Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 29 SEPTEMBER 1896

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

TUESDAY, 29 SEPTEMBER, 1896.

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

QUESTION.

LEASING ISLANDS AT PORT NEWRY.

Mr. DRAKE asked the Chief Secretary—

Have any negotiations of any sort taken place with the Government with a view to leasing any of the islands at Port Newry to anyone; and, if so, what is the nature of such negotiations?

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS replied—

A special lease (No. 505) has been issued to Acheson Overend for Mausoleum Island, exclusive of three acres for a lighthouse reserve. Rabbit Island was held under occupation license by Samuel Finlay, but was forfeited and reopened to occupation license in 1889. It has not since been applied for. Application was made by R. Gray Moffatt, in December, 1894, for the opening of Rabbit Island to grazing farm selection, but the application was declined.

LAND BILL.

SECOND READING—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: In reopening this debate I think I am justified in saying that up to the present time the House has not exhibited that amount of warmth or interest in this most important question that might fairly have been expected. In olden times when a Land Bill was introduced into this House by a Minister he did not have a very happy time of it; and it might be said, in the words of old, that a Minister who introduced a Land Bill here and laboured for peace and spoke unto hon. members thereof, they made them ready to battle. The Secretary for Lands may be congratulated upon the peaceful way the introduction of his Bill has been received, and the hon. gentleman has been accorded a most attentive hearing for his very elaborate introduction. I may predicate that he will receive no unfair or hostile criticism in the consideration of the Bill. While the House has not exhibited that warmth of interest in the measure which might have been anticipated, we have had the benefit of some

four or five very able speeches from hon. members who appear to have made the land laws of the colony their study. I listened to those speeches with interest, and I have since perused them with a certain amount of instruction. The debate has given a considerable amount of information to those who choose to investigate the condition of our land laws, and desire, as members of this House, to wisely assist in new legislation on the subject. I do not want to load the Secretary for Lands with eulogy, or that my panegyric should be fulsome, but I quite endorse what has already been expressed by hon. members as to the careful study and preparation which the hon. gentleman has given to this codification of the existing law. Considering the short time he has been in office he has devoted full attention, and displayed marked ability in presenting to us in a very clear and lucid form the codification of the laws now under consideration. I was pleased to hear the hon. gentleman pay a well-deserved tribute to the hon. member for Leichhardt, Mr. Hardacre, whose work, for a private member, exhibits an amount of attention and assiduity which is most creditable to him. However we may differ in our political views upon various matters, I must say that the consolidation which the hon. gentleman presented to us last session—and which did not, in my opinion, receive the attention it deserved during the recess—exhibits a great amount of attention, assiduity, and intelligence in the investigation of the condition of the land laws, which are by no means such that "he who runs may read," and the hon. member deserves credit for his attempt to consolidate our land legislation. While I give credit to the Secretary for Lands for the introduction of this consolidation, and while I have listened to his discursive and lucid speech, yet I ask myself the question, "Is the consolidation of the land laws all that is required at the present time?" I think that is a question which we each should ask ourselves. We have had experiences of land legislation, some not very satisfactory, and some of which has not had a very beneficial effect either in the way of encouraging close settlement or aiding the Treasury; and when we again enter upon the consideration of such an important subject, I say at once that it should not solely be confined to the consolidation of existing land laws but to remedying defects and endeavouring to provide legislation which will be accepted as the basis of a land policy which the Ministry identify themselves with, which they recommend to the country, and which we, after passing, are satisfied to accept as the land policy of the country for some years to come. I am convinced that since we have been constantly amending and re-amending our land legislation, especially since 1884, it has produced an amount of confusion in the minds not only of those resident in the colony but in the minds of those who contemplate migrating from European countries; in fact, I am convinced that the confusion has been such as to erect a barrier to the progressive settlement of our lands. Therefore, although it has not been expressed by the Secretary for Lands, I infer that we may accept this Bill not only as a consolidation of the numerous land laws pre-existing but also as a deliberate reconsideration by the Government of their settled land policy under which close residential settlement and occupation may be accomplished. I trust I am not drawing an unreasonable inference from the presentation of this Bill, but I think that is the light in which the country should view this Bill. I am not one of those who, in the few remarks I am about to make, address myself to this measure either as a pastoral tenant, a conditional or unconditional selector, a grazing farmer or a homesteader. Nor do I view it in the light of any one class particularly, while at the same time I am desirous of seeing the profitable occupation of the country increased by means of this Bill. But I think there is a higher duty cast upon me—that is, to consider our land legislation in its relation to the State. We have received a magnificent endowment in the shape of our vast territorial estate—an endowment which covers a larger territorial area than the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, France, Spain, Holland, and Belgium. And I think there are few of us who reflect upon the vast extent of the territory which we have received, and the uses to which we have hitherto put it. Those of us who take any interest in the production and development of the country must ask ourselves the question—"Have we during the last thirty-five years of unprecedented prosperity and peace of the Victorian era developed and used this magnificent endowment and inheritance to the fullest and most profitable extent, either in the way of encouraging close settlement or assisting the State in its progress?" I am inclined to think that the answer to that question cannot be considered as wholly satisfactory. There may be certain causes alleged which existed in former years—namely, the antagonism of classes. Happily, I think that cause has to a large extent vanished. I believe it is now recognised by the pastoral tenants that when close settlement requires it they are prepared and ready to recede before the tide of advancing close residential settlement. I know that has been frequently alleged, but this has not been sincerely acted upon; but I think now that "the hatchet is buried" between class and class, and that it is now admitted that the position I have stated is a fair and reasonable one to take up. Therefore, from the experience of the past we may postulate two positions of primary importance. The first is the encouragement of close residential settlement so that the productive powers of the country may be more largely developed, that improvements may be effected so that the demand for labour may be continuous; and the second point is that the territorial estate ought to assist as a valuable contributory to the Treasury to relieve it from embarrassment. I do not think those two cardinal points are necessarily antagonistic. I think legislation and administration can proceed on such lines as will effect a gradual co-operation between the two—that we might steer between Scylla and Charybdis—that we may avoid the Scyllan rock of discouragement to the selector, and at the same time avoid engulphing our barque in the Charybdean vortex of financial embarrassment of the Treasury. Now, I should like to direct the attention of the Secretary for Lands particularly to what has been the result of land legislation in endeavouring to bring about the profitable occupation of our lands in the shape of agricultural production. Turning to the statistical registers, which I presume will be accepted as authoritative, we find that in 1868 our population was 107,000, and the area under crop was 39,000 acres. In 1876, a period of eight years later, population had increased to 187,000—an increase of 75 per cent.—and the area under crop had increased to 85,000 acres, or at the rate of 120 per cent. Coming down to 1884, when we had the last principal Land Bill before us, the population had increased to 309,000, or 65⅛ per cent., while the area under crop had also increased from 85,000 to 187,000 acres, at the same rate of increase—120 per cent.—as for the preceding eight years. During the next eight years, from 1884 to 1892, our population increased to 421,000, or only 35½ per cent. as compared with 75 and 65 per cent. during the two preceding periods, and the area under crop only increased from 187,000 acres to

247,000 acres, or at the rate of 30 per cent. In the three years between 1892 and 1895 our population increased, by estimate, to 460,000, or 9¾ per cent., while the area under crop increased to 285,000 acres, or at the rate of 15 per cent. It must be borne in mind that during the last eleven years included in my review we have been annually endeavouring, by legislation, to encourage settlement—giving fresh facilities, and making the land more tempting in price, and in every way attempted to induce settlement—yet the figures I have quoted show that while in each of the two first periods of eight years to which I have alluded the rate of increase in agricultural settlement—for I take crops as being the basis of agricultural settlement—was 120 per cent., during the last three years, under our liberal and extremely frequent land legislation, our agricultural development has only been 15 per cent. Is there not something wrong in connection with our land legislation when we look at such figures? They are certainly discouraging, if not appalling. Why should it be so? I cannot imagine that we have disposed of the whole of our rich agricultural lands. I am not of opinion, looking at that map, and seeing that we have only alienated 14,000,000 acres, or about 23,000 square miles, whilst we have something like 640,000 square miles left, that those 14,000,000 acres constitute the very eyes of the country, and that nothing else is left to encourage settlement. But, even taking the existing alienation, this comparatively slow increase in development——

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: What about the other colonies?

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: I am not so much concerned with the other colonies. I think we have them too frequently before us, and what is done in them. I do not dogmatise on this subject. I merely give to the House the result of my investigations, and I ask the Secretary for Lands to consider whether this Bill offers such larger inducements to close agricultural settlement as will make this country what we so often speak of, and, perhaps, concerning which we use too many platitudes as to the country being adapted to supply the whole world with food, while at the same time we are not able to supply our own local demand, and at the rate we are progressing it seems to me that we are suffering from comparative retrogression. The second view of the subject is this: What has been the result during this time financially? I refer hon. members to Table M, accompanying the Financial Statement for this year, from which it will be seen that in 1883-4 we were obtaining £2 4s. per head from our territorial estate, whilst in 1895 we were only receiving at the rate of £1 4s. 5d. per head. In connection with this matter, I shall refer to the report of the Under Secretary for Lands for this year, wherein he enumerates the difference in revenue received in 1884 from pastoral rents and from selection rents, and he adds these words—

"From these figures we see that land rents proper in eleven years have decreased £71,146 12s. 4d. per annum, and it is a moot point, which I submit for your consideration, as to the causes that have led to this decline—whether fall in value of lands, fall in value of its products, or legislation.

"Without expressing any opinion, I do beg to submit that the land rents for a colony such as Queensland, comprising as it does the finest tract of country in Australasia, should not have stood still for eleven years."

That is not the opinion of a partisan. In fact, it is the opinion of a gentleman who has conducted the department for many years, and whose views have always hitherto been supposed to lean rather to the interests of the pastoral tenants, but who certainly speaks out with no uncertain sound in this direction; and, as I shall show before I resume my seat, I think he speaks most justly and correctly, and he thinks that, even at this late date, the matter is capable of improvement. I would ask the Secretary for Lands whether under his new Bill there will be any amelioration of this embarrassment of the Treasury? I use the words "embarrassment of the Treasury," although happily that does not now exist, but there is no doubt that had this state of things been different since 1884 there would have been no occasion to issue Treasury bills, and altogether our position would have been vastly improved at the present time. I ask the hon. gentleman whether the proposed reductions in the rents of grazing farms and homesteads is likely to lead to an improvement in our territorial revenue? In the hon. gentleman's reply I shall be glad if he will direct himself to this question. In connection with such an important question as our land legislation, which is the very basis of our prosperity both now and hereafter—that prosperity which we all hope and believe will ultimately reach this country, no matter what Government may be in power; and I am sure the Secretary for Lands is equally solicitous with myself in wishing to see its early arrival—I would ask the hon. gentleman, has he considered the financial proposals of the Bill? Does it remedy the defects of the Act of 1884 so far as regards the diminished revenue? I should be very glad to hear from the Treasurer in connection with the financial position of the Bill.

The PREMIER: If we get the settlement the revenue will come too.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: I am heartily pleased to hear that expression from the Premier, because that is what I am contending for. Although I am debarred from entering into the subject of immigration at present, I wish to point out that unless there is a large revival of immigration of a class of men who will settle on the land, it is useless to expect prosperity either socially or financially for many years to come. But I shall deal with that later on. In the meantime I would say that the Act of 1884 contains some very good provisions. But it was ushered into the colony not only in times of drought but in times of comparative impoverishment. Not only did a three years' drought attend the initiation of that Act, but it was unfortunately administered in the narrowest minded way possible, because the hon. gentleman who had charge of it had a fad for leasing lands only, and did not wait until the leasing principle was more fully recognised by the country generally. It was a too abrupt conversion of the one line of policy—freehold—to that of leasehold. I fully accept my own share of the blame in connection with approving of that Act, and shall not attempt to shield myself behind any colleague, whether now alive or gone over to the great majority. While the leasing principle looked very well on paper, it certainly was introduced in such an abrupt manner that it terminated gradually the large revenue which accrued to the State under the conditions of alienation contained in the Act of 1876. Had the Act of 1876 been continued I believe the Treasury would not have suffered the embarrassment which was caused by the very abrupt new departure of the Act of 1884. At the same time, I may say in corroboration of what I have stated, that it is a fact attested by our statistics that during one whole twelve months after the Act of 1884 was introduced not one single acre of country land was alienated, although previously the Treasury had been in receipt of a certain regular amount from the alienation of country lands. I have no hesitation in averring that I always believed in the superiority of freehold to leasehold

tenure. I believe that a man who has a freehold will put more labour and hard work into it than he would into a leasehold, and he will pay more to secure his freehold indefeasible. I am a believer in Professor Hearn's aphorism, "Give a man a lease of a garden and it will speedily lapse into a wilderness; give him the freehold of a rock and he will convert it into a garden." All experience tends in that direction. At the same time there are circumstances where a leasehold is the most convenient and proper tenure, as, for instance, where persons wish to use only the grass rights of country. There, I say, it would be unwise with the limited population we at present possess to press unduly for freeholds. I am supposed to object to a land tax. I wish it to be understood why I object to a land tax. It is simply because a few men who have shown their confidence in the country have invested their accumulations in freehold estate; their freeholds form but an insignificant quota of the immense area of land belonging to the State, and it would be unjust and unfair that those men should be at present saddled, in addition to their divisional board rates, with a land tax, while the whole estate belonging to the Crown and enjoyed by pastoral tenants should be wholly exempt from taxation. If a comparatively large area of land were alienated in freehold, then I say the introduction of a land tax would not be objectionable. It is one which in all countries where land has been alienated in freehold is a wise and judicious principle of policy to be adopted. The land is there under the protection and encouragement of the State; with increased population it acquires increased value, and is therefore fairly amenable to contribute to the necessities of the State. Now, there is one feature in connection with our land settlement which is somewhat discouraging. I appeal to the experience of hon. members, and trust my remarks will receive confirmation when I say that from my own observation I do not believe that the young men of this colony are, as a rule, very ardent to enter upon land for settlement. I do not say what the cause is, though I have my own ideas on the subject; but they want chiefly to be admitted into the Government service.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Why?

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: Because there is lighter work and more pay. As has been well stated by an hon. member, the profit which can be derived from the occupation and production of the land must more or less determine the rate of wages; and we will find that, while men can get lighter work and more pay by entering into the Government service or into private employment—which unfortunately is much depressed—they will not turn their attention to the occupation of the land. I very much regret that that should be so. I am sure hon. members will share in my feelings when I say that for one letter we receive asking us to give assistance to enable a young man to get a good selection of land we receive from fifty to 100 asking us to use our influence as members of Parliament to get them into a Government department. That is a lamentable feature, and I do not see how it is to be remedied during the present generation, because, when sons see their fathers toiling and moiling on the land from earliest morning till latest eve and making very little profit, they think it better to get into a Government office where they will have an assured income and live as gentlemen for the whole of their lives. This brings me to what the Premier interjected—that we must look abroad if we want to get a proper class of people to come here and settle on our lands, and I say also we must look abroad for land settlers, and that the proper class is those who possess moderate means and have been trained up to agriculture. The yeoman population of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and Northern Europe will be the class best adapted to fill up the blanks, and to create that demand for grazing and farm homesteads which we so much desire to see, with the view not only to get the lands settled and make them profitable in themselves, but also to make this country the great producing agricultural centre of Australasia. The table which I have read shows particularly that the falling off in production has been most marked during the time when immigration has ceased, and I may say that I very much regret that the new Land Bill does not exhibit what I inferred from a speech of the Home Secretary would be introduced into it—namely, a desire to encourage agricultural settlers of the class I have mentioned to enter upon our lands by giving them land free, provided they settle on it. In my speech on immigration I pointed out to the House, and I have no intention of entering upon the subject again, that there is no clause in this Bill such as I reasonably expected would follow the statement of the Home Secretary, which was to the effect that the Government had under consideration certain provisions in their new Land Bill which would encourage men to come over sea to take up land as agricultural settlers. I understood that provision would be in the direction of giving them a free title to the land after they had been resident on it a certain number of years. I commend this to the Minister and trust that it is not yet too late to introduce that feature, and while I am talking about amendments it must be borne in mind by hon. members that in regard to marked amendments, either as regards the constitution of the Land Board, to which I will refer presently, or as to giving freeholds to agricultural settlers, I would advise them to take time by the forelock, and not allow the Bill to go into committee without an instruction to the committee to deal with these matters, otherwise some very beneficial amendments may be prevented from being considered at the committee stage. We are quite justified in trying experiments to improve the condition of things in the past, and I hope the Secretary for Lands has not set his mind firmly against considering new proposals or eliminating objectionable features which may be in this Bill.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Hear, hear!

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: Coming to the constitution of the Land Board, I would like to ask the Minister wherein has the present board failed to give satisfaction? If it has failed to give satisfaction, I will heartily co-operate with him in trying to improve the condition of things; but if it has not failed to do what is right, then where is the necessity for increasing it? Does it not seem absurd that we should appoint a legal gentleman to be a judge in matters of fact? I can quite understand a legal gentleman dealing with matters of law, but if he is to be appointed simply to decide upon questions of fact, I should think that an intelligent layman might quite as well be associated with the present members as a lawyer. I always express my opinions openly, and I must say that it seems as if some pet in the profession is to be provided for; and it must not be forgotten that five-eighths of the Cabinet are lawyers, who appear to inherit proclivities to enlarge the influence of their guild From the way in which the departments have been administered I think the country possesses laymen of no ordinary intelligence, and they have quite as much right to be represented in the government of the country as lawyers. I would therefore ask the hon. member to make it clear what is the necessity for this alteration in the constitution of the Land

Board. I may also say that I feel rather inclined to favour the views held by the hon. member for Toowoomba, in which he suggests that there should either be district land boards or that the land commissioners should be itinerant. Instead of being centralised here, there should be local boards or the commissioners should itinerate, and thus acquire local knowledge, which would greatly aid them in arriving at decisions in cases that come before them. I was very pleased to hear the interjection of the Premier, who said, during the course of the able speech delivered by the hon. member for Bulloo, that he had always advocated local land boards, and I trust the advocacy of the Premier in this direction will have some weight with his colleague the Secretary for Lands. Now we come to a very important subject. I believe the pastoral lands of the colony should be classified. I cannot see how we can arrive at an equitable adjustment of our territorial revenue until something of this kind is attempted.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: They are systematically classified.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: The system is wrong. I think they should be individually classified.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: So they are.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: Then how comes it that some of the worst runs in the colony are paying the highest rents? Even assuming that they have been classified formerly, then I say there ought to be a reclassification.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I thought you were speaking of selections—grazing farms.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON; I am talking of pastoral leases. Even if the runs were classified under the Act of 1884, which I do not think is the case, the time has arrived when they should be reclassified, because we know the conditions of the country throughout this immense territory have been changing by degrees. Runs which twenty or thirty years ago were first-class country have deteriorated by rabbits and other plagues, and what was considered worthless country sixteen or twenty years ago, through the successful penetration of the earth by bores, has been turned into watered country, and is able to pay a higher rent.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You would not penalise men for having expended that capital?

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: I am coming to that presently. At the time of re-assessment when the carrying qualities of the country are better, and the original term has expired, I see no objection to the rent being increased. I think it should be. What are the rents at the present time? There seems to be great uncertainty about this. I do not mean uncertainty in the minds of those who have considered the matter, but there is a want of information in the minds of the public generally as to what is derived from our large pastoral estate. From statistics I have been able to obtain up to 31st December, 1895, the area of grazing farms was 9,739,000 acres, and the average rent was £4 per square mile, or about 1½d. per acre.

Mr. GLASSEY: Six times what the pastoralist pays.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: I have been informed that some grazing farmers consider they pay too much, and my informant was well versed and had a thorough knowledge of the interior of the country, so that possibly he was justified in his statements. At the same time I do not think that the grazing farmers complain of the rent as a whole. In the settled pastoral districts the area is 12,000 square miles, of which 2,758 square miles, or 21 per cent., is unavailable country upon which no rent is paid. On the residue of 9,559 square miles the rent is £2 a square mile, or about ⅝d. an acre. I do not know that I can find fault with the rent paid by the pastoral tenants in the settled districts. It is low, but it is a very marked improvement upon the condition of things in the larger unsettled districts of the colony. Of those runs under the Act of 1869, and those which have been brought under the Act of 1884, whether within the schedule or otherwise, the area is 401,000 square miles. Out of that there is an area of 75,000 square miles considered as unavailable country, or 18¼ per cent. of the total area of those leases from which no rent is received; and on the net amount of available country, representing 327,000 square miles, the average rental is 19s. a square mile. There are 26,000 acres held under occupation license, with an average rental of 12s. 4⅝d. per square mile. The pastoral leases held under the Act of 1869, not within the schedule or brought under the Act of 1884, include a total area of 121,000 square miles, of which 24,700 is unavailable country, or about 20 per cent.; and on the net amount of available country, 97,000 square miles, we find the average rent to be 13s. 11½d. per mile. Although it may seem a very inopportune time for saying it, when we know that pastoral enterprise is heavily handicapped and depressed, and while we recognise that the pastoral tenants are and have been the great factor of production and settlement in this colony—and I have no wish to see them unduly disturbed—still I have no hesitation in saying that the rents paid by them in the unsettled districts of the colony are ridiculously low. My hon. friend, the hon. member for Bulloo, admitted himself, in the course of his speech, that he did not complain that the rents were too high.

Mr. LEAHY: On the average.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: Exactly. I am only quoting averages. I believe the hon. gentleman will agree with me that there are some runs in this country that could well pay double or even treble the rent which they pay at present. At the same time I will go so far with the hon. member as to admit that there are some runs in portions of the country more drought-stricken than others, and where the land cannot in consequence be so heavily stocked, that can pay no more, perhaps, than they are now paying. This is one reason, and a very strong reason to my mind, why there should be a general reclassification of the capabilities of the runs and the character of the country. This being done, there might, without oppression on the pastoral tenant, be a very large increase of rental to the Treasury. And why should there not be? Look at the pastoral rents derived in New South Wales from a territory very much less in extent than ours. Without taking into account the rents from conditional purchases or the interest accruing upon conditional selections or purchases at all, the pastoral rents paid last year in New South Wales amounted to £760,000. Our pastoral rents for the same time, but for a very much larger area of country, amounted to only £358,000. If we could get that £760,000 into the Treasury, it would relieve us from continual embarrassments, and would relieve the landless portion of the community of the constant apprehension of increasing taxes to secure the equilibrium of revenue and expenditure.

Mr. LEAHY: The rents in western New South Wales are less than ours.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: I am not in a position to contradict the hon. gentleman. I am not dealing with individual cases, as I have not the local knowledge to justify me in doing so, but I say distinctly that the average rental from our territorial estate, and notably from pastoral occupation, is not at all commensurate with the magnificent country which belongs to us. I am

sure that without undue pressure upon the pastoralists that rental might very much more nearly approach the rental derived in New South Wales from pastoral occupation. I say at once, with respect to the pastoral tenants, that it is not the State rent that has ever crushed them. The incubus in their case has been the over-capitalisation of their industry, and the fact that they have unduly —and unhappily for many of themselves—availed themselves of the liberal opportunities given them by banking institutions to increase their overdrafts. It has been the inexorable interest charge upon those overdrafts that has crushed them, and not their annual contributions to the State. We must look that fairly in the face, and I say still, even in these hard times, that with a proper reclassification of the lands, a large and a just increase in the rental from pastoral occupation could be obtained, and I trust will be received in the future. I ask again, Is this Bill going to deal with that question?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Oh, yes.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: I hope the hon. gentleman will make that plain to us. I presume he well understands that the chief tendency of my remarks is to show that the State is not deriving a suitable amount of annual revenue from pastoral occupation, and the only feature which I can see in the Bill as tending to deal with this question is that a certain area of land—which the hon. gentleman stated at 80,000 square miles—is now occupied by the pastoral lessees and called unavailable country, whatever its character may be, and for which they pay not a cent of rent at the present time; and I understand that if this Bill becomes law that land will be expected to afford some contribution to the revenue.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: This Bill only applies, so far as unavailable land is concerned, to what is outside the schedule. It cannot affect the leases within the schedule. They are contracts which must run out.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: I read the hon. gentleman's speech very carefully after he delivered it; and if that be so I cannot see the relevancy of his introduction of the area of 80,000 square miles of unavailable country, from which no immediate revenue is derived.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I merely metioned it as a fact.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: We had better confine ourselves to the additional area from which some revenue may be derived. That appears to minimise to an extent of 24,000 square miles the unavailable area held by the pastoral lessees under the Act of 1869, and who are not in any way touched by the Act of 1884. That, however, tends to still further fortify my argument. Where, under this Bill, is the additional assistance to the Treasury? I say that with the experience of 1884, and seeing what has occurred during the past eleven years, it is incumbent upon members to see that our territorial estate makes a substantial annual contribution to the Treasury. If that principle is to be introduced into the Bill it will receive my approval, and if it is wholly absent then we shall have failed in our duty, because no one who truly apprehends the condition of the colony but will agree with me that we should derive a much larger revenue than we are deriving or have derived during the past eleven years from the public estate, and which we will fail to derive so long as the Act of 1884 exists, and its administration is continued on the same lines as in the past. I therefore would commend to the attention of the hon. gentleman what has been said by those who have more local knowledge than myself, but whose contention is practically the same as my own. Their claim for a classification of the character and value of the land is a reasonable one, and I trust that the Minister will see his way to include such a scheme in this Bill. I now come to Part III., and would say first that when the Act of 1884 was passing it was distinctly understood that the rentals would be an ever-increasing quantity. Unfortunately it is not so laid down in the Act, but I, who was Treasurer at the time, distinctly assert that it was an understood thing. It was that principle of the Act of 1884 which commended itself to me, but when the Act had passed and the rents had been assessed the amount received was extremely disappointing. However, although the amounts fixed by the Land Board were extremely disappointing, yet the Act involved a reassessment of rent at subsequent periods. I unhesitatingly assert that, if it had been contemplated that the revenue derived from our pastoral estate would not have been largely increased under that Act, the £10,000,000 loan would never have been sanctioned.

Mr. LEAHY: Look at paragraph (*e*).

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: I admit that that is a very mysterious paragraph, and I am somewhat pleased to see that it is proposed to eliminate it. I have not any doubt that the legislation of 1884 received additions which the Government of the day did not wholly approve of, but allowed amendments to pass when they were insisted upon by a contentious Opposition. Bear in mind that in 1884 there was a preponderance of pastoral tenants in the House, who insisted upon having amendments introduced at their own sweet will.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Including the appeal court as it exists now.

Mr. LEAHY: That was forced on the Government by the Opposition.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That is what I say. That was the price of the Bill.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: Do I understand that those members of the Government who were in the House in 1884 insisted upon having paragraph (*e*) inserted?

Mr. LEAHY: The Premier did.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I was referring to the appeal court. It is all in *Hansard*.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: It appears then that the Premier was a supporter of this paragraph (*e*) which the hon. gentleman now seeks to eliminate. I do not disagree with him. I think that subsection (*e*) ought to have been much more definite in its expression, and not leave a loophole through which, if reassessment occurred, if there was no retrogression, at any rate there was no advance. I thoroughly approve, at any rate, of the elimination of such a clause, which is open to various interpretations.

Mr. LEAHY: You were a party to it.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: I think that the man who grows older in politics and learns nothing is to be pitied, and has no right to be in politics. We ought, when we have discovered the error of our ways, to admit it and show a good reason for a change of front. I have already referred to the unavailable area, and as it has now been minimised it is not of so much importance. I, however, certainly think the Minister should answer very fully hon. members who, like myself, really wish to see a good Bill passed. He should answer the very incisive criticism of the hon. member for Bulloo, who has referred to the present position of the pastoral tenants, and contrasted the condition of those who have already come under the Act and those who at any time can come under the Act of 1884 before this Bill becomes law, and the advantages which they possess in the length of tenure—a twenty-one years' lease against a ten or fifteen years' proposed by this Bill — and also the appeal court which is taken from them,

the compensation for improvements under the Public Works Lands Resumption Act, and subsection (*e*), with the rights or privileges which are held out to them under this Bill. There is no doubt, judging from the position and the environment of the pastoral lessees at present under the Act of 1884 and the amending Act of 1886, that they certainly possess superior advantages to anything this Bill proposes to confer upon them; therefore it may well be asked by the hon. member for Bulloo what is the inducement for them to come under this Act, and is it not rather likely that they will be driven to come under the Act of 1884 before this Bill becomes law, and so maintain those privileges which the Acts I have mentioned confer upon them? During the discussion of this Bill I have been pondering over the question as to whether it is not feasible to extend the schedule of the Act of 1884 over the whole colony. I am informed that a large amount of expenditure in connection with surveys through the division of runs would have to be incurred immediately by the Treasury, as it could not well be delayed, but it is a question for the House and Ministers to consider whether it is not advisable to make the tenure for all pastoral lessees uniform, so that there would no longer be any uncertainty with regard to their tenure, and in any future legislation they could be dealt with as a whole. Instead of substituting Part III. of this Bill for Part III. of the Act of 1884, it might be as well to re-enact the latter. With regard to improvements on resumed portions and their value to the incoming tenant, the character of improvements has altered considerably since 1884. In 1884 we did not speak so freely nor did we anticipate so hopefully that artesian water would be so extensively found in the interior as it has been since. It is a matter of congratulation that it has been so discovered, and I contend that where bores have been successful the value of the improvement is such as the State might very cheerfully recognise and pay. It transforms the whole character of the country, and when a resumption takes place on which a bore has been sunk, which has been successful in providing either artesian or other water, it is the duty of the Government to nationalise such a bore.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Hear, hear!

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: It ought not to re-leased to a private individual. The country surrounding such a bore must be benefited by its existence, and it should be kept for the use of all those in the immediate vicinity.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Should they pay anything for it?

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: I should say that the land in the vicinity of a successful bore would pay a higher rent, as it must render the land more capable of carrying stock or more likely to be availed of by those intending to prosecute agriculture. These bores are such a great feature in transforming the character of the country, that after the original constructor has derived benefit from it during the term of his lease, and has received full compensation for it, it should become public property. Whilst on this subject I am sorry that the Bill does not deal with such an important question as the reservation of the full rights of the State over natural watercourses and natural waters. That is a matter we have overlooked far too long, and we might insert some clauses by which such water rights would be reserved to the State, instead of being parted with to monopolists, to the exclusion of the general public. I now come to a feature in the Bill which is likely to provoke a considerable amount of discussion. I refer to the question of the grazing farm pre-emptives. I am not disposed to regard this proposition favourably. Perhaps it may seem inconsistent, seeing that I advocated freeholds in the earlier part of my speech, but when I reflect upon the abuses which cropped up under the pre-emptives granted to pastoral lessees and the difficulty we had when passing the Act of 1884 in cancelling that right, I am very much opposed to this reintroduction of the practice in connection with grazing farmers, who, after all, are pastoral lessees on a small scale. What I am anxious to encourage is occupation and residence. We do not wish to see the system of absentees, such as we have witnessed on the Darling Downs and in connection with other large tracts which have been alienated in former days, perpetuated in connection with grazing farms. The Secretary for Lands presses the point because he wishes to afford relief to the Treasury—that the Treasury may not be called upon to pay such a large amount for improvements. The hon. gentleman does not show that the grazing farmer is going to take up the land on which his improvements stand.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He must.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: I do not read the Bill so. Is he bound to take up that portion of his holding on which his improvements are?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It must be with the consent of the Governor in Council.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: I am referring now to the position of the grazing farmer under the Act of 1884, under which he can claim payment for his improvements at the termination of his lease in cash; and, as I have already said, when those improvements consist of bores, they might very cheerfully be paid for by the country. Other improvements are perishable, but I take it that under the Act of 1884 the grazing farmer can demand payment for them in cash. He is in a different category to the pastoral lessee, who has to wait for the value of his improvements to the incoming tenant to be determined.

Mr. LEAHY: No.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: Well, that is a moot point. I am not referring now, however, to the improvements of pastoral lessees, but I am right as to the position of the grazing farmer under the Act of 1884. I do not see that under this Bill he is bound to take his pre-emptive where his improvements exist. He may claim cash for his improvements, and exercise his pre-emptive elsewhere.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Then his pre-emptive will be refused.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: Yes, but the land he has improved may remain unoccupied; and I hold that very possibly the improvements he has effected will be a barrier to another selector taking up the land. He may not have the cash in hand to pay for those improvements.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That is my whole contention.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: The contention of the hon. gentleman, as I understood it, was to the effect that a grazing farmer would be prevented from making a claim on the Treasury, as he would accept a pre-emption in lieu of his improvements.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: And it would make him keep his own improvements.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: I do not see how you can force him to keep his improvements. You are to pay cash for them if he chooses to relinquish his holding at the expiration of his lease. The hon. member for Bulloo interjects that he believes the grazing farmer will not care a cent. for the pre-emption.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Oh, yes, he will.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: At any rate in many cases it is quite possible that a man who has effected improvements, which year by year

will deteriorate, will be very glad to get cash for his improvements, and go further afield and perhaps take up another selection or engage in some other occupation.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He only gets what the actual value is at the time.

Mr. LEAHY: The unexhausted value.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: What I would desire to see in the case of the grazing farmer whose lease has expired is that in consideration of his improvements he should have a further extended term, or, if such a tenure could be introduced, that occupation with personal residence should continue. I am, however, extremely reluctant to part with the condition of personal residence in regard to either large or small areas of country. That is the underlying principle which the Secretary for Lands and the Government, and all Governments, should have in view in connection with land legislation, and it is one which should be very carefully guarded. I certainly think that at the present time it would be undesirable to grant these pre-emptives to grazing farmers, and I therefore feel disposed to vote against the provision. With regard to agricultural farms, I question whether there will be sufficient inducement to settlers of this class in the reduction of the now existing term of fifty years to twenty years. If the land is not paid for in the twenty-first year it will be forfeited. The reduction of rent will be a further loss to the Treasury, and there are many persons who would prefer to have the land for fifty years under rental.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: There is no reduction in rent.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: No, there is no actual reduction of rent, but there is in the time of payment. For the first twenty years the selector will only pay 3d. per acre, and in the twenty-first year he has to pay the balance.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That is the minimum now; the minimum rental remains the same.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: But it is distributed over twenty years, and I question very much whether some settlers would not prefer a longer undisturbed term. I think an alternative might be offered to the agricultural farmer. Again, with regard to agricultural homesteads, if we extend the area to 640 acres in worthless country, it is very hard on the agricultural homesteader that he should be compelled to expend 10s. an acre in improvements on that land.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I am quite prepared to consider that point.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: I am glad to hear that. The agricultural homesteader might very well be allowed 320 or 640 acres, but I do not think it is desirable to encourage agricultural settlement in bad country. It is like leading people into a trap.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Agricultural farms is a mere name.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: Yes, but when you state that land is an agricultural homestead people are led to believe that it is, as the hon. member for Fassifern would say, a tit-bit, or, as the hon. member for Cambooya would say, a "plum" of small dimensions; and it is a direct inducement to agricultural settlement. We desire to see agricultural settlement by men who will make those "plums" "blossom like the rose." With reference to unconditional selections, I do not think the hon. gentleman is to be commended for reducing the price under 20s. an acre. Anyone who wants to purchase land without the condition of residence or improvement might very well pay 20s. an acre for it.

Mr. LORD: It all depends upon what sort of land i is.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: Of course; and that shows the necessity for a classification of the lands. I hold that the minimum price for lands to be taken up under unconditional selection should not be reduced below £1 an acre.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That would mean that it would be almost double the price for agricultural farms, instead of one-third more as at present.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: I see no reason why it should not be. An agricultural farmer is a man who has to perform hard work on the land, live on it, comply with very irksome conditions, and effect improvements to the extent of 10s. per acre.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Not necessarily live on it.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: At anyrate he has to put his labour on the soil and make improvements, and under those circumstances I am of opinion that 20s. per acre should be the minimum price for unconditional selections. The hon. gentleman is to be commended for introducing the 171st clause, which makes provision for the registration of mortgages in the Lands Department. Under that clause mortgages on pastoral leases can be registered, instead of an actual transfer being granted to the financial companies which make advances against them, as at present it is very inconvenient and very unfair that an absolute transfer of those properties should take place where a simple mortgage is intended to cover the advances made to the pastoral lessee, and I have no doubt that this clause will be favourably entertained. A good deal in this Bill is more properly a subject for committee debate than for discussion on the second reading, and I have no desire to enter too minutely into the Bill itself. But I would still urge upon the Government that when we are reviewing our land legislation, a subject which is of the utmost and most grave importance not only to the present but also to the future prosperity of the country, the Government ought fully to consider whether the lines on which the new Land Bill is introduced not only deals with the consolidation of existing statutes but also discloses such a carefully thought-out land policy as will be accepted by the country without material alteration for a considerable period. I sincerely trust that the future will not witness the continuous changes in our land laws that we have been accustomed to in the past—changes which are embarrassing to the Government and to the Lands Department, and specially embarrassing to the selector. It is the duty of the Government, therefore, to see that the errors of the past have been avoided, and that the encouragement of close settlement and the improvement of the Treasury returns should be strictly kept in view. I heartily join in the pious sentiment uttered by the Premier in his Financial Statement, where he says he trusts that "the legislation of the session will tend to hold out still further inducements and facilities for the occupation of our vast territory by a thriving and industrious agricultural population." So say we all. I again ask: Is this Bill a consolidation of our existing laws——

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It is a great deal more than that.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: Based upon such principles as will give the fullest effect to the liberal expression of policy by the Premier? I shall support the second reading of the Bill, and I trust that, before the motion is carried, such instructions will be given to the Committee as will warrant the initiation of amendments which have not up to the present been considered advisable by the Government. I again congratulate the Secretary for Lands on the attention he has given to the measure, and on its

having been received by the House in such a spirit as to induce him to persevere with it, and I trust that in committee the recommendations and suggestions of those members who have the fullest acquaintance with the subject will be favourably received.

Mr. KEOGH: I have listened very carefully to the speeches delivered on both sides of the House on this all-important question. For I hold that it is one of the most important questions that can come before us, and one that will either make or mar this great colony. Nor do I wish to depreciate in the slightest degree the encomiums that have been passed on the Secretary for Lands on the way the Bill has been prepared and presented to us. No doubt they are richly deserved, and if there is any *kudos* to be derived from it he is perfectly entitled to it. Into past legislation on the subject I have no desire to enter; that has been already sufficiently dealt with by hon. members who have had a hand in it, but there are some matters to which I may call attention. With regard to the gentlemen who have at various times held the position of Minister for Lands, I do not think much can be laid to their charge. They have administered the Acts as well as their lights have shown them. They did all they possibly could to settle people on the land under the Acts which are now being consolidated. It is the persons under the immediate control of the Minister who have not carried out those Acts in their entirety. And a great deal of that is due to Mr. Hume; that is the gentleman I blame. The consensus of outside opinion is that that gentleman has stopped a great deal of people from settling on the land. Coming to the Bill itself, I will first refer to the proposed Land Court, and I am decidedly of opinion that if the court is to be established as proposed it does not require another lawyer. The work could be very well looked after by the gentlemen who now occupy positions on the board. In any case, if an additional member is required, I do not see why the pay should be £1,000 a year. The work has hitherto been done fairly well by the other two, and if they get £800 a year I do not think it is very bad pay. Instead of a lawyer I would suggest the appointment of a man who really knows what the settlers want and what the lands of the colony are like. A farmer who is really in touch with the people should be the man for the position; that is, if you appoint another man. But if you are going in for that, local boards should be established for the express purpose of seeing that the Act is carried out in its entirety. In every district there are commissioners or land agents; why not appoint a body of gentlemen in each district to act with the commissioner, and let that be a local board? If anything was wrong there could always be an appeal to the central court at Brisbane. The Act could be carried out far better under such a system than by those gentlemen travelling all over the country looking at land and other things that they know nothing whatever about. Of all the speeches I have heard upon this question commend me to those delivered by the hon. member for Toowoomba and the hon. member for Bulloo. The former dwelt admirably with that part of the Bill which affects small settlers, and the other hon. member is no doubt thoroughly in touch with the pastoralists. I believe that if this House had allowed those two hon. members to go over this Bill with the Secretary for Lands they would have brought it in in a better form than it is. The hon. member for Lockyer in his speech quoted the land laws in Canada and the United States at the inception of land legislation there, and showed conclusively that when the lands of the United States were put up at a very high price, while those in Canada were much less, all the immigrants landed in the latter country in preference to going to the former. But the people of the United States saw the error they had committed, and shortly after reduced their rents to a minimum.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: In what year was that?

Mr. KEOGH: At the inception of land legislation in America. When immigrants arrived in America, the people there received them kindly and placed them on the land. Not only that, but they gave them free grants, and provided for them in other ways until they were able to look after themselves.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: In Canada?

Mr. KEOGH: In the United States. I believe they are doing the same in Canada now.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Not since 1888.

Mr. KEOGH: At all events, they have done so, and it was the means of introducing large numbers of people. I think the United States can now claim that it is the Greater Britain. I also wish to show the effect of good legislation in other colonies. Since the Act of 1895 came into operation in New South Wales, 86,455 acres of land were applied for in one day; 1,141 persons have taken up homestead selections, comprising 336,088 acres; 321 settlement leases were taken up, comprising 897,368 acres; 990 original conditional purchases, 135,905 acres; 521 additional purchases, 94,123 acres; 853 conditional leases, 397,437 acres; 109 homestead leases, 733,598 acres; and 138 improvement leases, comprising 1,702,681 acres. The original conditional purchases and homestead selections and settlement leases carry a condition of residence, and therefore the total number of residential holdings—each of which means a settler—applied for since the Act came into operation is 2,561, for an area of 2,102,959 acres. All that is within twelve months! Where there has been good legislation there have been people to take up the land, and I trust that this Bill will be made so that we will be upon the same footing as New South Wales.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We let a greater area than that in grazing farms alone.

Mr. KEOGH: Not so many people settled upon the land.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: They have three times our population.

Mr. KEOGH: Of course our population does not come up to that of a third-rate city in England. Both Sydney and Melbourne have greater populations than the whole of Queensland, but to a great extent we are to blame for that, because we have not held out sufficient inducements to settle people on the land. If we insist upon the present conditions being performed we will debar a number of our very best men from going on the land—namely, the railway men. They are not in a position to occupy the land at once, and should be compelled during the first five years to fulfil only the fencing conditions, and put up a house; but after that period they might be compelled to go on the land and occupy it. Neither would I allow any man to select more than the maximum area. I would not allow any man who already holds land from the Crown to take up more than is allowed by the Act.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He cannot do that now.

Mr. KEOGH: That is a matter of contention. I do not think any man should be allowed to pay for his land otherwise than in the annual instalments. If a man is allowed twenty years in which to pay, he should not be permitted to pay all at once. Permitting a man to pay up when he likes has been one of the greatest curses to this colony, because it has led to dummying such

as we had in the past. If they have to wait till the whole term expires, people will have to settle on the land, because nobody will be willing to take it from them. Another thing I see here is that the selector has a right to mortgage his land, and he is not given the right to sell it, though the mortgagee is given that right. That is a very arbitrary clause indeed.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Where do you find that in the Bill? It is news to me.

Mr. KEOGH: That is my reading of it, at all events.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It is not mine.

Mr. KEOGH: We are all liable to err, and I shall be glad if my interpretation of the Bill is wrong. Another matter to which I shall refer is the refuse land in the settled districts. This has been a bone of contention for a considerable time between the pastoral lessees and the *bonâ fide* settlers, because there is always some disagreement between them with regard to the impounding of cattle and one thing and another. If the settlers' cattle go on to this land, the squatter says, "That is my land; I am paying rent for it."

Mr. GLASSEY: You mean the "unavailable land"?

Mr. KEOGH: Yes. My object in bringing the matter under notice is to suggest that this land should be thrown open to selection for six, nine, or twelve months, and if it was not taken up in the meantime I would at once put it up to auction, and whatever it brought I would let it go. We would do away with the bone of contention that exists in that way.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That is a new way out of the difficulty.

Mr. KEOGH: That is the only land that I would sell by auction. I am decidedly opposed to the sale by auction of any other land. If you attempt to put these other lands up to auction instead of by ballot we will have again the same thing carried out as heretofore; the man who has most money is bound to have the land. A member of this House only the other day applied for some lands that were put up, and not only himself, but his mother, his uncle, his cousins, and his aunts also put in for it. The result was that he only got one portion of the land; other people also got some of it. But if that land had been put up by auction in place of by ballot, the man with the money would have got it; the poor man would have had no chance of getting any of it. Then the homestead selector is given three years to fence; in other cases five years is given, and the alternative of other improvements to the value of the fencing.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You are confusing the agricultural homestead with the grazing homestead.

Mr. KEOGH: In one case you allow three years and in the other five years.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: No, both are allowed three years.

Mr. KEOGH: I do not see why you should not allow the same conditions to operate in the case of the grazing farmer and homestead selector as in the case of the agricultural farmer.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That was fought out on the Act of 1884.

Mr. KEOGH: It would give the *bonâ fide* farmer an opportunity to carry out the conditions.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: There is no trouble about fencing in three years for a grazing farm.

Mr. KEOGH: The hon. member for Bulloo said there would be no necessity for outside lessees to come under this Bill; that they could come under the Act of 1884, and that they would then be much better off than they would be under this Bill. That shows that there is something radically wrong somewhere, and that this Bill does not take in the whole affair.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Do you want to make it easier for them under this Bill?

Mr. KEOGH: I should be glad to see even-handed justice given to them all. With regard to the scrub selections, I am decidedly opposed to allowing persons to take up 10,000 acres, unless it is defined where the scrub land is to be. I should be very sorry indeed to see 10,000 acres of scrub land given to anyone within forty or fifty miles of the coast line.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You will not get any of this class of scrub within forty or fifty miles of the coast line.

Mr. KEOGH: I beg the hon. gentleman's pardon; there is brigalow scrub at Rosewood, and some of our very best settlers are on that land. It would be very unadvisable that those lands should be thrown open in such very large blocks as 10,000 acres. Some of the scrub lands along the coast line are the very best sugar lands in the colony, and I am decidedly opposed to those lands being given to people in large areas for a peppercorn. The consensus of opinion outside is with me in that.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: So am I. The provision in the Bill does not apply to those scrubs at all.

Mr. KEOGH: I see that the pastoral lessee is to be allowed to depasture his cattle on the resumed portion of the run so long as it is not required for settlement, but I should like to know whether the lessee can impound cattle off that land? Then, again, will the rent for the resumed portion be on the same footing as the rent for the unresumed portion?

Mr. LEAHY: The board will fix that.

Mr. KEOGH: I understand that if the selectors' cattle go upon the resumed half of the run the squatter has the right to impound.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He always has had that right.

Mr. KEOGH: But if the squatter's cattle go upon the selector's land the selector has to prove wilful trespass.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Quite so.

Mr. KEOGH: I consider that is not fair. We ought to have even-handed justice meted out to all alike. Let there be fair legislation for all parties.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Suppose he selects upon a cattle camp?

Mr. KEOGH: He has a perfect right to do so so long as it is part of the resumed portion.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Certainly.

Mr. KEOGH: I do not understand the hon. gentleman's contention.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: No, I don't think you do.

The PREMIER: It would be fair to everyone.

Mr. KEOGH: That he can impound? I do not think the selector should have to prove wilful trespass if the pastoral lessee has not to prove it.

Mr. LEAHY: Has any difficulty occurred in the past?

Mr. KEOGH: I dare say a great deal of difficulty has occurred. I know that the small people are very much frightened that their cattle and horses will be impounded by the squatters, but I should be very sorry to think that an injustice was done to the smaller men. I do not intend to detain the House longer upon this Bill. I trust when it comes out of committee it will be in a greatly improved form, and that many provisions which now appear harsh will be amended. I give the Secretary for Lands every credit for the manner in which he has introduced the Bill. I know the preparation of such a measure must be a most laborious undertaking, and my only desire is to see a successful and

workable measure passed by the House. I should be very glad to see the Government follow in the footsteps of America and Canada, and if necessary give the land for nothing so long as people will settle upon it and use it profitably. Failing that, I should be glad to see those who are not financially in a position to settle upon the land assisted until such time as they are able to help themselves. I shall support the second reading.

Mr. STUMM: As a mining member I should like to express my satisfaction that the Ministry has seen fit to provide that in future Crown grants reservation will be made of silver as well as gold. I would like to have seen them go a step further and provide for the right of access to mine for those minerals upon payment of fair compensation to the owner for actual damage done. There is very little use in reserving the gold and silver unless you provide machinery by which authorised persons may get on to the land. Besides, it seems inconsistent that there should be these two reservations in future leases, but that as soon as the land becomes freehold there will be no right of access for mining purposes. I know this raises a very big question, but depend upon it it is a question that the Parliament of Queensland will have to settle as it has had to be settled in the adjoining colonies of New South Wales and Victoria. I contend that we should carefully guard against the creation of any new vested interests which may stand in the way of settlement, and that Parliament ought to declare not only the right of the State to the minerals, but also the right to authorise people to enter upon land and mine for them under fair conditions. I also think that mining privileges on reserves and commons should be increased. In my district difficulty has been experienced by men who were anxious to take up a claim in a reserve for the purpose of mining for silver. When, therefore, we are undertaking the general revision of the land laws we ought to remedy these defects. As to the other new features in the Bill, I do not wish to go over ground which has already been traversed by speakers probably better acquainted with the subject than myself; but there is one feature upon which I must congratulate the Secretary for Lands; that is, that he has seen fit to restore under more liberal conditions than ever the form of selection known as agricultural homesteads. These holdings in the past have been most popular, and given us many of our best settlers. I believe that if that part of the Bill passes in the form in which it has been drafted it will render these holdings still more popular. The Bill will enable a man to select from 160 acres up to 640 acres, according to the quality of the land, and all that he needs to do to get his deed is to pay 3d. an acre per annum for ten years and spend 10s. an acre on improvements. He is also allowed the further right of selecting a grazing farm of 640 acres within fifteen miles of his agricultural homestead, and residence on the homestead will do for both holdings. These are very liberal provisions, but they are capable of being improved upon. I hold, for instance, with the hon. member for Lockyer and other hon. members, that it is unwise to insist on such a big expense as £320 being incurred in improvements upon a homestead of 640 acres. If a man can make a living by a smaller outlay than that the State should be satisfied. The main thing, after all, is to get men to go on to the land and found homes for themselves and their families. I also approve of the suggestion to lower the age of selection to sixteen years—as is the law now, I think, in New South Wales—because I believe that many a boy in Queensland is fit at the age of sixteen, under the guidance of his parents to begin to form a home for himself. A suggestion that is worthy of the most serious consideration has been made during the course of this debate—that the father of a family should be given the privilege of taking up land for his children, and making provision for settling them upon the land as they attain the age of manhood. As the law now stands, the father of a family is debarred from doing this, and it often happens that when the sons grow up to manhood all the good land within miles of the parental home has been selected, and if they want to settle on the soil and form homes for themselves they have to go out into the wilderness and start afresh. Under those conditions it is not to be wondered at that land settlement and cultivation is not so popular with the sons of selectors as it ought to be. I see no objection to allowing the father to take up homesteads for his children on condition that when they reach the age of selection they commence to fulfil the residential and improvement conditions. The scheme has this advantage—that it may prevent the dispersion of the family which takes place under our present system, and which more than anything else makes settlement on the land wanting in attractiveness to the native-born of this colony. Coming back, however, to the main point, I hold that the provisions with regard to the agricultural homesteads are a distinct advance as regards liberality upon anything we have ever had, although there might be some slight amendments as regards the amount to be spent on improvements on the larger areas of inferior land. Of course, we must have wise and liberal administration, because without that you can wreck the finest land legislation that the human mind can devise; but if we have that, I believe that this measure may be made to play a most important part in promoting the very kind of settlement we all agree it is desirable to encourage. I only wish the Secretary for Mines could be induced to treat the goldfields homesteaders with equal liberality. They have to pay 1s. per acre for ever for inferior land that the ordinary settler in an agricultural district would not fence in at a gift, and they are hampered with restrictions which I am satisfied if any attempt were made to apply them to any other class of selectors would provoke such an uproar that they would have to be removed.

Mr. GLASSEY: It has been said by several speakers that this Bill deals with a matter of great importance and I agree with them that no subject of greater importance than land legislation could engage the attention of the legislature. The hon. member for Bulimba said that so far very little warmth had been infused into the debate. I listened with great attention to the admirable speech delivered by the hon. member, and I must confess that, with the exception of the hon. member and the hon. member for Bulloo, very little warmth has been infused into the debate. The Bill is a very elaborate one, and it must have cost the Secretary for Lands a great deal of time much anxiety, and certainly a vast amount of labour in compiling it. Sharing the feeling of other hon. members with reference to the patience and time which the hon. gentleman took, and the very lucid manner in which he presented the measure to us, I must say that he deserves the commendation and thanks of every hon. member on either side of the House. Dealing with the question of land legislation, the Premier in his manifesto, issued in the month of February last, declared that the question was one of great urgency, and yet, notwithstanding that, it was the 15th of September before we were called upon to discuss the second reading of this Bill. Considering the importance of the consolidation of our land laws, and the importance of some of the features embodied in this

Bill, the Ministry, and especially the Premier, are not free from blame in not having presented this matter to the House for discussion and consideration at an earlier period of the session. In that manifesto the hon. gentleman said—

"The simplification of our land laws is in my opinion a matter of extreme urgency. I am disposed to regard the introduction of a measure for this purpose as one of the first duties of the new Parliament, and would wish to see it afford the widest facilities for settlement, without needless injury to existing institutions."

I shall treat very fully this question of settlement. I share to a large extent the sentiments of the hon. member for Bulimba that so far as this Bill goes it certainly only in a very small way meets the class who are concerned in close residential settlement; and I shall endeavour to show that, unless some new features are introduced into this measure which have not yet found a place in previous Land Acts, it will fall far short of bringing about that close settlement which is desired. When the hon. member for Bulimba was addressing the House the Secretary for Public Instruction interjected, "What is the amount of settlement in this colony as compared with the settlement in other colonies?" I shall endeavour to show that settlement in this colony is out of all proportion to our vast territory, and out of all proportion to the close settlement by agricultural communities in some of the other colonies. The hon. member for Bulimba in dealing with this question quoted statistics of the area under crops, but he took a later date than I have done. I have the figures of the areas under crops—not under cultivation merely—which deal with 1895 and previous years. The area under crop in 1895 was only 274,982 acres, and of that 71,818 acres were under sugar. I need not remind hon. members that the bulk of those sugar lands are tilled and cultivated by coloured alien races, and not by white people as is the case in most of the other colonies, which makes our position, so far as close residential settlement is concerned, infinitely worse as compared with the other colonies. The present Bill affords improved facilities for acquiring freeholds, but it does not make sufficient provision for the close settlement to which I have referred—settlement which must of necessity improve the country generally much more rapidly than any inducements that may be offered to persons who may have money at their disposal to take up lands with the view of holding them in reserve until times of greater prosperity, when they may be able to put those lands on the market and realise in some instances a handsome profit. The former is a much more beneficial system of settlement than the latter can possibly be. The Secretary for Lands stated, and stated truly, that since 1860 no less than sixty Land Acts have been placed on the statute-book, and that twenty-three are now administered by the Lands Department. According to the report of the Registrar-General, as far as close settlement and arable land under crop is concerned, there have been about 333 fresh settlers every year, but last year there were only 330. I am quite sure that I express the sentiments of a vast number of persons when I say that that is by no means satisfactory, and I had hoped when I saw the paragraph in the Premier's manifesto to which I have alluded that a Bill would have been submitted to us early in the session which would have embraced provisions for the encouragement of close settlement. But from that point of view the measure is very disappointing, and I trust that the Minister will be prepared, if the measure gets into committee and comes out of it, which I very much doubt, to accept some amendments, which will be submitted by members on both sides of the House with the view of inducing close settlement. I was saying, when the House adjourned for tea, that no fewer than sixty Land Acts had passed in the colony, and that the whole of those Acts have only resulted in placing 12,000 farmers on the soil, or an average of only 333 settlers for each year, and that according to the Registrar-General's report for 1895, only 330 farmers settled on the land last year. I also stated that, according to the latest returns I had been able to procure, out of this 272,982 acres, 71,816 acres, or the bulk of it——

The SPEAKER: I would ask the hon. member not to repeat all that he said before the adjournment.

Mr. GLASSEY: The bulk of it was cultivated by coloured alien races. I admit that during the last three or four years considerable settlement by white settlers has taken place on the sugar lands, and I sincerely hope that that class of settlement will go on, and that ultimately those alien races will not find a place on the soil of this country. Of the particular class of settlement of which I am speaking there has been very little during the last six years. In 1889 there were 247,000 acres under crop, where the population of the colony was 422,776 persons. At the end of 1895, with a population of 460,000, or an increase of 38,000, the increase has by no means kept up with the growth of the population. During the eleven years the Act of 1884 has been in operation, 12,533,815 acres have been selected, and yet there has been only a slight increase of land put under crop. That must be unsatisfactory to everybody, and I had hoped that the Bill would have ensured a large increase in the class of settlement I have named. That, I regret to say, is not the case. And here I will say in passing that I do not wish to offer unfriendly criticism to the Bill. I want to assure the hon. gentleman that I by no means offer any unfriendly criticism to the measure except, of course, where I think unfriendly criticism is needed. I assure him also that it is not on personal grounds that I offer any hostility to the Bill. If the measure gets into committee I shall endeavour, with others, to make it not only workable but to bring about the reforms we all seek, particularly in the direction I am indicating—the settlement of a large number of persons on the soil. I have mentioned the large area which has been selected under the Act of 1884. I will now refer to the large area of town and suburban land which has been alienated in fee-simple during the last ten years, showing, as I think it does, that if you offer cheap land for sale in fee-simple, it in no way guarantees that you are going to have this particular class of settlement. During the ten years named 4,500,000 of acres of these lands have been alienated, and yet we have only a slight increase in the amount of land under cultivation. Then what do we find, so far as alienation is concerned, since the foundation of the colony? Some hon. member says, "Offer the fee-simple at a very low figure, and it will induce settlement." So far, our experience has been that it has not resulted in close settlement, although the bulk of that land was alienated too cheaply. Since the foundation of the colony the aggregate area of land that has been alienated is 12,367,000 acres, and that has not resulted in the settlement of the class of people we desire—a class of yeomanry. In fact, it has rather prevented it, and it ought to be a warning to hon. members not to offer still further inducements for the alienation of land, but to endeavour to retain the best portions of the soil, more particularly in the accessible parts of the colony, where men with their families can carve out homes for themselves and for those who will succeed them. While the hon. member for Bulimba was speaking the Secretary for Public

Instruction made an interjection with regard to the small area of land under cultivation in this colony as compared with other colonies. In reference to that, I find that in New South Wales there are 1,325,964 acres under crop, or nearly one acre per head of the population; in Victoria there are 2,500,000 acres under crop, or nearly two acres per head; in Queensland there are 274,982 acres under crop, or about half an acre per head of the population—the lowest of all. I wrote to Mr. Coghlan in the early part of the year, and have obtained his latest figures.

Mr. LEAHY: These figures are three years old.

Mr. GLASSEY: He supplied me with statistics in the early part of the year, and they have not yet found a place in his work. In South Australia there are 1,995,402 acres under crop, or five and a-half acres per head.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Are you including the Northern Territory?

Mr. GLASSEY: I am not. I am taking population, not area. In Tasmania there are 214,857 acres under crop, or nearly one and a-half acres per head. In New Zealand there are 1,246,143 acres under crop, or nearly two acres per head. So far as I can find from the latest data I have been able to procure, there are 81,325 acres under crop in West Australia, and the population is 82,072, which gives nearly one acre per head. This is the youngest colony of the group, and notwithstanding the great inducements held out to the people of that colony to search for gold instead of tilling the soil, we have the fact that it has nearly twice the area per head under cultivation that we have. I think that is a sufficient answer to the Secretary for Public Instruction.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Does this include grass crops?

Mr. GLASSEY: No, cereals and tropical crops. The hon. member for Rosewood alluded to the efforts being made by New South Wales to settle people on the land by legislation, which efforts have been attended with some degree of success. This is taken from the *Sydney Morning Herald*—

"Mr. Carruthers ventured a year ago to undertake to settle 2,000 new settlers on the soil within twelve months, but the results show that he has succeeded in implanting no less than 2,516 families in new holdings as residential selectors. The average number of permanent selectors since 1861 has been about 800 per annum, although the selections were much more numerous; but unfortunately selection in bygone days was hardly synonymous with settlement."

The same thing will apply here.

"To-day, however, there is perpetual residence upon all homesteads, twenty-eight years' residence upon settlement leases, ten years' residence upon conditional purchases, and five years upon additional conditional purchases. With this great increase in settlement, it is noteworthy that auction sales for the year, 18,065 acres, were the lowest on record. The greatest rush for land that has taken place in New South Wales has been under the new Act."

I think that ought to stimulate the Government to emulate, as far as possible, what has been done in New South Wales, and if the efforts put forth in that colony have been so successful, there is no reason why a similar state of things should not be brought about here. Let us see what has been done in New Zealand in consequence of the efforts put forth by a progressive Government, which I am sorry to say we have not got here. The Minister for Lands of the New Zealand progressive Government, addressing a number of people a little time ago, said this—

"They had from the time of taking office put 10,902 settlers on 2,402,000 acres of land; and during the short period the Lands for Settlement Act had been in force they had purchased twenty estates, which have already been disposed of, and which were now yielding more than 5 per cent."

That is fairly satisfactory, and I am quite sure the present party in power in this country cannot show a similar set of favourable circumstances.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: What is the 5 per cent. on?

Mr. GLASSEY: It is the return on the money expended in the purchase of those lands; the land purchased from the large holders has now been disposed of to settlers, with the result that the Crown is getting a return of 5 per cent.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION What about the Darling Downs purchases?

Mr. GLASSEY: I do not think there has been a like return from them, though I hope there will be. The New Zealand Minister goes on to say—

"Other seven estates purchased had not yet been paid for. Between the village homesteads system and the land improvement farm system there were 2,000 working men put upon the land with their families, and, taking the average of the families as three, it would be seen that 6,000 people had been put upon the land"—

in addition to those settled on the estates purchased. That shows how matters are progressing in countries where the Ministry of the day desires to do something for the people whose interests they are supposed to serve and represent. I hope that the purchases made in this colony will turn out as satisfactorily as they have done in New Zealand, but if we are to judge from Professor Shelton's reports they are not likely to return 5 per cent. on the money expended in the repurchase. What has been the result of the progressive land legislation of New Zealand during the past few years? In addition to supplying her own wants New Zealand in 1893, according to the "Year Book" for 1894, exported wheat, oats, barley, malt, maize, peas, and beans to the value of £583,391—and if we add butter and cheese to the list, enormous quantities of both being exported—the value of these exports amounted to £937,662, or nearly £1,000,000.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Not as much as our sugar.

Mr. GLASSEY: Yes; but so far as New Zealand is concerned the exports are the produce of white men, and not of black people.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: It is mostly white people who provide the sugar export.

Mr. GLASSEY: If I may digress for a moment I would say that I think the bulk of them are black people.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We export more per head than New Zealand.

Mr. GLASSEY: I am sure if I had an opportunity of talking quietly to the Secretary for Railways he would agree with me that a country that is able not only to supply its own wants in the articles I have mentioned, but also to export those articles to the value of nearly £1,000,000, must be in a more prosperous condition than this country, which largely imports the articles I have referred to. Let us see what Victoria is doing in the way of cultivating her fields and supplying her own wants. According to the latest returns I have been able to get they exported in 1894-5 butter alone to the value of £1,081,243. South Australia in 1893 exported upwards of 13,000,000 bushels of wheat; 205,000 of barley; 177,000 of oats; 72,000 of peas; 334,000 tons hay; 22,000 tons potatoes; nearly 1,000,000 gallons of wine; and 92,000 cwt. of grapes. I have forgotten to get the value of those exports, but that is what has been done there by progressive land legislation. Some preventible causes have been assigned for the fact that we have not a larger area under crop, and one of the causes can be found in the high railway rates charged during the last few years. In 1887 an effort was made by the

Griffith Government to encourage a greater amount of settlement by reducing the rates for the carriage of produce.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot raise a discussion on that question now.

Mr. GLASSEY: I thought it pardonable to refer to some of the causes operating to prevent the amount of settlement we all desire to see brought about, and I was showing that in my judgment that was one of them.

The SPEAKER: That has nothing whatever to do with this Bill; I ask the hon. member to confine himself to the principle of the Bill.

Mr. GLASSEY: Instead of our being able to export the articles to which I have referred as being exported from the other colonies, we had in 1895 to import those very articles to the value of £657,325. That is not a satisfactory condition of affairs. We should not only be in a position to supply our own wants but export a considerable quantity of produce to other portions of the world. The hon. member for Bulimba referred to the fact that our pastoral properties yield a very small return to the revenue. I entirely agree with the hon. member. I have long held that the time has arrived when some effort should be made to procure a larger revenue from our pastoral properties. I find in looking over the Treasurer's tables that the land revenue has increased very little during the ten years from 1886 to 1895. In the first year the revenue derived from the whole of the land was £553,679, and in the last year only £554,167, while the pastoral rents have increased very little during the past ten years. When we take into consideration the large public expenditure incurred during that period it must be seen at once that we are not deriving that amount of revenue to which we are entitled. This is by no means a satisfactory state of things, and I was very much disappointed that during his lengthy speech the Secretary for Lands made no mention of any method by which he proposed to increase the revenue from pastoral properties. When we consider the vast area held by the pastoralists, and the enormous advantages and privileges which they enjoy, we surely ought to obtain a much greater revenue than we are now in receipt of. I find that our herds and flocks have increased enormously during the period I have mentioned. Of course the year 1886 might not be considered a fair one to go by, as nearly the whole country was suffering from severe drought, but even if we go back two or three years, and compare 1883, one of the most prosperous years ever experienced in Queensland, with 1895, we find there has been a large increase in flocks and herds, and that other pastoral products have increased in value, certainly out of all proportion to the revenue which we derive. In 1886 the number of cattle in the colony was 4,000,000; in 1895 nearly 7,000,000. The number of sheep in the first year was not quite 10,000,000, and in the latter year nearly 20,000,000. Then we may take for comparison the value of pastoral products exported in those two periods. In 1886 it was £2,267,239 as compared with £5,411,721 in 1895, or a difference of £3,144,388. Figuring it out another way, the pastoral increase was 138 per cent. while the rents of runs only increased by 25 per cent. But if we take the vast area of unavailable country for which the pastoralists have paid nothing, then the return is altogether unsatisfactory. Then if we take the number of cattle and sheep killed for home consumption, it adds very considerably to the value of the exports to which I have referred. During 1895 nearly £750,000 worth of cattle and sheep were slaughtered for home consumption, but I am sorry to say I have been unable to obtain reliable returns of the number slaughtered for home consumption in 1886. Mention has been made by the hon. member for Bulimba of the difference in the rents paid for pastoral properties in New South Wales and Queensland. I have referred to this matter before, and do not wish to go into it at great length, but I do say that if you compare the difference in rent paid by the small graziers in Queensland with the rents paid by the large pastoral tenants, two things are apparent—either one must be reduced or the other increased. I am not aware that numerous complaints have been made to the Department of Lands that the rents of the smaller holders are excessive, or that there has been any agitation for their reduction. Numbers of them have complained to me, not so much that their rents are high, but that the rents of the large pastoralists are so small—in many cases being only about one-sixth of the rents paid by the smaller graziers. It is well known that a vast quantity of the land which used to be held by the old-time squatter is now held by financial institutions. The Bank of New South Wales, for instance, holds upwards of 18,000,000 acres; the Bank of Australasia, 16,000,000 acres; the Australian Joint Stock Bank, 13,000,000 acres; and so right on down the list. We must not regard the pastoralists at the present time in the same light as they were regarded years ago, when the old-time squatters were much more numerous than they now are. Therefore, the large concessions which are given to the pastoralists are in reality given to financial institutions, and the time has arrived when this House should insist upon a larger return from pastoral properties than we are unfortunately getting at present. Take, for instance, the expenditure on fencing to keep out the rabbits. I have listened on many occasions to the hon. member for Bulloo enlarging, in eloquent terms, upon the rabbit pest. I believe to some extent the hon. member was sincere and earnest in his belief, but I cannot help thinking that the danger, as a whole, has been considerably exaggerated. But even viewing the matter in a serious light, the enormous amount of public money which has been expended in rabbit fencing has improved the value of pastoral properties, and ought to have been instrumental in obtaining a larger return from those properties than we have hitherto received. In rabbit fencing and boring for artesian water the expenditure of public money has amounted to £286,000. Another thing to consider is that not only have the pastoralists shorter distances to carry their produce, but I think I am correct in saying that the railway rates alone have been reduced by nearly 20 per cent. We received last year for the carriage of wool £236,000, but if the previous rates had been paid that amount would have been increased to £260,000.

Mr. LEAHY: How much of the wool would have gone to New South Wales?

Mr. GLASSEY: In addition to that there has been a large reduction in the carriage of live stock, equal in amount to, if not more than, the reduction on wool. In addition to this the railways are much nearer pastoral properties now; the cost of haulage to the railways is consequently reduced, thus increasing the value of their properties proportionately. I estimate that the loss to the revenue, comparing the present with the previous rates, must be about £60,000 a year. Another element worthy of consideration is the increased expedition with which they can carry their produce to the seaboard. Then we have the fact that the colony is paying nearly £20,000 per annum as a subsidy to a line of steamers which is used not so much for the conveyance of postal matter as for commercial purposes, and no class in the community is benefited so largely by the granting of that

subsidy as the pastoralists, as the bulk of the produce carried by those steamers belongs to the pastoral industry. Therefore, if we take the very considerable expenditure the colony incurs every year for the benefit of the pastoralists, together with the very small amount of revenue derived from their properties, it is time some means were devised whereby a considerable increase of revenue may be got from the pastoral tenants. Another little matter I wish to refer to is one means by which closer settlement on the land might be secured. They have a system in New Zealand of granting leases in perpetuity, which has resulted in a large amount of settlement during the last few years. I have long held that that is a much better means of securing settlement than offering land at a cheap rate, so that persons may be able to buy it in fee-simple. I do not agree with my hon. friend the member for Bulimba when he says that a person feels much more secure when he has the title deeds of his property in his possession than he would if he held his land on a long lease, or in perpetuity, as is done in New Zealand. I think the people in New Zealand and other countries where that system of tenure prevails feel just as secure as persons who have their land in freehold, and I believe they put forth their best efforts to make their holdings productive. In some portions of New Zealand, where this system of leasing prevails, the law is that their properties cannot be seized in the event of their getting into financial difficulties. I hope to see a law placed upon our statute-book before many years which will prevent the seizure of people's homes in the manner they have been seized for a number of years past. I visited some of the homes in those settlements in New Zealand, and I have never seen anywhere more widespread comfort or people who felt themselves more secure in their holdings than I did in those places. However, let me quote what is said with reference to features of this mode of settlement by a writer in a pamphlet published by the New Zealand Government—

"These features involve the principle of State ownership of the soil, with a perpetual tenancy in the occupier. . . . . In New Zealand this tendency to State ownership has taken a more pronounced form than in any other of the Australasian colonies, and the duration of the leases has become so extended as to warrant the name, frequently given to them, of 'everlasting leases.' Most of the Crown lands are now disposed of for terms of 999 years. The rentals are based on the assessed value of the land at the time of disposal, without increase or recurring valuations; there is a fixity of tenure practically equal to freehold, and which, like freehold, necessarily carries with it the power of sale, sublease, mortgage, or disposition by will. Since all lands held under the Crown 'by lease in perpetuity' are subject to the land tax, the necessity for the periodical revaluations under the perpetual lease system is done away with, the State reaping the advantage of the unearned increment through the beforementioned tax. At the same time, the improvements made in the soil by cultivation, etc., are secured to the tenant."

[The hon. member read further extracts showing that the advantages of the system were that any man without capital might make a home for himself; that the values placed on the lands were low, so as to encourage settlement and indirect revenue; that in selection the poor man had equal chance with the rich one; that "free selection" was offered under three tenures—

"1. For cash, in which one-fourth of the purchase money is paid down at once, and the remainder within thirty days. The title does not issue until certain improvements have been made on the land.

"2. Lease with a purchasing clause, at a 5 per cent. rental on the value of the land; the lease being for twenty-five years with the right to purchase at the original upset price at any time after the first ten years.

"3. Lease in perpetuity, at a rental of 4 per cent. on the capital value, as already described above."

The result of the "small farm association" system, under which twelve individuals could select 11,000 acres, with conditions of residence-improvement, during the three years ending 31st March, 1895, was that 1,390 selectors had taken up 277,579 acres.]

"The result of the operation of this law in two and a-half years was—

"1. Selected for cash, 1,542; area, 110,570 acres.

"2. Occupation with right of purchase, 1,060; area, 236,270 acres.

"3. Lease in perpetuity, 3,224; area, 634,086 acres."

Nearly twice the amount of land was taken up under that in my opinion proper system than was taken up under our system.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: And yet our terms are much easier.

Mr. GLASSEY: No, our terms are not easier. Then in addition to that there is another system, respecting which the writer says—

"Considerable progress has been made under the ordinary village system of land settlement, and during the past year 295 new selectors have taken up selections, representing an area in aggregate of 7,616 acres."

Further on he points out that these homes of the people are not open to be seized at will by persons to whom they may owe money. A man's residence, improvements, and appliances are protected from seizure for debt. We have no such liberal law in Queensland.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We used to have, but we had to abandon it.

Mr. GLASSEY: I hope we shall return to it soon, and I have no doubt that if we do the same result will follow here as has followed in New Zealand. I visited sixty-five homes in some of those settlements in New Zealand, and I put the one question to each settler, "Would you like to go back to the old freehold system, or do you prefer to continue under the system of lease in perpetuity?" And without a single exception one and all declared that they would rather live under their then conditions than go back to the system of fee-simple. We are sometimes told, when advocating this class of settlement, and particularly when advocating the non-seizure of people's homes, that this would limit the credit of the settler. That was not the result of my investigations in New Zealand. That result was that their credit was in no way limited.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That was not the experience in Queensland.

Mr. GLASSEY: In talking to tradesmen in different places where this settlement prevails I was told on all sides that, with few exceptions, they had little cause to grumble about people not meeting their engagements. And, indeed, it stands to reason that when settlers have money in their possession to work their holdings and buy the necessary implements and the ordinary requisites of civilised life, they are far better able to meet their liabilities than men who are in the hands of storekeepers or merchants, paying large interest on borrowed money, and being bound to sell their produce to one man and buy his stores in return. They stand in an infinitely better position to find the means to work their holdings and pay their liabilities than those who are tied up neck and heels in debt and difficulty under our present system. Therefore I would like to see a change in the direction I have indicated. The Secretary for Lands, who, I believe, has fairly advanced views on land legislation, will do himself infinite credit if he rises to the occasion and introduces those two reforms. In New Zealand, also, the Government spend a considerable sum annually, and encourage the local authorities to do the same, in making and maintaining roads. The want of decent roads is one of the drawbacks to land settlement in this country. I have been in various parts of Queensland where large numbers

of farmers are settled, and I say, without any reflection on the present Secretary for Lands, who is not responsible for it, considering the nature of the country and the difficulties with which, in many instances, water is obtained, the roads made to those places are simply a disgrace. In New Zealand, last year, I think I am correct in stating, they spent nearly £250,000 in making and repairing roads. Nothing is more likely to encourage settlement than to give facilities of access to a market. In this country, especially in some parts of West Moreton, in the Lockyer, the Rosewood, and the Stanley districts, the roads are a positive disgrace to the Government. I should have thought that by this time our Government might reasonably have come to the conclusion that the time has arrived when facilities should be given to settlers to borrow money at cheap rates. This, of course, has been scouted in various parts of the country. It is scouted by some members of the House. But I see no earthly reason why the Government should not interfere to encourage a number of people to settle on the soil by means of monetary assistance, and to encourage a number of persons who are now on the soil to improve their dwellings and leaseholds without getting into the debt and difficulty by which they are now surrounded. That matter has been referred to by several members who have spoken. I must refer again to New Zealand, where they have established the system of lending money to settlers on approved securities, for lengthy terms and at reasonable rates; and I must say, so far as the returns to hand show, the system seems to have worked fairly satisfactorily.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: No.

Mr. GLASSEY: The hon. gentleman will pardon me, but, so far as the returns show, the system has worked fairly satisfactorily. And another thing it has done: it has not only given facilities to farmers to borrow directly from the State, but it has been the means of reducing the rate of interest throughout the whole of the islands. The same thing prevails to a considerable extent in South Australia, and I think the Minister will agree with me that, although that system has only been in force there for a little while, it is working admirably; and in the course of a few years' time the bulk of the settlers in both of those colonies will feel much more comfortable in their holdings. Their liabilities will be much less, and their families will have much more comfort. The Premier said some time ago, either in his manifesto or in his Financial Statement, that an effort would be made to secure better markets for the produce of settlers than they have had in the past. Up to the present no such effort has been made, but I hope it will be made shortly. South Australia has taken the matter into its own hands with a considerable amount of success. They have not been afraid to establish a department to look after the disposal of the produce of the soil in the foreign markets of the world on advantageous terms for the people. Although that may be regarded by some people as bordering upon socialism, I do not think it matters what "ism" it is so long as it is conducive to the welfare and happiness of the people, and the general good of the country. There is no reason why it should not be adopted here, and I hope the present Government will not shirk their responsibility in this direction. If these measures which I have referred to be adopted, they will to some extent solve a difficultly in regard to the unemployed. Of course we have been told by the *Courier* that there are few, if any, unemployed in the colony. Considering the few industries we have, there must be more unemployed here than in New Zealand. The very fact of the enormous area of land under cultivation there proves that more hands must be employed. I do not agree with the *Courier* when it asks, Where are the unemployed? I would rather ask, Where are the employed?

The SPEAKER: I will ask the hon. member not to open up that question beyond referring to it incidentally. I hope he will not go into details, because it is entirely foreign to the question before the House.

Mr. GLASSEY: I am not inclined to agree with you. I think these matters are closely connected.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member can only dissent from my ruling by motion. I say again that I consider the remarks he was making were not relevant to the question now under consideration.

Mr. GLASSEY: I have no desire to question your ruling, and am quite willing to discuss the matter dispassionately and free from any feeling. Still, I venture to say that, if any suggestion can be made to settle upon the land some of those who are not working, this is not an unreasonable time to refer to the matter. It is right to keep these matters in view, because if those men who are not permanently employed were making a living upon the land and making homes for themselves and their families it would not only result in great good to themselves but also in great good to the country as a whole. They would contribute more to the revenue, and the returns from our railways would be greater. There are one or two other little matters I wish to mention before I close. The first is in regard to the condition of those who are already settled on the land, and I do not wish to be considered inconsistent, after wishing to settle a greater number on the soil, when I refer to the almost deplorable condition of some already there. I consider that means ought to be devised to assist new settlers on to the soil, and at the same time to improve the conditions of life of numbers of people already settled. At present in many cases their homes are mortgaged; a number of others are in debt to the merchants and storekeepers in the districts in which they live. They are even compelled not only to sell their produce to those storekeepers but even to mortgage it before it is ready for sale. They are also compelled to buy from the same storekeepers; and although some storekeepers have afforded considerable relief to settlers, unfortunately others are not so liberal. Sometimes their action results in disastrous consequences to the unfortunate settler. I will here refer briefly to some letters, and particularly to one which appeared some time ago in the *Courier* concerning the condition of the farmers in the Logan and Albert districts. I know the letter was taken exception to by the late member for the Albert, Mr. Plunkett; but I think there is a considerable amount of truth in the statement of the writer, Mr. Briggs, of Beenleigh, who, as a travelling draper, has every facility for knowing the condition of the farmers of the district.

The SPEAKER: I really fail to see how the information the hon. member proposes to read can affect any of the principles of this Bill, or how he can apply it. I hope the hon. member will not be too discursive; that he will confine his remarks to the principles of the Bill.

Mr. GLASSEY: I think I was speaking to the principles of the Bill in suggesting that there is no means for relieving the condition of these settlers foreshadowed in this Bill.

The SPEAKER: This is a Bill dealing with the Crown lands, and not for the relief of settlers on freehold property. I ask the hon. member to endeavour to confine himself to that.

Mr. GLASSEY: I have no desire to show any hostility to your ruling, but I was endeavouring to show that there are omissions from the Bill,

and suggesting remedies for the present condition of things. If I am out of order I will not attempt to pursue that line of argument further than to say that the present condition of settlers is by no means satisfactory, and I hope some system will be adopted that will give them relief.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Do you mean selectors or freeholders?

Mr. GLASSEY: Of selectors and freeholders. The hon. gentleman will admit that there are some selectors on Ma Ma Creek, in the Lockyer district, and if he paid them a visit he would find their condition deplorable for some of the reasons I have mentioned. I hope it is within bounds to mention that there is nothing in this Bill to provide for better roads for the settlers in the future. Many of the roads in old and newly-settled districts alike are in a deplorable condition, and that has done much to retard settlement in this colony. I hope that when the Bill gets into committee some of its defects will be amended. I will do my best to amend it in some of the directions I have mentioned, but it is hard that some of the serious defects, omissions, and, I may say, blots of the Bill cannot be referred to. Some members disagree with the proposals of the Minister with regard to the establishment of the Land Court. I do not share their opinions; I think the proposals are neither unreasonable nor unfair. The change proposed with respect to preventing an appeal to the Supreme Court is deserving of our serious consideration. I have long held the opinion that it was a mistake to allow these appeals. They are extremely costly, and in many instances result in no good to the litigants, and certainly not to the State. Some exception has been taken to a lawyer being chairman of the court, and I shall not say that I would favour a lawyer being appointed to the position. What is wanted is a capable man who knows something of the wants and difficulties of the selectors, and particularly a person who is in sympathy with their struggles. An intelligent man of that stamp who knows what he is talking about, and who is capable of reading and administering the law from a common-sense standpoint, would be better for the position than some lawyers. I understand that one of the members of the present Land Board is a lawyer, and if that is the case it would be a mistake to increase the number of lawyers constituting the court. I do not know if I am correct, but if one of them is a lawyer he ought to be able to guide the court so far as the law is concerned.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You are not correct.

Mr. GLASSEY: Then I do not know that I can quarrel with the suggestion to obtain a lawyer to constitute the court. With regard to appeals, who are the parties who will appeal to the Supreme Court? Not the struggling selector or the grazing farmer or grazing homesteader, but those who have means, such as the banking institutions to which I have referred. They are in a position to go there, and very often to defeat the attempts of the Crown to obtain a more reasonable return from the pastoral lands than they have hitherto obtained. It is all very well for some hon. members to say that it is the right of the humblest citizen to appeal to the highest court in the country. That is so, but who among the humblest citizens have the means to enable them to go to the Supreme Court?

Mr. LEAHY: You had the means.

Mr. GLASSEY: Unfortunately I had to follow some other persons, very much to my cost. If the matter had been left to me I probably should not have been there. I hope the House will view with favour the proposal of the Minister to prevent appeal to the Supreme Court, which in most cases has ended unfortunately for the country. With respect to the proposed increase of the homestead areas, in some instances it may be desirable to increase the area from 160 to 320 or 640 acres, but I do not think there is much in the argument that persons cannot make a living off 160 acres. If the land is good and accessible, it is better for a man to devote his energies to the cultivation of 160 acres than to devote them to the attention of a larger area, but in some parts of the country where the land is rather poor I would not stand in the way of the area being increased. I also agree that the homesteader should have a grazing area of 640 acres within fifteen miles of his home. Unfortunately, that cannot be provided in some districts, but it is an advantage that a man should not be compelled to put "all his eggs in one basket." With regard to the provision dealing with scrub lands, I agree with hon. members who think that 10,000 acres is rather too much. I can well imagine cases where the land would be acquired more for personal advantage than the advantage of the State. There are other provisions that we may defer consideration of until we get into committee, but taking it as a whole, so far as consolidation goes, I think the measure will result in considerable benefit, but I do not believe the class we require to settle upon our lands will be increased by this measure to any appreciable extent. I remember well when the amending Act of 1894 was going through how we were told that by allowing people out in the back country to take up 2,500 acres there would be a rush for settlement, and that it would be a solution of certain difficulties that had occurred out there. The result of that measure, however, has been that only 104 selectors have taken up land. I do not believe the sanguine expectations of the Minister will be realised in regard to the amount of settlement which this measure will create, and I therefore hope that in committee we will unite, free from party bias, and endeavour to improve the Bill. I shall not oppose the second reading, but in committee I shall assist in putting the Bill into a better shape than it is in at present.

Mr. MURRAY: It is not my intention to speak at any great length on this measure as I fear the House is getting tired of the debate. There are some few features of the Bill which I conceive it to be my duty to draw special attention to, and those I will devote my attention to. To begin with, I have to congratulate the Government on the fact that at last there is some effort being made, which I hope will be successful, to improve the land laws and bring them into conformity with the requirements of the people—a better effort than was made in 1884. Since that time very great changes have taken place in our whole mercantile system and with regard to our production and exports. In 1884 we might say our local markets were sufficient for all our surplus products. Since that time we have been forced to come into contact with the markets of the world. In dealing with the land question now we have not only to consider our own local affairs, but the fact that there is a necessity for meeting other countries in open competition when we are endeavouring to dispose of our surplus products. Therefore this question, while it is essentially a local one, is surrounded with outside influences which have a direct bearing upon our products and exports. I have viewed this question all along on these lines. The Secretary for Lands, when referring to my action last year in moving for the appointment of a Royal Commission to take this gigantic question into consideration, said that he was not favourably disposed to my

proposal. In fact, he said that he had not even taken the trouble to read what I had said on that occasion.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I certainly did not say that.

Mr. MURRAY: The hon. gentleman also said that I had been ably met by the Home Secretary.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I heard all you said, and I read it afterwards.

Mr. MURRAY: How could the hon. gentleman know that I had been ably met if he did not read what I had said?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: If I am made to say that I am certainly misreported, but I do not think I am so reported.

Mr. MURRAY: After saying that my arguments in favour of the appointment of a Royal Commission had been ably met by the Home Secretary, the hon. gentleman said—

"I have not looked up what the hon. member for Normanby said on that occasion, but, speaking from memory, he mentioned that in his opinion it would be necessary for such a commission to travel over the greater part of the colony to see what measure would be most beneficial for each particular district."

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That is correct.

Mr. MURRAY: The point I wish to draw special attention to is that the Home Secretary did reply to me, and he was the means of defeating my motion last year. I hold that whatever this Bill may come to—and I am not alone in my opinion—that the appointment of a Royal Commission to deal with this extremely important question would have resulted in very great benefit to the country.

The HOME SECRETARY: It would have cost £2,000, with no result.

Mr. MURRAY: The Home Secretary came down on my proposal like a wolf on the fold, denouncing Royal Commissions—they were costly luxuries; they were never productive of good—but Parliament had hardly gone into recess when he himself was the means of calling together a Royal Commission of ten times the magnitude of the one I asked for, and incurring, I believe, ten times the expense, because I only asked for four or five practical men to deal with this question.

The HOME SECRETARY: You are quite wrong if you think I fathered the Local Government Commission.

Mr. MURRAY: I am very sorry, at all events, that the hon. gentleman did not stick to his guns on that occasion.

The HOME SECRETARY: I did.

Mr. MURRAY: If a Royal Commission was not necessary to deal with this question, it was not necessary that a Royal Commission should be summoned to deal with an unimportant question compared with this. I hold that the occupation and utilisation of the lands of this colony is by far the most important question we have to deal with, and if ever the Parliament was warranted in appointing a Royal Commission to deal with any business of this description, it was on that occasion. However, I shall drop that matter, although I still hold the opinion that that was the best way to proceed with this business. Since the passing of the Land Act of 1884 we have been forced to look to Europe for our markets, and there is where a commission would have been useful. It would have had to consider the land legislation in other countries, the means by which producers may acquire land in other countries, and how they can put their produce on the markets of the world. It is foreign competition we have to be afraid of more than local or internal competition, and that is where the commission would have done a vast amount of good. Another thing the Secretary for Lands said with reference to what I said, when moving for the appointment of the Royal Commission as to the necessity for taking into consideration local and climatic conditions, was this—

"I hold that it is utterly impossible to lay down any hard-and-fast rules for particular districts. No one district is sufficiently distinctive in all the varying conditions of, we will say, soil, climate, timber, scrub, proximity to railways or to coast towns to make it possible to lay down any fixed rules with regard to the tenures which should obtain or the areas which ought to be leased or sold within such district."

Now I hold that there is more difference between the coastal and inland districts of Queensland than there is between the coastal and inland districts of England, or indeed of any other country in the world. For instance, the average annual rainfall varies from 149 inches at Geraldton to 5 inches at Birdsville. Yet this Bill has a general application; a man taking up, say, a grazing farm at Geraldton takes it up under exactly the same terms as the man taking up a grazing farm at Birdsville.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That is a matter of administration.

Mr. MURRAY: I cannot see that, because I hold that in dealing with any species of occupation we should be guided entirely by the likelihood there is of the land being required for closer settlement in the near future. I admit at once that it would be injudicious to give a long term of lease for any of our best agricultural lands along the coast. In fact, I think those lands should be specially reserved for agricultural purposes, but I am convinced that the Western interior will remain purely pastoral country for the next fifty or 100 years, if it does not remain permanently pastoral country. Any person who has been subjected to the merciless severity of the climate in those regions can come to no other conclusion than that it would be utter folly to offer any inducements for people to go in for anything like agricultural settlement in those localities. Therefore I say we should have laws of distinct application to deal with such lands entirely apart from the laws which operate in the coastal districts. That is one of the arguments I used in favour of the appointment of a commission last year. However good this Bill may be for encouraging settlement in the coastal districts it will be utterly useless in promoting settlement in the Western country, and when dealing with the land laws we should do our best to encourage settlement to the very Western border of the colony. I would suggest that the area and tenure should depend entirely upon the locality. While ten years in the immediate coastal districts might be a sufficient term for a grazing or agricultural farm—because I believe in the very near future the coastal districts will all be required for agricultural settlement—I hold that as you go back from settlement and from the more favourable climatic conditions which prevail along the coast, a man ought to be allowed a larger area and a longer tenure. A man who goes between 400 and 500 miles into the interior and takes up 20,000 acres of land as a grazing farm is not in half as good a position as a man with 160 acres of good agricultural land in a district like Bundaberg. I am convinced that a man with 160 acres of land in a district like Bundaberg will be far more prosperous, live far more comfortably, run fewer risks, and make more money than a man with 20,000 acres 400 or 500 miles from the coast. That is a proposition I wish the Minister to pay attention to, because there is something in it, and I shall endeavour to get a provision dealing with the question inserted in the Bill when we go into committee. The area of holdings should increase as you go back from the coast.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Practically that is done in working now.

Mr. MURRAY: I am not aware of it. The maximum area any one person can select is 20,000 acres.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Yes; but within that limit it is the practice now to increase the limit as you go westward.

Mr. MURRAY: Up to 20,000 acres?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Yes.

Mr. MURRAY: But I am going to show that 20,000 acres is not half enough in some instances. I would suggest that if a man goes 400 miles into the interior, and 100 miles from railway communication, he should be allowed to select 40,000 acres; that if he goes 600 miles into the interior the area should be increased to 60,000 acres; and that if he goes to the Western border he should be allowed 100,000 acres and a fifty years' lease. I have been thirty-two years a resident of Queensland, and have taken up land under every Bill that has been passed since 1862. I have during that period been dealing with and working land in all its varied ways—agricultural and pastoral, and in every possible form. The first I took up was under the Agricultural Reserves Act, and I paid £1 an acre cash for it. The area was then limited to 320 acres, and the terms were cash for one-fourth, and 6d. per acre rent for the other three-fourths with a right of purchase at £1 per acre. That was thirty-two years ago, and if that same land were put into the market to-day with all the improvements and thirty years' toil upon it, it would not bring 15s. per acre. That is an illustration of the progress we have made.

The Hon. J. R. DICKSON: That is because there is no population.

Mr. MURRAY: I admit that if we had 4,000,000 of people in Queensland instead of 400,000 possibly other things might result. But would the people be in any better position? I would sooner be a citizen of Queensland with its 400,000 inhabitants than a citizen of Queensland with its 4,000,000 people. The cause of the depreciation of land values from that time to the present, and of the values of products going down in the markets, is the bringing into use of the lands of other countries, and the development of rapid means for the carriage of produce from the remotest corners of the earth to the one common market. That has had a tendency to level all land values, and it is the cause of the lowering of land values in this colony. We think that we are dealing liberally with the lands of the colony, and placing them in the hands of people who are prepared to work them on the most moderate and easy terms, but I am of opinion that there will be a still further tendency to depreciation in land values, and in the values of produce. I see no help for it. At present produce, we think, is cheap. In fact, some of it is so cheap that it will not pay the cost of freight to the old country. In some instances people who have sent home frozen meat have been called upon to pay the expenses of freight and sale.

Mr. MCMASTER: Bring the people here to eat it.

Mr. MURRAY: I am surprised at the hon. member for Fortitude Valley saying "Bring the people here to eat it." If the people were here they would not eat more than they do now, and hon. members should not forget that if we bring the people here to consume our products that that will not improve our position. I am not one of those who raise the cry "Bring the people here to consume our products," because I am convinced that the cost of carrying our products to the people on the other side of the water who are prepared to pay for them is so trifling that it is not worth while talking about it. Victoria is a comparatively densely populated colony, but the settlers there are not one whit better off than the settlers here. If you imported 4,000,000 of people into Queensland to-morrow, a portion of those people would go into the industries of the country and become producers, and we should have a still larger surplus produce than we have at present. What we have to do is to manage our affairs to the best advantage of the people within our own borders, and not to consider whether what we do here will benefit people elsewhere. I am quite convinced that if we increased our population that would not remedy our position one iota. The hon. member for Bundaberg drew a very invidious comparison between New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Queensland, and said that while in South Australia they had under cultivation five acres per head of the population, and in New South Wales two acres per head, we had only half an acre. Still we find an exodus of settlers from Victoria to New South Wales trying to get an opening there, and there is a rush of them coming into Queensland to-day. Is that a proof that with a larger area under crop the people are more prosperous? The settlers of South Australia must be the poorest people in Australia. They cultivate an acre of land for an average return of eight bushels of wheat.

Mr. MCMASTER: Six at the outside.

Mr. MURRAY: That makes it still worse.

Mr. GLASSEY: They supply their own wants, and export more than we produce.

Mr. MURRAY: Would the hon. member like to go to South Australia, put an area of land under wheat, reap it, put it in good order, bag it, send it to market, and get a total return of £1 per acre?

Mr. KEOGH: Many in Queensland do not get that out of an acre of land under corn.

The PREMIER: If the hon. member says that, he cannot know much about farming. Twenty bushels at 1s. per bushel would amount to that.

Mr. MURRAY: I am only replying to the comparison the hon. member for Bundaberg drew between Queensland and the other colonies. I know this, and I am not afraid of contradiction, that the settlers and the people generally of Queensland are in a 50 per cent. better position than the people in the other colonies.

Mr. GLASSEY: Then the others must be in a bad position.

Mr. MURRAY: In New South Wales, and in Sydney particularly, there is continual trouble with the unemployed. We have not an unemployed man in Queensland.

Mr. GLASSEY: Oh, oh!

Mr. MURRAY: I say that without the slightest fear of contradiction. A fortnight ago I had occasion to go out through the Western districts, travelling through some of the largest stations, and I found the sheds were not half-handed. One and all wanted hands. Not only was everyone employed, but men could not be got to do the work.

Mr. KEOGH: That will not last six months.

Mr. MURRAY: Contrast our position with that of the colonies held up by the hon. member for our example. Why, the settler in Queensland is a king compared to the men in New Zealand.

Mr. DUNSFORD: They make a better use of the land.

Mr. MURRAY: The people who go on the land, and who make it their business to live on the land, are the best judges as to what use to put it to. If a man finds he can make more money by using the grasses Nature has provided him than by cultivating the soil, he has a right to do so, and he does just as well for the colony. No doubt some day people will be forced into agriculture, but all things will come in due time. The proper thing is that we should all move together.

To give undue inducements to any particular industry must recoil upon ourselves sooner or later. Recently we passed an Agricultural Lands Purchase Act, the object being to encourage closer settlement on the Darling Downs, the common cry among the people being, What a sin it is to see those beautiful lands under pasture. But when all those lands are under crop there will be a still greater cry amongst the settlers for a market. One thing I warn the House, and that is, before very long, if agricultural settlement goes on on the Darling Downs to any great extent, they will have to look to Europe for a market. I hope they will be able to do it, but they will not do it with ordinary agricultural products. On one occasion when I was at Toowoomba I saw potatoes offered for 15s. a ton. I want to warn people against encouraging any industry to any undue extent, because whenever the produce becomes greater than the local market can consume, prices must of necessity come down, and the producer will be barely able to make a living. I will now leave that subject. The Bill proposes to add another member to the Land Court, and the Secretary for Lands says that that additional member should be a lawyer. I do not agree with him in that. I cannot see that there is any likelihood of any questions of law cropping up as to the value of improvements or the classification of country. I believe it would be a good thing to appoint a third member to the Land Board, and to have one of them stationed in each of the divisions of the colony. But I am not prepared to do away with the appeal court. I do not say the present Land Board would do anything wilfully wrong, but where people wield despotic power, and if there is no likelihood of their decisions being disputed, they might become troublesome. Therefore, I hold it is better to have an appeal court. They might meet periodically, and sit as an appeal court with a judge of the Supreme Court if necessary. Of course, a member of the board whose decision was disputed should not sit on the court. I think the hon. gentleman will agree with me that one member of the Land Board could do the business just as well as two or three.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Not with the same amount of public confidence.

Mr. MURRAY: The hon. member is to be complimented upon some liberal provisions he is making for the extension of the areas of agricultural farms and homesteads, but there is one provision that I do not like; that is, the proposal to reduce the tenure of grazing farms from thirty years to twenty-one years. I have already pointed out that while that may be desirable in closely-settled districts it is not desirable outside. The hon. member should not forget that a grazing farmer has to make many improvements; in fact, for the first ten years he is carrying out improvements. If his lease is reduced to twenty-one years he will be discouraged. Why should the term be reduced? The land is not likely to be required for closer settlement. In thirty years his family will have grown up, and will have spread over the whole area, and they will occupy it as well as anyone else. Why should they be put out to let others in? I do not see where the benefit will come in, and, therefore, I hope the hon. member will amend that provision. There are many improvements that selectors wish to carry on, such as ringbarking, fencing, and putting up buildings, but they will not if the term is reduced. I admit that there is great difficulty at present when many applications are put in for the same selection. It has been suggested that the land should be put up at auction amongst the applicants; but I am afraid that that would result in greater evils than now exist. A wealthy man who wanted a piece of land would offer a *bonâ fide* applicant £100 to stand out, and, moreover, the *bonâ fide* men would be penalised in every direction. It is quite possible that the lessee of the run would put in an application and run them up; and some of his employees would be put on to run up the rent so high that the *bonâ fide* man would be out of it. Even if a *bonâ fide* man got possession of the land he would find that he had given more than it was worth; he would pay one year's rent, and then the land would go through the formalities of forfeiture. Even amongst the *bonâ fide* men themselves it would not be fair to put them to the test to the utmost farthing they could pay. This is the remedy I would suggest, and I hope the hon. member will consider it. It is the simple remedy of supply and demand. No man will give £500 to get possession of a piece of country if he knows that to-morrow he will be able to get something else. The reason why there are so many "clashers" is that twenty farms are wanted where only one is offered. Why not supply the demand? We have the land; there is plenty of resumed country which might be thrown open.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Where are you speaking of?

Mr. MURRAY: All over the colony. I understand that all the runs within the scheduled area have been divided, and that a portion of each—if not half—has been resumed, and may be thrown open to selection.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: A great deal has been selected; in some districts the whole.

Mr. MURRAY: I am thinking of Winton and the Western district generally. That appears to be the district where there has been the most demand for land. The remedy is simple. Throw open the whole of the resumed halves. That will cure it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: No.

Mr. MURRAY: I am convinced that it will. There is another provision which might be inserted, and which I think would be beneficial. Instead of compelling a selector to obtain his certificate in three years, I would make it five years, and where there are a great number of applications coming in for one selection, it should be the duty of the commissioner to take evidence as to the *bona fides* of the applicants, and the commissioners should be given extended powers of examination. Another little matter I would call attention to is in regard to the fixing of rents; I would suggest a method by which this might be done in a simple and fair way. When new country is thrown open for selection as grazing farms it is proposed that for the first period the rent should not exceed that paid by the pastoral lessee by 25 per cent. I think it should not exceed that paid by the pastoral lessee at all.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: One is a mere occupation license, while the other is a lease for thirty years at present.

Mr. MURRAY: I hold that the lessee's tenure is just as good as that of the grazing farmer.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It is practically from day to day.

Mr. MURRAY: Yes, for the resumed half; but I am speaking of the unresumed half, and I say the rent paid by the grazing farmer for his first period should not be more than 25 per cent. of an increase upon that paid by the lessee for the leased half of the run. The Land Board, whose knowledge of these matters we take to be sufficient, fixes the rent for the lessee; and why should the resumed half, just because we want a change of tenancy only in a smaller way, be taxed to the extent of 200 per cent. over the rent paid by the original lessee? The average rent paid by the lessee of the leased halves of run

is £1 11s. 6d. per square mile, and that paid by the grazing farmer is £4 3s. 6d. per square mile. I do not think that is fair, as they are both Crown tenants holding the country on almost the same terms, and they should be equally treated, though I am prepared to go as far as a 25 per cent. increase for the grazing farmer. That would be a simple way, too, of getting over the difficulty. These are things to which I will draw more attention in committee. Another little feature in the hon. gentleman's proposal is that he appears to look upon it as a great boon to the grazing farmer that he is going to permit him to purchase one-tenth of his holding. I can assure the hon. gentleman that in the pastoral districts no grazing farmer would ever dream of doing such a thing.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Yes, they would. I know it.

Mr. MURRAY: That he will buy a tenth part of his holding with all the improvements on it? If he studied the thing he would never dream of doing it, because he must know that the incoming tenant would have to pay for the whole of the improvements, and if he purchased his homestead with the bulk of the improvements on it the incoming tenant would have comparatively nothing to pay. No; he would never purchase his homestead.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I could tell you of plenty who would be very glad to do it.

Mr. MURRAY: I know of none who would do it. To give any benefit to the grazing farmer in a right to purchase, you must give him the right to purchase the whole of it. Even then I would not dream of purchasing for 10s. an acre what I can get at present at 1½d. an acre.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You might not get it at 1½d. an acre a dozen years hence.

Mr. MURRAY: It is as likely as not that I would get it then at ¾d. an acre. I am surprised at the opposition raised by some hon. members to the freehold tenure in a country like this, with the liberal franchise we have.

MEMBERS of the Labour party: Oh, oh!

Mr. MURRAY: I say it is a liberal franchise, and yet with the power the people have to tax land they are afraid of a man holding a bit of freehold. Why, you could tax him out of it in six months if it became an evil. I hold that no evil will result from it, but I admit that in the meantime business men will not take a freehold where they can get a leasehold. I used at one time to be an enthusiast with regard to freeholds, but after contact with the world I am content with a leasehold; but I am convinced that, if at any time the possession of freeholds became an evil, the people of the time will be able to deal with the evil. It matters little upon what tenure the people hold their land so long as they put it to a profitable use for themselves. I would not let the fear of freeholds stand in my way in dealing with the subject, and I point out that the stupid part of the business is that, while you carefully guard against the grazing farmer acquiring more than one-tenth of his holding, one man under the Special Sales of Land Act can get 200,000 acres alongside of it. The law allows of the acquisition of an unlimited area of freehold at present. I come now to the part of the Bill which deals with rabbit fencing. Under the Pastoral Leases Extension Act passed last session, grazing farmers were enabled to group their areas to the extent of 100 square miles for the purpose of rabbit fencing, and that is a provision which I hope will be extended. It is desirable that wire fencing should be carried round the heads of watercourses where possible rather than across them where there is danger of the fence being swept away. In some parts of the Western country where there are numerous watercourses I suggest that it would be advisable to extend the provision for grouping grazing farms, and to allow eight farms to be grouped. It may be said that that would allow of too large an area to be enclosed by one fence, but a lessee alongside may have a much larger area enclosed in one fence. Under the Fencing Act of 1861 fencing is compulsory, and its provisions should be extended to rabbit fencing, as I believe the Rabbit Act will be a failure unless fencing is made compulsory. The hon. gentleman stated that he believed in the compulsory clauses, but that to put them into force would have a tendency to block settlement; that to his knowledge lands had not been taken up in the settled districts in consequence of the compulsory clauses, and that men had gone to the outside districts rather than take up those lands. The suggestion I would make in regard to that would be this: The hon. gentleman has thrown open to selection some lands in that district at 2d. an acre rent; I would suggest that that land should be thrown open to selection at a rent for the first period of seven years not greater than the present lessee is paying for the land, with the condition that the grazing farmer, who will be the incoming tenant, shall put up a wire fence. He would be willing to do that if he got the land for the first seven years at the rent paid by the pastoral lessee, and there could be a re-assessment of rent for the subsequent periods. I hold that if the Rabbit Act is to be of any benefit whatever it should be compulsory. It is no use one person fencing in his holding if his neighbour does not. I know of some people who are very anxious to enclose their holdings, and I would like to see the Bill extended in that way. Another important feature of the Bill is contained in the clauses dealing with scrub lands. I am very pleased to see those provisions, which I have advocated for a long time, but I hope the Minister will consent to extend them to country infested with zamia and other poison bush country. I am quite in accord with the proposal under Part V. dealing with the expired leases in the settled districts. The very best thing that can be done is to give the lessees the right to occupy the land under occupation licenses. But I go a little further and say they are entitled as original lessees to have the right of priority to a grazing farm of 20,000 acres alongside their homesteads. That would only be fair, and I do not think anyone will object to it. Of course that would only apply in country where the land is not required for closer settlement. I have referred briefly to the leading features of the measure, and have not gone into details, because they can be dealt with in committee. I hope the House will divest itself of all party and class interests in dealing with a measure of this sort, and of all fads and theories. We are dealing with a practical question, and should deal with it in a practical way. I can only hope that the House will settle down to the consideration of the subject in earnest, and that at the end of the session we shall be able to congratulate the country upon having a better land law than it has had for some time past. I am still of opinion that if it could have been done it would have been better to deal with the measure in the way proposed by me last session, and if anything should happen to the measure perhaps that may yet be done. It is not often that we have an opportunity of amending the land laws, and now that we have one, I hope whatever is done will result in making the measure a complete, comprehensive, and liberal one, which will meet the requirements of the people in all respects.

Mr. DUNSFORD: I believe there will be at least one good arise out of the introduction of

this measure, that is, that hon. members, after listening to the discussion, will be better acquainted with the land laws than they have been in the past. Certainly, my knowledge of the lands laws was very superficial, but before the Bill gets through committee I hope to know something about them. I hope this measure will not be hurried through. I believe that ample consideration should be given to it, not only on the second reading but in committee, and I hope it will not become law this session.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Why?

Mr. DUNSFORD: Because I believe it is necessary to hasten slowly with a measure of this sort. This is only the second attempt that has been made to consolidate the land laws, and I say that more time is therefore necessary than we can hope will be given to it at the end of the session. Hon. members have already foreshadowed numerous amendments, and I believe the Bill when it comes out of committee will not be recognised by its own father. I am sure if it were reintroduced next year, after giving it full discussion now, it will receive much greater consideration. Indeed, I think a special session is almost necessary to deal with the subject. The Bill has been considered from many standpoints. We have had the advocacy of the pastoralists' representative, and especially the hon. member for Bulloo, and we have had the representative of the smaller men who come between the agriculturists and the squatter in the person of the hon. member for Normanby. That hon. member advocates that grazing farmers should have their holdings extended, and I go with him to the extent of saying that in localities where the land is not immediately required it might be given to the grazing farmers on short leases. It would be better to deal with it in that way than have it lying idle.

Mr. LEAHY: He means on the extreme western boundary.

Mr. DUNSFORD: I dare say there are some remote places in the Northern territory where larger areas might be granted. I do not think we ought to look at this measure so much from the financial standpoint, although perhaps it is wise to get a fair return out of the lands of the colony. It is admitted by many persons that the pastoralists have not being paying a fair rental, but we should look at the measure more from the agriculturists' point of view, and to the prosperity of the colony as a whole. But how are we to bring this about? It does not appear to me that this Bill will give any greater facilities for closer settlement upon the land than have hitherto existed. We have found recently that those people who are asking for land are inquiring for it within reasonable distance of markets, and especially for those lands along our railways. But the trouble is that these lands have been alienated in the past as pastoral lands—because at one time it was thought that even our splendid Downs lands would not grow a pumpkin—and they have now been found to be our best agricultural lands, but they cannot be procured for the people who want them. Perhaps I may be going a little outside the Bill in dealing with matters which refer more specially to the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act, but I may be allowed to touch upon this matter because all such matters should be embraced in a measure of this sort. The House has in the past made efforts to deal with this question by repurchasing lands previously sold, but the area repurchased has been comparatively small, the sum at the disposal of the Government being limited. I believe they have almost exhausted the £100,000 they were authorised to spend, so that we cannot go on repurchasing such lands. As the hon. member for Cambooya, who is a farmer, reminds me, the price paid for those lands by the State was so high that it does not pay farmers to purchase them.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member is wandering outside the strict lines of debate. He must confine himself to the principles of the Bill. He cannot well discuss the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act, which is not dealt with in this Bill at all.

Mr. DUNSFORD: Is it your ruling, Mr. Speaker, that I cannot touch on the Land Acts not included in this Bill?

The SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot touch upon the working of the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act under this Bill.

Mr. DUNSFORD: Can I not complain of the fact that the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act—which, of course, deals with the lands of the colony—is not included in this measure, which is a consolidating measure?

The SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot discuss the workings of that Act on the second reading of this Bill.

Mr. DUNSFORD: I am sorry that you will not permit me to go into the effect of that Act, because I could have shown that there are better means for getting them than those which have been adopted. One thing I could have suggested was this—and it might be included in this Bill—that as soon as lands adjacent to railways are required for close settlement, they should be obtained by means similar to those referred to in a motion introduced recently in the Victorian Assembly by Mr. F. Longmore, member for Dandenong. I shall read this motion, and then proceed, if I may be permitted to do so, to show how it would operate in this colony. This is the motion—

"That with the view of enabling our railways to pay, and thus assist in bringing back prosperity to this country, the owners of large estates of country lands should be called upon by the Government to sell during next year, in the open market, land held by them within three miles of any railway running through or close to such purchased land, under conditions to be prepared and passed by Parliament, provided that not more than one-tenth of any such large estate shall be so required to be sold in any one year. That purchased land held to the extent of 4,000 acres of first-class land, or 5,000 acres of second-class land, or 6,000 acres of third-class land, or 7,000 acres of fourth-class land, as set out by the Land Tax Act, 1877, held by one family, shall not be considered a large estate for the purpose of this motion."

The SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot discuss that question. It could not be embodied in this Bill, which deals with Crown lands, and not with freehold properties.

Mr. DUNSFORD: Of course, I bow to your ruling; but since what I have read will appear in *Hansard*, it will have no sense unless I add a few qualifying remarks, and I ask the permission of the House to do so.

The SPEAKER: I ask the hon. member not to proceed with that line of argument. He proposes to introduce into this measure a principle which could not possibly be introduced into it.

Mr. DANIELS: He wants to show how the lands could be exchanged.

The SPEAKER: If the hon. member wishes to advocate the exchange of lands, he may do so; but he is not proposing an exchange.

Mr. DUNSFORD: I cannot take refuge in the excuse that I wish to propose the exchange of lands. What I proposed to advocate was that the adoption of the principle of the motion I read would have the effect of making large landowners sell a small portion of their holdings every year, which certainly would be to the benefit of the colony and of intending purchasers. However, I shall leave that subject in view of your ruling, Mr. Speaker; but I would emphasise this upon the Secretary for Lands—that he should do everything in his power to obtain suitable lands

adjacent to the railways, and within reasonable distance of markets. The hon. member for Bulloo spoke of the classification of the lands, and contended that not only the quality of the land, but distance from a market, rainfall, and other things should be taken into consideration. I would have shown, if I had been permitted, that that classification would not apply to the lands alienated along existing railways, but as that has been ruled out of order I shall not trench upon that subject.

The SPEAKER: I do not wish the hon. member to misunderstand the matter. He may deal with the classification of Crown lands, but not with the classification of freehold lands.

Mr. DUNSFORD: I can show that there are no Crown lands, or very little, within a reasonable distance of a market, and that there is no desire on the part of the people who want land for those lands which are called Crown lands—at any rate not such a desire as there is for those lands which are freehold, and which should become the property of the State. One of the clauses of this Bill proposes to give the Minister the right to sell town lands at a price of not less than £8 per acre, and suburban lands at not less than £2 per acre, and in areas varying from one rood to ten acres. That I am entirely opposed to, because the unearned increment enters more largely into the value of such lands than it does into the value of country lands. The presence here of many people who have emigrated from the old country at the expense of the colony has increased the value of town lands in a far greater ratio than it has in the case of country lands, and the selling of these town lands will result, as it has in the past, in a great loss of revenue which ought to go into the coffers of the State. It would be more reasonable, and certainly more business-like, for the State to say that the rents for land which are now going into the coffers of private individuals and banking institutions should go into the coffers of the State. At any rate, a portion of those rents should go to the State, and I believe that individuals would sooner pay a fair rental to the State for town and suburban lands than to private persons. The hon. member for Bulimba went so far as to say that if a man has the leasehold of a garden it will soon become a wilderness, but that if he has the fee-simple of a rock he will soon make it a garden. That is not so on mining fields, as I know from my own experience. Comparatively inferior lands in a dry area like Charters Towers are becoming veritable gardens under the leasehold system. There are very few acres of freehold on Charters Towers—though a few too many, I am sorry to say—and as the law stands no land can be sold in fee-simple on goldfields. On Croydon there is not an acre of freehold; it is all leasehold, and we do not find that the system operates to the detriment of the individual or the State, but rather to the good of all concerned. There is a steady stream of money going into the coffers of the State in the shape of rent, whereas if we had parted with the land in fee-simple the rents would be going into the pockets of private individuals.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: And the State would get the capital sum.

Mr. DUNSFORD: What is the capital sum we have received for our lands? We have parted with 14,000,000 acres of land, for which we have received £7,000,000, an average of about 10s. per acre for all lands, including town lands. Those lands now, according to divisional board and municipal valuations, are worth £33,000,000. Surely, then, the hon. gentleman cannot say that the State has received the capital sum for those lands! I contend that it is very unwise to continue the selling of lands. This Bill allows the selling of not only town and country lands but of agricultural homesteads, grazing farms, and pre-emptions. To emphasise the evil effects of selling land in Australia—for similar laws have prevailed in the other colonies—I will quote a few figures. I find that up to 1893 no less than 124,172,000 acres of land have been parted with in fee-simple in Australia, and that this vast area is held by 1,225 persons, which gives about 20,000 acres for each individual. Another evil is referred to in Coghlan's "Wealth and Progress of New South Wales," from which I shall read a short extract. On page 668, Coghlan says—

"A comparison of the area dealt with in the following table shows how fast the original conditional purchasers of Crown lands are dispossessing themselves of their holdings, whilst the area selected does not exhibit a tendency to increase at anything like the same rate. An examination of the table reveals the fact that since 1882 only there have been 26,599,813 acres of conditional purchases transferred as against 14,649,037 acres applied for—a difference of 11,950,776 acres, which have gone to increase the large estates, distinctly to the detriment of healthy settlement."

Coghlan also points out that much of this has gone by way of mortgage to companies and financial corporations. I will not enter into details, but certainly the lands lately applied for do not in any way come up to the amount which is rapidly slipping away from the original owners. If hon. members will turn to page 47 of the Bill they will find that opportunities are to be given to mortgagees to enter upon and take possession of any land, or to sell the holding by public auction. This is a new kind of eviction that is creeping up in Queensland. In Ireland eviction is generally undertaken by the landlord; here the usurer, the Shylock, comes along, and we give him power to evict the tenants of the Crown. Why should those financial institutions be enabled by the State to evict men whom they have at their mercy, and either retain possession of holdings or sell them by public auction? As has been pointed out, the holder himself, even if he was not mortgaged, could not sell his land by public auction. Why should financial institutions have the privilege of crowbarring a man out and selling his home over his head? Men struggling for a living on the soil, and who have been forced by the neglect of the State into the arms of the usurers, should be protected by the State. Their homes should be protected before anything. I will go further, and say that private mortgagees ought not to be permitted by the State to get any hold at all upon the tenants of the State, and if they require financial aid the State should give it to them. At present their liberties are interfered with by the institutions, and it is an evil that is growing in the colony. I hope that in committee the Minister will see that it is only right that this class of persons should be protected. The hon. member for Normanby, when endeavouring to refute certain statements made by the leader of the Labour party, said that in South Australia the produce of the farmers only averaged in value £1 per acre, and that farmers in Queensland were more prosperous because they got a better return from the land than that. Yet we find that in South Australia, although the returns are so small, there are five and a-half acres per head of population under cultivation, whereas in Queensland, where the returns are so much greater, there is less than half an acre per head of population under cultivation. How is this? There must be some other cause outside that of the production per acre. If farmers can receive a larger reward for their labour here one would think there would be a greater rush for land. Does it not point to the fact that it is bad land laws which prevent

men from putting the land under cultivation? Surely otherwise people would rush in where there is a chance to make a living. The hon. member for Bulimba pointed out that in Queensland young men did not care to go on the land; they wanted to obtain Government billets —to become Civil servants in however low a capacity. Why is that? Is it because they do not like farming in itself? Not at all. The fact is that if they go on the land they are not sure that there will be any reward for their labour. The Civil servant knows that his salary, small as it may be in some cases, is secured to him. The farmer may earn a lot more, but is it his own? He has paid away a large amount of rent to the State, or purchase-money to a private owner; he has to lay out a large amount of capital, and he is never sure that he will get any return for either his labours or his capital. This should teach us that those who are willing to run all the risks should be assisted by the State to obtain better land and cheaper capital. The hon. member for Normanby—speaking, I presume, from a pastoralist standpoint—said that the farmers would have to look to Europe for a market. I deny that they will have to do that for some years yet. We have home markets which are not supplied. I am sure we have at Charters Towers; and even if the present market were supplied, that should not prevent the farmers from increasing their output, because where close settlement springs up towns now unheard of will be formed, and the population and home consumption will be increased. If we increase the prosperity of the people at the same time that we increase production, we shall also increase the consumption. The hon. member for Normanby forgot that the pastoralists are compelled to look to European markets. Everything they produce has to be sent away, and so far as the meat industry is concerned, the European market has not turned out very profitable, but if the Premier keeps his promise and wipes out the middlemen, the pastoralists will become prosperous. I desire to say a word or two in regard to the mining laws of the colony, so far as they are referred to in this Bill. I think all mining and mineral lands should be under the administration of the Mines Department. It is wrong to have two departments clashing with one another. If you want a road, or a lane, or a reserve proclaimed, you have to go to both of these departments, and matters get so complicated that I hope the Minister will give his attention to this suggestion. I am sure that it will save much work and ease the Lands Department a great deal. Under the Goldfields Homestead Leases Act lands are leased for twenty-one years, and areas may be leased from half an acre to forty acres at 1s. per acre, but the minimum rent is 5s. Within a municipality the maximum area obtainable is half an acre. Within two miles of a municipality the maximum is five acres, and beyond that forty acres, and there can be only one holding. These forty-acre holdings are used principally as homes, and as the land is not of much use for anything outside gold-mining, it requires a great amount of work to make the soil grow anything, so that the rent of 1s. per acre is very heavy, and I hope the Minister will consider the matter. I also wish to point out that an area up to twenty-five acres may be applied for by a gold-mining company, but while they apply for this for gold-mining purposes, they also have some sort of right to prevent anyone else from settling upon the surface of the land.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member is now going too much into details. If he merely wishes to mention these Acts by way of reference he may do so, but he cannot discuss the details of an Act which is not before us. It is not embodied in this Bill, and is entirely a separate matter.

Mr. DUNSFORD: I will finish by saying that I think the surface of these lands should be reserved for miners who may wish to reside upon it. Some people have sold residence areas upon these lands, and have obtained large sums for them. I object to that, and think that in all further dealings with lands on goldfields the surface should be reserved. At present miners are forced to live a long way from their work through the monopoly of these surfaces. I shall not say any more now, but when the Bill gets into committee I hope to be able to offer some suggestions which will improve it.

Mr. CORFIELD: I move the adjournment of the debate.

The PREMIER: It is too early.

Mr. CORFIELD: In common with other hon. members I must congratulate the Secretary for Lands upon being possessed of the industry and patience exhibited in this Bill, and the hope that its merits will cause it to be passed in a complete and satisfactory manner. The Bill bears so much upon preceding Acts, without making any very great change, except in a very few matters, that it seems very difficult to discuss it except in committee. Still, there are many new proposals which I wish to see further explained both as regards their necessity and their utility. One of these is in regard to the payment of rent upon the full area of the leased country, or, in the words of the Act, there is to be no allowance for "unavailable" country, which, I think, is likely to raise awkward difficulties between the Crown and its tenants. So far as I have been able to learn from a perusal of the Bill, I do not see that the area for homesteads is to be increased. That has been for years past a subject of discussion, and it was generally considered that an increased area would be a step in the right direction. Of course I am now referring to the ordinary homestead selector at 2s. 6d. an acre with five years' continuous residence under the old Acts. I see that clause 128 of the Bill allows of a much larger area, but at a much higher rate. The principle having been adopted of allowing a homestead selector to hold a grazing farm, I am of opinion that the maximum might be increased to 1,280 acres, and the distance extended to thirty miles. I see that the Minister is inclined to enforce survey before selection, but there is one great hardship which I do not see that he has removed; that is the provision by which six months must elapse before the selector can enter into possession of his farm. As there seems to be a desire to extend the grazing farm system, I suggest that six months before a man can enter upon possession of his land is altogether too long; some relief in that direction is needed. There are cases in point where the Minister's approval is required to confirm the applications, but whether the board's or the Minister's approval is necessary is a small matter compared with the question as to what use is the board, or the court with its increased membership, if the Minister is still a factor to be consulted, as provided in this Bill. I hope that, as the Bill is silent upon the question of the appointment of a legal gentleman as the third member of the court, the Minister will not go out of his way to make such an appointment, because in dealing with our Crown lands there should be very few if any legal points involved. This Bill, although cumbersome, does not appear to me to need the presence of a barrister. The hon. gentleman in charge of it has said that he has adopted the phraseology of the Act of 1884, which is a model of clearness; and so far as my own experience goes it was only upon one or two cases that a

decision upon points of law was needed. I would much prefer to see the appointment of some gentleman of practical and modern experience upon the value and capabilities of land and the difficulties that the occupants have to work under, and that is not to be expected of a legal gentleman, no matter how great his ability may be. With all due deference to the Minister, I think it much easier to lay down a hard-and-fast rule for particular districts than for the whole country, which is what he has done when he fixes the minimum rent for the coastal districts, the Western Downs, and the comparatively inferior country of the far West. The far West is separated from the rest of Queensland by the climate, the scarcity of grass, the small rainfall, and distance from market. That country should receive special treatment and consideration. This Act expressly declares that the rent shall not be lower than 10s. per square mile. I am now speaking of pastoral leases proper. I do not say that that rent is too high, or that it is not low enough ; all I know is that the pastoral lessees say that the present rent of from 12s. 6d. to 15s. a square mile is altogether too high. If, as has been asserted, the rabbits are spreading in the country, and if under high rents and the conditions to which I have alluded the lessee cannot bear the further strain of erecting rabbit-proof wire netting, is it not possible that the whole of this country may yet be thrown upon the hands of the Crown? When a minimum rent was fixed as a principle of our land laws rabbits, ticks, and other pests were unknown. I think the Bill should declare that portion of the country an unsettled district, so that it might receive distinctive treatment. The provision giving the land to the highest bidder, instead of making the applicants draw lots for it, is a good one if only for the sake of consistency—to discountenance the practice of gambling—but I hold that it is not so much the duty of the Crown to obtain the highest rent for land as to see that the most suitable person has as good a chance as any others to secure the land. And such a person though poorer will have an equal chance with a more wealthy applicant under the lottery system that he will not get if the land is put up to auction. I hope therefore to see this provision amended in committee. As it is late I shall not detain the House much longer. There are several other matters to which I would like to refer, but I can do so in committee. Taking it altogether the Bill is a good comprehensive one. I hope it will prove all that I wish it to be—conducive to the interests of the country generally and assist its closer settlement.

Mr. STORY: If my voice will last for a few minutes I would like to say a few words about this Bill. It has been suggested to me that I should move the adjournment of the debate, and I think that would be the best thing to do.

The PREMIER: Do not make any mistake, Mr. Story. You have made a little speech already, and you cannot speak again on the second reading.

Mr. MURRAY: Except by permission of the House.

Mr. STORY : If I must go on, there is something I have got to say, and I am bound to say it. I wish the debate had been adjourned, and under the circumstances, the Minister will excuse me for not complimenting him on the great patience, the great industry, and the great skill he has displayed in producing this Bill. I will leave the compliments to a better time. Before I actually discuss the Bill itself, it is necessary to say that I represent a pastoral district altogether, though my position has always been perfectly plain in the matter of resumptions. I have always contended that the squatters receive an equivalent in the increased tenure, and the resumptions must take place when the land is required for closer settlement. Of course it is only a truism to say that all our land legislation is experimental. We know what laws we make, but it is impossible to tell how they will affect other people. We can only judge as time goes on how our experiments work. The first question which most hon. members have dealt with is the matter of the constitution of the Land Court. I am in favour of the suggestion that there should be a another member of the court, but that the three members should form a court of appeal. The appeal to the Supreme Court was a privilege which few could avail themselves of. Hon. members have said there have only been two appeals to the Supreme Court, but I know that there would have been 200 if it had not been for the cost. In nearly every case the pastoral lessees have been dissatisfied with the decisions given on the evidence brought forward, and if the Government would have allowed them to make a test case of a dozen they would have appealed, but where men have individually to fight their cases before the Supreme Court, the fact of the matter is that they cannot afford it. If hon members have ever seen the assembling of a land court in a Western town they will admit that no such thing is known in any civilised country outside of Russia. First of all the commissioner comes along, and travels over certain runs and inspects them. Now I say, not without fear of contradiction, because I know I shall be contradicted, but I say—and I am certain I am right—that the commissioner is not in a fit position to judge as to the value of the country that he inspects. How, in the western country, can a man coming there for two or three weeks, and doing a bit of inspection, judge of the carrying capacity of a run as well as the man who works it? There is nothing to show that these commissioners are monuments of success in the way of squatting themselves, that their word should be taken in preference to that of the men who have lived in the district most of their lives. After the commissioner has made a valuation then the Land Court comes down, and they bring a barrister with them. These tenants of the Crown are not defaulting tenants. They have paid their rent regularly; they took up the country in a half-finished state; they have made it, reclaimed it, and when they appear before the court they bring in their hands a new colony which they have created and handed over to the State. And although they come to tell the truth they are confronted with a barrister—treated as criminals before a court. Men are brought from Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane, and knowing that they have a trained barrister to contend against they have to hire a man to come and plead their case before the Land Court. So far as I have seen, the Land Board take into consideration no earthly thing but the carrying capacity of the run. They do not take into consideration whether anything is made out of it, the amount that has been spent in making it carry what it does carry, or the interest upon that expenditure. They simply say, "Your country will carry a certain amount of stock, and therefore we assess it at a certain rate." I may say to my hon. friend and old schoolfellow, Mr. Lord, "Your country will carry fifty head of cattle to the square mile." He cannot disprove it. He can only say, "I have done so and so." He cannot prove that I am wrong. Neither can these gentlemen prove that the commissioner is wrong, except so far as their experience for a great number of years proves to them that he is wrong. At any rate, the Land Board always lean towards the commissioner, the barrister pleads for him, and the result is the rent is generally raised 50 per cent. Now, under the Divisional Boards Act they take the actual value

of the land in rating; they have nothing to do with improvements. If a man builds a palace on his land they do not increase the rating, but in the case of the pastoral lessee, the more improvements he goes in for the more rent he has to pay. On one station out our way, within the last six years they have spent £42,000 in bores and rabbit-proof fencing; and that is on leased ground, mind you. There is no freehold. We are told by some hon. members that a man will make a rock blossom like a rose if it is freehold, but that on leasehold it will become a wilderness. I can tell hon. members that the man I speak of has put such improvements on the land as would astonish them, and people from the south coming out there wonder that they have the heart and pluck to do it upon leased land. They talk on the other side about the different rent the squatters pays to that paid by the grazing farmer, but I shall prove in the few minutes that there is not such a difference as hon. members contend. But even if it were so, the squatter went where the grazing farmer, the selector, and the dairy farmer, and the men who hang on to the Government for help could not possibly have gone; they cleared the way for these others, and they did their work well. More honour to them for going there. Yet hon. members talk about increasing the rents of these men! That country would never have been selected if it had been left for the grazing farmer or the selector. We are constantly being told that it is time for the squatter to go. It is like children saying of their father, who has made a reputation and a living for them, "Oh, the old man is done; let him go." But where will you get such men as Fisher, Whittingham, Cobb and Co., the Armstrongs, the Kirkes, and others like them? I do not think it sounds well just now at the termination of their leases for members to say that the squatter has had his day, and he must go. He has had his day, but he has done what could not be done by those who come after him. Before I go any further I shall just compare a few of the pastoral rents. It is not so much that I am anxious to disprove what hon. members say, but still it is rather absurd for them to repeat in a sort of parrot cry that the ordinary rent paid by the squatter is 12s. or 14s. a square mile, whilst the grazing farmer pays £4 per square mile. Just allow me to quote from the last reassessments in St. George. We know that £4 a square mile is 1½d. an acre. Well, Curriwillinghi has been assessed at £2 15s. per square mile—that is 1$\frac{3}{5}$d. an acre—and there are any amount of grazing farms in my district which can be had for ¾d. an acre. I shall read a few more from this list to show what is really paid for pastoral land: Gulnarbar, £1 15s. per square mile; Doondi, £2 5s.; Noondoo, £2 10s.; Bullamon, £2; Hollymount, £1; Weeyan, £1 1s.; Collyben, £1 10s. 6d.; Cubbie, £2 7s. 6d.; Gnoolooma, £2 7s. 6d.; Fairymount, 12s. 6d. All the rest are from £1, £1 1s., up to £2 10s. There is not one of them less than £1 a square mile.

Mr. DANIELS: Have you got the unavailable area? Generally there is more unavailable country than they pay rent for.

Mr. STORY: I do not think so. Here is the unavailable column, and this is what is said about Curriwillinghi: Available, 122 square miles; unavailable, 0; total, 122 square miles; first period, £2; second period, £2 15s. That is a higher rent than is paid about the Nebine for grazing farms, and a higher rent than is asked for the Charlotte Plains resumption. I do not wish to go back again over the ground, but I point out, in connection with the commissioner's valuation, that Gulnarbar is assessed at £1 15s., whilst Weelamurra and Widgeegoara are assessed at £1 13s. Of course hon. members know the difference between heaven and elsewhere; I know the difference between these stations, and the idea of putting down £1 13s. to Weelamurra and £1 15s. for Gulnarbar is a farce. There are scores of others I could contrast, and which prove that the commissioners have no knowledge of the comparative values of the country they inspect.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Are they both for the same period?

Mr. STORY: Yes. I say that the man who values country lands should know the whole country. The man who lives on the head waters of the Moonie thinks that country like that is tip-top country because he has never seen anything else. When I came from the West I thought that there was nothing created like the Warrego country; but when I saw the country about Warwick, Pittsworth, and Killarney I began to think that I was a bit wrong. The man who values our lands, though he should have local knowledge, so that he may understand the local conditions, should be a man who can compare sugar lands with the lands out West, and compare the Western lands with the lands in the South. He should know when land is worth £1 per acre, and when it is worth only 3d. per acre. I am not going to talk of other countries. I have been ill for some time and confined to my house. I have not heard any of the speeches on this question since the Secretary for Lands spoke on Tuesday week, but I have read the speeches in *Hansard*, and when I saw that the hon. member for Bulloo went back as far as human memory could reach, I looked up Leviticus to see if I could get any land law there that the hon. member knew nothing about, because I did not think the hon. member had looked there; but I could not find anything that I could compare with this Bill. I found many regulations as to the jubilee year and that sort of thing, but there was nothing that would help me to make a good long speech. I shall just deal straight away with the things which I notice in the Bill. The squatter now pays rent for the whole of the resumed portion of his run until it is selected. There is no doubt our present Secretary for Lands is not only the political head of the department, but the practical head as well, and he has a thorough knowledge of the land he is dealing with, and all sides must admit that in connection with the land which is now thrown open there is no loss of rent to the Crown. It is a very hard condition; but I must say that it is necessary. When land is thrown open at a certain rent, and it is not taken up for some time, the rent is reduced, and at last it comes down to this—that the selector who takes it up fixes his own rent. If the country is not good it will not be taken up, and the squatter is in a pretty good position, because there is land thrown open for selection now which will not be touched for many years to come, and they will have to pay rent for the resumed area, as they have at present. The fact that it is thrown open is a benefit to the country, and now that we get the full rent for it the State will suffer no loss. I think the rent should be reduced periodically. If you keep a high rent on a resumed area you are practically giving the country to the squatter for ever, because you can put on such a rent that nobody will select the land, and it is only a farce throwing it open. So long as the rent is reduced periodically no one can complain. I would make this suggestion to the Minister, which comes from a thorough knowledge of the local wants: That when land is thrown open in any district there should be a list of every selection that is thrown open sent to the local paper, and that the list should be revised on the first of every month by the land agent, and 100 or 300 slips printed off and given to the land agent for distribution. Then any man in Victoria or New South Wales who

wanted to take up country, and wrote to the land agent at, say, Cunnamulla, asking, "Will you be good enough to supply me with particulars of land thrown open in your district?" could have one of those slips sent to him. He could also write to Winton and Barcaldine and other places, and thus by the same mail get particulars of all the lands open in Queensland for selection at that date, with the areas and rents. I know that the land agent in our district —than whom there is no better in the colony— gets numerous letters from persons wanting to know the rainfall, area, class of country, and everything else connected with the lands available for selection, and that he has to write interminable replies week after week to persons in the other colonies applying for such information, whereas if he had slips pulled as I have suggested he could enclose one of those to any man who wanted to select. With regard to withdrawals of land from selection, I see that the Minister can withdraw country in urgent cases. I hope that such cases will be very seldom; that land which has been once thrown open will not be withdrawn except under very great necessity, as it is a most disappointing thing for a man to go to the office expecting to get land, and then find that it has been withdrawn from selection. I observe that it is proposed that after an application has been made to the commissioner's court the confirmation will be in the hands of the Minister, and that will be a very great advantage. Before the papers went travelling all round the colony after the Land Board, and in some cases men have had to wait months before their application was confirmed. I know one man, named Campbell, who had to wait seven months before he could get a license to occupy, and he was paying rent during the whole of those seven months. I would suggest to the Minister that it would be an improvement if it were provided that, although a selector has to pay the rent and survey fee when he makes his application, he should not be charged rent until his occupation license is issued, which may be a month, or two months, after the date of his application. It is surely not, under any circumstances, fair to charge a man rent for country which is unoccupied, and he cannot occupy it until he gets a license. In many cases in our district men have come up with stock ready to occupy, and had it not been for the courtesy and good feeling of the squatters, who allowed them to go on the land before they got their license, there would have been a great deal of trouble. I hardly know of one case where such permission was refused. With regard to pre-emptions, I am not fond of them somehow. I thought it was a fine thing at first, but I am now more in favour of giving the present tenant a preferential lease of his selection, for this reason, that in some cases the improvements on a 10,000 or 20,000-acre block are so great that you might just as well pre-empt a white elephant as to pre-empt them. A good bore would water 60,000 or 80,000 acres of land; and only fancy a man with 2,000 acres of land and a bore, houses, and other improvements on that land. It is very seldom indeed that the improvements are put on the best part of the land. Out our way yards, houses, etc., are put on a murilla ridge, or a sand ridge, and not on the black soil, and if a man had to pre-empt his improvements he would probably have to take the very worst part of his selection. The Secretary for Lands was good enough to say that there are many things in this Bill which are debateable, and I think this is a matter that will stand discussion. There is a bore at Hariman which is on a sand ridge. At Charlotte Plains there is a very large bore, and it is on a hard murilla ridge. Victo has beautiful black soil country with good Mitchell grass, and his bore is on a mulga ridge. It was put there so as to water two selections, and as he could not water them from the lower land it would be very hard for that man to have to pre-empt the worst part of his holding. With regard to the re-assessment of rents, I do not see why we cannot have a fixed annual increase in the rents, and do away with this re-assessment and the summoning of people to fight against their landlord and the landlord against the tenant. Why not have an annual increase of rent—fixity of tenure and fixity of rent—never mind if it is 1 per cent. or 2 per cent? It would save an immense lot of bother, and would come to very much the same thing in the end. One hon. member, when speaking the other evening, said, "But if we did that we should be fixing the rent people would have to pay for thirty years." But that is not such an astounding thing after all. The Musgrave Wharf was let the other day, and a certain rent was fixed for the first seven years, a certain larger rent for the second seven years, a certain larger rent still for the next seven years, and so on. Why should not you fix the rental of country districts in exactly the same way? A fixed annual increase or a fixed rent would do away with those re-assessments. All the present rents of grazing farms should be reappraised. The thing we want to get at is not the carrying capacity of the land, but the capital value of the land, and base the rent on that. If land is worth 2s. 6d. or 5s., or 10s. or 15s. an acre, let it be put down at what it is worth; then you get a proper basis. I will quote a case or two in point. Aylward has 10,000 acres on the Warrego. He has a good frontage, with blacksoil country and Mitchell grass. It will keep one sheep to two acres, and he pays 1d. a year rental. Twenty-five miles back, on Bow Creek, where there is no permanent water and no Mitchell grass, where it is average country which will take five acres to keep a sheep, he pays a rental of 1½d. Cole, at St. George, has 3,718 acres. It is dense pine scrub, with not more than 500 acres of cleared land, and he pays a rental of 2d. That could not be helped at first, because the rents were fixed by local people. There are scores of men living at Cunnamulla now who have never been out of it, and there are scores living on the Moonie who know nothing of the Western country. A man to fix the rent must know the country generally; he must compare the country he sees to the country he knows elsewhere, and he will not then call certain land tip-top when he has seen better in other places. In a day's ride in the Balonne district you can get murilla, mulga, rosewood, spinifex, dense scrub, and grand Mitchell grass country. If you classify the country in great blocks you classify all that together, and upon that you cannot possibly get a fair basis of valuation. With regard to the clause dealing with priority, I think that will be moderately safe so long as the forfeiture is strictly enforced. If a man has priority of application he has to pay a certain amount, and if he does not proceed with his application he loses it. If that is not strictly enforced he will pick the eyes out of the country. In the matter of auction as against ballot, I must admit that there is danger on all sides, and unless the Minister has some way to make it safe I do not see how the danger can be obviated. Take country with a good waterhole. A man coming along with a lot of travelling sheep wants it. He would go to the auction, and it would pay him, for a 10,000-acre block, to pay 6d. an acre. We can let a 12,000-acre paddock for £60 a month in a case of necessity, so you can imagine how readily such a man would pay £250 for 10,000 acres with a good waterhole. Of course he would throw it up ultimately, but it would block settlement. With the ballot the result would be

the same, and I must confess that I cannot offer a suggestion as to how it is to be made safe. With regard to the closure of roads, clause 212 allows a man to apply for a road running through his selection, and the Minister can give him a lease of it, and he can close that road. I would call the hon. gentleman's attention to section 26 of the Act of 1891, which has been left out of the Bill, no doubt unintentionally. That section gives, in the case of two selections side by side and a road between them, the privilege of one selector to fence half-way down, cross the road, and put up a licensed gate; the other selector did the same. That has acted capitally, and one fence does for the two selections. It will be a very great mistake if that provision is not included in the Bill.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That is provided for in clause 101.

Mr. STORY: Clause 173, dealing with mortgages, does away with the three years' condition. A mortgagee, having taken over a selection, had to offer it for sale within three years by public auction. That is done away with. If so, it is a very great mistake, because people will lend more money on a selection than the selector has any right to borrow. The mortgages will fall in, and it will lead to the aggregation of big estates. They are doing so now, because they can get men to hold them. It is a cruel kindness to allow any man to borrow more money than his business warrants; he only goes to the wall. It is no use talking about crushing the poor man. We all know that no man can expect to succeed in business unless he brings in a moderate amount of capital to help him. If he goes back altogether upon borrowed money, especially in a grazing farm, he is bound to come down; and if the Bill makes it possible for him to borrow easily, he will avail himself of its provisions, and the mortgagee will have his land. I think that should be altered in committee. It is all very well for large companies who want better security for their money, but the result will be that the selectors will all disappear, and there will be nobody but the representatives of financial institutions. Coming to the clause relating to scrubs, is there any advantage in it at all? I must admit when I read it that I thought it an admirable thing, but I worked it out in this way: Take a farm of 10,000 acres, with 2,500 acres of scrub. If the rent is 1d. per acre it will amount to £41 13s. 4d. per annum; or, in five years, to £208 6s. 8d. That he will evade paying. On the other hand, he will have to clear that scrub, and that cannot be done for less than 5s. per acre, so that it will cost him £625 to save £208.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: But he gets a twenty-five years' lease after that at a maximum of 1d.

Mr. STORY: If the rent is fixed and cannot be altered, I think he should have the option of purchasing the farm at the end of the lease at as low a price as possible, because if the scrub is left it will grow again. There are thousands of acres that it would pay the Government over and over again to give away to anyone who would work the land. When I was going from St. George to Nindigully, we went through one of the Bombah resumed paddocks. It was good rich soil, and when it belonged to the station it was perfectly clean, but there is now Bathurst burr for miles; it is growing on the roads. Every flock of sheep that goes along the road takes the burr further down, and I am sure no man will select on that country and clear it for 5s. per acre, because the burr will come up fresh after every rain. It would pay the Government to give the land away, because the burr is going right down the Moonie with every flood. I do not see why a man should take scrub when there is clean country; but if you want him to take it you must be as liberal as possible, because in a few years the Government will have to take the work in hand, or else all the selectors will be ruined and every stock route will be a mass of burr. Some time ago I was at Killarney with the Attorney-General, and saw prickly-pear growing nearly everywhere. It was round the homesteads and on the railway banks, and the men who let it grow there ought never to be allowed to put their foot on the land again. I was brought up as a farmer, and know how a man loves the farm he cultivates, and I say that the men who allowed this land to get into this state ought to be on board ship and never on the land. They could have no affection for the land. These people walked to Sunday school between rows of prickly-pear, when they would be far better employed in pulling it up, and proving themselves fit for earth before they thought of going to Heaven. It is a scandal to see land allowed to get into such a state through sheer laziness. There is a clause which allows a tenant to improve resumed areas, and that provision ought to be extended to occupation licenses. There is one case that I could quote—that of Cypress Downs, which was divided and thrown open to selection. The rent was too high, and the lessee threw up both the lease and the resumed part. It is wild country, and I think a century will pass before it will be taken for selection. However, somebody has taken it under occupation license, and wants to put improvements upon it. But even the squatter has to borrow money to put on improvements; a company will not lend him money unless he has some asset, and land without a lease is not an asset. I believe the occupier of this lease applied to the board to be allowed to put down four tanks of 10,000 yards each, but they would not let him put down a bore. If a man out in that country suggests putting down a bore the Government should go to him at once, take him to some quiet corner and get him to say it again, and let him do it. That country will not be fit for anything for the next fifty years, except to be held under occupation license. The Secretary for Lands talked about the necessity for elasticity, and I think this case might fairly be left in his hands. There is one thing I would like to ask the hon. gentleman. In the case of a man fencing a resumed area, and this area abuts on a leasehold, it is impossible to make the leaseholder pay his share of cost of the fence, because it is on a resumed area. There is no arrangement made for that in the Bill. The hon. member for Normanby talked about the absolute necessity for rabbit fencing anywhere and everywhere, but he does not know our district or he would know that there are a couple of million acres taken up there before the Act of 1892; the runs there have the ordinary six wire fences round them, and you cannot compel those men to wire-net. There are only a very few blocks in the midst of the country open, and it would be a palpable absurdity to make the men who took them up wire-net those few blocks in the midst of an immense area of country that is not wire-netted. It could be provided that those taking up those blocks need not fence with wire-netting unless they are given notice to do so. If they are compelled to fence it will cost them £60 a mile, and it will do neither the State, their neighbours, or themselves any particular good. In the case of country proclaimed open for selection, I suggest to the Minister that if it is intended to proclaim that lands within a certain area must be wire-netted, the rabbit board of the district should be consulted. They might be able to show by charts that the fencing of certain blocks in the district would give a continuous fence that would be of great use to the country, and it might be found

that less fencing than was thought would be necessary. Then, if the selector is obliged to net, he should be allowed to order his own wire, the rabbit board paying him for the wire at the nearest railway station. If he is not allowed to do that he will not be able to fence his country at all. The only way he can wire now to obtain the benefits of the Act is to apply to the rabbit board for the wire, and it may be twelve months before he can get it. In the meantime the station stock can come on to his selection, and he cannot impound them because his land will not be fenced. There he is, he can do nothing at all with the land, his hands are tied, and he is waiting for another body to move before he can do his own work. The men in the West are not accustomed to that sort of thing. When they have got work to do they want to start it at once, and if they have to wait until others start it will be the greatest block to settlement in those districts that you could possibly have. A rabbit board may very justly tell a man that he cannot have his wire for six months' from now, there may come a wet time and it may be months beyond that before he gets it. Then he can only fence in country like this in particular seasons. He cannot fence in a wet season, and if a drought is on he cannot fence because he has no water. It is absolutely necessary if he is to wire-net that he should be allowed to get the wire-netting himself. Then if there is any delay he will have himself to blame, and if you compel him to apply to the rabbit board there will be a lot of trouble and vexation about it. On reading *Hansard* a glow of gratitude swelled up in my bosom when I saw the amount of notice and kindly consideration the Warrego district had received in my absence. I may tell some hon. gentlemen that I am able to run the Warrego district as its representative, and when they have made a lot of unfounded assertions about it they must not be offended if I contradict them on the first opportunity. The hon. member for Toowoomba, Mr. Fogarty, said that the whole of the beautiful frontages of the Warrego had been taken up and secured by the large holders, and the selectors got nothing at all, and had to go away back. I do not know when Mr. Fogarty was there.

Mr. HARDACRE: The *St. George Standard* says that.

Mr. STORY: The hon. member will pardon me for saying that I should like to see that before I can credit it. I know that the owner of the *St. George Standard* was never on the Warrego.

Mr. HARDACRE: It is in the issue for 12th July of last year.

Mr. STORY: Well, you will take it from a man who actually knows every fence and every man, woman, and child on the Warrego. I will tell you who are the selectors on the Warrego. Starting from the Claverton boundary on the western side of the river, they are, Bates, Schmidt, Rossiter, Beardmore, Stacy, Dawson, Goodwin, Layden, Aylward, and Burton. On the eastern side, then going down and starting from the Claverton boundary, there are Maloney, Doyle, Seaton, Aylwin, O'Connor, Philpot E., and Philpot P., and that goes down to Cunnamulla. Now, the fact is, that the frontages, instead of being all secured by the squatters were secured by the selectors. Coongoola has got a leasehold, of course, with a certain amount of frontage, but it has only got its half, and every other one of these selections has frontage to the river, and is either actually abutting on the river or upon a road that is next to the river, where they can put up a three-wire fence that the sheep can get through to water at the river. So that all that statement is nonsense. Mr. Groom, in speaking of the squatters, referred to the Fairbairn Brothers and the enormous amount of money they were making. It looks well in the prospectus, but it seems strange that they should be so rich that they do not want to get rich at that rate any more. Perhaps theirs is the one case that stands out, and everybody is quoting it now; but how many cases show entirely the opposite? Will you put against Fairbairn's case the case of C. B. Fisher, one of our own Australian natives, who came into Queensland and poured out hundreds of thousands of pounds here? He took up station after station in wild country, with no water and unfenced, and he turned it all into sheep country, with water everywhere, fences, and six or seven woolsheds. He had large armies of men employed there, and he always paid the highest wages. There never was a man who worked for any of the Fishers that did not swear by them as the best employers that were ever in Queensland. Every man who worked for them got 20s. in the £1. There were men, women, and children there, and families grew up on the place; and who got the benefit of it all? Not the man who brought the energy and brains to bear on it. I heard a man say that if the whole civilised world was one sheep farm, C. B. Fisher could work it without help if he could manage it by himself, and he was the only man who never got 6d. out of all his anxiety and all the money and trouble he spent, and all the people he helped. It is nonsense to talk like this, and say these men are making money and are paying no rent. All of the old hands have gone with nothing left out of the money they have invested, and their places are filled by new men. The hon. member for Toowoomba says you cannot get men on the land without cheap money. I don't know why the farmer should have cheap money any more than the rest of us. We all want cheap money, and we can all get it if we have security to offer. If the Government is going to help the farmer with cheap money let them help everyone. It was not so in the old days, but it seems to me that when a man wants to make a living in these days he puts his arm round the neck of the Government and says, "Help me to make it." If they help the farmer with cheap money let them give the same advantages to everyone else. The hon. member for Cambooya has said that the average rental of grazing farms was £4 per square mile and of runs 16s. per square mile, and it has got down as low as 12s. a square mile. I do not know the wretched country he quotes as being let at 12s., a square mile, and I don't want to know it.

Mr. DANIELS: I got the figures from the Lands Office.

Mr. STORY: What is the use of quoting figures in that random sort of way? He might as well get his figures out of the family Bible as quote them in the one-sided way he did. I will give you some rents of the runs:—Coongoola, £1 17s. 6d.; Dynevor Downs, £1 2s.; Bingara, £1 6s. 6d.; Charlotte Plains, £1 13s.; Wellamurra, £1 13s.; Noorama, £1 12s.; Bowra, £1 15s. 6d.; Widgeegoara, £1 13s.; Tilbotoo and Eulo, £1 3s. 6d.; Bando, £1 6s.; Dundoo, £1 1s. 3d.; Tinnenburra, £1 6s. 6d.; Owangowan, £1 12s.; Humeburn, £1 3s. 9d.; Wild, 15s. 6d. That last is the nearest to the hon. member's figures. Does anyone know Wild? I do, and perhaps that is as much as it is worth. And then last we have Cunnamulla run at £1 17s. 6d. per square mile. I hope I have made it perfectly clear that the grazing farmer is not, as has been asserted, paying six times as much for his land as the pastoral lessee. I have shown, and I can show it over and over again, that the squatter has in some cases to pay more than the average rental for selections in the same district. On the resumed portion of Charlotte Plains the rent is ¾d. an acre, and on Curriwillinghi it is 1$\frac{1}{32}$d. The hon. member would be more certain of salvation and would oblige me if he would in

future avoid making these misstatements, which are liable to mislead people. They all appear in *Hansard*, and it is not everyone who has the opportunity of going to the Lands Office for information. The worst of it is that such statements are read and repeated. I intend to support the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. BELL moved the adjournment of the debate.

Question put and passed; and the resumption of the debate made an Order of the Day for Thursday next.

CUSTOMS DUTIES BILL.

MESSAGE FROM THE COUNCIL.

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

The House adjourned at twenty-three minutes to 12 o'clock.