

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 10 AUGUST 1893

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, 10 August, 1893.

Grazing Farm Selections.—Civil Service Superannuation Fund.—Wesleyan Methodist Church Property Trust Bill.—Special Trains to Ministers.—Amendment of Electoral Laws: Resumption of debate—Co-operative Communities Land Settlement Bill: Second reading.—Adjournment.

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

GRAZING FARM SELECTIONS.

Mr. CROMBIE, for Mr. Cameron, asked the Secretary for Lands—

Whether it is the intention of the Government to throw open for selection the grazing farms which have already been surveyed on the resumed portions of runs in the Mitchell district?

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS (Hon. A. H. Barlow) replied—

Not at present.

CIVIL SERVICE SUPERANNUATION FUND.

Mr. LEAHY asked the Premier—

1. What amount has been invested out of the Civil Service Superannuation Fund to date?

2. Have any of the securities fallen into the hands of the Board? If so, how many, and for what advances were such securities taken?

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir T. McIlwraith) replied—

1. £46,384 on mortgage on real property; £25,000 at fixed deposit.

2. Yes; seven, representing £1,285.

WESLEYAN METHODIST CHURCH PROPERTY TRUST BILL.

Mr. POWERS presented the report of the Select Committee on this Bill.

Report received and ordered to be printed; and the second reading of the Bill made an Order of the Day for Thursday next.

SPECIAL TRAINS TO MINISTERS.

On the motion of Mr. FISHER, it was resolved—

That the return to an order of the House, relative to special trains granted to Ministers of the Crown, laid upon the table on the 3rd instant, be printed.

AMENDMENT OF ELECTORAL LAWS.

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

On the Order of the Day being read for the resumption of debate on Mr. Powers' motion, "That, in the opinion of this House, it is desirable to amend the electoral laws at present in force, and especially to repeal the provisions under which a man can be registered as an elector in every electorate in the colony in which he owns a freehold property of a value of £100 clear of encumbrances"—which stood adjourned at 7 o'clock p.m. on Thursday, the 3rd instant,

Mr. DRAKE, continuing, said: When the debate stood adjourned on Thursday last, I was replying to the remarks of the Secretary for Lands, and more particularly to that part of his speech in which he stated that if the reform advocated by the leader of the Opposition were effected, it would necessarily lead to equal electoral districts, thus giving an unfair amount of political power to the people in the towns. I will point out, in reply, that at the present time, when we have a system by which the votes are partly personal and partly property, we deliberately make the electoral districts unequal, in order that this preponderance of power may not be given to the towns; and I cannot see any

reason why, if plural voting were abolished, it would become more necessary to have equal electoral districts than it is now; on the contrary, it seems perfectly clear that it would be less necessary. If the evil that the hon. gentleman fears is that the population in the large towns would outbalance the rest of the population, then I think he should be in favour of abolishing plural voting, because there can be no doubt that the plural vote is more extensively used in and around the towns than in the outside districts. It must be so. I would point out, in passing, to strengthen the argument that I presented last week, that it was never intended in the first place that property should have a direct voting power for this representative Chamber; that the law still requires that the individual himself shall present himself at the ballot-box. Now, if the power were given simply in respect to a certain amount of property owned by that individual, why should the necessity arise for the person himself to attend at the ballot-box? Because it is necessary that he should do so, it is perfectly clear that a person who has the right to vote in several different electoral districts has a better chance of exercising his power in those electorates in districts that are thickly populated, because it becomes a physical impossibility for him to get about from one electorate to another where they are very far distant. It is possible to imagine that one individual may have voting rights in every one of the back country electorates, from the Gulf of Carpentaria down to the New South Wales border, but it would be physically impossible for him to record his votes in those different electorates. Therefore, so far as he was concerned, plural voting might just as well have been abolished. But in the towns and in suburban electorates it is very easy for one individual to record a great number of votes on the same day. In fact, I think that the Government during the last election facilitated that process by having polling-booths appointed in North Brisbane for electorates as far away as Gympie, Bundaberg, and Maryborough. If that were not done by the Government, then, as the law stands, it would be exceedingly difficult for anyone to exercise the right of plural voting, except in the town and suburban electorates, and the action taken by the Government in appointing polling-booths for one district in another district had a very unfair operation. Polling-booths were appointed in Brisbane for outside districts; but they were not appointed in the outside districts for the centre. Consequently, the person who happened to be in North Brisbane, who had a vote for Gympie or Bundaberg, could stop in Brisbane and record it; but a North Brisbane elector who happened to be away at Gympie or Bundaberg, perhaps looking for work, had no similar opportunity of being able to record his vote for North Brisbane. If the preponderance of voting power in the towns is an evil, we diminish it by abolishing plural voting. I think our present system of voting is unjust and irrational. Why should this particular right be given to the owners of property, and more especially to the owners of landed property? The Secretary for Lands gave the ordinary argument on the subject when he said that the land could not run away. Of course the hon. gentleman must know perfectly well that the right to vote is not given in respect of the land—that is, the earth and stones of which the land is made. They cannot run away; that is true enough; but the vote is given in respect of the ownership of the land, and that ownership we know can run away very easily. The vote, in fact, is given on account of that margin between the value of the land at any particular time and the amount of money that has been

lent upon it—really the equity of redemption, and nothing else. Is there any more evanescent form of property than that? A man can never know, except by valuing his securities, whether the equity of redemption represents a vote or not.

The PREMIER: That is the same with every other kind of property.

Mr. DRAKE: Then the argument of the Secretary for Lands falls to the ground, because the hon. gentleman takes up the ground that there is something peculiar attaching to the ownership of the land which should justify this system of plural voting. In fact, the hon. gentleman's colleague, the Colonial Treasurer, swept all that on one side when he said, so far as he was concerned, he would give a vote to any man who had £100 in the savings bank.

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS: I would not. Votes could be manufactured wholesale at that rate.

Mr. DRAKE: The leader of the Opposition made use of an argument which, I think, was very unfairly distorted by hon. members who followed him on the other side, because the hon. gentleman's argument showed the absurdity of the present system, that if a man is living in an electorate in respect of which he votes, supposing he has spent any amount of money—has bought land and erected factories—it gives him no more voting power. He has one vote and no more, whereas another man who has only £100 worth of property may invest it over the border in another electorate and gets two votes. That shows the absurdity of the thing. Let us take two cases as examples—of men who have £1,000 each. One buys land, builds factories, erects machinery, and starts some industry—he gets one vote; the other buys ten allotments of land, in electorates around Brisbane, and gets eleven votes. Can anyone possibly contend that the man who spends his money in buying allotments round a town is a better citizen in any sense than the man who spends his money in industries in the electorate where he lives? That is where the absurdity of the system comes in; and I believe there are many men who have the right of voting in more than eleven electorates round about Brisbane. Anyone, by speculating in property in electorates around a town, may obtain that voting power by purchase, and that is certainly not right. In the other colonies, and largely in this colony, men have given up contending that our present system is based upon any just principle whatever, and they fall back upon the contention that though this system may not be right it would never do to abolish plural voting altogether. Some system of plural voting, they contend, should be maintained, and they suggest that one vote should be given for thrift. The Secretary for Lands argues the point in this way: Why should the wise, prudent, and thrifty man be placed on a level with the foolish, careless, and imprudent man?

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS: Exactly.

Mr. DRAKE: That is the general argument in favour of giving a vote for thrift. If we can invent a system by which, instead of having a representative Chamber, we shall have a number of gentlemen elected by a peculiar kind of voting representing certain individuals only, then the hon. gentleman says we shall have got something very much better than we now have. I think that is a fad, if anything is, because it is advocating a political impossibility.

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS: I did not advocate that. I say: "Let well alone; leave things as they are."

Mr. DRAKE: If the hon. gentleman says "Let well alone," he is one of those who say that the present system—unjust, absurd, and irrational as it is—should be maintained for fear that something worse will happen if we try to reform it. Leaving the hon. member out, as he disclaims the contention, there are still a number of persons who contend that we should have another system, so that we may give the larger amount of political power to the wise, the prudent, and the thrifty. Hon. gentlemen know, of course, the difficulty in such a case arises the moment you are called upon to divide the people of the colony into the two classes. The moment a man comes up to have the question decided as to whether he is to have one vote or two—a single or a double ticket in the affair—we can see what the scheme really is, because we come down to the one question, and ask the man if he has got £100. If he says he has got £100, we won't ask any more questions. What is that, if it is not a property vote pure and simple? I have given a good deal of thought to this subject, and I have come to the conclusion that there is really no possible way in which you can parcel out voting rights equitably except on the principle of giving equal voting rights to each individual.

Mr. KINGSBURY: Would you give them to women?

Mr. DRAKE: I would give them to women. The Secretary for Lands spoke of this as being one of the few safeguards left; but I should be very unhappy if I felt that this extraordinary election law, and the peculiar way in which it is worked, is any safeguard whatever. The arguments the hon. gentleman used are very similar to those used every time any electoral reform is advocated. In 1832, in 1867, and always we have had the same arguments. There is always something terrible going to happen if you only trust the people. But I am a Liberal still; and I believe that the proper line in political action is trust in the people. I believe that by trusting the people we are more likely to arrive at safety than by any system of unequal electoral rights. The hon. member for Maryborough, Mr. Annear, spoke of this matter as one of the "fads," and said I preached it at the Centennial Hall, and so on. I have advocated the principle of the abolition of plural voting ever since I have known anything of politics, and before the phrase "one man one vote" was introduced. I do not use that phrase myself, because I do not know exactly what it means; but I clearly understand what plural voting at elections means. It appears to me that it is not based on any reason. I have continually invited arguments in support of the present system, but I have never got them. What is called a "fad" is simply a political question that has not yet got a majority, but as soon as a few more votes come over to its side the "fad" becomes a wise, just, and beneficent reform. That is what is coming about in this colony, in all the colonies, and in England. It will come about; and hon. members whose careers do not belong entirely to the past will do well, in connection with this question, to leave this golden bridge to retreat upon, for they will want it.

The Hon. J. R. DICKSON: The motion submitted by the leader of the Opposition is a very comprehensive one. It asks the House to express an opinion that it is desirable to amend the electoral laws at present in force. There may be a consensus of opinion that certain requirements of the present electoral laws might be advantageously amended, but the hon. member in his motion then proceeds to deal with the subject in a way which I imagine the good common practical sense of the majority of members of this House, and of the people of the

colony, will condemn as an injurious and unnecessary innovation, especially at the present time. I am aware that my utterances are not likely to be satisfactory to the gentlemen on the Opposition cross-benches, but I have been heard before, outside this House, to express my condemnation of a measure which I consider to be a "fad." I repeat that it is a fad, and I was one of the first to characterise it in that way. It is based upon the purely selfish considerations of those who advocate it and who want to bring all men down to a common level. They preach the doctrine, as the hon. member for Enoggera has done, that all men are equal and have equal rights—a statement in the American declaration of independence which, at the present day, is admitted to be utterly absurd and baseless. All men are not equal in their intellectual or physical endowments, or in their social position, and from the position in which one man lives he has a right to exercise and is called upon to exercise duties, responsibilities, and privileges which others do not possess and are not called upon to exercise. I say at once that I go with the hon. member as to the advisability of amending our electoral law; I would very gladly amend it in certain directions. One of my amendments would be that no man should have a voice in the election of members of Parliament who had not acquired some experience by a twelve months' residence. The present term of six months does not give a man a sufficient opportunity of acquainting himself with our social conditions to justify us in giving him a potential voice in returning representatives to make the laws of the country. I have said this before, and I think that twelve months' residence would be a very wise provision to be introduced into any amendment of our electoral law.

Mr. McDONALD: Twelve months in the colony, or in one electorate?

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: Twelve months' residence in the colony. At present a man arrives here, takes no interest whatever in our social conditions, and has no proper perception of our laws—I thoroughly believe such a man should have an opportunity of acquiring some knowledge of these things before he is called upon to have an equal voice—because that is what the hon. member for Maryborough advocates—simultaneously in the representation of the country. Another amendment I should like to see introduced would be an education qualification. Every man should be able to read and write who is to exercise the franchise in the colony. That would have been insisted upon before this, only out of consideration for those of an older generation, who possibly have been, and still are, very good colonists, but whom it would be cruel to debar from a voice in the political affairs of the colony whose prosperity they have done so much to promote. I also think that a very wise reform in our electoral law would be that men who have been convicted of a criminal offence, on being released, should undergo a period of probation before they are re-admitted to the franchise. They might very fairly come under the same category as new arrivals, and have a twelve months' probation before having a voice in the election of representatives. I give these as my individual ideas. No doubt hon. members on both sides will have a great many more suggestions to make; but we are not engaged now, and I hope we shall not be this session, in revising our electoral laws. We have plenty of other matters to attend to at present of much more pressing importance. I have been anxious to hear from members who support the hon. member for Maryborough wherein the great imperfection

of our present system consists. I admit at once that it may not be a perfect system, nor do I think that any amendments that may be made in it will wholly escape censure, and commend themselves to everybody. I understood the hon. member for Enoggera to say that the spirit of our present Constitution is hostile to property possessing any claim to representation; but, according to our electoral laws, the three qualifications which entitle a man to the franchise are freehold, leasehold, or residence. Clearly it was contemplated by the Legislature that the franchise should be acquired by property as well as by residence. As to the voice of the people, I quite go with the hon. member in desiring that the voice of the people should have a full and legitimate opportunity of expression in this Chamber. At the same time, I hold that the property-owners of the colony may form quite as important a section of the people as men who have been here only a short time, or who are leading nomadic lives, and could, perhaps, leave the colony to-morrow without any great sacrifice. The former are bound to the fortunes of the colony because they have invested their savings in it, and could not leave it without a certain amount of sacrifice. The more they are attached to the colony by investments in land and otherwise the more likely they are to desire good government, and to keep the country free from revolutionary administration or actions. They are the backbone of the colony, the men by whom a wise conservative administration will be maintained, by which progress will be facilitated. They will act as a counter to those revolutionary tendencies which have of late manifested themselves with a desire to introduce new modes of procedure, the result of which it will take some time for us fully to understand. It is well to hasten slowly. I should much like to hear this one man one vote question put before us in a more scientific form than it has been put by the hon. members for Maryborough and Enoggera, who seem to think that its adoption will tend to deliver the colony from the distress which at present pervades all classes. I cannot conceive that it will have anything like the beneficial effect which those hon. members have endeavoured to persuade the House would follow upon the adoption of the resolution. The colony is suffering from very grave economic distress, and we are asked to introduce a piece of purely political quackery for the purpose of remedying it. The whole thing is valueless as a remedy. As I stated before, the system would be most unfair to men who have lived in the colony for years, have invested their savings in it, and who are bound up with its future welfare. I have observed that many people who profess admiration for this one man one vote question, and who preach the doctrine that no man should have a voice in more than one electorate, have not the slightest objection or compunction in exercising their personal influence at election times in as many other electorates as they can possibly induce to entertain their views. If they were sincere, they would not break through the spirit of that profession. We know that sometimes personal influence goes further than a vote; and if the system were a good one, its advocates should show their entire belief in it, by restricting their efforts to the electorates in which they are personally concerned. Take the illustration given by the hon. member for Enoggera: A man acquires property in one of our large cities in trade or manufacture; he prospers, and establishes another industry in another electorate; has he not an interest in both? Why then should he not have a voice in both? We have placed before us as a terrible spoliator

the man who invests his savings in the lands of the colony and acquires rights in different electorates. One would imagine that he is an animal to be detested by all right-minded thinkers; but I say that such a man shows confidence in the colony, and is not a mere bird of passage. The investment he makes to-day will lead him to make another to-morrow, as his means increase; and, consequently, with investment employment and improvement must extend, and such investor will be found to be a more useful colonist than a man who considers it a crime to hold any land and wishes to have his savings invested in such a shape that he can leave the colony at a moment's notice. To sum it all up, it seems calculated to revert to the position which the hon. member for Enoggera partly indicated—that all men should be equal.

Mr. DRAKE: Should have equal political rights.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: If by their own industry and frugality they are enabled to acquire a higher position in the social scale, I do not see why the rights they at present possess should be curtailed. I do not think a man would distribute his money in £100 allotments all over the colony for the sake of getting votes; and if he did, in the majority of cases he could not exercise those votes, because so many elections are held on one day. If a man by energy and thrift has investments in different parts of the colony, he has a general interest in the whole colony, and in those electorates in particular. Therefore, until I receive fuller light on this question, I shall adhere to my opinion that it would be unwise to adopt the one man one vote system at present, but should like to see the subject very fully discussed. Indeed, I intended to have waited until some of those hon. members who have made this subject one of the chief planks of their political platform had enlightened us, because I am not beyond conviction. If they can show that this will be an improvement to our social fabric, they may convert me. I want to hear all they have to say, because this is a very important question, and the hon. member who has introduced it has not placed it before the House or the country in such a full and convincing manner as to alter a single vote or opinion already conclusively established upon a prior consideration of the subject. He has not affected my views. The hon. member spoke solely from the standpoint of one class; and both he and the hon. member for Enoggera talk of the people of the colony as if the people consisted solely of men who consider it a crime to be a freeholder, and who think that six months' residence and a sort of itinerating vote all over the colony is the acme of popular ambition. I believe in a settled population—a population attached to the soil—possessing all those privileges which an intelligent man, who shows his confidence in the country by remaining and investing his savings here, is entitled to enjoy. Those men not only act as good colonists, but they lay the foundations of greater prosperity by bequeathing an improved patrimony to their descendants. I shall vote against the resolution as a whole, although if the Government deem it their duty—I cannot see my way to urge them to do it—to introduce an electoral measure this session, I should advocate certain improvements in the present law. I am sure that if we rush into the one man one vote system we shall be exchanging the present system—a by no means faultless one—for one attended with grosser and more glaring evils, and which would entirely unsettle the very foundations of society.

Mr. BROWNE: When this motion was introduced I thought it would readily have been

passed, knowing how many hon. members expressed favourable opinions of the system during the elections, or if there were opposition we should have heard strong arguments against it. Having been told, as we have, that we are not listened to by crowds, but by the intelligence of the House, we expected to have heard stronger arguments in favour of plural voting; but the plural vote has been better advocated at camp fires than I have heard it here. The Treasurer first objected to this motion on the ground that it is not a liberal measure—that it takes away certain rights from some people, and therefore cannot be a liberal measure. But if we refer to history, we find that all progressive movements from the earliest times have taken away some so-called rights from certain classes in the community. In the very first reforms—getting freedom from despotic government—the rights of kings have been taken away, until, under constitutional government, they are almost completely shorn of those rights. Then, to mention a reform, which the Treasurer must admit was a reform, and which took place at the beginning of this century, there is the great movement initiated by Wilberforce and others in favour of the abolition of slavery. The men who initiated all these reforms have been called exactly the same names as reformers of the present day are—the same as are hurled at my friends here, and probably at myself also—those of “anarchist,” “communist,” and all the rest of it. At the time slavery was abolished in the British dominions it took away from the planters in the West Indies and British South America the right of slave-holding, but no member will say that that was not a liberal measure. In these colonies, when the anti-transportation movement was advocated by Sir Henry Parkes and others, they were denounced in the same unmeasured terms for wishing to take away the so-called rights of the large landowners in New South Wales of getting regular supplies of assigned servants and cheap labour on their estates. That was an abrogation of the so-called rights of certain individuals, but no one will say that it was not a liberal measure. Then there was the abolition of slavery in the United States which caused the great civil war. The abolitionists were denounced as anarchists and so on; and we know the millions of money that was spent and the amount of blood that was spilt to procure that reform—a reform which took away rights that were conferred on the planters by the laws of the United States and were said to be inalienable rights.

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. H. M. Nelson): Don't you know that when slavery was abolished the British Government paid £20,000,000 as compensation?

Mr. BROWNE: That was when slavery was abolished in the British dominions. In the United States there was no compensation. Every reform must take away so-called rights of certain individuals which cannot be participated in by the large multitude; and the measure that remedies the wrong is a liberal measure. The Secretary for Lands said that people were in the habit of stating that the electoral laws were unjust, which he totally denied.

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS: So I do.

Mr. BROWNE: So far as the hon. member's experience goes, they may not be unjust; but in parts of the country where he has not been those laws are most decidedly unjust. The class to which I belong—the diggers—are very unjustly treated by the Electoral Act. It is almost impossible for a large number of them to be on the roll to-day—men who have been a lifetime in the colony.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. Tozer): There were many hundred more names on the Croydon roll than men in the electorate.

Mr. BROWNE: A great deal has been said in the papers about the way in which the rolls have been manipulated and injustice done in different parts of the colony; but I wish to say, as coming from Croydon, that, so far as the Government officials there are concerned, I do not believe any men strove harder to administer the law justly and impartially, and I do not believe they wilfully excluded one man from the roll. The Secretary for Lands talks about men seeing a justice of the peace; and that is all very well in the metropolitan constituencies, but it is very different in the outlying districts. In the Croydon electorate the camps are scattered about a long way from the registrar, and in the Burke electorate there are places as much as 100 miles away from any justice of the peace.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The warden visits there regularly.

Mr. BROWNE: Yes; but when the warden comes the men may be at their work, and they may not know he is coming. I will now point out how the law affects a body of men not of the nomadic character referred to by the hon. member for Bulimba. On the Gilbert River, about equally distant from Croydon and Georgetown, there are some good honest settlers farming under far greater difficulties than those which beset the farmers in the coast districts. They are settled on waterless country, trying to do their best for themselves and their families, and I have not come across a more intelligent lot of men for a small community anywhere in Australia. When I went there the last time, I found that, out of about sixty men camping about the river, only eight had been left on the roll. This was through no fault of their own or of the officials; it was simply through the unjust law. There may be some error with regard to a man's residence—it may be a clerical error or a printer's error—and a man's name is erased. If the Croydon registrar, for instance, finds a man's name erased, and there is no objection to the erasure, he writes a letter to "John Smith, Croydon." That is dropped into the Croydon post office, and the man may be sixty or seventy miles away, and never gets the notice. It is true that the names are now advertised; but men in the bush cannot take all the newspapers published in the colony. As a rule, they take one of the weekly newspapers published in Brisbane or in the North, so that they may get all the news of the outside world; but it is very seldom that they will pay 6d. for a local paper. The consequence is, that they never see the advertisement, and when election time comes they find that their names are not on the roll. Men whose names were on the Burke roll for twelve or fourteen years found that they had no vote at the last general election. Another thing, there is no chance of appeal. The registrar may know that it is an injustice; but after a name has once been erased a man has to wait for another quarterly revision court before he can get his name put on again. A great deal has been said about six months' residence, and I would not object to the hon. member for Bulimba's proposition that the time should be lengthened to twelve months if it was twelve months' residence in the colony; but I object to confining it to the one electorate. For instance, a miner in the North may have been knocking about the Palmer, Croydon, and all those diggings for years without having ever left the colony, as many of them have been; and on a rush breaking out in some other place forty or fifty miles away, he may go there, and thus lose his vote, although he has been residing in

the district for fifteen or twenty years. These are men who do not require capital to keep them up, but who are striving to keep off the labour market and develop an important industry, and I contend that they ought to be considered. But while these men, who have lived a lifetime in the colony—many of them being natives—are deprived of a vote, new chums arriving by the British India boat, are entitled, after six months' residence, to a voice in the affairs of the country. I maintain that a law which admits of such inequalities cannot be called a just law. With regard to plural voting, that does not affect my electorate very much; but I can thoroughly understand how it affects Southern electorates. One of the strong arguments advanced in favour of plural voting is that a man who is unthrifty and careless should not be placed on the same footing as the man who is wise, prudent, and thrifty; but have we any guarantee that the man who possesses property is the thrifty man? A great many of the propertied men in the country are no doubt men who have gained their present status through their own exertions; but we must remember that all the colonies are now more than a generation old, that many of the old pioneers are dying out, and that their successors are reaping the benefit of their exertions.

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS: Why not?

Mr. BROWNE: A large majority of thinkers are now coming to the opinion that hereditary legislators are an evil, and I think hereditary voters are a worse evil. The Secretary for Lands may have been an industrious man, as I believe he has been, and may have acquired a competency. I do not know whether he has any sons—I hope he has, and that they are as good men as himself; but it is quite possible that the hon. gentlemen may have a son who is as big a scamp as his father has been a good man, and why should he inherit the vote given to his father for frugality and thrift? The hon. member for Bulimba was very indignant at a new-comer, who knows nothing whatever of the conditions of the country, having a vote; but it is only by a property qualification that an absolute new-comer can have a vote.

The Hon. J. R. DICKSON: He must have that qualification for some time before he can have a vote.

Mr. BROWNE: A man may hold property in a dozen electorates, and by virtue of that qualification he may have a vote in each; if that man dies, and his property is inherited by some relative in the old country who knows nothing whatever about our conditions, that relative comes out here, and, on being registered as the owner of the property, he has a claim to be enrolled.

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS: He must be here six months before he can be registered as a voter.

Mr. BROWNE: I am speaking about the property vote. There is no time qualification for the property vote.

Mr. REID: Yes; the same as the other.

Mr. BROWNE: The property holder gets his vote at the end of six months without any trouble in registering himself.

Mr. McMASTER: No.

Mr. BROWNE: A man who claims to be enrolled for a residence qualification has to go to a great deal of trouble before he is registered; he has to go through a number of forms, and is liable to meet with objections on all hands; but the property-owner can get his name on the roll, and there are no objections.

Mr. McMASTER: He has the same trouble as the other man.

Mr. BROWNE: He is registered by virtue of his property qualification.

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS: Will the hon. member allow me to read the clause?

Mr. REID: We know all about it.

Mr. BROWNE: I understand that the man must register himself as the owner of the property, but I say he has not the same trouble in getting his claim attested by a justice of the peace as the man who has only a residence qualification.

Mr. McMASTER: Yes, he has.

Mr. BROWNE: Almost every friend the property-owner who comes here has got is a justice of the peace, so that he has no trouble in that respect; while men on the Gilbert River, as I have already pointed out, have to ride sixty miles to Croydon, or sixty miles to Georgetown, and then hunt about for a justice of the peace in order to get their claims attested. On the other hand, the property-owner meets with justices of the peace in the society he mixes with—possibly in the very hotel where he is staying there are several—and he can easily get his claim attested. There is one other matter to which I wish to refer; that is the contingent vote. I am very sorry to have to mention it, as I believe it was an idea of the Secretary for Lands. One of the strongest arguments against the contingent vote was given by the senior member for Maryborough. That hon. member assisted in passing that measure, and has since been elevated to the high position of Chairman of Committees, yet he admitted the other night that it was months and months before he understood the contingent vote. The cry about the contingent vote has always been that it is so complicated that the ordinary working man—

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS: That is what your party thought fit to say.

Mr. BROWNE: The majority of men in the colony cannot understand it. We have been told continually that it is so simple that anybody could understand it; but we have the Chairman of Committees telling us that for months and months after the Bill was passed he did not understand it. If one of the highest officials in this House did not understand the law, how can ordinary people all over the country, who are supposed to be only half-educated, be expected to understand it? Had it not been for some very curious statements which have been made, I should not have spoken at all; but I could not sit still and allow them to pass. I intend to vote for the resolution.

Mr. MACFARLANE: I suppose other hon. members had a similar experience to myself at the late general election. I was asked whether I was in favour of one man one vote, and I said that, though I was not as advanced in my ideas on the subject as the members of the Labour party, if I had an opportunity of speaking and voting on the question in this House, I would go to the length of giving no man more than two votes—that is, one vote for his manhood and one for his thrift. I agree with the motion so far as affirming that it is necessary to amend our Elections Act. I should like to see the law amended so that all elections should take place on the same day, that all public-houses should be closed throughout the colony on the election day, and to give no man more than two votes. I know of many working men who reside in Ipswich, and who have property votes in each of the six electoral districts having Ipswich as their centre; and though they may not have voted in all the different electo-

rates, they had the opportunity of doing so according to our law. At one time I had the qualification entitling me to three votes, and at the present time I could have two votes, but I have never in my life voted for any district other than that in which I resided. As far as the question of right is concerned, it may be said that no man has a right to more than one vote, but the law allows a vote for every electorate in the colony, provided the man holds the necessary qualification. In supporting the resolution to the extent I have indicated, I do so not on account of any recent agitation for the principle of the resolution. In my earliest days I was saturated with the Chartist notions so common in Scotland fifty years ago, and I have always contended that the day would come in my own lifetime when, not only in the colonies, but in Great Britain also, most of the points of the charter would be the law. Many of them have already come to pass, such as payment of members; and this is only another of the points. Equal electoral districts have not yet come to pass; and perhaps in Queensland that would enable a large city like Brisbane to swamp the country districts, but that would not be possible if we had equal districts all over the colony. I know that the members of the Labour party do not like compromises, but it is sometimes better to make a compromise. To make a small demand, and, when that has been got, to then go for more is better than to contend for the whole matter at once and fail to get anything. I like to go by degrees, and not to move before the people are ready.

Mr. REID: The people are ready for this.

Mr. MACFARLANE: If we do not proceed with any legislation until the people are ripe for it, we shall do well; and I am quite prepared to vote for the resolution, with the modifications I have suggested.

Mr. DUNSFORD: The hon. member for Croydon informed us that the administration of the present iniquitous electoral law has not been so bad after all in his district. I am sorry to say that I cannot make a similar statement regarding its administration in the electorate I represent—Charters Towers. Bad as the law is, we have found its administration still worse. At the annual revision court, held in November last, something like 1,900 names were marked as having left or died. I do not know on what system the names are picked out, but amongst those names were those of three or four men who are still acting as mining managers; there was one justice of the peace, and also the leading Catholic priest in the district—all marked as having left. The names of numbers of men who have been in the district for several years, but who were working in outlying districts, and who, because, unfortunately, they did not discover till too late that their names were marked in this way, were struck off and they were deprived of the opportunity of recording their votes at the general election. The hon. member for Bulimba need not have wasted his breath in uttering the truism that all men are not equal. We all knew that long ago. All men are not equal in beauty or in ugliness, in weight of flesh, in physique, in mental capacity, or in anything else. But is that to say that all men should not have equal opportunities—equal political opportunities? I think they should. If Nature has gifted the hon. member for Bulimba with special mental capacity, and with other special qualities, is that any reason why this House should step in and further reward him with seventeen votes? I think not. I think any hon. member who has special natural gifts should consider himself sufficiently

rewarded by having them, and not ask for a special vote for his gifts. Members must allow that at the present time all men in the colony have not equal political opportunities. Numbers of men have been prevented from recording their votes. Some of them are so situated that, although their names appeared on the rolls at the last general election, they were not able to record them, because they had stepped across the line of demarcation between the constituencies. The men who are here have to submit to the laws; they have to pay to the State revenue; and therefore I think those are reasons why they should have at least one vote in the elections that take place. There is one thing in which I will inform the hon. member for Bulimba we are equal. We are equal in our common humanity, and equal in our individuality. Each individual is a unit in the State, and he should not be deprived of his rights by any other unit. Therefore I plead here to-day for equal political opportunities for every man in the country. No man is more than a man or less than a man, and why should he be deprived of his rights?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Why do you exclude Chinese and Japanese?

Mr. DUNSFORD: Because they will not conform to the usages and customs of the country. For that reason alone they should be deprived of their rights of citizenship, and it is one among many other reasons why these aliens and kanakas, or slaves, should not be permitted to come here; but it is no reason why white men, working men, freemen, should not have their full political rights. We were told here last Thursday by the junior member for Fortitude Valley, Mr. Watson, that men should have votes according to the money they brought here and the people they employed. If they have a yacht they should have a vote for it; for a buggy they should have a vote, because a man is employed to drive it; and for the same reason a man should have a vote for a perambulator, because he employs a servant to shove it along. Then, again, pursuing that argument, the sugar-planter should have a vote for every kanaka he employs, and so on. Say the hon. member for Fortitude Valley is a carpenter and employs a tailor to build him a suit of clothes, he should have a vote for employing the tailor, and if he builds a house for the tailor, the tailor should have a vote for employing him; if he employs a bootmaker to make boots, or an undertaker to make a coffin, he should have a vote for employing each of them. Every man should have a vote for himself, and a number of other people. Of course the argument is ridiculous. The Secretary for Lands says all men are not equal in intelligence or morality or anything else. Then does not the hon. gentleman see that he cannot give any two men the same voting power. On what basis would he give a voting power at all? I say, therefore, that the only basis you can go upon is our common humanity—one vote for every man, and no more. I say, therefore, it is the duty of this House to see that every man in the country should have an equal opportunity of recording his vote, and thus indirectly of making the laws. I hope the motion will be passed.

Mr. BURNS: As one of those who in recent times had to pledge himself one way or the other on this question, I should like to say a few words upon it. I was asked if I was in favour of one man one vote, and I said I was not in favour of that for this particular reason—that I could not see the justice of it. If I were convinced of its justice, I hope the House will believe that I should be prepared to vote for it. When the justice of it is demonstrated to me I shall be prepared to vote for it. I put this

case before the electors. I said: Suppose I am able to save a little and go to another district, where I put my money into an industry; I cannot live in two places, but I am very much interested in both. Therefore, I see no reason why, because I do not live in a particular place, I should not have a say in putting in the best man to represent it. That is a much fairer way of stating the case. Hon. members on the other side say that some men have eleven or twelve votes, but I think those cases are so few that it is scarcely worth the while of the legislature to provide specially for them. I say that all men are not equal, but that every man, for his manhood and six months' residence, is entitled to a vote, and if he goes beyond that and makes himself a useful citizen in a different part of the country, he is entitled to a vote for the place to which he goes. The man who finds employment for a dozen, twenty, fifty, or 100 men is doing as much for a district, although he does not live there, as a man who labours there for six months, and may be anywhere else for the next six months. It is a fair thing that when a man by his industry improves his position and does good work for a district in which he does not live, his industry on behalf of that district claims an honest vote without depriving anyone of any right. The hon. member for Enoggera says that seeing that every man is personally required to record his vote, it is clear that plural voting was not intended. If that is so, and there is any sting in plural voting, that takes it away, because it is only in a very few instances that men can personally record votes in a number of electorates.

Mr. REID: Live in Brisbane.

Mr. BURNS: It is only in a place like Brisbane, in the whole colony, where it has any material effect. The time of the House is not profitably occupied in discussing such a question as this when other matters concern us, the discussion of which would be more beneficial to the country. This is more a matter of sentiment than anything else. The junior member for Charters Towers spoke of every man having the same opportunities. So far as I know, as nearly as men are made equal, they have equal opportunities. There is no law to prevent a man acquiring property by which he may secure a number of votes. Had the motion been confined to its first part, and affirmed that some reform was requisite, I would have voted for it, but as it has drifted into this particular line I cannot vote for it. I would have been prepared to raise the qualification of a property vote to £500 if it was thought necessary, as I think £100 too low; but I think a man should have some encouragement to extend his interests to different parts of the colony, and it is unjust, where a man has done that, to enable a man who has resided only six months in an electorate to swamp such a man's interest in it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I rise not only because I got a free hand from my constituency, but because this matter has often been discussed in the House, and some of the arguments used before and not used on this occasion may be repeated. After the number of discussions we have had on this question, there is not the slightest chance that there will be much originality in the debate. Last year a proposal to the same effect, moved by the same hon. member, was defeated in this House by a majority, I think, of 44 to 12.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: That was not in the country.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: So far as the country is concerned, people are perfectly satisfied with the system as it stands at the present moment. There is no doubt the question proposed here is a complex one, so far as

regards its form. It specifies that there is need for some revision of the electoral laws of the colony, and then it gives a reason at the end. We know the electoral laws of the colony are not as perfect as they might be made, and there is need for reform in nearly every law in the colony. The most obnoxious part of the motion is an insidious attempt to introduce into this colony, by a resolution, mob rule. That is what it really is—rule by the mob, by mere numbers. I do not mince matters when I speak in this House. I speak straight out; and I say the object of this resolution is to get rule by numbers. That was the admission made just now by the hon. member who said it was based upon the rights of our common manhood. Yet the hon. member, directly he approached the question of the rights of our common manhood, scuttled away at once from the proposition by saying that he did not mean it to apply to Chinese or to aboriginals. They have no rights of common manhood according to the hon. member, though they have to obey all our laws and suffer and go to prison as we have for breaches of the law. The aboriginals were here before us. We took their country from them, and introduced our laws to them, and yet the hon. member says they must be excluded from the rights of common manhood.

Mr. DUNSFORD: They are not naturalised.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: According to the hon. member they have no rights of common manhood which we need consider, though they must obey our laws. The hon. member would exclude others who have to submit to taxation and to our laws, as he does not go so far as to give women the right to vote. This resolution does not go so far as that. It goes on the ground of our common manhood, and does not give the right to vote to those who, though under twenty-one years of age, have still to obey our laws.

Mr. DUNSFORD: That is boyhood.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: But there are many men in their second childhood to whom the hon. member would give the right, and spectacles of them are sometimes seen in this Assembly. I dispute the contention that there is any abstract right of humanity to have a vote. I do not know where that is given. The question paramount to that is the question of securing in the best way the best government for the majority of the people. We recognise no such abstract right in a lunatic. Why do we not give a lunatic a vote? Because he is not wise enough to give a vote in the best way for the interests of the majority. The first question is: What, under all the circumstances, is the best way to get at the best sense of the community in the interests of the whole community? If by giving a vote to property we do not secure that, we should not give a vote to property; and if by giving it to numbers, we drive away people we really want, that cannot be the best way. There is, theoretically, no best way, and we have to work at it, and until the end of the world we will, I suppose, be working at the proposition. There has been a conflict of opinion for years as to whether the system of having members for particular localities is the best system, and in some countries a system of electors for the whole land has been tried. There is an anomaly in the colour of our hair, and we know there are hundreds of anomalies in our present system of voting, but what we must try is to work out something which will give the best results.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Who is to be the judge of the results?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: There was something "fetching" in the French idea at one time to make men electors for the whole nation, and that is what the arguments used here tend to.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: And a good thing, too.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Possibly, but the French democracy turned the whole thing back again to a system of electorates, because they found there was as much evil in the whole-nation system as in the present system; and it was found that cliques and organisations deprived people of their interests in particular districts and their right to vote in those localities. They found that, though it looked well theoretically, it did not work practically. In America they have some similar system; at all events, greater numbers vote for members there than here. Our system here is one by which the colony is divided into certain portions, and we have adopted it simply because we have found that it is the best and most convenient, as far as we can judge up to the present time. Therefore, when hon. members want to introduce a peripatetic system, and say that our electoral laws are bad because there are no peripatetic voters in the colony, I say that that is a condition which must always be if we keep to our present system of making electorates of small portions of territory, which makes us members for a particular locality instead of for Queensland. So long as that system continues you cannot introduce into it peripatetic voting. It is wrong, therefore, to say at this time that the laws are unjust, and that a better system could be grafted upon it. I do not think it would work, especially taking into consideration the number of young men working up towards manhood. And there is the advantage in our present system that members know the wants of their own localities. No doubt there are anomalies, and there has been log-rolling in the House in consequence of that; still, after all, taking everything into consideration, I think it is about the best system we could work under. I should indeed hesitate to see Queensland made into one electorate, for that is practically what the argument amounts to, or at any rate a reduced number of electorates, in which every man shall have one vote and shall give that vote where he likes. I therefore join issue with the motion which has been moved by the hon. member for Maryborough, on the ground that it has never been proved to my satisfaction that every man has a right to claim the franchise. We know that all men have to obey the laws under certain penalties. We have divisional board laws and municipal laws. We entrust to the people of Brisbane the right of making laws for the city, and if I do not drive on the left-hand side of the road, the mayor, or someone acting under his authority, would order me to be arrested. We also give power to them to collect a tax—the wheel-tax it is called in some places. The persons who have to pay that tax are not necessarily ratepayers, but I have never heard it contended that property should not bear all the burden of municipal maintenance. Property alone is taxed, and property alone has the representation. Here we are asked to take away certain rights and give to somebody else, who has not paid any rates, the right to vote; and are told that by so doing we shall be legislating for the common rights of man. There may be something in it, but when a man who claims only to have the power to legislate in regard to the common rights of man, chooses to take upon himself further rights, and to say what I should do with the right which I have already, and to take it away from me, I consider that I have a right to protect myself. I have a further right; he claims to put upon me an amount of taxation which we all know is to be used for the purpose of keeping up the rate of wages. That is, practically, what is asked for. By means of a tax upon the land, which would only affect the

industrious, the thrifty, and those who have acquired property, they hope to derive from the land and those who use it sufficient money to keep up the rate of wages in the colony. To illustrate my contention, I will tell the House how I put the question to my electors. In the Wide Bay electorate there are fewer instances of plural voting than in any other electorate in the colony. My constituents are nearly all farmers, living on the Mary River; therefore, I am not one of those hon. members to whom the plural vote was of much use. I said to those people, "Supposing some of your number, we will say fifty, migrated to one particular island. Say, for argument, that the island is a small one, and is situated 100 miles from Queensland. You take up a portion of the land, make splendid farms, obtain the freehold, and form a little Parliament of your own. By-and-by another 100 persons choose to go to the island; but, instead of acquiring land as the others did, and working for themselves, suppose they said, 'We have come to your land; we want to get into your Parliament; we want to have the same right of voting as you; and we want it for the purpose of taking away some portion of your property in order to give ourselves high wages.'" That is, practically, what a number of people who come to this colony want to do. They want all the people who have borne the heat and burden of the day to pay a tax on their land for the purpose of keeping up the rate of wages in the towns. The farmers of Wide Bay, and the working men, too, sent me here, and told me I was to do my best to oppose any system by which such a preponderance of power should be given to the towns. I also told my electors that the men who went to that island had equal opportunities to take up land to those who went there first; and that if they had done so, and acquired freehold property and electoral rights, they would never turn round and say they wanted one man one vote; they would take care that, as far as they could help it, nobody should get their property from them.

Mr. REID: We will have you voting for it yet.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: No, indeed! When the Labour party abandon the idea of making other people pay the taxes in the colony they may have me voting for it. They claim, because they have the common rights of men, to make other people give up that which those people have hardly earned, while there are equal opportunities for every other man to do the same, and there is plenty of land for persons to do the same as those who have it. Those who have acquired property have a right to protect it against intruders.

Mr. REID: They can't get on the land.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The object of our legislature is not to gratify the ambition of any man to get political power, but to secure the best possible government. If we were all equally wise it might be possible to have one man one vote; but we are not. When we have an ideal Parliament, an ideal electorate, a perfected nature, and all that sort of thing which Bellamy points out—which will be in the millennium—then one man one vote may be desirable; but the essence of voting is that we shall get, so far as possible, the perfection of wisdom. We deprive lunatics of votes because they are not wise, and children because they have not arrived at that age at which they might be supposed to have wisdom; but we do not prevent old men voting, although some of them may not be wiser than young people of from fifteen to twenty-one years of age, because they may have done good service

to the colony. The right to have a vote is secondary to the paramount claim of the whole people to be ruled by the best laws. We have had changes in the past. There has been mob rule, and I do not think we want much of that in this colony, but it is what this resolution is tending a great deal to. We have lowered the franchise as low as possible in any part of the world, and I do not know that it has been of any advantage to Australia. I have watched passing events, and do not think it wise to try more experiments in that direction. There may be great anomalies, and the hon. member who moved this resolution is a perfect master at finding anomalies—I may call him an anomaly hunter; and it is one of our duties to find out anomalies and correct them if possible. But if the hon. member took the other side of the question he would find there are anomalies there also. The hon. member for Charters Towers was asked, whether, on the ground of common manhood, he would admit Chinese; but he said he would not. If common manhood is the basis, why not admit Japanese? The hon. member floundered, and could give no answer. Chinese and Japanese are particularly intelligent and clever, and they keep our laws better than many white people. The Japanese are showing themselves equal to us in civilisation, in art, and in progress. They are going in for railways, and I have seen Japanese with the degree of Master of Arts at Cambridge and Oxford; so that I do not see any more reason why, if one of them walks into Queensland and chooses to stay here, he should be deprived of a say in the government, any more than many hon. members opposite, on the ground of common manhood.

Mr. DANIELS: If he is naturalised he is entitled to a vote.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The hon. member and others, by their wise laws, prevent the naturalisation of these men. On the ground of common manhood, racial questions cannot come in. But the question cannot be decided on the basis of common manhood, but on the higher basis of what may be the best government under the present circumstances. We have a system which suits us well, and now it is proposed to change it for another that may be worse. I do not like to rush into experiments when we have already a system which gives every man a right to vote after six months' residence. I like to call a spade a spade, and I say the object of this resolution is to throw the entire power into the hands of mere numbers, and give none to the educated classes and those who have property. They want to increase the power of mere numbers, with a view of disfranchising the majority. This is not an enfranchising proposition, but a disfranchising one, to put the power into the hands of people who are ignorant of our laws, and the mode in which our political system is managed. There is more power in some individuals in this colony than in property. Can it be said that the Australian Labour Federation has not more power upon a certain number of subjects than any holder of property in the colony has upon a like number? There is the power of swaying the uneducated by appealing to their prejudices, and that power will be intensified by this resolution. It is intended to give numbers the power to legislate over every person who is educated and who has property.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Have the property men all the wisdom?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Many persons may make money, but it takes a wise man to keep it, and by doing so he shows his wisdom. Our present system does not deprive any man of his vote; it simply says that men who have

acquired a stake in the country, and have shown more wisdom in keeping their property than the spendthrift in getting rid of what he has, those men are better fitted than anybody else to assist in managing the affairs of the nation, so far as regards that property. Before we alter the present system, it should be shown that the proposed change will probably bring about a better system of government. But there are no instances which would lead Queensland to change her system for another. Has one man one vote been for the benefit of South Australia? I say that South Australia, in spite of great natural advantages, has been in a state of discord for five or six years; class has been set against class; people who were helping to make the country prosperous have taken their money elsewhere; and instead of having stable government there are incessant changes.

Mr. GROOM: One man one vote has not caused that.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It has contributed more than anything else to it. It has been the cause of men being elected who did not know their own mind; and the result has been that Ministries which came into power with a strong following have been thrown out in four or five months. Changes have been frequent; there is no stable government; and the colony has no prosperity in consequence. If South Australia is the ideal of what Queensland is to be with one man one vote, I hope there will never be one man one vote in Queensland. Then, I contend, there is a third effect: Being numerous, they would attain their desires. They would demand abnormal wages at the expense of others in the community—

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Educate them.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: If they were well educated and wise they would resist the demagogues, and not act upon those class prejudices. I know what a mob is—how easily they may be swayed by class prejudices; therefore, there is a necessity for every colony to resist everything by which mob rule or mob power may be brought about. I have seen a mob carry a man on their shoulders one week, and the next week howl him down. A mob is actuated by impulse, and the object of good government is to prevent anything which may be done solely from impulse. Then I think that the effect of this would be to give free scope to socialism.

Mr. REID: How about the new Land Bill?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That is going quite far enough in the way of socialism. To give free scope to socialism would make it necessary to increase the relief vote from £8,000 a year to £80,000 a year; and it is my duty to resist the ultra-philanthropic tendencies of those who would come into power by means of one man one vote. "One man one vote" is an epigram; but there is another epigram by the same author which I do not hear so often repeated, and that is, "One vote one value." When the proposition "One vote one value" is proved I shall be more prepared to listen to argument on the subject. I admit that there is a great deal to be said as to whether or not the present system is best; but to put it solely on the ground of common manhood is an argument I cannot admit at all. We have often heard that Queen street rules the colony; but if we had one man one vote the 100,000 people in and about Brisbane would much more rule the colony. The principle of one man one vote carries with it the corollary that votes must be equal. You cannot tell a man in Brisbane that he is only to have one-twentieth of a vote, whereas a man in Charters Towers is to have one vote.

Mr. DRAKE: Why?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: On the ground of common manhood you are not going to give one man less voting power than another. Of course the hon. gentleman is too intelligent to claim one man one vote on that ground; but the socialist claims it entirely on that ground. In the Wide Bay district, which I represent, there are somewhere about 1,400 electors, but in other electorates there are 2,500, so that under the present system of apportioning the electorates there would not be "one vote one value." Hon. members opposite have made certain attacks on my department in connection with the administration of the electoral law, but those attacks have been of a general nature. I have repeatedly asked hon. members to bring any specific charge of omission or commission by electoral registrars, and have intimated that I would sift them and correct anything that was wrong. I have gone into every case that has been brought under my notice, whether it affected a political friend or foe. So far as regards the last electoral revision I have had no complaints about the acts of electoral registrars which necessitated an inquiry. It is very easy under our electoral system for any one who desires to get on the roll to be enrolled; but, as hon. members know, it is only at election times that the majority of people value their votes, and then they are awakened into existence by societies mostly, by agents, and by candidates. They then wake up to their negligence, and cry out because somebody has got that which they neglected to obtain. General elections in this colony are nearly always held in the month of May. The annual revision court only sits once a year—namely, in November; and no name can be struck off the roll, except by order of the bench after due notice has been given to the persons concerned. There are many unions in the colony with secretaries in nearly every centre, and I cannot believe that they have so far neglected their opportunities that many persons entitled to be enrolled have been left off the lists, seeing that the names of all persons omitted were publicly advertised. But if the names of any persons were wrongly omitted there was ample time for them to be put on again; they had thirty days in which to do it. I admit that by a misconception on the part of some electoral officers the word "left" was put opposite a name when there had only been a change of residence. As soon as I found that out I censured all those who had made the mistake, and gave notice to others, so that where a man had merely removed from one part of an electorate to another the words "change of residence" should be inserted, with the view of giving him an opportunity of showing another qualification in the same electorate. There was no change of the law in reference to this matter, and the officers administering it should have known that they ought not to put on a notice the word "left" for change of residence. Previously there seems to have been some laxity on the part of electoral registrars in doing what they should have done, and I only put fresh energy into them, telling them that the people demanded as clear and well criticised an electoral roll as possible. I believe that justice was done as well as it possibly could be under the circumstances, though in some instances names were struck off which ought to have been retained on the roll. Still there were ample opportunities for such persons to be re-enrolled. The revision court was held in November, and application for re-enrolment could have been made in the following January. The Government postponed the general election until after April, so that the revision courts sitting in that month could deal with any applications received. I have had no complaints from any individual

or section of persons, stating that the present electoral law works any injustice to any number of people in the colony. As to the statement that many persons find it difficult to get their claims attested, we know that there are hundreds of justices in the colony, as well as hundreds of State school teachers, and that there is scarcely any scattered population where there is not a provisional school. With regard to miners, I know from my residence of twenty-five years among them that they are very jealous of their rights and privileges, and they have many opportunities for getting their names on the roll, as they are often in town, sometimes at the savings bank, and sometimes for letters, and the warden frequently visits the field. There may possibly be ten cases in the whole colony where a man is so situated that he finds it inconvenient to get registered; but every man who values the privilege has ample facilities to get enrolled. I admit that there are some points in which the existing electoral law might be amended. I think that amendments reducing the expenses of elections would be desirable, and I am pleased to say that in the last general election, which I took into my special charge, the country was saved 300 per cent., while at the same time fair remuneration was secured to every man for his services. At any rate it did not cost more than one-half of previous general elections. Formerly they cost £8,000 or £10,000; but the general election this year cost only about £3,500. There is room for a still further reduction in the cost, and it would also be well if some provision was made for preventing hon. members being blackmailed at election times. Of course hon. members on the other side do not feel this so much as hon. members on this side. With the part of the resolution which affirms that it is desirable to amend the electoral laws, I quite agree. The Government took office at a period unexampled in our history, and their time since then has been fully occupied with much more important measures to the future of this colony than the question of one man one vote. They have been trying to give every man in the colony some bread on which to live, and not a stone. One man one vote will not make us any richer, and though the Government have had under consideration the question of electoral representation, they have not been able to mature any amendment of the present laws. And now, whilst we are charged with this duty, we have this stock motion brought forward year after year. I know why it is brought forward—because it is a good catch thing with a number of electors. I have by me a little diary, of which the leader of the Opposition is the author, in which he states that on a certain day last year he moved a resolution to the same effect as this. His object is to secure credit to himself. The Secretary for Lands said that members begin electioneering the moment they come into this House, and there is nothing which catches better with numbers who do not think than this motion. The question of one man one vote appeals to their sentiments only. It does not suit the leader of the Opposition to leave this question in the hands of the Government. He must move that it is necessary this should be done. We do not find such a trifling with the time of the House of Commons. By our Standing Orders the resolution would have no effect beyond the present session unless it is acted upon. This resolution is double-barrelled. It states, in the first place, that it is necessary to amend the electoral laws; and, as there are about 200 clauses, they are not all likely to be perfect. It is perfectly wise, therefore, for hon. members to vote for that part of it. Whether it would be wise to amend the laws

now is another matter. The hon. gentleman then gives as a reason for this, that it is necessary in order to abolish plural voting—placing a special reason at the head of the general reasons. We have had this academical discussion now for two afternoons, and it is likely to continue for several more. We have had such debates taking up Thursday afternoons for about three months. Instead of a bald resolution like this, the hon. member should have introduced a Bill of one clause. This is only political fireworks. Legislation is not always introduced by the Government; and as the hon. gentleman introduced a Bill dealing with about 170 different subjects, he would have no trouble in drafting a Bill of one clause dealing with this question. But his object is not practical legislation. His object is simply to give hon. members an opportunity of going back to their constituents, and of giving the demagogues an opportunity of gulling the people as they have done in the past.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Divide!

Mr. McDONALD: I would be perfectly willing to let the question go to a division, but I know that hon. members on the other side are not going to divide. The Colonial Secretary merely tried to talk the motion out. He talked a great deal about our present system of government being the best possible system. That may be so. He also told us that it was only the educated and property-owning classes that had wisdom. I have heard an anecdote about a very prominent man, who is about as well to do and as well educated as anyone. This man, who has great wisdom, one night mistook one of those cumbersome vans which run about the streets for an omnibus. That gentleman may, for aught I know, now have a seat in Parliament. This is the stamp of man who we are told should have votes. I contend that, notwithstanding all the property these men acquire, they have not got the wisdom of the average man who is now disfranchised. As to the talk about Chinese, Japanese, and kanakas having votes, without wishing to disparage those races, I hold that, socially and morally, we cannot mix with them; and the Colonial Secretary would be one of the first to object to any of those people obtaining a seat in this House.

At 7 o'clock, the House, pursuant to Sessional Order, proceeded with Government business.

CO-OPERATIVE COMMUNITIES LAND SETTLEMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS: The Bill which I am about to submit to the House for its second reading is the outcome of the promise made to this House by the Premier; and in order to clear the way, I will refer to his statement made on the 21st June. In answer to an interrogation as to whether the Government were willing to give land, the hon. gentleman said—

“There is no country in the world that has been so liberal in the matter of land as Queensland; and there has been no Parliament prepared to be more liberal than the present Parliament. We are prepared to give land for nothing—in fact, that is practically what is done now—to any man who likes to settle on it; and I am sure the House will be with us in that. But what some people advocate is not only that we should give the land for nothing, but that we should take people by the scruff of the neck, put them on the land, provide them with houses and rations, give them a cow and calf, and everything else. I say that is not a good thing to do, because it would not make men good producers. And there are no means that I could suggest by which money could be raised for the purpose. Let any member on the other side put forward some practical scheme by which the necessary capital can be got, and the Government will give the land for nothing, and give

every facility to settle on the land. But the Government will not countenance any scheme which will have the effect of making paupers of people, and bringing them into competition with men who have earned the position they occupy by the industry they have practised for years. As long as we give the land, and give every facility for settling on the land, what more can people want?"

In answer to another interrogation as to whether the Government were willing to alter the land laws to embrace large combinations, he said—

"Most undoubtedly. The land is of no value unless people are on it, and I am perfectly prepared to encourage settlement by any combination of men, barring Chinamen, belonging to civilised nations. Speaking on behalf of the Government, I say that we will meet in the most liberal way any combination of men who come in a *bona fide* way to settle on the land. We will give them land on terms they will appreciate, and as close to the railway as they can get, that is often adjoining the railway. I do not think it is necessary for me to say any more, as the hon. member has not proposed anything himself."

When I introduced this Bill in committee the other night, the leader of the Opposition said he hoped, when the second reading was brought before the House, I should be in a position to state where the land is upon which this settlement is proposed to be made. I am not able to give the hon. gentleman the precise information which he requires; nor do I think, if I were able, it could reasonably be expected at this stage of the proceedings—before the Bill has become law, or any action has been or can be taken under it—that the Government should give that information. But I can assure the hon. gentleman that I, myself, and the Surveyor-General have been unceasing in our attempts and endeavours to scan the whole length and breadth of the colony, in all its three divisions, to find suitable land that answers the requirements referred to by the Premier in the remarks which I have read, so that when the Bill has become law, and operations are to be commenced under it, there will be no unnecessary delay in hunting about for land at that stage of the proceedings.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS: We are doing our best to find land, and to list and make notes of it, which answers the requirements referred to in the extracts from the speech I have read. Now, at the outset of my remarks I may say that objection has been made to me privately that the proceedings contemplated under the Bill will seriously come into competition with existing farmers. I think we shall be able to show that farming members need have no very great alarm on that score. One gentleman said to me to-day that he was sure the farming people who were in any way in debt or dissatisfied with their lot would leave their farms *en masse* to come within the provisions of this Bill. I do not think there need be any fear that they will, and the Bill, when it becomes an Act, may be so worked that as far as possible any danger from this source may be avoided. At the same time, the question has to be carefully considered. I have always, in the House and out of it, expressed the opinion that any system of profuse subsidies to men to put them into competition with men who have already borne the burden and heat of the day would not be a fair thing. And I trust that the manner in which the Bill is drawn, or in which the wisdom of the House may see fit to amend it, will be such that this difficulty will not need serious consideration. I say this at the outset, because I am anxious to disarm opposition on that score, and to show hon. members that I am fully aware of the difficulty and perhaps danger which may exist in this direction. When these settlements, to which I shall refer in detail, are explained to the House, I think hon. members will agree with the opinion

I hold that many of them will form the very best part of an agricultural college. It does not follow that all these settlements will be pauper settlements. What is required of an agricultural college, as I understand it, is that it should be a place where the practical operations of agriculture should be learned, and possibly if there were a little less science, and a little more practical experience in these matters, it would be better. I am therefore not without hope that in some of these settlements—and especially settlements of young men who may desire to strike out for themselves a better way of life than hanging on to Government employment or the uncertain life of a city—and I am sure any Secretary for Lands and the Agricultural Department will give such settlements every assistance—I say I am not without hope that some of these settlements may be worked up to be the best parts of an agricultural college. The question of funds will naturally suggest itself for the consideration of the House. There is now on the Estimates a sum of £8,000 in connection with the Labour Bureau. It is proposed to appropriate this for the relief of immediate and pressing distress in feeding people and giving relief in congested centres. I hope that under this Bill some of this money may be put to much better advantage than in carrying out a system which, however necessary, is very much to be deplored, and cannot do anything else but undermine the self-respect and self-reliance of a great many of our people. What is going to be the end of this congestion of people in the cities which we see all over the world at the present time—whether Providence, by pestilence, war, or some other calamity, will interfere to drive men out into the country again, remains to be seen; but at present there is growing all over the world—and it is intensified in these colonies—a disposition on the part of men to concentrate themselves in the cities, and to join the distributing population instead of the producers. This, I am happy to say, seems to be the case to a greater extent in the southern colonies than in Queensland. The difficulties which naturally suggest themselves are: What is to be done with men who have no agricultural experience, and know little or nothing of the business of agriculture? Agriculture is not always the sweet and happy thing some people represent it to be. What Virgil says about shepherds sitting on flowery banks and playing upon musical instruments may be all very well in poetry and at fancy-dress balls, but the real hard life of the farmer is a thing which is not always to be envied, and those men who are already on the land, and have done so much to make themselves comfortable homes, have a right, as I said at the outset, to consideration. In the 1st clause of the Bill, hon. members will see, provision is made for monetary assistance. Neither the House nor the public must expect that this is going to be profusely given. The figures that have been inserted in the first part of the measure are to a great extent experimental, and I may say they represent the very maximum amount which, in my judgment, ought to appear. I prefer to give this hint at the outset, so that during the passage of the Bill it will not be supposed that money is going to be profusely expended for this purpose. To a great extent its object will be to prevent men from coming into competition with those who are already on the soil, who have done the hard work, and surrounded themselves with something like comfort. The principal aim of the first part of the Bill is to enable people who really have a desire for a country life, and wish to settle on the land in communities, to do so. I am not without hope that many of those who have not got practical experience

will mix up with those who have, and that by that means they may be educated with each other and go on to prosperity and happiness. There must always be a residuum of men who are beyond help. I certainly do not flatter myself that this measure, which has cost me so much personal labour and trouble, will put an end to pauperism or discontent in the colony; but I do think it will go a long way towards removing from cities and other centres of population those who are really worth helping. What is to become of those who are not worth helping it is not for me to say. There are men who are unable, by vice and things of that kind, to help themselves, and there are others who are helpless by nature, who would be helpless anywhere. With those men the Bill does not in the slightest degree attempt to deal. It only tries to deal with those who try to help themselves, and are willing to allow themselves to be helped. There is nothing at all new in this village community system. It is really older than the Norman Conquest. In various forms it existed during the Saxon period of history, and it survives in the country where one would least expect to find it—Russia. The village life of a Russian peasant, as long as he pays his taxes and gives his quota of conscription to the army, is probably as enviable as that of any race in the world. In their village communities they manage their own affairs, they cultivate their land even without dividing fences; and until, perhaps, injudicious reforms were made before the country was fit for them, they had an amount of liberty which is incomprehensible to those who look upon Russia as a huge bureaucracy. There is, therefore, nothing at all new in the village community system. It is a very hard thing—I have never experienced it myself—to go out into the bush, and to live there far away from neighbours. Man, as long as he is what he is, will require society—some association with his fellow creatures; and one of the greatest defects in our present system has been the complete isolation of many of our settlers. It is not necessary at this time to do more than glance at the Act of 1884, which we admit has not carried out to anything like the fullest extent the expectations of its framers. That Act was the result of a combination of circumstances. The pastoral proprietors acted very injudiciously in the early days of the colony; they raised up a state of feeling against themselves which resulted in most repressive legislation, which has had a tendency to check settlement, and to impose almost impossible conditions on the *bond fide* selector. The *bond fide* selector has been compelled, in terror of losing his homestead—in terror of the bailiff and the ranger—to be continually on his premises. He has been prevented from going out and working for wages and trying to get money wherewith to improve his land. If he had been allowed to do that, within proper restrictions, he might probably have had a friend instead of an enemy in the large holder in his immediate neighbourhood. They would have worked together for the common good, as they did in the early days of New South Wales. In those days there was not the antagonism we see now. A man who went on to a station to work for wages—and comparatively small wages, too—became the ally of his employer, and in course of time took up country of his own. If he was not provided with money capital, he was provided with capital in the form of stock, and sometimes with rations. He was started on his own account, and another man took his place. I know from personal knowledge that numbers of people in New South Wales began life in that way. At the time I first became acquainted with that colony, there were many of them who are

now solid men—members, perhaps, of the Upper House of the legislature—who were just emerging from that condition. This Act of 1884, like almost all its predecessors, deprived the settler of a large portion of his capital by forcing him to make unnecessary improvements, and so crippled him. I am not prepared to say that all those restrictions were not necessary. Possibly they may have been at the time, but I think we have arrived at the conclusion now that there is a better way. In those times we were under the impression that the land was so excessively valuable that we parcelled it out as if it had been a back yard, and the result was restriction. Every Land Act was more repressive than the last, until last of all came the Act of 1884, which, but for the homestead clauses which were introduced, might have been the most repressive measure of the lot. We have now arrived at the conclusion that it is quite possible, by judicious legislation, to enable the large man and the small man to flourish side by side; and now we are going a step further in what is certainly a bold experiment—a hitherto untried experiment—of putting men on the land in communities. I need hardly say that in submitting this measure we look for the cordial help of every well-wisher of the colony. In past times Governments have been charged with putting on undue restrictions, and with a desire to keep people off the land. The desire in all the Australian colonies now is to get the people on to the land. But getting people on to the land, as has been repeatedly urged by the Premier, will be of very little use unless they grow something for which they can find a market. We have hitherto lived, in many cases, not by growing food for men, but food for horses. A great portion of our farming has been of that character; and unless we can grow something which will have a value in the markets of the world—such as sugar, or some other article of export which will always command a price, and which can be profitably grown by the small man—we shall only congest our own markets, and make things worse than they are. Therefore, in all matters of land reform and land legislation we must keep it steadily in view that produce for export must be grown. We have an enormous vacuum to fill up in our own consumption yet. There are many things we consume which we could very well grow instead of importing them. Many of them are, to a certain extent, fancy products, of which the colony only consumes a very small quantity, and, therefore, while in older countries of the world they may be important articles of export, with us they would not be so. We must endeavour to cast about wherever we can to get suitable articles which we can produce in large quantities, which are consumed amongst ourselves in large quantities, and which also have a value in the markets of the world. It is unnecessary to deal with general principles any longer. The Bill, to which I now direct attention, begins by inferentially repealing all things in the Act of 1884 which are contrary to its own provisions. It permits things to be done in spite of the Act of 1884, and hon. members will find, as we go along, that in many cases it runs counter to that Act. It is divided into four parts—"preliminary, self-governing communities, labour colonies, and general provisions." I will deal with self-governing communities in the first place. Clause 4 provides that whenever not less than thirty male persons eligible to apply for and hold land under the provisions of Part IV. of the principal Acts—grazing farms, homesteads, etc.—have associated themselves together for the purpose of co-operative land settlement, they may apply to the Minister to be recognised as a

"group" under a stated name, and upon depositing with the Minister a copy of the rules of the group, signed by every member thereof, they may be recognised by the Minister as a group. It does not say that the Minister "shall" recognise every thirty persons who come to him with a code of rules in their hands as a group; but if he is satisfied that it is all right he may recognise them as such. Each group will bear a name; one may be the "Excelsior," and another the "Good Hope," much the same as mining companies have their names, and by that name each will be distinctly known. In Bill drafting all the small addenda cannot be thought of, and it may be necessary to provide here that no one shall be a member who is not a natural-born or naturalised subject. The state of the land laws at present is this: that an alien can apply for land, and become a lessee or a licensee; but by the common law of England he can never hold land from the Crown—that is, he cannot have the freehold. Another reason is that aliens get on juries, and probably an alien may be as good a juror as a natural-born subject. But not only in the administration of the criminal law, but in that of the civil law, the presence of an alien on a jury may be a very serious matter, and have the effect of vitiating the proceedings. It is not too much to ask that if we offer these facilities to an alien, and welcome him to our country and give him all the indulgences proposed in this Bill, he should pay the very small honour to our society of becoming a member of it. I think the general sense of the House, when it goes into committee on the Bill, will be in favour of that provision. It may also be necessary to provide that no man shall be a member of two or more groups at once, otherwise he might carry on a profitable industry in dummifying himself as a member of every group in the colony. No hon. member who has not drafted an Act of Parliament can possibly imagine the difficulty of foreseeing everything; therefore I offer no apology for mentioning these matters as elements that will have to be introduced. The 5th clause deals with a very important point; it provides that no person shall be disqualified from being a member by reason of his already having received a deed of grant in fee-simple of an agricultural farm under section 74 of the Act of 1884. A large number of men in the colony have lost homesteads by misfortune. Hon. members must be aware that by the Act of 1884, when a man has taken up a holding not exceeding 160 acres at 2s. 6d. per acre, and has obtained the freehold, he is for ever incapacitated from having another. In the jargon of the Lands Office these men are called "exhausted homesteaders," and in my own district there are many excellent men who have lost their land through no fault of their own. Perhaps they got on to inferior land, or had mismanaged their land through inexperience; and it is not stretching matters very far to let them have another chance of getting homes for themselves and an abiding place in the country. It is not a very great concession, and it is one which will meet the views of a very large number of very respectable men. There may be cases where men have acquired the freehold of 160 acres at 2s. 6d. per acre, and, having converted it into a valuable estate, have sold it. I would let them try again. They must have been exceptionally fortunate to have got hold of a homestead out of which they could make such a profit. As a rule, those cases will be found very few and far between; and therefore we may stretch a point in generosity, and allow them to come into these communities. A great difficulty presented itself to my mind, in looking over the proposed legislation of other colonies, as to the manner in which these people should be incorporated. We might have said they shall

[The SECRETARY FOR LANDS.

be incorporated under the Companies Act of 1863; but that would have been to lead them to their own destruction, because a man who wants to work the Companies Act of 1863 has not only to be a man of superior education, but he had better keep a lawyer on the premises. Incorporation under that Act would be sufficient to interfere with the good working of the scheme, and introduce enormous difficulties. Neither is it possible for them to associate together in simple partnership, because in simple partnership each partner has a right to bind all the rest in business matters. It has been said by a very distinguished man that you should never take a man into partnership unless you are prepared to let him ruin you—that is, he may deal with the property in such a way as to lead to your ruin. It was suggested by the Hon. Mr. Thynne, who has taken a great interest in the question, that they should have the alternative of incorporating themselves under the Friendly Societies Act, as specially authorised societies; but, in the meantime, those who do not choose to do this may remain on the land simply as a community. And here will probably come in one of the difficulties which the Bill will have in commending itself to hon. members. If they remain as a simple community it is necessary that the Government should have somebody to look to as the head of that community, and I arrived at the conclusion that he should be the man whose name appears first on the list of members, and, if he died, the second on the list; and so on until the thirty had been exhausted, and thereafter the member who was senior in point of registration. It does not follow that this man must necessarily be a scholar; if he cannot do the work himself he will find plenty of educated men in the group who will do it for him; but he will be the recognised medium of communication between the Government and the group. The 8th section, providing for registration under the Friendly Societies Act, requires no explanation. Under the Companies Act of 1863 an association of more than twenty persons for any business partnership is illegal; therefore it became necessary to remove that obstacle. The 9th clause provides that, in spite of the Companies Acts, the association of more than twenty persons in a group for the purposes of this Act shall not be illegal; but it prohibits the registration of those persons as a company, and also their amalgamation with any existing company. The 10th section, which is very important, says, "It shall be lawful for the Governor in Council, by proclamation, to set apart an area for the purposes of any group, not exceeding a total acreage calculated at the rate of one hundred and sixty acres for each member." It does not follow in the case of good land that the whole of this acreage will be allotted; but there must be a maximum area stated. The clause goes on to say that "an excess area may be included in the proclamation in order to make provision for roads, reserves, and other matters for the expansion and the general convenience of the group." In the village settlement scheme introduced by a gentleman, who, I regret to say, is no longer a member of this House, the areas were limited to 80 acres, and provision was made for central townships. After very much consideration we arrived at the conclusion that central townships are unnecessary. They have never been a success; and if the "groups" find it necessary to have a township, they will make one out of the excess area. If not, they will do without it. It may be that in some cases they may try the experiment of nationalising the land of the township. The 11th section defines the things which the Governor shall do in his proclamation; it restricts the area, and

provides that no area shall be set apart for a period longer than twelve nor less than six years. The time for improvements under the existing Act is five years in the case of agricultural farms; but I do not think a period varying between six and twelve years is too long for the purpose of trying this experiment. I think that during that time it can be tested and made a success. The 12th section says that "within three months after the issue of a proclamation at least one-half of the members must enter upon the area and take possession thereof, and thereafter during the period the area must be continuously and *bonâ fide* occupied and improved by the group." At present entrance on the land must be made within the first six months, and we have shortened the period to three months. The condition of improvement under the Act of 1884 was left till the conclusion of the term. When the person applies for the conversion of his leasehold into a freehold he has to show that he has carried out the improvements required by the Act, and if he can do so he gets what he wants. But, in order to keep a fair check upon these communal settlements, we have divided this period into four portions, and we propose that they shall make one-fourth of the improvements in each of these four periods. The settlements will be inspected, and a warning given, if necessary, at the end of any of these periods; and if at the expiration of the next period the improvements which should have been effected are not effected the group can be removed from the area. I do not think that improvements to the value of 10s. an acre, spread over a period from six to twelve years, can be considered excessive. The 14th clause says that "the conditions of occupation and improvement shall be sufficiently performed if at all times during the period not less than one-half of the whole number of the members of the group are *bonâ fide* resident upon the area, and if the improvements required by this Act are made upon any part of the area." It is highly necessary that a portion of the settlers should be allowed to go and work, and with their earnings contribute to the common good. It is also necessary that they should not be confined as to their improvements to any particular part of the area, and, following the Co-operative Selectors Act of 1891, the improvements made upon any portion of the area may be attributed to the whole. I think that is a fair and liberal provision. If they make improvements, which are really not agricultural improvements or not such as are intended to carry out the objects the House has in view in passing this Bill, the Minister may notify them that those improvements will not be allowed, and will not be calculated in giving them the freehold. The 15th clause provides that "no member shall have any individual interest or property in the improvements made upon the area, but the same shall be vested in and be the property of the" Secretary for Lands and Agriculture. This provision does not refer to animals or movables, but only to such improvements as are fixed on the land. These will be the property of the Minister, technically, of course, and any action for damage or trespass will be brought in his name. In the 16th clause, which deals with the settlement of disputes, we have endeavoured as far as possible to do without the legal profession. We are going to try if we cannot get a community in which legal proceedings will be at a discount. These co-operators, therefore, will have to settle their disputes among themselves, except, of course, in matters of a criminal nature, and if they resort to any contentious proceedings—that is to say, if they go to law or attempt to go to law with one another—they will cease to be members of the

society. This is a bold experiment, and is proposed without the slightest disrespect to the legal profession. I do not think that in any village community for some years to come there will be very much opportunity for making costs.

Mr. GROOM: Did the Attorney-General draft that clause?

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS: No, I drafted it myself; I took it from an existing Act. The settlers may, however, resort to proceedings under the Courts of Conciliation Act of 1892; they may have their five shillings' worth of justice from the conciliation justice as often as they like; but they are prohibited from resorting to legal proceedings in the ordinary sense of the term. The 17th clause provides that when the prescribed conditions of occupation and improvement have been performed, and the then members apply to become purchasers of the area, grants in fee-simple may be made to them of the number of acres of land to which they may be entitled. In case any group has dwindled down from, say, thirty to fifteen, the co-operators who have continued during the whole period will be entitled to receive a grant of a portion of the land, and, to all intents and purposes, they will be in the same position as a homestead selector who has fulfilled the conditions and got a title; but the shares of those who have fallen out will remain Crown lands. The 18th clause is merely formal, giving the Governor in Council power to grant these lands. The 19th clause deals with the division of the area. It was necessary to devise some method by which the co-operators could divide the area among themselves, and I confess that this was a difficult problem. I can only hope that the good sense of the co-operators when they go on the land will be such that they will make a rough survey of it, and endeavour as far as possible to provide for the time when a division will take place. I think that reasonable men taking up a large area of land will observe some such precaution. Possibly they may have surveyors among them, but if not they can employ the services of a surveyor, and make a rough survey with a view to the final division. Hon. members may ask why do not the Government survey the land? The reason we do not do so is that to survey such an area of land as would be required would cost from £300 to £600.

Mr. LOVEJOY: Why not map it out?

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS: We might put up corner-posts and map it out on the plans, but that would not help the selectors in the slightest degree unless they were surveyors and were able to take the bearings. I have great hopes that, having got the boundaries, they will adopt some rough method of measurement, so as to make the final division of the area comparatively easy. It was necessary to provide for differences of opinion with regard to the division, as the barns, stables, houses, and other buildings will probably, unless care be taken at the outset, be located in difficult positions, and a division may be exceedingly troublesome in respect of these improvements. Should there be any quarrel or differences of opinion as to the division of the land, the commissioners of Crown lands for the district will be directed to go upon the area and call a meeting of the co-operators and endeavour to bring them to a reasonable conclusion. If he cannot do that, they are to appoint an assessor, and the commissioner and the assessor will choose a second assessor, and these three will hold a court for the division of the area. If the commissioner and assessor fail to appoint another assessor, then the Minister will appoint two assessors, neither of whom shall be a member of the group, and they will go on to the land

and make a division, which shall be final. There must be finality somewhere, and I think this provision will meet the case. The 23rd clause provides that no party to any proceeding shall be represented by a legal adviser, but may be represented by an agent who is not a practising barrister or solicitor, or the clerk of either, appointed under his hand, attested by the commissioner or a justice of the peace. Then the court is directed to have regard to equity and good conscience, the reasonable wishes of the parties, the existing allocations and division of the area among the members as to cultivation and fencing, the rights of access, and the situation of buildings, and so on. In fact the land is to be divided so as to consult the comfort and convenience of the parties. The 24th section empowers the court to recommend suitable reserves, and for that purpose, if necessary, reduce *pro rata* the acreage of the land allotted to the members. I have reason to hope and believe that all these things will be conducted in a reasonable way, and that by mutual accommodation and consultation there will be no trouble. The 26th section is also important. It provides that in all questions involving trespass, impounding, and fencing, the rights of the group shall be those of the lessee or licensee of an agricultural farm. We cannot go further than that. Probably the first thing they will do when they get on to the land will be to fence the whole external boundary. Then they will be in a very powerful position with regard to impounding or trespass. They will have a very considerable amount of security, and the right of impounding may be exercised upon any part of the area by every individual member, though his particular holding may not be trespassed upon.

Mr. MORGAN: Suppose it turns out that one man had given the owner of the animal permission to put the animal on the land?

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS: He would have no right to do that, because it would be a trespass upon the demesne of the Secretary for Lands. It is necessary to provide for changes in the membership, and in the 27th clause it is provided that in the event of death or certain other contingencies, which are substantially those referred to in the Act of 1884 and the amending Acts, the membership of any person affected thereby shall absolutely cease and determine, and the Minister shall thereupon, from time to time, if he receives a certificate from the secretary that any person eligible to become a member has been duly elected by the group, appoint such person, and if he does not within one month from the happening of such vacancy receive such a certificate, he may appoint some fit and proper person to such vacancy. The Minister, however, must give one month's notice to the secretary of the name of the person proposed to be appointed; and if, during that period, a protest against the appointment is signed by at least two-thirds of the members of the group, the appointment is not to be made. Nothing can be fairer than that. In the event of the decease of any member the members of the group would, if the son or heir of the deceased was an eligible person, in all probability elect him. I have sufficient faith in human nature to believe that.

Mr. FOXTON: The rules can provide for that.

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS: I have sufficient faith in their honour to believe that they would put the heir in the position that the father would have wished him to be in if he could have left the property to him. I now come to the difficult task of justifying the expenditure of money on this experiment, and this

will be purely experimental. I do not think that Parliament will either provide or the Government grant any very large sums of money for the assistance of this class of settlement; but at any rate it is sufficiently guarded by this: That out of any money appropriated by Parliament for the purpose—Parliament having the complete control of the matter—the Governor in Council may make advances to the extent mentioned, and such advances may be made in the form of money, food, tools, agricultural implements, materials for providing shelter, or in such other form as may be prescribed by the regulations, and shall be expended and used in such manner and under such superintendence as may be so prescribed. Hon. members are not to suppose that because there are thirty members in a group that £800 is to be given to them to make ducks and drakes of. That is not the scheme of the Bill. The scheme of the Bill is that it shall be expended under superintendence, and in a prescribed manner. Thirty members is to be the minimum, but we have reason to hope that the number may be even 120 or more; and, if that is the case, it might be desirable to appoint a Government instructor or inspector to see them started, and see that the money is applied in the way best suited to advance the general interests. The 29th section is a fairly satisfactory reflex of the present Government Labour Bureau. It provides that in cases of destitution certain allowances can be made to the wives and families of the men for a limited period at places away from the settlements. It would be impossible to take women and children to a settlement in its first rough condition, and it is absolutely necessary that houses or huts should be provided. When that is done, it will be time enough to take the families on to the land, and in the meantime the families must be supported. I do not suppose that all the buildings will be roofed with galvanised iron. Probably the time-honoured bark will be resorted to, under which some of our best colonists have made their fortunes, and under which some of the best men in the adjoining colonies were born. The 30th, 31st, and 32nd clauses are purely formal. They simply provide what has been provided in Bills which have been before us already this session. These advances are to be Crown debts, which shall be recovered in a certain way. The other matters are purely technical. To meet the case of groups which may desire to continue on the community principle, the 33rd section provides that if at the expiration of any period the members do not wish to subdivide the land, the secretary shall certify the fact to the Minister, who shall, if he is satisfied that all the conditions have been performed, grant a certificate, which shall have the effect of a lease, that the area has been set apart for a further period not exceeding ten years. And so they may go on from period to period, enjoying what is virtually a perpetual lease, but having these periodic rests, at which the settlers can arrive at a conclusion to enter or not upon another form of life as they choose, and subdivide or not subdivide the land as freeholds. The 34th section states that the rental demanded by the Government shall be 5 per cent. on the fair unimproved capital value of the land at the commencement of each period, and that the valuation shall be revised and may be increased by the Minister at the end of every five years except the first period. That is nothing more nor less than an adaptation of the clause in the Act of 1886 regulating the increase of the pastoral rents. The rents shall be made payable from one time, and the conditions are set forth in the 3rd section. That is in the Act of 1884 and the Amending Act of

1889. In like manner the purchasing price increases in the same proportion as the rental, which is nothing more nor less than an adaptation of the agricultural clauses of Part IV. of the Act of 1884. Payment may be made by land-orders. I think that is a fair thing. It does not mean that they can go and buy up land-orders, but the land-orders which are in the names of members of the group may be applied to the purchase of the land or the payment of rent, so that if a man has land-orders and no money, he can put his land-orders into the common stock or *vice versa*. Now, a difficulty occurred with respect to ratable land. Crown land is not exempt from rating if it is in occupation; and I think it better that for five years it should be free from local rating, and there is provision to that effect. Under clause 39, while the local authority may distrain on goods, permanent improvements will be protected against the sale or leasing powers conferred by the Local Government Act, and for the purposes of rating, the land may be deemed to be one holding and the group to be one occupier of an agricultural farm. That exhausts the whole of the co-operative settlement portion of the Bill.

Mr. GROOM: Who will make the roads for the first five years?

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS: They will have to make their own roads. No rates, no roads. However, those are questions that will have to be considered in committee. You cannot foresee everything in drafting a Bill, and if hon. members think there is a better way, I am not wedded to any particular form. I have endeavoured, as far as possible, to give the utmost liberty of self-government under the Bill. I have endeavoured to provide that all disputes shall be settled in a spirit of fairness, and I do not think it will be necessary, with this measure in force, for men to go away from our country and start settlements in places that have very few attractions, and where they will not get the protection afforded by our laws. Instead of going to places where the climate is not favourable, where the laws are not at all favourable, and where return is impossible or difficult, they will be able to take up land under this Bill under the protection of our own laws. If there is among them that spirit of comradeship that they are prepared to make such sacrifices for one another, and cast into the common stock all that they have, they can, under the protection of this Bill, and under the just administration of it, do a great deal better for themselves than by going to an unknown country. They will be able to work out this system under our own eyes, and perhaps bring about a better spirit—a better feeling of contentment than has existed for some years past. The remaining clauses of the Bill are very simple. They deal with a purely labour colony. They deal with colonies of men who are unable to help themselves, and are absolutely destitute, and for the main portions of this part of the Bill I am indebted to the Victorian Act. I have made certain modifications of it; but there is no great originality in it, and I have simply modified it in accordance with the requirements of Queensland law. The 40th clause says—

“The Governor in Council may, by proclamation, from time to time set apart and appropriate as a labour colony under this part blocks of Crown lands not exceeding ten thousand acres in extent, and may at any time revoke any such proclamation.”

The tenure under this portion of the Bill will be purely on sufferance.

“Such proclamation may state that such lands shall or shall not be liable to rating by the local authority of the district within which they are situated, and such lands shall or shall not be liable to such rating accordingly.

“Any blocks of land so set apart and appropriated shall vest in trustees when appointed as hereinafter provided, and such trustees shall, subject to the provisions of this Act, hold such land in trust for use and maintenance as a labour colony under this part.”

Then trustees may be appointed, and may be removed. The 43rd section is a variation of the Act in force in the southern colonies. The other colonies propose that there shall be a limit to the age. I do not think that a very old man or a very young man, provided he is not a child, should be excluded from these labour colonies. I have seen many old men who were able to work according to their physical capacity, who were very useful men. I am getting old myself, but I do not think very old people are altogether useless. Therefore, instead of applying a limit, as the Victorian Act applies, we have said that every man may be admitted to the colony who is unable to support himself otherwise, and he shall be entitled to—

“Such benefits as the rules of such colony may prescribe so long as he complies with the rules and discipline thereof, unless in the opinion of the trustees, he is not of good character or repute.”

The trustees will have the fullest power to winnow out all those who are objectionable, and by making inquiries they will be able to reject men who will be a trouble and worry to the community. The remainder, although their physical powers may be low and they may be steeped in poverty, may be able to do better things, and by getting them out of the cities and into a better life they may ultimately become fit to join the communities provided for in the first portion of the Bill. Section 44 deals with the power of the trustees, and the 45th section says—

“Subject to the provisions of this Act and of any regulations made thereunder, the Governor may, by warrant under his hand addressed to the Treasurer, direct him to pay to the trustees of any labour colony for the maintenance thereof, out of any moneys generally appropriated by Parliament for such purposes, such sum as the Governor in Council may think fit, not exceeding one thousand pounds, either unconditionally or to the extent of two pounds for every pound received by the trustees thereof from public or private subscription for the like purpose.”

I think £1,000 out of the £8,000 put on the Estimates for the labour bureau might be well invested in a scheme of this sort. It will probably do a great deal more good than in giving relief to the poor of this city. It may be given either unconditionally or up to the limit of £2 for every £1 subscribed by the public. The trustees are to have a bank; they are to keep accounts, their accounts are to be audited, and, with the approval of the Governor in Council, they may make rules. We have heard in recent debates of the supposed fallacy of providing for rules being made under an Act of Parliament, but I have here the rules of the labour colony in New South Wales, and they contain references to minute matters which could not be approached in an Act of Parliament. There is one provision here with respect to the cash-book of the New South Wales village settlement people, and you could not embody a thing like that in an Act of Parliament. There must be a certain liberty to make rules, and so under this Bill it is provided that the trustees of these labour colonies shall have power to make rules and power to inflict a fine not exceeding £2 for a breach of any of these rules.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: How can that be enforced?

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS: It can be enforced in the ordinary way before justices. Hon. members opposite, and particularly those on the cross-benches, will, no doubt, agree with me that discipline must be maintained; and I

do not think that if any one of them was a trustee of one of these settlements he would tolerate breaches of discipline or loafing of any description. They will agree that men who are assisted and taken up to lead a better life should justify the hopes reposed in them, and by mild yet firm discipline be made to see the necessity for obedience. These rules then, with the assistance I may get from legal members of the House, will be made effectual means for keeping up discipline. The 49th section protects the Minister against any actions brought against him or his officers for anything done, or any default committed in the carrying out of the provisions of the Bill. The 50th section provides that the Governor in Council may make certain necessary rules which, not being contrary to the provisions of the Bill, shall have the force of law, and which must be laid before Parliament; and by the 51st clause the Minister must cause to be laid on the table of both Houses a report of the doings of the association. Now, I have explained the Bill to the best of my ability. It has cost a great deal of labour and of thought. It is a bold experiment that is being tried in all the colonies. I am vain enough to think that our Bill gives more liberty of action, and is better adapted to carry out the principles we advocate than the Bills introduced in the other colonies. We have had the benefit of their experience, and have been able to compare their Bills together; and we have been enabled to take the best parts of them all, together with the best parts of our own land legislation. I shall endeavour in the passage of the Bill through committee to give hon. members every information and assistance. The only thing I would ask of them is that they should print their amendments. It is a most difficult thing, even with the best legal assistance at my right hand, to incorporate amendments handed in at the table in such a way that they shall be satisfactory and workable. Hon. members can get any amendments they wish to introduce into the Bill printed at the Government Printing Office for nothing, and when they are carefully considered by the Attorney-General and myself we shall be prepared then to bring them into the Bill in a harmonious fashion, so that the Bill may ultimately work well. I sincerely trust that the Bill may become law, and that when it becomes law it will work to advantage and be the beginning of better things. I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. POWERS: I feel to-night in a somewhat peculiar position. A short time ago we told the country that there was an Opposition here, and since then, in the case of two out of three Bills introduced by the Government, I think it is likely they will get as much, if not more, support from the Opposition as they will get from members on the other side. Many hon. members on this side of the House have always advocated that an experiment something like this should be tried to get over some of the difficulties we have to face now. The Secretary for Lands will have assistance from this side in getting this Bill into law, and in trying to make the scheme proposed as good as one as possible. The hon. gentleman should be congratulated upon introducing such a Bill, and upon the very lucid manner in which he has explained its provisions. Every hon. member, I think, understands now what the Government propose to do by the Bill, and I may say that the Secretary for Lands reminded me to-night more of the senior member for Ipswich of three years ago than of the senior member for Ipswich of the last two or three years. I am glad to hear that he still holds some radical principles, and glad to find him introducing such a Bill as this.

I think the hon. gentleman was quite right in his remarks upon village settlements, as farmers like to live where they think they can best carry out their business, and do not care to live in villages set out for them. As to people coming into the towns, it should be remembered that to a great extent they are driven into the towns by past land legislation under which large areas of agricultural land have been locked up. When good land has been thrown open at Roma, or in the Wide Bay and Burnett districts, there has always been a rush for it by persons willing to settle on it. I am glad to hear the Secretary for Lands, in reply to my interjection of the other evening, say that with the assistance of the Surveyor-General, he has been looking for good land to give those who are to engage in this experiment a good start. I am satisfied with the explanation the hon. gentleman has given on that point, because I believe that on the generous administration of the Act and the selection of good land, the success of the experiment will largely depend. No matter how good we make the Bill, the experiment will fail if good land is not selected. As to the Bill generally, I think there was only one man in the last Parliament who advocated all the principles in it, and I am sorry he is not here to have the pleasure of seeing such a Bill introduced. This Bill provides for socialistic settlement, State-aided settlement, compulsory arbitration, and a recognition of the obligation of the Government to find work for those in want, in the form of labour colonies. I am glad they have come round to the belief that something of that kind should be attempted. It was a "fad" all the last Parliament, but I believe it is a "fad" in the right direction. It is a fad started by all the other colonies; and public opinion on the subject has been so strong here and elsewhere that I believe the Government would have done wrong if they had not turned round and made some attempt to find a practical way of assisting some form of community settlement which people have been so anxious to try in this and in the other colonies. The Secretary for Lands has said it is a bold experiment, and the Government would have failed in their duty to the country if they had not made some attempt to see whether or not it can be made successful. The Secretary for Lands does not assume that the Bill is perfect, and there are some parts of it I do not like. I have some suggestions to make in connection with it, but I am going to help the hon. gentleman to get it through, and not to block it in any way. I should like the hon. gentleman to consider whether he is right in insisting upon thirty persons being necessary to form a community for the purposes of the Bill. In some places he may get 100, or forty, or fifty to work together, but he is giving extensive rights to these communities of persons, and amongst them the right to expel members, and I suggest that if the scheme is likely to be successful on a large scale it might also be successful on a smaller scale; and I hope that when the Bill gets into committee the Secretary for Lands will be prepared to consider whether the minimum number might not be reduced below thirty. The hon. gentleman did not say much about clause 6, which gives power to two-thirds of the members to expel the rest. It does not matter how much they may have paid in; all their interests absolutely cease and determine on expulsion. See what might happen if political troubles or troubles of any other sort were to arise. Surely there should be some compensation, or some provision made for the expelled members in order to prevent a possible injustice. There is great danger in the clause in its present shape, and the question as to whether it cannot be altered in such a way as to remove

that danger is worthy of consideration. Of course people must trust each other to go into a community, but this is allowing them to form a "Nancy Lee" sort of settlement. The Secretary for Lands did not mean it, perhaps, but he said that, if members were expelled, their land, being Crown land, would be the property of the Government; it would not belong to the remaining two-thirds.

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS: It would not increase their area.

Mr. POWERS: Then the Government would get the benefit of the expelled people's money, which is rather mean. I think the Government should pay something to the expelled men for the money they had put into the land. As to the area of land, if you form a community of thirty persons, with 160 acres each, that means 4,800 acres in one block. But you may not get 4,800 acres of land in one spot the whole of which is good enough for the purpose, whereas you might get a smaller community of fifteen or twenty persons, and put them on land which they could divide more equally and fairly than a larger area. As to boundaries and descriptions, I do not think they can be very well set out in the proclamation under clause 11. Clause 23 allows the Minister, apparently without calling upon the settlers to show cause, to cancel the agreement if the improvements are not effected in his opinion.

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS: They will already have had warning.

Mr. POWERS: I want to refer briefly to clause 16, which the hon. gentleman said would be the means of keeping the lawyers out of these communities, or, rather, preventing the people from going to law. That will be about as popular a clause as there is in the Bill; they will get on very well without lawyers; but I am inclined to think this principle will be extended still further if we are not going to have any legal reforms at all. This is the second measure showing that lawyers are not to be allowed in the courts. The other was the Courts of Conciliation Act. I have said before that for a poor man to go into the Supreme Court is a sort of madness; but when the District Court and the Small Debts Court are not open to him he is deprived of rights which may be of the greatest moment.

The SPEAKER: I think the hon. member is departing somewhat from the question before the House.

Mr. POWERS: What I mean is, that if these men are not to be allowed to go to law at all, the Government should go a step further and not allow lawyers in arbitration proceedings, because it will be more expensive than if they go into the Small Debts Court. With regard to division and allocation, I think the Bill provides as good a way as could be devised to prevent difficulties. The division will have to be submitted to, and it is the only way to settle a dispute amongst thirty men who could not possibly agree about it amongst themselves. The question of expulsion comes in again in clause 27. If a man dies, his representative should have some interest in the land.

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS: He may be a most unfit person.

Mr. POWERS: It might be his widow, and as she could not take up the land she ought to get something for the outlay that had been incurred during, perhaps, five or six years. Some means might be devised to do something in that direction. With regard to the secretary I do not think the hon. gentleman has gone the best way to work. It is to be the first man, then the second man, and then the third man. The first man may be a very good man the

others may turn out to be altogether unsuitable. I would suggest that the first man be the first secretary, and then afterwards let the community elect his successor. They ought not to be confined to this particular list after the first appointment has been vacated. It would be better for them to elect a secretary for the purposes of communication between the Minister and the men. So far as the labour colonies are concerned, the men who are unemployed would rather work than accept relief. They say they are anxious to work, and I believe them; and this will give them an opportunity of showing whether they are willing or not. At any rate, the country that keeps them ought to receive some benefit. As regards competition with farmers, I know that is one of the objections to the Bill; but there are many things that can be grown, like sugar, that can be exported without coming into competition with farmers now here. It does not matter how much sugar is grown, there is a world-wide market for it. The proposal is not intended to do the farmers any harm, but is intended for the benefit of the men who cannot get work under present circumstances. I hope the Government will not be too niggardly in regard to giving assistance to enable these settlements to go on, and also that they will give the land upon which these communal settlements may be tried. There has been an objection amongst many people, inside and outside the House, to doing anything of the sort; but when we see the colony in such a state as it is at present, and we have the express desire of the people to go on the land, which they cannot now do because they have no capital, the Government should be generous in their administration of the Act. I have for some time believed the experiment should be tried, and I intend to heartily support this Bill, and do nothing more than make suggestions to the Minister, because the sooner the Bill is on the statute-book, and the experiment tried, the better for the colony.

Question put.

Mr. HOOLAN: Of course, if the Government are willing to let the Bill go through quickly, we are only too glad to agree upon that point, as it has the sanction of the Labour party both inside and outside Parliament. The Secretary for Lands says it has already cost him a great deal of time and care and thought to arrange it and bring it forward in this concise manner, and I do not dispute the assertion for a moment. So far as I am able to judge, it is a liberal measure, and one well worthy of the time he has bestowed upon it. We know there is a strong feeling in the public mind for a measure of this kind. This is not brought forward presumably with the object of bringing together a number of ignorant, unintelligent people and paving the way for their settlement on the land. On the contrary, it is intended to meet the wishes and desires of a number of highly informed, highly instructed, and highly industrious people who wish to settle on the land and improve their condition, to their particular benefit and that of the colony also. It might have been elaborated a little more, but possibly its beauty is in its simplicity. We know that it is impossible to embrace all that this aims at within a single Bill; but the people who will take advantage of this small Bill will be in a great measure politicians themselves, and will very soon be able to regulate and bring to a satisfactory conclusion all that this Bill has omitted. The Secretary for Lands has done all he possibly can, no doubt, and it is the duty of others to assist him in any details in an amicable spirit to make the scheme a success from one end of the colony to the other. For myself, I intend

to do so heartily. The public, whose condition in life it aims at improving, will be of the greatest assistance; and the hon. member will find more assistance from those who settle under this Bill than from any criticism we may pass in this House. We cannot benefit by criticising, but by acting and putting it into operation immediately. I shall not criticise it. I consider it a beautiful measure; one of the most liberal and progressive land measures the colonies have ever seen. It seems strange for such a measure to emanate from the McIlwraith Government; and even if it seemed faulty, it would be unwise to offer it any criticism. It does every credit to the Secretary for Lands, and no one will begrudge him all the kudos that may fall to him for the compilation, introduction, and safe carrying through of the measure. If certain hon. members supporting the Government are disposed to offer some opposition to the provisions herein made for assisting people on the land from the public funds, I trust they will do no such thing. It is most decidedly the duty of the State to assist the working people, who build up the State by their industry, always supposing that the interests of the State are safeguarded and protected. The hon. member has sufficiently protected those interests in this measure as well as those of the people who will come under it. There is one measure in the Australian colonies that was probably more liberal, as far as the individual is concerned, and that is Sir John Robertson's Land Act of 1861 providing for selection before survey. Unfortunately the people it was designed to benefit turned round, and in a gambling spirit bartered away a very large portion of the lands of New South Wales, and created a system that is now bringing its evil results. This Bill will not leave it in the power of people to enter on the lands to improve them until they become of a certain value, and then dispose of them; and that is one of the most commendable of the many commendable features of the Bill. We are also glad to see, notwithstanding all that has been said against the efforts that have been made to bring about compulsory arbitration, that the hon. gentleman, with the sanction and assistance of his colleagues, has introduced the principle of compulsory arbitration into this Bill. He has wisely prohibited lawyers from entering these communities; and if a lawyer gets a footing in any of them, the first thing they should do is to hang that lawyer. A professional medical man is wanted in nearly every community, and up to the present, under our high order of civilisation, the legal professional man is also wanted. But you can hardly take any fifty non-professional persons within the colony without having among them sufficient medical skill to cure all their ills; and you can hardly take fifty non-professional persons without sufficient legal skill to regulate their own affairs. There is no danger of this Bill interfering with vested interests. It is not intended to encourage persons to go on the land to enter into competition with those already on the land. But why should we not encourage people to go on the land simply because of the people already on the land? You might as well say we ought not to encourage persons to go mining because there are people already engaged in mining; you might as well say that we must not encourage the raising of sheep because there are people already engaged in pastoral pursuits. I say it is the duty of the State to encourage persons to settle on the land, no matter with whom they may compete. The colony possesses a very large area and a very limited population. The only agricultural settlements we possess are the few farmers in the extreme Southern portion of the

[Mr. HOOLAN.]

colony and the few planters along the coast, who cannot successfully carry on their operations without the aid of kanaka labour, which gives rise to so much bitterness of feeling and ought to be abolished.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot discuss that question under this Bill. I must ask him to confine his remarks to the Bill before the House.

Mr. HOOLAN: I do not intend to go into the kanaka question; but I consider that this Bill will in a great measure relieve us of our difficulties in connection with black labour, because I think we shall find sufficient white labour amongst us to take up large areas that are still uncultivated, and do away with that class of labour which is so hateful to many people of this colony. In laying down the fundamental provisions of a Bill for the peace and prosperity of a large number of persons, it is as well to be careful as to its main provisions. One clause provides that the Governor in Council shall have power to appoint and to dismiss the trustees. The duties of these trustees will be very onerous, and I think they should be elected, if possible, by the communities themselves. It is very well for the Governor in Council to keep control over the lands of the colony when they are about to arrange for those lands to be taken up in large quantities and when they are prepared to advance sums of State money for their improvement; but I do not think it is wise to impose such restrictions as are here laid down with regard to trustees of co-operative settlements. There are a great many other matters which might be mentioned, but it is not necessary to delay the House by discussing them now. I have some suggestions which may or may not be useful, and I shall be glad to give them to the hon. gentleman privately, if he is willing to receive them. But the Bill seems so carefully thought out, so simple, and so broad and liberal in its provisions, that it is hardly possible to suggest anything that would further enlarge and liberalise it without doing it an injury. The public are clamouring for some such measure. Already there are some half-dozen associations in existence, with their rules and regulations, and there are many more people ready to join in co-operative settlement for their own benefit and for the benefit of the State generally. We know that a number of people, including men of intellect and education, and first-class artisans and mechanics, have put their capital together and created a fund sufficient to buy ships and sail from these shores to a foreign country, and there are many others getting ready to leave. I have no knowledge of foreign countries, but in my opinion we have lands, forests, gold and silver, soil and sunshine equal, if not superior, to anything to be found in foreign countries, and it would be better for our people to settle here than to go elsewhere. I trust the public will accept this Bill in the spirit in which it is given; and, without wishing to prophesy, I venture to say that it will be highly successful.

Mr. PLUNKETT (whose remarks were very indistinctly heard) said: It has been said that hon. members on this side are opposed to this measure; but I have heard no objections to it. The Bill is certainly creditable to the Minister, but it is more creditable to his heart than to his head. I am prepared to support it, though I really do not think it will be a success in its present form. When the last Land Act was going through, eighty acres was fixed as the maximum area for a settler, and I pointed out at the time that it was too small. In my opinion 160 acres is not by any means too much for a man to make a living on. In some places even that area is not enough, and it is no

use putting men on the land if we cannot keep them there. To make this measure a success, the area should be extended from 160 to 320 acres. I took up land on the Logan in 1864 under the Act of 1863; and a more liberal Land Act has never been introduced in this House. Under that Act we had to fence in the land within twelve months, and cultivate a certain part of it, otherwise the selection was forfeited. Afterwards, in 1870, I selected 160 acres on the Albert, where I have been ever since. There was no house on it, and we had many difficulties to encounter. I had a thorough knowledge of farming; the land was within easy distance of water carriage; it was almost treeless, and was of very good quality. I worked not eight but twelve and fourteen hours a day, and I found that, with all the help I could get, 160 acres situated so near a market was not sufficient. With all my knowledge and experience, and some capital, I found it difficult to make a living on 160 acres; and what will be the position of men taking up that area under this measure far away from a market and, possibly, not near railway carriage? A man cannot make a living by cultivation alone; he must keep cattle, pigs, and fowls. I am sure that if the Secretary for Lands can see his way to extend the area to 320 acres it will be all the better for those who take advantage of the measure, and it will be for the benefit of the colony. But if he thinks 320 acres too much, let him proclaim large reserves in these co-operative settlements, where the people can run their cattle, for cattle are necessary to successful farming. That is my own experience. In the district in which I live many of the most successful farmers were men who began with very little or no capital. They were farmers from home, or farmers' sons; they started by working for farmers, or shepherding, or anything they could get to do, and then took up land for themselves, with very little besides a stout heart, strong arms, and a determination to succeed. If the men we now wish to settle on the land go with the same determination, they will make a living for themselves and their families. With regard to the provision in clause 29 for granting 30s. a week to the wives of these members for a period of not more than six months at any place not within the area, I do not think that right. One of the greatest factors in the success of any man settling on the land is having his wife to assist him. If this money is to be granted to the wives of these men, why not give it to them on the land? I am going to support the Bill all the way through. I am very anxious that it should be a success. The Secretary for Lands has spent a lot of time and trouble on it, and his heart is in it. I am sure that every hon. member on this side is just as anxious that the growing evil of the number of unemployed should be dealt with as anyone on the other side. As to the farmers objecting to these men coming into competition with them, speaking for myself, I shall be only too pleased to see these people put in a position to make a living for themselves. Our only wish is to see everyone prosperous, and all personal feelings are set aside.

Mr. CROSS: In regard to the objection of the hon. member for Albert, to the assistance to the wives and families, the Secretary for Lands is to be complimented for making such a provision. I have had something to do with initiating experiments of this kind, and the provision is exceedingly wise, for it will enable a man to go to the settlement and make his preliminary arrangements, knowing that his wife and family are cared for in the meantime. As to the insufficiency of the area, as the areas are contiguous, the advantages of their being so

placed will overcome the smallness of each area, as they can agree amongst themselves to have one portion for farming, another for grazing, and they may have a creamery and other things. The Secretary for Lands must be congratulated on having brought in this Bill. If a reputation as a statesman can be built up in these colonies, it can be built up by anyone who makes any improvement in the land settlement of the country. The introducer of the Bill has certainly made an excellent step in that direction. Certainly it is a pleasing surprise for such a liberal Land Settlement Bill to come from the present Government; and the undoubted approval the measure has received already from this side of the House is another pleasing feature which might cause the Government to take heart and believe that we are here to further good legislation. If they would only abolish the Polynesian Labourers Act, expel the Chinese and Japanese, repeal the Naval Defence Act and the Land Grant Railway Act, they would complete a circle of surprises which the people would hail with delight. If they would then wipe off the Estimates the Defence Force vote and the salary paid to Mr. M. H. Black, and recall him—

The SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot enter into extraneous matters of that description. I must ask him to confine himself to the discussion of the Bill now before the House.

Mr. CROSS: I think that, in the matter of the appointment of a secretary, although until the preliminaries are arranged the secretary might be recognised as provided in the Bill, the Minister might after receiving an application for the creation of a group allow the members to appoint a secretary. Probably a secretary selected as provided in the Bill might be the least capable to fill the position. As to the question of the expulsion of a member, there should be some check on the members. In the communication to the Minister announcing the expulsion of anyone, the reason for such expulsion should also be stated; and if the person expelled wished to appeal, he might do so by arbitration, as laid down in clause 16. With regard to the registration of any group, it should be clearly understood, as money may have to be advanced, that the registration shall not cost anything, and that the associations shall not be expected to send in yearly and quinquennial returns. It may be that there will be more or less useless land proclaimed for the settlements, and I think such portions of land should be looked upon as unavailable and excluded from the total area. I agree with the leader of the Opposition that one portion of the area should be set apart as a central village settlement, and leave it optional with the members to make use of it or not. Inspection by the Government is a good provision, and will be a stimulus and incentive to the members of the group to keep up to their work and make it a success. In regard to settlement of disputes, I agree with what has been said that the less you allow lawyers to interfere the better. People often suffer from too much law, and the exclusion of those gentlemen who often make so much out of law will be an excellent experiment. I do not think such evil results will follow from the exclusion of lawyers as from their presence. In clause 30 I think the maximum interest should be stated not to exceed 8 per cent. Then, with regard to the settlement of the members, there is one thing the Bill does not provide for, and that is the transmission of the land. I think that the implements or tools of trade should be admitted duty free; as little expense should be placed upon those who wish to go upon the land as possible. Of course

the transmission by rail is already granted by the Government; but there must be places where part of the transmission will have to be by steamer, and I would suggest that the cost of that ought to be a debt on the group, and be payable as provided for in the Bill. I have not the slightest doubt that if the Government carry out, to the fullest extent, the hopes and expectations they have raised by this Bill they will meet with the approbation of both sides of the House and the country as well.

THE HON. G. THORN: I am very anxious that this Bill should pass. I am not opposed to it, although I have grave doubts as to its success. You may take a horse to the water, but you cannot make him drink; and you cannot make people go upon the land. In New Zealand this experiment was tried, and out of 900 people who were located on the land, under a somewhat similar measure, only 200 now remain. That does not augur well for Queensland. In New Zealand they have an excellent climate and soil in their favour, together with certain seasons. They have regular conditions which we in Queensland have not got, and for that reason I doubt the success of this scheme. A great deal depends upon where the colonies are located, and I have my doubts about the wisdom of the Agricultural Department mapping out the land for the settlements. I may tell the hon. member for Logan, Mr. Plunkett, that eighty acres of coast sugar land is worth 360 acres in the interior, and will give a far larger return. I suggested the other night to the Secretary for Lands the selection of land in a district I pointed out on Eurimbla run, a little south of Bustard Head, and I believe settlement could be made a great success in that locality. I am not afraid of this Bill affecting the farmers already on the land, but I am afraid in some districts where the farmers have mortgaged their holdings they will throw them up and clear out. That will be one of the effects of the measure, and it will depreciate the value of land in electorates such as mine. I do not think there ought to be less than thirty families in each community, as some of them are sure to withdraw. I will tell the Secretary for Lands something that he was not aware of before. I recently put a settler on the land in the East Moreton district. He selected 160 acres, and he had to pay a survey fee of £13. That seems monstrous, when you consider that formerly the fee was only £4 or £5. That is driving people from the land and preventing them taking it up. I am glad to notice that the lawyers are to be excluded when disputes are being settled, and I think that is a wise provision. Altogether I congratulate the Secretary for Lands on the admirable Bill he has produced. I will not criticise it in detail, as I want to see it passed as quickly as possible.

MR. DANIELS: I have very little to say upon this Bill, except to congratulate the Secretary for Lands upon introducing it. Clause 4 refers to "male" persons, not exceeding thirty, associating for purposes under the Bill; and I should like to see that word "male" left out altogether. Females want homes as well as males, and I do not see why we should not give them a chance. I agree with the hon. member for Albert that 160 acres of land is not sufficient. It is sufficient if it is first-class land, close to a railway, and near to a market; but, in all probability, many of these settlements will be a good bit back, where the settlers cannot depend upon sending vegetables and produce of that sort to market. They will have to depend to a great extent upon grazing and dairying, and 160 acres of land so situated is not sufficient, no matter how good it may be. I hope the Secretary for Lands will be prepared

to amend the Bill in that respect, and allow a larger area, according to the locality of the settlement and the quality of the soil. The Bill provides that payment of the purchase money or rents may be made by land-orders, and if that is to be allowed I think land-orders should be given to native-born persons, and persons who have resided for a certain time in the colony. For instance, our sons and brothers reared in the colony, and who have contributed to the revenue, are as good men when they stand in Brisbane as any new chum who has paid his passage to Queensland, and are equally entitled to a land-order. They have cost the country nothing to bring them out, and they should as well as others be provided with land-orders which they may use towards paying their share of rents or purchase money. I am going to support the second reading of the Bill with the greatest pleasure, and I hope these little matters will be amended when it gets into committee.

MR. MURRAY: I regard this Bill as purely of an experimental nature, and for that reason I should like to see some limit put upon the extent of its operations. From my knowledge of farming, which extends over a great number of years, I fear this thing is going to be a failure. I fear that the men likely to be engaged in the operations under this Bill will be without the hard practical knowledge necessary to successful farming. I suppose a code of rules will be laid down for the management of these settlements, and I heard it said that one of these rules will provide for the eight hours system of labour. If that rule is adopted, the thing must of necessity end in failure. The successful farmer must, to my mind, have no knowledge whatever of the fair duration of a day's labour. His labour is from daylight to dark. The men who have been successful as farmers here have been men of that description, and men who have never asked any assistance whatever from the State. They are men who have risen from the ranks of working men to be farmers in a small way first, and then in a large way. There is a saying that "Providence helps those who help themselves," and I believe the State should help those who help themselves; and any attempt by the State to help men who will not help themselves must end in failure. Instead of devoting so much attention to encouraging the unemployed to go upon the land, more attention should be given to the encouragement of those farmers who by their own energy and exertions have placed themselves on the land. The Secretary for Lands has admitted, in introducing this Bill, that they are struggling under unnecessary restrictions under the regulations of the Land Act, and if this Bill is to be carried out I hope he will see that these hampering restrictions are removed from the men who have already gone upon the land without State assistance, and are carrying on the industry of the country. My principal reason for rising is to propose that some limit should be put upon the operations of this Bill. From my experience of men, I am satisfied it is only self-reliant and self-denying men who will ever succeed in any capacity in life. Depend upon it, there is a large section of men who, if they think for a moment that the State will assist them, will depend upon that assistance, and will not exert themselves in any shape or form while that assistance is forthcoming. If this is to be tried, it might be confined to three groups to begin with, or even to one. Let it be proved that one is successful before we launch out in this way. If it is proved that one is likely to be attended with any degree of success, we can then extend the operations. I know

the experiment has been carried out in the Central district on the Alice River. Probably sixty or seventy of the most capable men for the purpose that could be found in Queensland started operations there at the close of the shearers' strike. They were dissatisfied with the treatment and wages they received from their previous employers, and they said, "We will start a settlement and employ our own labour on our own account." That was a laudable experiment, no doubt, but I think the country is pretty well acquainted with the result of it. I saw those men when they started, and the last time I was there their experiment was as nearly a failure as it could be, and the settlement was almost deserted.

Mr. HOOLAN: Fancy the spot they settled in!

Mr. MURRAY: I only allude to this to show how necessary it is to be careful in launching into experiments of this kind. We have had this experiment carried out under our own view, and when we have this information as to its result, why should we launch out in the way proposed in this Bill? So far as I can see there is no limit to it; we may have groups of these settlements cropping up in all directions. There are numbers of men roaming about who will certainly join in this thing when they know the Government will support them, and so long as rations can be got, and a little tobacco to smoke, with very little to do, and eight hours a day to do it in, they will be content to stick to it. I think if three such groups were started it would be sufficient to test the experiment, and in such a matter we should make haste slowly, and feel our way in an experiment of this sort. I do not think it desirable for the Government to encourage this sort of thing at all. I like to see men depend upon their own exertions for advancement in this world, and I do not like to see them encouraged to lean up against the Government and the State in matters of this kind. The only successful men we have in the country are men who have gone through laborious training. Perhaps the most prosperous man in Australia told me that in his young days he had had to work hard for 10s. a week, and he has risen to be one of the most influential and wealthy men in the colonies to-day.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: There are not the same opportunities now.

Mr. MURRAY: There are greater opportunities now than there were then. There is no such thing now as 10s. a week to a competent man; he can get his £1 a week without any trouble whatever. I do not like the Bill, and when it gets into committee I shall endeavour to put a limit upon its operation, because I feel assured that it will be a failure.

Mr. GROOM: If there is one member of the Chamber who has a right to be congratulated on this Bill, and the way it has been treated by both sides of the House, it is the hon. member for Enoggera, who, last session, had to stand here almost alone and advocate the very principles that are embodied in this measure, amid a considerable amount of ridicule and even of abuse in certain quarters. State-aided settlement was termed a fad, and a thing that ought not to be tolerated; and extracts were read from innumerable books—even Prince Bismarck was quoted—to show the utter absurdity of introducing it. The hon. member is here, silent, but he sees every principle he advocated last session introduced into a measure submitted by the Government. I, myself, share to a very large extent the opinion uttered by the hon. member who last spoke—that the results which are anticipated from this Bill will not be realised. At the same

time, I am going to support the Bill in order that the system may have a fair trial, and I am sure it will be well administered by the hon. gentleman who will have charge of it. I represent a large farming constituency. Some of the early pioneers of the district commenced on two acres of land—as much as the land-grabbers at that time would allow them to get hold of—and they are now in possession of as much as 1,500 or 2,000 acres; they have been for the last thirty years engaged in farming. I know some of the difficulties under which farmers laboured, and the hardships they had to undergo before they could make farming a success.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: And you have been legislating the whole time.

Mr. GROOM: The hon. gentleman is perfectly right, but, unfortunately, I have been in the minority.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: You have always been on the Government side, as a rule.

Mr. GROOM: On this question I have always been in a minority. I know something about the land legislation of the colony, having taken part in all the Land Acts of the colony except that of 1860. In 1868, two years after the great crisis, when men were allowed, on the subdivision of runs, to select up to 760 acres, we were told we should have all the young men with small fortunes in England coming out to the colony. The expectations raised by the Act of that year were not realised. In 1876 we repealed the Act passed in 1868, and great expectations were raised by the new measure. To a certain extent those expectations were realised,³ and I have always contended that the Land Act of 1876 was one of the best that was ever passed. It extended the area of homestead selections, and was the means of settling some of the best selectors we have in the colony. With regard to the present Bill, I should very much like to know the land that is going to be thrown open for settlement in this way. In Victoria, when Mr. Macintyre, the Secretary for Lands, introduced a Bill on the same principles as this, he was able to lay on the table of the Chamber a map showing the land suitable for village settlement in various parts of the colony, a great part of which was within reasonable distance of a railway and other settlements. I have seen some of the village settlements which have been thrown open in this colony—whether with the intention that the system should be a failure or not I do not know, but that is the result which has been brought about. Some of them are in the most inaccessible places possible, and selections are limited to forty acres. Anyone acquainted with agriculture in any part of Australia, with its various climatic conditions, must be satisfied that it is utterly impossible for a man to be a successful farmer on forty acres of land. Under this Bill it is proposed to give up to 160 acres. It will depend largely upon where it is situated whether the settlement will be a success or not. In Queensland it has been conclusively proved that it will never do for a farmer to have all his eggs in one basket. Farming must be combined with grazing to ensure success. The small sum which is proposed to be advanced under this Bill, unless the members of the communities are prepared to go out and earn wages, will be altogether inadequate for giving assistance in settling the people on the land. A house has to be built, horses, carts, and implements have to be purchased, and then the settler will have to cultivate the land and wait until the crop is realisable, if it is capable of being realised. In many instances, even the men who are on the ground now, who work from daylight till dark from Monday morning to Saturday

night, are compelled, directly their crop is ready for market, to sell it at whatever price it may fetch. There are many initial difficulties to be overcome before a Bill of this kind can be a success, as I sincerely trust it will be. But to accomplish that the land selected must be near a railway and accessible to a market. I have often said, and it will bear repetition, that whether you have communal settlement or labour colonies, farming will never be a success until some very substantial alteration is made with regard to railway freights.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I thought the Commissioners would come in.

Mr. GROOM: I do not want to say anything about the Commissioners. The hon. gentleman did me a serious injustice the other night when I was absent from the Chamber. He made a statement for which there was no foundation in fact.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: What statement was that? I don't know what you mean.

Mr. GROOM: I will not introduce the subject now. I merely mention it to the hon. gentleman. If it is desired to settle people on the land, the railways of the colony will have to be utilised, and the people given more facilities than they have now. Will those people have to pay railway fares on the carriage of their little household gods and their wives and families?

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS: That is provided for.

Mr. GROOM: In the administration of the department, so long as we know the railways are to be used in such a way we will be satisfied, because they are here and we have paid for them, and the more they are brought into use for effecting settlement the better return will be given. I do not wish to make a long speech. The hon. gentleman in charge of the Bill set forth its provisions very ably. I hope it may accomplish the desired result; but I am much afraid it will not realise the expectations formed of it. If it should, it will be a great benefit, because if people are really desirous of settling on the land this Bill gives them facilities. Like the leader of the Opposition, I would ask the Secretary for Lands not to be too niggardly in the amount of assistance to be rendered. The labour market is in a very congested state; a large number of men are out of employment, and if they are anxious to make homes for themselves let them do so. I would rather see an effort of this sort made to settle people on the land than a New Australian expedition, such as that which left Sydney a few days ago, taking away something like £25,000 of capital which might have been spent upon these settlements much more to the advantage of the colony. If the Bill will prevent emigration of that kind, it will be a step in the right direction; and the hon. gentleman is to be commended upon the spirit in which he has brought it in.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: As usual, the hon. junior member for Toowoomba has been able to argue on both sides without telling us whether he is in favour of the Bill or not. It does not matter what the question may have been, he has always said something in favour of it and also something against it, and is prepared to quote what he has said, as occasion requires. It is just the same now; but we do not want this lukewarm advocacy. He either believes in the Bill, or he does not. He should have followed the example of the Labour party, of which he is now a neophyte on probation. The party do not know as yet whether he is worthy to be accepted as a Labour man or not. They do

not go shilly-shallying and vacillating; they go straight; and why does not the hon. member do the same? But I have never known him do that. He accused me of saying something about him when he was out of the Chamber; but I am informed on the best authority that he was hiding behind a screen all the time. At any rate, as soon as it came to a division, he was in the Chamber at once—very much against his will. He had to come in because he could not help it, after winding up a long and irrelevant speech on the Financial Statement by saying that he "felt inclined" to vote for the amendment. That was after he had schemed for six months or more with no other object than to turn the Government out, or any other Government that he is not in. No member can tell whether he approves of the Bill or does not. There is a principle in the Bill, and we want to know whether he agrees with that or not. We do not want to know any details about Victoria. He never gets up without quoting New South Wales or Victoria. If New South Wales does not suit him he says circumstances there are different from those in Queensland. So they are, and then he goes to Victoria. Then he harks back and finds something in New South Wales that suits him, and he quotes that as an example we ought to follow. Can he not straightforwardly tell us whether or not he believes in the principle of settling the people on the land? Let us give them, say I, every opportunity that can be devised of acquiring land, and, if they will not accept those opportunities, show us how we can offer further facilities. We are ready to put people on the land upon any terms that can be devised. We want to get the land populated. The land of Queensland belongs to the people. It became the property of the Queen, and she handed it over to us for a very small consideration. We, as a Parliament, are the trustees of those lands, and it is our business to see that those lands are worked in such a way as to benefit the people in the highest degree. We are trying to do that by every means we can, and are seeking assistance and advice. We ought all to be actuated by the same motives, and be all desirous of settling people on the land; and this is a Bill to offer facilities which have never been offered before to effect that object. What does the hon. member mean by saying he will vote for the Bill, and then finding half a dozen objections to it? If it is some small detail that he does not like, this is not the time to mention it. What we have to do on the second reading is to assert, yea or nay, whether the principle be good or not. There is a large consensus of opinion in the House that the principle of the Bill is a good and commendable one.

Mr. HARDACRE: The hon. gentleman who has just sat down says that at any rate the Labour party are straight. I have denounced in no sparing terms those measures which I considered unjust, and I now desire to give unstinted praise to the measure now before the House. We have been apt to ask in the past, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" And I am almost as surprised as the Jews of old to find that something good has come out of Nazareth; that out of what we considered sterile soil has blossomed a flower. I consider that by passing this Bill the Secretary for Lands will enrich our statute-book. Though it may not at first have any practical effect, it will, if placed on the statute-book, be the basis of future measures of this character. I think I am not out of order in referring in connection with this Bill to one of the grandest men that ever left these shores, whom we may thank more than anyone else for this—that is, Mr. William Lane. Hon. members may laugh;

but I do think that to him more than anyone we are indebted for this measure. The fact of so many persons going away from the colony has almost shamed our legislators to doing something to wipe out the disgrace of people being forced from these shores, like the pilgrims of old, to seek a new land wherein to build up a society which will give them what they ought to be able to enjoy in our present civilisation. Notwithstanding that I agree with the principle of the Bill, I may point out one or two things which we may consider in committee. I would prefer not to see the clauses providing for the alienation of land in this Bill, because I think they will permit dummieing on a very much larger scale than we have ever seen before. With regard to those who desire to base the groups on the perpetual lease system, I think it would be better to allow them to intimate to the Minister, at the commencement of the first period, their desire to hold the land in common, and under those circumstances we might give them the further advantage of requiring from them a very much smaller value of improvements on the land. The object of requiring improvements at the rate of 10s. an acre, under the Act of 1884, was to prevent people taking up land and letting it lie idle; but this condition would not be necessary under a perpetual lease—at any rate, a smaller value of improvements would be necessary, and more likely to make the village settlement scheme a success. So far as I am concerned, I will do my best, not only to get the Bill through committee, but also to make it a practical success by starting a group of my own.

Mr. FISHER: The Secretary for Lands said this evening that Providence generally found a way of relieving the congestion of population in large cities, whether by means of a plague, a war, or by some other means. I hope this is neither of the first two, but one of the "other means." The Colonial Secretary, in speaking on another question, made the statement that if the people had an equal voice in the affairs it would be mob rule, and would be dangerous. I see that there is to be equal voting power under this Bill; hence, according to the hon. gentleman, there will be mob rule, and the settlement will come to destruction. Notwithstanding the experience of the hon. gentleman, I doubt if we can find a better way of governing any community than that by the clauses of this Bill. At the same time I think that the person who is to represent the group as secretary ought to be elected. One thing I am doubtful about is the extent to which the people who are clamouring for this measure will take advantage of its provisions. I believe there is a real desire on the part of a large number to do so, and I hope those people will be brought together for their own advantage and for the benefit of the colony. I thoroughly agree with the hon. member for Cambooya that both sexes should have an opportunity of going into these groups; and I also think that the Secretary for Lands in selecting the sites should choose suitable land as near as possible to settlement, so that every opportunity may be afforded to make the scheme a success. I give my unqualified support to the measure, as I believe it is a step in the right direction.

Mr. KERR: It was not my intention to speak on this Bill, because I am quite in accord with it, and from intelligence which I have received I know there are groups in my electorate who are only waiting for it to pass, in order to take up land. But the hon. member for Normanby has referred to the Alice River settlement in a way which renders it necessary for me to say something. As most hon. members are aware, that settlement

was formed under great disadvantages. No one will say that the soil or rainfall is good, but the hon. member for Normanby spoke of the settlement as a failure, and said the men had left it. I was at the settlement in May. The men had certainly left the original settlement, the reason being that in consequence of the drought there was no water, but the settlement is not broken up. They took five acres of land from Mr. Cronin, and when they had been there ten weeks they showed by their industry and energy that they could make it a success if they had water. There is water on Mr. Cronin's selection, that gentleman having expended £1,000 in putting down a bore, but they are labouring under another great disadvantage, in that they have to draw their manure a distance of nearly six miles. Mr. Cronin had offered to bear the expense of a level crossing over the railway, by which the distance would be shortened to one mile; but the offer was adversely reported upon by the railway officials, and the Commissioners refused to grant the crossing. That is rather hard on men who are endeavouring to show by combination that they are desirous of improving their condition by settling on the land. The hon. member for Toowong and myself interviewed the Commissioners on the subject, and they informed us that they intended visiting the spot, and would then go into the matter fully; but I learn from the proprietor of the selection that they have not been there yet. I hope the Government will take this matter into consideration, and afford those men the convenience of a level crossing, the want of which has prevented them putting in their crops this season. I will help to pass this Bill through committee, and will also assist in forming communities to take up land under it. I trust that it will not be the failure the hon. member for Normanby has endeavoured to prove it will be; but that it will be a success, and be the means of drawing many of the unemployed from the towns and settling them on the lands, because I believe we shall never have a happy, contented, and prosperous people in this colony until we have the lands settled.

Mr. DRAKE: I am glad the Secretary for Lands has included in this measure the two schemes of co-operative settlement and labour colonies, because the measure would have been incomplete without the two. The provisions in regard to labour colonies will do a great deal towards ensuring the success of the other portion of the scheme, because they will provide for those who wish to take up land, but in consequence of having no means, and for other reasons, would not be likely to make it a success. I have no doubt that groups will be formed, and then their success will depend mainly on the way in which the Bill is administered. So long as it is administered by the hon. gentleman now in charge of the Lands Department, everything that can be done will be done to make it a success. The first difficulty on a group being formed will be the framing of rules. That will be a very important matter. The framing of rules under the measure is left entirely to the groups, and I think it is wise that the men who are going to make the attempt at forming these settlements, and who will be most interested in their success or failure, should have the framing of the rules. At the same time it would be a valuable addition to the Bill if the Minister would give, in a schedule, a model set of rules.

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS: I thought of that.

Mr. DRAKE: I thought that if that were done the groups might be left to make their own rules with perfect freedom, only providing in the

Bill that these rules shall come into operation when they are not contrary to the rules that have been drafted by the groups.

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS: Like in the Companies Act.

Mr. DRAKE: Exactly like the model articles of association in the Companies Act of 1863.

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS: That could not be done—we want to give the utmost freedom. I have thought that out thoroughly.

Mr. DRAKE: I knew before I made the suggestion how difficult it is; I know that the first difficulty that will present itself to a group when formed will be the framing of rules, because they have to look a number of years ahead, and contemplate their wants and the possible contingencies that may arise. In view of the difficulty of framing a set of rules to meet all these contingencies, the idea occurred to me that the hon. gentleman, with the assistance that no doubt he will have at his command, could devise such rules.

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS: Then they would charge the Government with any failure.

Mr. DRAKE: The result of the wisdom of a great number of years has brought about the articles of association contained in the Companies Act, and I thought the same thing might be done here.

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS: I do not think any one set of rules would be applicable to all the conditions.

Mr. DRAKE: I quite agree with that, but there are certain provisions that would be made in every set of rules.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Did you ever know a company, under the Companies Act, working under its rules?

Mr. DRAKE: I believe there are some. Every company has its own articles of association, but they are not complete in themselves, and very frequently they are supplemented by the articles of association contained in the schedule to the Act. Of course I heartily support the Bill; I do not even make any suggestion that would throw any obstacle in the way of its going through.

Mr. MORGAN: I move that this debate be now adjourned.

Question, after brief discussion as to order of business, put and passed.

The resumption of the debate was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

ADJOURNMENT.

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