

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 19 OCTOBER 1898

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2. There being no unnecessary delay, there can be no responsibility attached to anyone.

SELECTION IN THE BARCOO AND MITCHELL ELECTORATES.

Mr. KERR asked the Secretary for Lands—

1. What lands are being opened for grazing farms selection in the Barcoo and Mitchell electorates respectively?

2. Is it the intention of the Lands Department to throw such land open in large blocks of 20,000 acres, or in small blocks for close settlement?

3. How many of such selections are being opened in blocks of from 15,000 to 20,000 acres?

4. How many in smaller areas, and where?

5. What are the proposed terms of lease of the large selections?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS replied—

MITCHELL ELECTORATE.

1. Grazing selections are being opened on Green Hills, Lerida, Darr River Downs, Kensington Downs, Coreena, Clare, Tocai, Vergemont, and Hobartville Runs.

2. Both.

3 and 4. Thirty-two portions on the Runs Kensington Downs, Green Hills, Darr River Downs, Lerida, Coreena, and Clare, of which seventeen are over 15,000 acres, and fifteen are under 15,000 acres. Areas on the other runs unknown until surveys are effected.

5. Twenty-eight years.

BARCOO ELECTORATE.

1. Grazing selections are being opened on Maryvale, Ellenvannen, and Warbreccan Runs.

2. Both.

3 and 4. Unknown until surveys are effected.

5. Twenty-eight years.

MARSUPIAL PROOF FENCING BILL.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS moved—

That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirability of introducing a Bill to encourage and facilitate the protection of certain lands from the incursion of marsupials, and for other purposes.

Mr. McDONALD: I should like the hon. gentleman to tell us whether this is a very urgent Bill.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It is very important to farmers.

Mr. McDONALD: I'm satisfied. We now know exactly where we are.

Question put and passed.

SUPPLY.

REPORT FROM COMMITTEE.

Mr. ANNEAR, as Chairman of Committees, presented a report from the Committee covering the resolutions passed in connection with the Aide-de-Camp to His Excellency the Governor, Executive and Legislative, and the departments of the Chief Secretary and the Home Secretary, with the exception of the Defence Force.

Resolutions agreed to.

UNIVERSITY BILL.

FIRST READING.

The House, in committee, having affirmed the desirability of introducing this Bill, it was, on the motion of the SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION, read a first time, and the second reading made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

MINING BILL.

SECOND READING.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I rise with a certain amount of diffidence to move the second reading of this Bill. It is the most important Bill I have ever put before the House, and, with the exception of the Land Bill, one of the most important Bills that have ever been put before the House or the country. Of course everyone in this House knows the important place that mining now occupies in this colony.

WEDNESDAY, 19 OCTOBER, 1898.

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

QUESTIONS.

SELECTION ON BANDO RESUMPTION.

Mr. STORY asked the Secretary for Lands—

1. What has caused the long delay in throwing open to selection the blocks on Bando Resumption?

2. Who is responsible for the delay?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS replied—

1. The principal cause of these lands remaining unopened to selection has been the time necessarily occupied in surveying and levelling to admit of selecting the best modes for the channels for conveying the bore water to the farms surveyed, and in preparing plans, etc., for the works. These surveys have now been completed, and the plans and specifications are practically in the same state, and action is being taken to call for tenders for the necessary works. When these have been completed the farms will be opened to selection.

From the first discovery of gold in 1859 up to the present date the mining industry has occupied a very considerable share of attention of the people of this and the neighbouring colonies. I do not know of anything else that has done so much to pioneer this colony and open it up as the miners and the mining industry.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: This Bill is not laid before the House to be worried and put over until next session. I am extremely anxious, as I believe every member on this side is, that this Bill shall be passed and become law this year.

MEMBERS on the Government side: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: It may be said that that is a big undertaking, but when the Bill comes to be discussed it will be found that there are not many big points at issue.

Mr. DAWSON: What?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Yes, I mean that. The three most important things in this Bill are the mining on private property, giving a better tenure to the mining homesteads, and the extension of leases.

Mr. DUNSFORD: Is mining on private property dealt with in this Bill?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: It is in this Bill. This Bill gives the right to mine on private property on gold and mineral fields. The Bill that comes in afterwards will embrace all the private property in the colony. The provisions to give effect to the Mining on Private Property Bill are in this measure, and the other short Bill will embrace all land that has been sold in Queensland.

Mr. DRAKE: Why do you not put all the provisions in this Bill?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Because I think it is better to have two Bills. It is just possible that a good many people might object to one Bill and not object to the other. It is best to get as much as we can, and not aim at too much. At the present time our mining laws are governed by sixteen different Acts of Parliament, besides regulations, and we have attempted to consolidate the whole of those Acts in this Bill. It has been a rather large undertaking, but when the Bill is thoroughly understood I believe most people will be pleased if it becomes law. To my mind the most important alteration is the giving power to miners to go on to freeholds on goldfields and mineral fields, and, if this Bill is passed, this right will be extended to all the private lands in Queensland by the other Bill. The want of a Mining on Private Property Act has been a crying need in this colony for the last ten or twelve years, and, if this Bill passes, the miners will have it. If there are rich deposits of minerals, and particularly of gold—as many miners think there are—on freehold land, miners will have the right to mine on those lands on fairly good terms. With regard to mining homesteads, I suppose there are thousands of acres of land taken up on the various goldfields of the colony, for which the occupants at present pay an annual rent of 1s. per acre. Under present conditions this rent must always continue to be paid; but it is proposed by the Bill that after having paid 1s. a year for thirty years they shall get a title—the same title that they have at present. The land in these mining homesteads is no better than the land we have sold for 2s. 6d. an acre. They have made their homes there, and after having paid rent for thirty years they are entitled to some consideration.

Mr. KEOGH: A freehold.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: It is not a freehold.

Mr. KEOGH: Make it a freehold.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: It is a mining homestead. You can go on it and mine wherever you like. The next most important alteration is the doubling of the area of leases. At the present time no man can take up more than twenty-five acres in one lease, and we purpose making it fifty acres per lease. It is well known to nearly every hon. member that at the present time there are many companies working two leases from one shaft. They have two areas of twenty-five acres each, and put down a shaft in between, and, so far as I can learn, they have never been interfered with. I have never heard of any outcry on the goldfields on that account, and we now propose to allow them to take up fifty acres in a lease. It has been stated that under this Bill it will be possible to take up four fifty-acre leases and put down a shaft in the corner; but we will take care that that does not occur, because the shaft will have to be on each lease.

Mr. DUNSFORD: It does not say so in the Bill. You give no definition of a shaft.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: That is not my fault. I asked the draftsman to give me a definition of a shaft, but I am sorry to say he was unable to do so. However, I shall take care that a clause is inserted that will provide that there must be a shaft on every fifty acres, and they must be manned separately.

Mr. DUNSFORD: It will depend on the administration.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: No. We can put it in such a form that it will be understood by everyone. It is not my intention to give more than fifty acres to a shaft. So far as we know, all the shallow ground on all the main goldfields has been worked, and it is difficult to induce men with capital to subscribe a large amount of capital with only twenty-five-acre leases. We are told by capitalists that they want a larger area. Every hon. member wants to see more capital introduced into the country. We are spending a great deal of money just now in advertising our fields. Last year at the Brisbane Exhibition we spent a good sum in advertising our goldfields, and I think every hon. member will admit that we thereby did good. We purpose going further. It is proposed to go to London next year, and make a display of our minerals there that will compare with that of any country in the world.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. KIDSTON: You have just told us that you do not propose to give investors a larger area.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: There are at present companies working fifty acres from one shaft.

Mr. McDONALD: One hundred and forty acres.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I do not think so. I know of them working fifty acres.

Mr. DAWSON: You know the Mills United?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: That is all they have.

Mr. McDONALD: One hundred and forty acres.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: They have a freehold. There is another important matter. At the present time the Minister may forfeit a lease if the conditions are not fulfilled. Though I do not know that any great hardships have occurred from having that power, I think it is too much power to give to any one man; and in the Bill I purpose altering it so that the Minister will have power to fine for the first two offences, and at the third offence he may either fine or forfeit. I think there has been only one case in which I have exercised that power. It was in the case of a mine on Croydon—the hon. member for Croydon will remember it.

Mr. BROWNE: It was a justifiable case.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: It is too much power to place in the hands of the Minister, because we wish to encourage people on the other side of the world to put their money into our mines, and they have not confidence in doing so until our mining law are somewhat modified.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: They do it.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: But not to any extent. I do not think that since the Day Dawn P.C. was floated about ten years ago we have had any English money worth speaking of. I believe this Bill will induce English capital to come here. If we can accompany the great display we intend making next year in London by a statement like this—"These are the conditions now. You can take up so many acres, and there is not the slightest risk of your mine being forfeited"—it will go a long way towards removing the strong objection people at home have to investing in our mines. I know a great many leases have been taken up in the colony, and a great many efforts have been made at home to float them into companies, but there has been the greatest difficulty in floating them. In fact, I only know of one successful attempt to introduce English capital lately. My hon. friend, the late Premier, formed a small company in the old country, in which he put £1,000 of his own money, to prospect some mines on the Hodgkinson. We have been indebted to British capital in two cases for the opening up of new mines of recent years—notably the Brilliant P.C., on Charters Towers. That was discovered by British money.

Mr. DAWSON: No; by Charters Towers money; by Day Dawn P.C. money.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I know just as much about the matter as the hon. member for Charters Towers. Certainly Mr. Ives was very successful, and made a great deal of money out of the Day Dawn P.C., and he is now living in Ireland—I think at Cork—where he formed a company to work the Brilliant. I do not believe there was a single sixpence of Charters Towers public money put into the mine. One gentleman got a good salary for commencing the mine, and he also got 12,000 shares. The mine was called "Craven's Folly"; people laughed at the idea of putting a shaft down there. The floating of the Brilliant P.C. gave a new lease of life to Charters Towers. It may not have doubled the population, but it certainly added one-third more to the population. That was foreign money coming in.

Mr. DAWSON: Not 6d. of it. £20,000 was bank money advanced.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I never heard it before, and I can hardly believe there was any bank overdraft in it. I believe the whole of the money for putting the shaft down came from Cork. I admit that some of the money went from Charters Towers to Cork, but the whole of the money was subscribed in Cork.

Mr. McDONALD: No.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I may be wrong, but I think I am right. However, everyone will admit that the sinking of that shaft put one-third more population on Charters Towers.

Mr. DAWSON: Without asking for fifty acres either.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: But the people all round got the advantage of the sinking of that shaft. The Victoria Mine with twenty-five acres took up twenty-five acres more, and the Victoria Mine took as much gold out of the reef as the Brilliant. They benefited by those pioneers from Ireland, and so did the Brilliant St. George.

Mr. DAWSON: Pioneers!

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: They were pioneers. I may be wrong, but I understand that the whole of the money subscribed to put the shaft down came from Cork.

Mr. DUNSFORD: It came from the Day Dawn P.C. That was the source.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: A lot of money from the Day Dawn P.C. went out of the colony altogether. Look at Gympie! There is a notable case there. I think some gentlemen from Scotland put down the deepest shaft there. There is the Scottish mine; they discovered a new reef, and they applied for twenty-five acres. It is not all local money that is used in sinking our deep shafts. I had a deputation the other day about some mines on the Palmer; three merchants in Brisbane were putting their money into them, and they wanted more exemption. I admit that mining has done a great deal for Queensland; at the same time nearly everybody who makes anything out of mining in the colony as a rule puts it back into mining, and I think it is only right that we should in every possible way conserve their interests, because we are not short of miners. We can always get as many miners as we want on goldfields. I have always heard that the miners want more work, and the working miner cannot undertake these gigantic undertakings—for sinking a shaft 2,000 or 3,000 feet into the bowels of the earth is a gigantic undertaking. It requires a lot of pluck, a great deal of money, and a good deal of skill.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: And there is a lot of risk.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: And they do not always turn out well. A great many of the deep shafts that have been sunk, and if the owners had 1s. in the £1 of the money they spent, they would think themselves well off. However, very often somebody else comes along and tries them again, and sometimes they turn out all right. Now, annually there are millions of pounds leaving Great Britain, to be placed in the mining industry, and I am sorry that it has not been attracted to Queensland of late. It has gone to the Rand and to Western Australia. I believe in the Rand they can get 640 acres, and at the Raub five square miles. I have seen telegrams to the effect that the Minister for Mines of New South Wales is going to the border of New South Wales and Victoria, to make arrangements in connection with an application for a lease of 2,000 acres to mine in New South Wales.

Mr. DUNSFORD: They can get a few square miles in New Guinea, but that does not make it right.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: It only shows that this is not the only colony that contains gold, and every other country in the world is trying to induce capitalists to invest in their mineral fields. I would be the last man in the world to lock up country against the miner if the miner wants it, but my experience is that the miner wants work. The Etheridge contains 10,000 square miles, not all auriferous, and there are not more than 400 or 500 men there at the present time. The Hodgkinson was opened twenty-five years ago, and a very good field too. I believe no field in the colony offers greater inducements for capitalists, yet I do not suppose there are more than fifty or sixty working miners there now. There are mines three or four miles outside of Charters Towers in which I have invested money in times past, and I believe that if large areas were given deep shafts might be sunk on some of them, but at present they are lying idle. I refer to the Black Jack, the Stockman, and the Princess.

Mr. DAWSON: They are all working.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: They are not working like the Brilliant mine is working. I maintain that if we offered greater inducements we might get strong companies to develop those places. Labour conditions is another item. Hitherto we have not dealt with labour conditions in any Act of Parliament, but always by regulations. I think that we shall have to give more liberal conditions than we have given in the past, and in this Bill I only wish to enact what we are really doing now. The regulation says one man must be put on for one acre on goldfields, and one man for every five acres on mineral fields. I have got a return from the wardens of all the goldfields at the present time—it is only a fortnight old—to let me know how many men are working on leases not on gold, because in the case of mining on gold there is no occasion to limit the number of men. I think, at Charters Towers, the Brilliant St. George has 170 men in connection with twenty-five acres. I find, taking all the fields right through, the average is five acres to one man.

Mr. DUNSFORD: Charters Towers?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Of course plenty of those mines are not working at all; they have been granted exemption.

Mr. DUNSFORD: I suppose you mean leases which have been exempted?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: There is any amount of ground under lease which is not on gold, and some of them are not working at all. At any rate the average is five acres to one man. Would it not be better if we gave it out to the world that we would accept one man to five acres? That is what we are doing at the present time. Mining investors have told me that they could not afford to put on one man to every acre. And although the Minister has power to exempt, he may do so or he may not; and it is a big undertaking to take up a twenty-five-acre or a fifty-acre lease and put on twenty five or fifty men. People cannot afford it, but they might be able to put on five or six men to sink a shaft. That is about as many as can work sinking a shaft. This is what they say: "Though we know that the Minister as a rule gives exemption, still we may be stuck up some day and be asked to put twenty-five men on a twenty-five acre lease. If we are getting gold we do not mind doing that, but if we are not we think it is very hard to cripple us and to prevent us from getting money to work the mines by those conditions." It is only prospecting. I am quite willing to put into the Act what the minimum labour conditions should be.

Mr. DUNSFORD: What do you think they should be?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: One man to five acres on goldfields, and one man to twenty acres on mineral fields. When the Mining Commission went over the different goldfields I do not think they found any complaints about excessive exemptions. On the other hand, they found the miners were satisfied with the present state of things. What I should like to see is that if a man takes up a lease he should remain on it. At present when a man takes up a lease he puts no men on, and applies for a six months' exemption, and often he asks for a six months' further exemption again without putting any men upon it. It is recognised on all goldfields that it is a fair thing to give a man exemption to enable him to find money. It would be far better to say, "If you take up a twenty-five-acre lease you must put five men on—sufficient to sink a shaft; if you do not you must leave it for somebody else to take up." Hitherto, as I said, the practice has been to take up twenty-five acres and apply

for six months' exemption. It is always recommended by the warden; there has been no complaint about it, and working miners and mine owners recognise it, as a general rule. Sometimes they apply for a second six months' exemption. There is a mine on Charters Towers—the Day Dawn School Reserve—that has been exempted for six years, after spending some £40,000; and each time the case has come before the warden there has been no objection.

Mr. DUNSFORD: May not that state of things continue, even though you amend the Act?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Not to the same extent.

Mr. DUNSFORD: It will depend on the administration.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: It is not a nice thing to be continually granting exemptions. Sometimes I am accused of favouritism, but I try to deal equal justice all round. I may make mistakes, but I do not make them intentionally. It would be very much better if people taking up leases knew the least number of men they could employ. With regard to miners' rights, under the proposed system a miner's right will enable a man to work for any minerals in the colony—gold, silver, copper, tin, and so on. At present it only gives the right to work for gold; a man has to take out a mineral license if he wants to work for other minerals. It is also provided that miners' wages shall be protected for one month. At present their wages are not secured against a liquidation, and many cases of great hardship have occurred at Ravenswood on that account. Wages are generally paid fortnightly, and it is considered they should be protected to the extent of two pay-days.

Mr. DAWSON: That does not belong to the Mining Bill at all.

Mr. JACKSON: It is in the Mining Act in Victoria, where wages are protected up to £50.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: If the proposal in the Bill is not sufficient I have not the slightest objection to make the time longer. I know that at Ravenswood men had to go without their pay for three or four months.

Mr. JACKSON: That was an English company; they were waiting for money coming out from home.

Mr. DUNSFORD: That is one of the benefits of foreign capital!

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: We compel foreign companies now to register in Queensland, otherwise they cannot get a lease. That is a further protection; it shows their *bona fides* to a certain extent. I do not propose to go through all the clauses of the Bill. I am anxious to see it become law, and I daresay every clause will be thoroughly debated and thrashed out in committee. I have roughly outlined the main features of the Bill, which contains many important alterations. The main Gold Mining Act was passed in 1874, and since then there have been fifteen amending Acts. We are always getting experience. We know far more about mining now than we did in 1874. At that time there was not a shaft sunk in Queensland deeper than 400 or 500 feet. Now there are shafts considerably more than 2,000 feet in depth. What is wanted is an influx of capital to develop our fields, and this Bill will hold out inducements in that direction without infringing in any way on the rights of miners. There is another important provision to which I must refer—that with reference to homestead areas. At present a man cannot take up more than forty acres, for which he pays 1s. per acre. We propose to increase that to 160 acres outside the five-mile radius, and the rent will be 6d. per acre on the 160 acres. On large goldfields like Charters Towers, the Etheridge, and Croydon,

It is necessary that there should be a lot of small cattle people to provide milk for the inhabitants. In many cases forty acres are not sufficient, and there are many instances where men have taken up three or four homesteads in different names. It is also proposed to give certificates to mine managers as well as to engine-drivers.

Mr. MAUGHAN: What about coal-mines?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The main amendments entitle check-weighers to sue for payment, and that the distance between shafts shall be at least fifty feet. What, to my mind, are the principal features of this Bill are mining on private property, the granting of a better tenure to mining properties, the alteration in the acreage of leases, and the taking away from the Minister the power to forfeit on a first offence and substituting a fine. I think there ought to be a minimum fine. In Victoria it is £100. Those are the main provisions, and I do not want to speak at great length, as I think all the mining members will like to speak on this Bill. I can assure the House that I have a strong desire to see this Bill become part of our legislation this session. It has been wanted for some time past. The year before last we appointed a mining commission, the members of which took a great deal of trouble with their work, and their report is well worth reading by every member of this House. Hon. members will find that a great number of the small and big things they have recommended are embodied in this Bill. We have also had the benefit of the advice of three or four of the principal mining wardens of the colony, and they agree with me about the labour conditions, and also about the size of the leases; and in every way they think this Bill will be an improvement upon the law as it stands at present. Of course I know it is not possible to bring in a perfect Mining Bill. We might pass a Mining Bill every year without giving complete satisfaction. Our land laws every year are being altered, and always will be so altered, and in the same way our mining laws will require to be altered, too, as different circumstances arise. Though I am happy to state that the whole of the mining industry is at present in a flourishing state, and this year is likely to be a record year for the amount of gold won in Queensland, we must remember that a great deal of it is being won from tailings which have accumulated for the last twenty years on Charters Towers. When these tailings are exhausted we will have to look to the future and try to resuscitate some of our old goldfields. I believe the Etheridge, with railway communication, would employ thousands of miners. We must remember that on Charters Towers and Gympie a number of young men are growing up, and mining is their only occupation—it is their trade or profession, and we must look to the development of gold-fields in the future to find employment for them.

Mr. CROSS: Does this Bill prevent leases on alluvial fields?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: No, it does not; but I am not aware that that has given any trouble or has caused any monopoly here. We have very few of such leases except where there may be a deep lead, and we have not been in the habit of allowing leases on alluvial fields. In Victoria and New South Wales on alluvial fields such leases have been given for large areas. We are quite prepared to accept suggestions in connection with the matter. A good deal has been said at different times about the power given by regulations, but they are always necessary in matters of this sort. I remember that two or three years ago, when the cyanide process was coming largely into operation in Charters Towers, we had to frame regulations with regard to sand claims, and I think that on the whole those regulations

gave satisfaction. The gold at present being won by cyanide from the tailings on Charters Towers is as much in weight if not in value as that won from the quartz. I think the returns last month were about 18,000 oz. from each. In most cases under the regulations the sand claims have fallen into the hands of working miners. I do not know that many have got into the hands of syndicates unless they are syndicates of working miners. It cannot be said that in this connection any monopoly has been given—quite the reverse. I think the men who usually speculate largely on Charters Towers are out of these things altogether, and the working miners have got the most of them. The mining industry is only second in importance in this colony to the pastoral industry. It returned last year a product worth £3,000,000, and this year I expect the return will be worth £3,500,000. In addition to that, thousands of men are getting a good, profitable living out of the mining industry of the colony, and anything this House can do to further the industry I believe hon. members will be prepared to do. The majority on this side are prepared to try and put this Bill through this session and give it the force of law. I hope the mining members on the other side of the House will assist me in putting the Bill through. It is a Bill that I believe will give satisfaction to the majority of the residents on every goldfield in this colony. If there are some matters upon which we cannot agree, we can at least discuss and divide upon them; but I believe that if the mining members have studied the interests of their constituents they will be prepared to put the main provisions of the Bill through. I need not add much more at present. I will be glad to hear the opinions of the mining members on the Bill, which they have had in their hands now for a fortnight, and I dare say they are fully conversant with its leading features. I hope it will get fair discussion. Of course, if the House says it is not prepared to pass any legislation, and if on that ground this measure is taken exception to, I do not think the Government will be prepared to submit any more Bills. I have no wish to make any challenge to the House at all, but I certainly think that if legislation is desired the passing of this Bill will be a step in the right direction. I have much pleasure in moving the second reading of the Bill.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. BROWNE: It is rather a big contract to follow the Secretary for Mines on an important Bill like this, especially when one is not altogether physically fit; but as one who has for a long time been identified with the mining industry I have taken the liberty on this occasion of getting up after the hon. gentleman. I may say that I agree with him in several of the things he has said this afternoon. As to the importance of the industry we are all of the opinion the hon. gentleman has expressed, and also as to the importance of this Bill. That is one of the reasons, as I shall show later on, that I regret that this Bill has been brought on at this stage of the Parliament when I think there is very little probability of its being got through. The Minister said there were three most important points in the Bill, and one he alluded to was the provision for mining on private property. But that is not before the House yet, and is not a part of this Bill. Hon. members will agree that it is rather an extraordinary thing that we should already have a Mining Bill introduced in this House amending the Bill we have now in our hands for its second reading. If the provisions of the other Bill were embodied in this I could understand it. The Minister may be perfectly right in what he said that being a different subject it

is better dealt with in a different Bill. There may be something in that. The hon. gentleman alluded to what has often been said about capital being wanted in this colony. It has also been stated several times that there are persons who do not want to see capital brought here, but I must say I never came across those persons. I have been working in this colony for many years, not for wages but for myself, and I have always been anxious to see capital coming into the country. But we want to see it coming in on equal terms, and what we are most concerned with in this Bill and in any mining regulations is not the blocking of the capital of working miners, but the blocking of bogus capital which is running the show at the present time in Queensland, the capital that will not work the ground itself, and won't allow others to work it. They are men who, to use an expression of an old friend of mine, do all their mining above the surface. They are the sort of men we are to guard against, but to whom this Bill gives a great many loopholes. The hon. gentleman repeated the statement that has been so often made, that it is want of confidence that has kept capital out of the country. I am certain that the hon. gentleman as a business man knows that it is nothing of the sort. Capital, like everything else, goes round and round. A year or two ago there was an immense amount of money going into Western Australia, unfortunately for the persons who invested their capital there; and I would ask were capitalists then satisfied with the mining regulations of that colony? Why, at the very time when capital was flowing into the colony meetings were being held in London, at which it was stated that if the regulations were not altered in certain respects there would not be a farthing of money invested in Western Australia. Yet millions of money were invested in mining in that colony, though the mining regulations there at that time were not so good as the mining regulations in Queensland. The hon. gentleman also alluded to the fact that it was proposed to grant a lease of 2,000 acres in a certain district in New South Wales. But that is a different thing altogether from that for which we are providing. The tract of country which it is proposed to lease in such a large area is supposed to be very deep and very wet, and no gold has been seen in its vicinity for miles around, and the company seeking the lease is willing to prospect that ground to see whether there is any gold in the district or not. But the provisions of this Bill are to be applied to tried goldfields, which is a very different matter. Capitalists will not come along under this Bill until the working miner has proved the land; then he will come along, put in his capital, and share in the benefits of the field. I am quite willing that he should share in those benefits, believing that it would be a good thing for the country; but at the same time I am anxious that he should do so on fair terms, and let those who have borne the heat and burden of the day also have a fair share of the pickings.

Mr. HAMILTON: They can take up land now.

Mr. BROWNE: The hon. member did not say so a few years since when he was as great an advocate of mining reform as I have been myself, and I believe a sincere advocate, for he has advocated reform on every possible occasion. But if what the hon. member says is true, and if, as the Minister stated, all these things can be done without this Bill, what is the good of taking up the time of this House in discussing this measure, and of spending all the money which it cost to draft the Bill? There is one thing I wish to refer to before entering on the details of the Bill. I believe the Minister is very anxious that this Bill should pass. He

made a very strong appeal to the House to pass it, stating that the whole country was anxious to see it become law, and in a sort of way he said that if hon. members who did not agree altogether with the principles of the Bill hindered its progress the whole country, and everybody else who was anxious to get the Bill through, would blame those members for blocking and obstructing it. Now, when the agitation in favour of mining reform first took form—I think it was in 1884 or the beginning of 1885—the hon. member for Cook spoke very strongly in this House about the necessity for such reform, and the then Secretary for Mines, Mr. Miles, invited certain mining men in the North, myself among the number, to formulate suggestions to be embodied in an amendment of the mining laws. We did furnish suggestions, but I do not know what was done with them. Again in 1888, when Mr. Hodgkinson was appointed Secretary for Mines, he made a similar request, and we formed committees who formulated certain suggestions. When Mr. Hodgkinson went out of office, and Mr. Macrossan became Secretary for Mines, he also asked the assistance of local committees, and I think on nearly every mining field committees of mining men and business men engaged in the mining industry went to work and formulated suggestions, which were sent to the Minister. In 1889, when an amending Bill was brought in, a gentleman whom everyone in this House respects and considers as good an authority on mining law as there is in Queensland—I refer to Sir Horace Tozer—spoke of the necessity for an amendment of our mining laws. Then again in 1890 a conference was held at Herberton to deal with mineral leases, and I think the suggestions of that conference were sent down to the Secretary for Mines through Sir Samuel Griffith. Now I come to the present Secretary for Mines. On the 18th of July, 1893, three days after I had taken my seat in this House, I asked the hon. gentleman whether it was the intention of the Government to introduce any amendments in the mining laws or in the Mining Companies Act, and the answer I got was that the Government had the matter under consideration. It has only taken the Government five years and three months to consider the matter, and bring down this Bill at the end of the session; and yet they expect members of this House to make up their minds on it in a few days. In 1893, when a discussion took place on the Estimates with regard to the necessity for amending the mining laws of the colony, two mining members in this House—the hon. member for Gympie, Mr. Smyth, and the hon. member for Burke, Mr. Hoolan—expressed the opinion that there was no necessity for any alteration of the mining laws, but the hon. member for Cook contended that there was a great necessity for some amendments. When I myself pointed out to members what I believed to be good suggestions for a Mining Bill, the hon. member for Cook said, as hon. members will find by referring to *Hansard* for the 5th of October, 1893, he was glad that the Minister said that he would accept suggestions, and he hoped there would be no delay in the matter; if the Minister would be willing to accept suggestions he would guarantee, he said, that between then and Monday—that was three days—a few mining members in the House would have suggestions ready to submit. So that it has not been for want of offers of assistance that nothing has been done in the matter up to the present. I believe that the hon. member for Cook was just as earnest in his desire for reform as I was. Since then we have had Under Secretary Selheim sent on two or three trips round the colony to collect information for an amending Mining Bill. We have also had

appointed a Royal Commission, who did a lot of work very industriously, and sent in a report. Since then we have had the Under Secretary and two wardens considering the matter. And the result of the whole of these efforts is embodied in this Bill of 246 clauses, and after it has taken all that time to bring down the measure, members of this House are asked to swallow the whole thing in a few days. I am pointing out these things to show that if there is any delay in the mining community getting the reforms they are asking for, the blame for that should be saddled on the right shoulders—that is, on the gentlemen sitting on the Treasury bench. And the Secretary for Mines, for whom I have a great respect, is just as blameable as anybody, because he has had as long a term as Secretary for Mines as any of his predecessors, if not longer. Now, dealing with the Bill itself, I intend to criticise it fairly and honestly, just from the point of view of one who has been identified with the industry, and has had a considerable experience of it, not from any party standpoint, but purely and simply from the standpoint of what would do most good to those who sent me here to represent them. I admit at once that there are some very good features in the Bill—features that I shall point out, as the Secretary for Mines has done. But there are some more that are really good points. For instance, there is the consolidation of these Acts. I agree at once with the hon. gentleman that this was badly needed. As to the drafting of the Bill, I am not an authority upon drafting or anything of the sort; but there are gentlemen here who are; but speaking for myself, I must say that I cannot congratulate the draftsman, because in many cases where the wording of the old Acts has been altered I do not think the alteration has been an improvement. As a matter of fact, things have been made more obscure than they were before. Another good feature is that there is a provision allowing the holder of a miner's right to search for other minerals than gold. That is a concession that has been asked for for many years, and I believe it is a very just one. I see that it has been embodied in the Bill on the suggestion of the Mining Commission, and I may add that a good many of these amendments have emanated from the same source. The Secretary for Mines also alluded to another thing that I consider of very great importance, and that is that foreign companies holding miners' rights or gold-mining leases shall register in Queensland; and there is also protection given to miners' wages. It might have been possible to have gone a little further in regard to this last matter, but the provision made is a very good one, and I am very pleased to see it introduced into our legislation. Then, again, there is another feature that I lay more stress upon than other hon. members possibly may, and that is that in two or three places the Government have attempted to place more obstacles in the way of Asiatic and African aliens getting a footing on our gold and mineral fields. That is a very good feature of the Bill, and I should like to see it carried further. Next there is the reduction in rents. Although I am totally opposed to increasing the area of homesteads I think the reduced rents and the easier conditions are very good things indeed. Among the good things in the Bill are some amendments that are contained in the Mines Regulation Act, which looks after the lives and limbs of the men working in mines all over the colony. Many suggestions, some of them admirable ones, were made by the Mining Commission, and I am glad that the Minister has embodied them in this Bill. So far for the good points in the Bill. I honestly admit that they are good points, and I wish the rest of the Bill was more in harmony with them. There is a very large portion of

the Bill that I need not deal with, because it is simply an adaptation of the old Acts with very trifling alterations, and they are not worth dealing with. I need hardly say that one of the very first things that I consider bad in the Bill is one that the hon. gentleman thinks is a very good one, and that is the extension of the areas on goldfields. I say that although the increase to fifty acres, and the one man to five acres labour condition, were recommended by a majority of the commission, yet I say distinctly that anyone who likes to look through the evidence, and count the number of witnesses, will see that this recommendation is not borne out by the weight of evidence. Only one witness advocated these two things, and that was a Brisbane sharebroker, Mr. Corrie. I have gone carefully through the evidence, and although there were several witnesses who advocated more liberal labour conditions and extensions of the area, there was only one witness who advocated both together.

Mr. HAMILTON: A great many witnesses advocated the fifty acres.

Mr. DUNSFORD: Not as applied generally.

Mr. BROWNE: I should advise those hon. members who have not studied this report to go through it, because I am sure they will see that the objections to both these provisions could not have been put in stronger or better language than they were put in the minority report of the hon. member for Charters Towers, Mr. Dawson, whose arguments seemed to be unanswerable. The hon. member for Cook said that a number of witnesses advocated the fifty acres; but they only did so under certain conditions. I myself have said that under certain circumstances I would not object to see the area increased. What the majority of witnesses asked was that the Act should be made more like the regulations with regard to "block" claims, or claims in deep, wet, or abandoned ground; that the area should be greater in those cases than others, not that fifty acres should be the area all round.

Mr. O'CONNELL: Fifty acres is the maximum area allowed by the Bill.

Mr. BROWNE: We know that it is the maximum area, but that is the area they will all try to get if they can. An outcry was made that people would not take up claims because the area was too small, and that it was impossible to work the country, and the rest of it. So I went into figures; I went through the wardens' reports, and laid them before other people, and we found that, although we were told that fifty acres was as little as anybody could do with, and twenty-five acres was not enough, yet right through the whole of Queensland, taking the aggregate acreage then under gold-mining leasehold, the area of the average lease was about fourteen acres.

Mr. STUMM: Is that a fair use of the figures?

Mr. BROWNE: Yes. Directly after the issue of the report of the Mining Commission certain gentlemen, to my knowledge and to the knowledge of other hon. members, who gave evidence before that commission, and stated that it was no use, that they could do nothing in the London or Melbourne or Sydney markets with anything less than fifty acres, took up five-acre blocks here and six-acre blocks there, although there were twenty-five acres lying idle which they could have taken up in each place if they had wished. But they did not do it. They took up smaller areas, and took them to Sydney, Melbourne, London, and all sorts of places.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: They thought it was better ground, I suppose.

Mr. BROWNE: There was no question of better ground. There were hundreds of acres lying idle, but they contented themselves with blocks of six, eight, or ten acres.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: What was the area of the last lease sold in London? Fifty acres.

Mr. HAMILTON: There is only one that has been sold.

Mr. BROWNE: Leases have been sold of all areas.

Mr. SIM: There are lots of shareholders who have been sold also.

Mr. BROWNE: The Secretary for Mines and the member for Cook know as well as I do that a lot of claims have been sold on the London market when not a bit of ground has been taken up.

Mr. HAMILTON: That is not the question. Did they succeed in selling?

Mr. BROWNE: They did in some cases. Immediately after the Mining Commission had been on the Hodgkinson there was a sort of boom set in there. I think within two months there were thirty-seven leases taken up by gentlemen well known in the mining community. The very men who wanted big areas came in, and out of the whole lot there was not one twenty-five-acre block taken up, although those men, both in the Press and on the public platform, were never tired of saying that nothing less than twenty-five acres would suit them and their friends.

Mr. HAMILTON: The capitalists would not buy them unless the area was twenty-five acres.

Mr. BROWNE: I know one gentleman in this city, perhaps one of the richest brokers, who took up six acres of ground when there were 100 acres lying all round, but he thought six acres quite enough for him. I am only pointing these things out because they prove to my mind that there is no demand either by the capitalist or the *bona fide* working miner for these extended areas. It is an entirely bogus cry got up to suit the purposes of certain persons. I have heard it said more than once, "I am going to London, but it does not matter whether there is gold in the ground or not so long as I can get a big area. That is what fetches the purchaser." Well, I do not wish to fetch the purchaser under false pretences. I believe in a man going to London with ten acres and showing that it is likely to turn out a good thing—that it has got gold in it. That is much more likely to reflect some good on the community than hawking about huge areas which have nothing in them. The Minister pointed out—and it was about as good an argument against this power which he seeks as could have been used—that at the present time fifty-acre areas are held without any difficulty. Does the hon. gentleman think that if the area is extended to fifty acres the same game will not be carried on, and areas of 100 acres be held? The same thing applies to the labour conditions. The very figures the hon. gentleman used were a strong argument against reducing the labour conditions. He has shown that under our present mining laws, when one man is supposed to be employed for every acre held, yet as a matter of fact the ground is held or monopolised by one-fifth of the lawful amount of labour. What does this proposal to allow one man to hold five acres instead of one man to every acre mean? Why, in a year or two—or in less time than that even—we shall find one man holding twenty-five acres. These are only some of the reasons which can be given against an enlargement of the area and more liberal labour conditions. I am not going into detail now because there are many members to speak and each will have a lot to say. It is sufficient for me to say at this stage that I am opposed to the proposal, which is one of the very bad points in the Bill. Then, again, there is almost a similar provision with regard to mineral leases. There is special provision by which 320 acres may be held. Clause 38 provides for amalgamation, but

while there is a limit put upon goldmining leases which cannot amalgamate beyond fifty acres, with regard to mineral leases there is no limit at all. They can amalgamate up to 10,000 acres if they wish to do so.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: No, 320 acres is the limit.

Mr. BROWNE: There is nothing in the Bill which says so.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The previous clause limits the area.

Mr. BROWNE: The previous clause provides that they shall be allowed to put all their men on one lease.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: That is the limit.

Mr. BROWNE: The Secretary for Mines has said on many occasions that he does not believe in giving the Minister so much power as he has at the present time, but there are several provisions in this measure which give him more power than he now has. He is given power to put all sorts of conditions in the lease. There is considerable increased power given in regard to forfeitures for non-fulfilment of the labour conditions. First of all there is power to impose two fines before forfeiture, and then in another clause it is provided that even when the mining lease is liable to forfeiture, yet the Minister is empowered to impose another fine. That is in effect giving the Minister power to allow the shepherding of ground for ever. There is not a man in the House who has had anything to do with mining who does not know that all over Queensland ground is held under all manner of pretence which should have been forfeited long ago. Only a few weeks ago there was a case in point on Croydon. A claim was held by a certain bank on which not a tap of work had been done for two years, and a party of men applied for the forfeiture. What was the result? It was not recommended. What troubles me is that the capitalists—the men who are supposed to be backed up by unlimited means—are the very men who do the least work. It is the people with no money who have all the work to do, and the big people come in afterwards to reap all the benefit. When the forfeiture was applied for in the case I mention, the agent of the bank made a sort of indefinite promise that they would go to work some day or other, and then offered terms to the men who had applied for the forfeiture. The men declined to make terms. They had made the application; they wanted the ground, and the Minister exercised his discretion—I am not saying now that he was wrong, or expressing any opinion whatever—and declined to recommend the forfeiture. With regard to the homestead leases, I quite approve of putting a limit to the term of rental, but I am certainly opposed to this large increase in the areas. It is all very well to say that on these large goldfields you want paddocks. It is proposed to extend the area to 160 acres outside the five-mile radius. The Secretary for Mines knows the Croydon field, and I would ask him what would have been the state of affairs if seven or eight years ago such an area had been allowed at the Golden Gate, which is now the richest part of the field, and which is over five miles from the township? The land would have been locked up in a homestead lease, and there would have been a great deal of trouble before you could go on to it to mine; besides which, there would be compensation to pay.

Mr. SMYTH: It would not have been locked up.

Mr. BROWNE: I know you can enter a homestead lease under certain conditions; but anyone whose experience has not been limited to one field must know that there are scores of places where homestead leases are almost as inviolable as freeholds, simply because the

warden says to anyone wanting to go on to the land, "There are a lot of valuable improvements, and if you go on you will do a lot of damage, and I therefore require you to plank down £500 or £1,000 before you can go on."

Mr. SMYTH: Where, where!

Mr. SIM: Only the other day a case occurred in Sircom street, Croydon, where men were required to put down a deposit.

Mr. SMYTH: Blackmailing.

Mr. BROWNE: I am not going to accuse anyone of blackmailing. If anyone acts within his legal rights he has a perfect right to do it. At the same time it is only fair that there should be reasonable compensation—that is one of the privileges of the homesteader. It would be wrong for any man to be allowed to enter a homestead directly after the homesteader had made valuable improvements, without paying him compensation. But, with regard to the increased area, we have trouble enough already on Croydon without doing this, and that is one of the reasons why I am opposed to this Bill. My main objection to the Bill is that nearly everything that we have been led to expect in the Bill is to be dealt with in the regulations. I have said often before, and I repeat it here, that the greatest curse of our mining laws in the past has been not so much in the law itself as in the regulations which are continually being made by different Ministers, and then have to be interpreted by the various wardens. I can mention a case to show the trouble that may arise from this. My hon. friend the member for Carpentaria was on Croydon at the time, and can bear me out. Before the arrival on the field of the Hon. John Archibald, now a member of the other House, as warden, there was scarcely a holding on Croydon that could have stood the test of law if a man had come along—as men did shortly after Mr. Archibald went there—and tried to take advantage of the state of affairs that then existed. I give every credit to that hon. gentleman. John Archibald as warden exercised a very large amount of common sense—although I believe that in a few cases he went outside the strict letter of the law in doing what he did, for which I give him credit—and in the course of a few months he earned the gratitude of every miner and mine-owner in the place. It was the fault of the mining regulations, and had not a good man come along a great deal of harm might have been done. This Bill proposes to perpetuate the system of dealing with many important matters by regulation. In addition to the large number of clauses contained in the Bill, clause 241 contains forty-six paragraphs, specifying the different matters on which regulations are to be made, and the 4th paragraph in that clause practically places the whole control of the mining industry in the hands of the Minister for the time being.

Mr. O'CONNELL: It is in his hands now.

Mr. BROWNE: He has not so much power as this subsection will give him. It was expected that this Bill was introduced to do away with things of this sort. We do not want a Bill brought in to perpetuate a bad state of things, or make it even worse. We want it remedied. Just read subsection 4 of clause 241—

For prescribing the labour conditions subject to which any mining tenement or class of mining tenements shall be held, and the condition on which exemption from the performance thereof may be applied for, granted, and obtained, and generally for prescribing the manner in which, and with what incidents, rights, and obligations, any mining tenement or class of mining tenements shall be taken possession of, held, occupied, used, worked, or enjoyed.

What is the good of a Parliament or a Mining Act or anything else when we have such a power placed in the hands of the Governor in Council

—which means the Secretary for Mines for the time being? It gives the Minister power to give away any part of the gold or mineral fields of the colony on any terms and conditions he likes.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Oh, no; it does not—you know differently.

Mr. BROWNE: I am trying to speak as fairly as I can, and I am telling the House how it strikes me. Is there anything in connection with the mining laws of the colony which is not covered by that paragraph?

Mr. O'CONNELL: What about the area?

Mr. BROWNE: It covers everything else except the area. Then, again, clause 243 provides that the regulations "shall be published in the *Gazette*, and, after publication therein, shall have the force and effect of law, and shall be judicially noticed in every court of justice." Immediately they are gazetted, without anyone but the Minister and the draftsman having a say in them, they are to have the force of law.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That is the present law.

Mr. BROWNE: I know it is the present law, but we are supposed to be amending the present law. If everything in the present law is good and right, why bring in this Bill at all? We want some reforms, and not the same old law over again. We do not want to be told a thing is right because it is. Of course it is provided in clause 245 that copies of all regulations shall be laid before Parliament within fourteen days after publication, but what is the good of laying them on the table of the House? If there was any provision by which we could revise them or object to them, it would be different, but we have to swallow them whether we like them or not. I have referred to the one man to five acres provision. It was not mentioned, but we have been told of what was going to be done, and more than that, we have seen the promises that have been made, which makes me more suspicious than ever with regard to the exemptions. One of the greatest curses that Queensland has suffered from—exemptions were introduced for a good object, but they have had a very bad effect for many years past. We saw by the *Courier* the other day that Mr. Dowell—a former member of the New South Wales Assembly, and whom I knew in years past—wants to get twelve months' exemption for mineral leases, and he further stated that he has a promise that this sort of thing is going to be introduced. I cannot vote for anything blindfolded. If the Secretary for Mines wants us to vote for this Bill he should tell us of everything there is in it, and, accompanying the Bill, he should have supplied us with copies of the regulations he intends to make when the Bill is passed. Nothing at all is said in this Bill with regard to the numerous complaints about claims held under miners' rights. The hon. gentleman was voicing the grievances of the capitalists and how capital was kept out of the country, but he did not tell us whether he would allow the holder of a miner's right to take up 250 feet as well as allowing the concession of one man to five acres.

Mr. HAMILTON: Do you advocate that?

Mr. BROWNE: I do not; but if one is fair the other is fair. Fifty feet along a reef to one man is the same as one man to one acre in a lease, and if the capitalist can only afford to pay one man's wages on five acres, then it is a scandalous shame to make the holder of a miner's right pay five men's wages on the same area of ground.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: He can take a lease.

Mr. BROWNE: But they are not all leaseholders, and the hon. gentleman will admit that miners' rights are not played out yet. They are just as good a tenure as any of the rest. And it is not every man who pays 10s. for his miner's

right that has the means to apply for a lease. As the hon. member for Charters Towers reminds me, on new goldfields leases are not allowed to be taken up for two years.

Mr. HAMILTON: Not even by the bloated capitalist.

Mr. BROWNE: I would not say that. With regard to the exemptions which have been promised so liberally, I want to say—and I say it with all due respect to the Secretary for Mines—that since the exemption laws have been in force in Queensland there has never been so much land exempt and such a free use made of the exemption clauses as during the last two or three years.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Neither has there been such a large output of gold.

Mr. BROWNE: Possibly so, but I cannot see anything logical in the hon. gentleman's interjection, because if the exempted mines had been at work during the past few years the output would have been very much greater. The thing has grown to such an extent that wardens have had to put their foot down and refuse to give any more. This is where the hardship comes in: "The bloated capitalist," as the hon. member for Cook calls him, comes along and takes up a lease. He can, without putting a pick in the ground, apply for three or six months' exemption in order to float his company or raise money to work the mine, and he gets the exemption. But the holder of the miner's right who pegs out his little bit of ground has to do six months' *bona fide* work before he can get his exemption.

Mr. HAMILTON: The man with a miner's right can take a lease up.

Mr. BROWNE: He can if he has money enough, but he may not have the money.

Mr. HAMILTON: He generally sells to the bloated capitalist.

Mr. BROWNE: If he gets the chance he is very foolish if he does not sell as a rule. At present the position of affairs is as I have said, and we are told of nothing to provide a remedy. The only thing the hon. gentleman has in view is to encourage capital.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Do you object to that?

Mr. BROWNE: I am anxious to see capital come in, but I want it to come in on fair terms. And let us get the *bona fide* use of that capital. If a man comes here with £50 and works a piece of ground, supporting himself and assisting others at the same time, that is better than if Baron Rothschild took up 500 acres and got exemption for twelve months. People take up big leases, and immediately they have to float a company. They want time to do that, and very likely they trade it to another company. During the twelve months they monopolise the ground they are trying to victimise somebody; if they do not succeed, they simply let the lease drop and try somewhere else. I do not believe in seeing the land monopolised. There is one thing I am sorry is not in the Bill, and that is a provision dealing with the question of having a political head of the Mines Department, about which I have expressed my opinion time after time, even before I became a member of this House. I am not speaking with any reflection on the present Minister for Mines or any other. We know it is rigorously provided in different clauses that any warden, and any inspector of mines—anyone holding a judicial position on a goldfield—if directly or indirectly interested in any interest on the field, is liable to be dismissed and subject to further punishment; yet we allow to be at the head of the department a gentleman who is a politician, who may if he likes hold an interest in every goldfield in the colony; and a great many cases arise in which he is sole

judge. It may be said that judges won't act in cases affecting themselves, but under this Act, the Minister for Mines in a great many cases has no option. And there is the political aspect of the question too. In order to show that I am not alone in this opinion, I will quote the words of a man who knows as much as anyone about the inner working of the industry. This is what Mr. Tozer, now Sir Horace Tozer, said in this House on the 5th June, 1889, speaking on a Bill to amend the Gold Fields Act:—

My experience has led me to believe that, no matter which side is in power, mining decisions and matters connected with the goldfields of this colony are decided by political considerations only. I speak from my knowledge of the subject, and have known leases forfeited when they should not have been. I have known a lease in full work forfeited by a Minister for Mines in this colony, and I have heard of a Minister of the Crown exercising undue influence over the Department of Mines with a view of obtaining forfeitures and grants of leases.

Those are weighty words, and I agree a great deal with them. I say this without casting any reflection at all on the personal honour or honesty of any Minister. I believe that as long as the head of the department is engaged in politics, and is a party politician, where such large interests are at stake, he is liable to be biased quite unknown to himself, because every man is more or less influenced by his environments. And I agree with the words of Sir Horace Tozer when he said no matter which side is in power the same thing applies. I am not going to detain the House much longer. I have tried to deal with the Bill as fairly and honestly as I can. I have tried to recognise what is good in it and what is bad. There is no man in Queensland more anxious to see an amended Mining Bill pass than I am and have been for years past. But after seriously considering this Bill, and knowing what it means to myself as representing a mining community, I am quite prepared to take the responsibility for what I have said. I feel convinced, for the reasons I have stated, that the balance of good in the Bill is considerably outweighed by the bad that is in it. Then, again, so much being left to the regulations practically leaves a lot of members in the dark as to what they are really voting for if they vote for the Bill. I certainly do not feel inclined to vote for its second reading. I do not believe it is possible for the House, at the present time and in the present state of things, to deal honestly and justly with the measure. It contains 246 clauses and a tremendous number of debatable subjects. We have in the ordinary course of events, even if we sit till the latest possible period of the session, not more than eight weeks at the outside. We have the Estimates and a lot of other work to do before the session closes—that is, if we finish the work at present before us. At the very outside the House could not devote more than a day and a-half per week to this Bill, or twelve days altogether.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Oh, yes; more than that.

Mr. BROWNE: I ask hon. members if a Bill which has taken the Government five years and three months to consider and get ready to lay before us—if it is fair and just to the members of the House, or to the mining community at large, to ask for inside of twelve days to put this Bill through?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: You put your forty-three planks through in a very short time.

Mr. BROWNE: Yes; and there is enough wood left to make coffins for a good many members on the other side.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: It did not take you a week to finish your platform.

Mr. BROWNE: No, each man shouldered his own plank and the platform was constructed very quickly. As we are all aware, the Bill has to pass through another Chamber after passing here, and there are two or three members there who know quite as much about mining matters as any one in this Chamber, and it is very unlikely that they will consent to have this Bill shoved into their hands at the fag-end of the session and be told to pass it in two or three days. I have no doubt they will insist upon their right to criticise the Bill, and demand sufficient time for the purpose, which will be considerably more than two or three days. To proceed with the Bill here will only be to delude the mining public. Therefore, believing there is more bad in the Bill than good, believing that it is an impossibility to get it through at the present time, but believing also that there is a certain amount of good in it if the House had time to go into it and amend it—instead of voting against its second reading I shall now move that all the words after the word "Bill" be omitted, with the view of inserting the words "be withdrawn."

Mr. JENKINSON: I beg to second the amendment, and in doing so I wish to say that I endorse what has been said by the hon. member for Croydon. I believe the Bill contains a great deal that is good, but it also contains a great deal that will press very heavily on miners and on the mining community generally. On the principle, therefore, that the part cannot be greater than the whole, I think it is advisable that those who have the interests of the mining industry at heart should oppose the passing of the measure. Like the hon. member for Croydon, I can hardly understand why the Minister comes down with a second Bill—dealing with mining on private property—instead of incorporating it in the Bill we are now discussing. It appears to me that mining on private property is a more contentious subject than the one now before us; and it is hardly likely, whatever may be the fate of this Bill, that the other—which is equally as important, I maintain—will be passed into law this session. I go a great deal of the distance with the Minister with regard to homestead leases. For many years homestead lessees have laboured under many grievances, and it is just about time that those grievances were rectified; but the putting aside of this measure for a time in the larger interests of the mining community, will not create another extra grievance to those people. I am entirely against the increase in the area of mining leases. The Minister has not made out a good case for it, and it will require more argument than he has used this afternoon to convince those who get their living by mining that the area should be increased to fifty acres. As has been pointed out, in all probability the amalgamation of leases would not allow it to remain at fifty acres. It will be considerably more than that. Some of the sharpest men in the world are connected with mining, men who can drive a carriage and four or six through any law that is likely to be passed. Even at present, though the Act distinctly states that the maximum area of a gold-mining lease shall be only twenty-five acres, on many of our fields there are leases amounting to fifty acres and more held and worked by one company. We know also that the labour conditions have been evaded by passing the lease from one shareholder to another. Speaking particularly of Gympie, I have a case in my mind's eye where no less than two years' exemption was allowed for two twenty-five-acre leases. The *modus operandi* adopted was this: The two leases were taken up in two different names. Six months' exemption was applied for each lease and granted. When the time expired, two other

shareholders made application for the leases. There was no objection on the part of the previous holders, and again application was made for six months' exemption, which was again granted. This was done on four different occasions, so that the syndicate holding those fifty acres actually had two years' exemption.

Mr. SMYTH: Did they sink a shaft?

Mr. JENKINSON: They went into an old shaft and sunk a very short distance, as the senior member for Gympie knows very well.

Mr. SMYTH: Two hundred and fifty feet. I know of another lease, too.

Mr. JENKINSON: There are many other leases which I have not the slightest doubt the hon. member for Gympie could point out. He is simply strengthening my case, though I want no assistance from him at all, because I can advocate my own case just as well by myself. The Minister has mentioned that it is in order to induce foreign capital to come here that these extra inducements are held out. I do not want it understood inside of this House or outside of it that I am against the introduction of foreign capital. Far be it from me to say a single word against foreign capitalists, but I do not see why they should be placed on a different footing to people who have been living here for many years.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: They are on the same footing exactly. There is no different footing.

Mr. JENKINSON: The main argument of the Secretary for Mines all through has been that if we increase the area and reduce the labour conditions it will be an inducement to foreign capitalists to come here. Why do they not come here and bring their capital here—as many have done, and it has paid them to do it—and enter on mining operations on the same conditions as we do now? It is also said that they will not go outside and try prospecting the same as so many of us have to do here now. It is only on tried goldfields they want an increased area and reduced labour conditions.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: It is only members on your side of the House who say that.

Mr. JENKINSON: Hon. members have only to look at the evidence given before the Mining Commission by gentlemen interested in the flotation of companies, and they will see exactly what is desired by them. It is also very well understood that when Sir Hugh Nelson and the late Mr. Byrnes were at home they were waited upon by capitalists to try and get such measures passed into law as are included in this Bill. Hon. members will not need any reminder from me that if capitalists are shown that a particular ground is sufficiently good for them to prospect it they will do it. We have an instance on Gympie, where a lease of five acres only—and I ask hon. members to take particular note of the area, five acres only—was successfully floated at home—

Mr. STUMM: Why, they were on heavy gold!

Mr. JENKINSON: The reason the company was floated was because the ground was good enough. Exactly. And are we to understand from the interjection of the junior member for Gympie that it is only poor ground that we want to let the capitalist have?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Unproved ground.

Mr. JENKINSON: That might be a dangerous statement to let get outside.

Mr. HAMILTON: How will the bloated capitalist rob you if you only give him poor ground?

Mr. JENKINSON: The Minister also pointed to the fact that work was wanted for our young men, and suggested that the increased areas and reduced labour conditions would probably find work for them. I am inclined to think that, if we take the case quoted by the

Minister, the Brilliant at Charters Towers—and I think they have an area of fifty acres—the chances are that those outside capitalists, if they could, would have taken up a larger area than that, and where then would be the chances of work for our young men? The chances are that they would have to go elsewhere. Our experience has been that if the capitalist has the slightest opportunity of locking up land and holding it for a future rise he will do so, the same as other people do at the present time. Mining members know, without reference to any particular field in the colony, that the desire of the capitalist, whether home or foreign, is to get as much land as he can and work it with as little labour as possible, and simply await developments. We know that generally all the leases taken home at the present time are floated into companies with immense capital, and a good portion of the money goes to the promoters or persons in charge of the flotation, and they reap more benefit than the shareholders or the man who is actually selling the land. I believe the brokers or company-mongers have taken a very active part—

Mr. ARMSTRONG: It is the same in all industries.

Mr. JENKINSON: Unfortunately it is, but I do not think we should pander to it any more than we can possibly help. I think we should rather try and protect the industry against these people who, through no practical labour on their part, reap the most of the benefit by exploiting other people. At the present time the Minister can forfeit a lease if the labour conditions are not complied with, but it is intended by this Bill that for two such offences a fine shall be inflicted, and for a third offence the ground shall be forfeited. Looking over the evidence taken by the Mining Commission, a consensus of opinion will be found that no hardship has, up to the present time, been brought about through the operation of the present labour conditions. It will be seen that wardens have in nearly every instance made recommendations for reduced labour conditions where they were satisfied of the *bona fides* of the claimant. I maintain that where the wardens are not satisfied of the *bona fides* of a claimant exemption from the labour conditions should not be allowed. This Bill practically puts it into the power of the Minister to grant exemptions on the payment of a fine—to lock up ground for a considerable period and thus do many mining men out of an opportunity of earning a livelihood. If this is carried it will press very hardly indeed upon the mining population on all the goldfields of the colony. A suggestion has been made by some of these gentlemen, and I do not know whether it could be included in the regulations or not—I may say here by way of parenthesis that I agree with the hon. member for Croydon in saying that this is but another example of government by regulations, a pernicious system which appears to be growing considerably to the detriment of many of the industries of the colony. I was going to mention that some gentlemen who gave evidence before the Mines Commission actually advocated that the erection of machinery should be sufficient cause for exemption from labour conditions, thus making iron, steel, and wood take the place of flesh and blood. If that can be carried out under this Bill it is another reason why hon. members should fight strenuously against the passing of it. The Secretary for Mines spoke of the English capital that had been introduced on some of the fields and the opening up of the country which had been brought about in that way. It has done good in many places, but a certain amount of good it has done has been overbalanced by the evil it has brought with it.

For instance, on Gympie there is a company that has taken up a lease, they have sunk a shaft after a great deal of expense, and at the present time they are going to still more expense. Fortunately for them it is all being paid for out of the ground, because they have struck a payable reef, but we find that two leases at least have been taken up by this company, and I do not know how many more, and periods of exemption time after time have been granted to the company, although applications against them have been lodged before the warden. The Secretary for Mines stated that no complaints had been made with regard to the granting of exemption to some companies. The reason why no complaint has been made in such cases is that the working miner, the man who is likely to suffer most by the granting of exemption, is afraid of losing his billet if he opposes the application of these companies; he knows very well that if he does he will be a marked man afterwards.

Mr. SMYTH: Rubbish.

Mr. JENKINSON: It is not rubbish at all; there are some men on Gympie who have been marked in that way, and the senior member for Gympie knows it as well as I do.

Mr. SMYTH: That is not true.

Mr. JENKINSON: Very well; that is your opinion. Are we to squander our heritage simply to induce capitalists to come here? I have pointed out how some companies have acted in other colonies, and we have no reason to suppose that they will act differently in Queensland. If the increased area is granted they will take up as much ground as they can, and lock it up from future exploration. There is no doubt but that if that is done, and we squander our heritage, we shall simply be like the prodigal son, and bewail the fact after it is past recall. It is proposed to make the labour conditions more liberal. On this point I shall quote the evidence of Mr. Elmslie. I have not a personal acquaintance with that gentleman, but from the reading of his evidence I should imagine that he thoroughly understands the business, and is in touch with the London market. He says distinctly that the companies he has been interested in have, up to the present, experienced no difficulty in getting exemption where *bona fide* reason is given for exemption; and his statement is borne out by many other witnesses examined by the commission. If it is absolutely necessary to reduce the labour conditions, then I would suggest that the rent should be increased. At the present time there is no attempt made to increase the rent, although reductions are given on two or three items. I think that £1 an acre is hardly sufficient under those circumstances. The suggestion I have made is one that was brought before the Mining Commission, and I am inclined to think that it is rather a good one if we have to accept reduced labour conditions. I am pleased to see that it is proposed in this Bill to give increased powers to miners under miners' rights, but I should also have liked to have seen the price for a miner's right reduced. Although 10s. may not appear much to some hon. members, yet it is a great deal to men who have not got the money, and there are many prospectors to whom the payment of half-a-sovereign is a very heavy burden. I should therefore like to see the charge for a miner's right reduced from 10s. to 5s. The hon. member for Charters Towers, Mr. Dawson, informs me that the Mining Commission recommended that a permit should be granted. I think that would be very advisable in cases where evidence is brought forward to convince the warden that the man is not in a position to pay anything at all for a miner's right. The State would lose very little, and the chances are that a great deal

would be gained, by granting a permit. We owe a great deal to the prospectors of goldfields in Queensland, and who can tell but that one of these men going out under a permit may find a field similar to Charters Towers, Gympie, Croydon, or some of the other goldfields in the colony? I am glad to notice that an increase has been made in the amount of the reward for the discovery of a payable goldfield. I think it is also a step in the right direction to compel foreign companies to register in Queensland. That is a provision that has been very badly needed, and if it becomes law it will tend to assist companies who are doing business in Queensland at the present time. I am also glad to see that it is intended to grant certificates to mining managers. It has seemed to me a bit of an anomaly that engine-drivers, who are subordinate officials to managers, should be compelled to undergo an examination and hold a certificate while their superior officers were allowed to take charge of a mine without any certificate as to competency or anything else. As the senior member for Charters Towers points out, the manager has the right to discharge an engine-driver who holds a certificate, and also the men under him; and it will be a step in the right direction to require managers to obtain certificates of competency. With the hon. member for Croydon I agree that the time available this session is not sufficient for us to discuss an important measure like this. It has been in embryo for so many months that more time might have been given us to deal with the measure, which, if passed, will play a great part in the mining industry of Queensland; but instead of that, it is brought down at what may be termed the fag end of the session. That is hardly fair to members, and it is very unfair to the mining industry. As I said at the outset of my remarks, as we have gone on for so many years without any amendment in the mining laws, I do not think much more hardship can be brought about if this measure is not placed on the statute-book this session. I heartily believe in many of its provisions, but there are other provisions in the Bill which will overbalance any good that is likely to be brought about by the passing of the measure. Therefore, I have much pleasure in seconding the amendment moved by the hon. member for Croydon.

The PREMIER: The reception which a measure of this importance has met with at the very inception of the discussion indicates undoubtedly that there is a pre-arrangement to obstruct the Government in proposing useful legislation this session.

MEMBERS of the Opposition: No, no!

The PREMIER: Such an extraordinary step as that taken by the hon. member for Croydon, and supported by the hon. member for Wide Bay, I can regard in no other light than as an indication of some principle of procedure having been arrived at by hon. members opposite to delay the business of the country by the Government this session.

Mr. JENKINSON: Not so.

The PREMIER: The hon. member who has just addressed the House complains of this Bill being introduced so late in the session, and says we have no time for its proper discussion.

Mr. JENKINSON: I did not say that.

The PREMIER: The hon. member seconded a motion which will protract the discussion which will take place now.

Mr. JENKINSON: I said there was not sufficient time.

The PREMIER: There is no intention to pass this Bill hurriedly. We invite the fullest consideration of the very important principles of consolidation which are contained in this measure, and there is ample time for hon. members to go

fully into it, and place it upon the statute-book this session. On behalf of the Government I distinctly accept the challenge of hon. members opposite in regard to this motion, which is nothing less than a deliberate attempt to obstruct the business of the country as intended to be proceeded with by the Government at present.

MEMBERS of the Opposition: No, no! That is not so.

The PREMIER: I know that hon. members opposite are wanting an opportunity of testing the strength and solidarity of this party, and I am very glad indeed that we may now arrive at a conclusion in this matter, because if the Government are not able to pass a measure of this importance, urgently longed for, earnestly desired, and eagerly demanded by hon. members representing mining interests upon the other side—if they are not able to pass such a measure in the form desired by the country, then they have no business to hold the reins of administration.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: In that light I accept the challenge, although I think it would have been better if it had come from the hon. member who leads the Opposition. I certainly cannot construe the extraordinary action of hon. members opposite in their reception of a measure of this very great importance, before it has even received a preliminary consideration, as other than a challenge. If we had proceeded with its consideration, and defects had been pointed out in it which would demand the serious consideration of hon. members, we should have been proceeding in the ordinary form of debate. But at the very outset, after my hon. colleague, the Treasurer, has very lucidly explained its provisions, the Bill is met by a motion that it should be withdrawn. Under those circumstances I say distinctly that the Government must accept the challenge contained in the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Croydon, and, as I said, I only regret that the challenge has not come from the leader of the Opposition instead of from a private member. However, I distinctly wish to inform hon. members who intend to support the amendment, that I view it in the light of a challenge, and I shall accept the result as that which will determine the future action of the Government. This is a very important measure—a most important measure—and I say that if its passage through the House is delayed by these obstructive tactics which have been displayed this afternoon—

Mr. McDONALD: I rise to a point of order. The hon. member insists upon stating that the amendment is moved with the object of obstruction, and I ask your ruling, Mr. Speaker, as to whether the hon. member is in order in deliberately stating that this amendment of the hon. member for Croydon is moved with the object of obstructing the Bill?

The SPEAKER: I understand that the hon. member accepts this amendment of the hon. member for Croydon as a challenge.

Mr. DAWSON: We deny it.

The SPEAKER: The hon. gentleman has a perfect right to accept it as a challenge, if he chooses.

Mr. DUNSFORD: Is the hon. gentleman in order in saying that we are resorting to obstructive tactics? Are we not doing everything within the Standing Orders, and is the amendment of the hon. member for Croydon obstructive tactics?

The SPEAKER: The amendment moved by the hon. member for Croydon is perfectly in order, and the hon. member at the head of the Government has a perfect right, if he chooses, to accept it as a motion of want of confidence.

Mr. GLASSEY : I think, if you will pardon me, that you are rather overlooking the point. The question is whether the language used by the Premier in referring to the amendment as "obstructive tactics" is in order?

The SPEAKER : I have already ruled that it is not, because the amendment is perfectly in order. I thought my statement covered that.

Mr. BROWNE : If I might be allowed to make a personal explanation, I should say that I have been accused of acting in collusion with the hon. member for Wide Bay and others in moving this amendment.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS : You would not have anything to do with it, would you?

Mr. BROWNE : I give my word to hon. members that I had no communication with any hon. member belonging to that party. When I rose they did not know what motion I was going to move, or anything else. I moved the amendment as a mining member upon my own responsibility, and am fully prepared to take all the responsibility.

The PREMIER : Of course I am bound to accept the statement of the hon. member for Croydon—

Mr. DAWSON : You say you are bound to do it?

The PREMIER : As a matter of parliamentary practice I am.

Mr. DAWSON : Will you do it as a man?

The PREMIER : I may hold my own opinion ; but I must confess that these are extraordinary tactics in connection with a Bill of such marked importance—to demand its withdrawal when but a week ago hon. members upon both sides were most insistent upon its introduction, and were deploring that owing to the illness of the late Premier this most important measure was delayed. Hon. members were continually asking when the Mining Bill would be produced, and my hon. colleague had to be constantly answering interrogatories, and making excuses for the delay, and under those circumstances I cannot refrain from expressing my opinion that the procedure adopted this evening indicates at any rate a remarkable departure from the ordinary procedure on the second reading of a Bill. I certainly am quite justified, as leader of the Government, in announcing that I accept this departure as a direct challenge to the Government to prove their ability to carry the Bill through. I believe that I am perfectly in order, and it is far better that hon. members on both sides should clearly understand the position. Without going into the details of the Bill on the present occasion, I may say that it is a measure of very great importance to the mining interests of the colony. It is a consolidation of several statutes, and even if hon. members have solid grounds for objecting to it, they should not demand its withdrawal before it has received much fuller discussion—before the speech of the hon. gentleman who introduced it has been answered or subjected to that criticism which the introducer of such a Bill might naturally expect to be furnished in response to his arguments. I am exceedingly surprised and disappointed that a measure of this sort should be attempted to be shunted at this early stage of its parliamentary consideration, and I sincerely trust that no support will be given to the withdrawal of the Bill at the present time. I repeat that from all I can learn and observe the country demands the Bill, and it requires that consideration should be given to it. It has received the deliberate and full attention of members of the Cabinet who are conversant with the mining industry of this colony, and in that light alone it deserves full consideration at the hands of hon. members. I can

only construe the attitude of members representing mining constituencies who may support the amendment to imply that the mining laws of this colony are so good that they do not require any further amendment.

Mr. DUNSFORD : They are bad enough, but this is worse.

The PREMIER : The hon. member will permit me to say that neither he nor the two hon. members who have spoken have intimated in any way that this consolidation will prejudice the mining interests, or that the attempt which has been made, after full consideration and reflection, by my hon. colleague the Secretary for Mines does not meet very grave deficiencies in existing legislation, and introduce a consolidation of mining laws which will tend to improve the existing condition of things, and place on a practical footing the important mining industry of this colony. We are quite prepared to have this measure closely criticised, but at the same time I really cannot understand the attitude of hon. members who have been asking for this Bill in saying that the measure shall be withdrawn forthwith, and if, in the earlier portion of the evening, I have emphasised my feeling that such an extraordinary and unprecedented mode of considering an important measure as now introduced indicates that there is some prearrangement to deny to the Government that power of legislation which they desire to possess, and should possess in the interests of the country, I think I may be very well excused for having expressed my indignation that such an intention should be veiled by a motion such as that moved by the hon. member for Croydon. Of course, I accept his statement that he has introduced the amendment entirely of his own free will. That may be so. The hon. member must, however, admit that it is a very extraordinary and very discourteous mode of procedure to adopt towards an important Government measure, and under these circumstances I consider I am quite justified in intimating that I consider the amendment a distinct challenge to the Government to prove their ability to carry through a measure on which the mining community of this colony has certainly set its heart, and which it expects the Government should be able and willing to place on the statute-book. I need not occupy the time of the House with any further remarks. I do not wish to go into the principles of the Bill, which can be better discussed on the second reading, but at this peculiar stage of our proceedings I think I have very clearly intimated the attitude which the Government will take up, and the course which, if the vote on the amendment is adverse to the Government, they will pursue.

MEMBERS on the Government side : Hear, hear!

Mr. GLASSEY : It was not my intention to have entered into the merits of this Bill nor to have spoken on it to-day, at any rate, if it had not been for the rather warm remarks made by the Premier just before we adjourned for tea. The hon. gentleman will persist in saying that the amendment moved by my hon. friend the member for Croydon is an indication that some understanding has been arrived at between members sitting on this side of the House with a view of thwarting the Government in carrying this measure. I deny that statement entirely, and I think my hon. friend the member for Croydon cleared up the point when he made a personal explanation and emphasised in the strongest language that there was no such understanding. I think, therefore, the Premier might have well let the matter rest there, and accepted the hon. member's statement. I trust the hon. gentleman will accept my assurance that no such understanding has been arrived at ; that

is to say, that no such understanding has been arrived at by those gentlemen forming the two sections sitting on this side of the House. The hon. gentleman says that this amendment is moved with a view of delaying the business of the country, and that he accepts it as a challenge to prove that the Government are able to carry on legislation. In what way is this amendment moved with a view of delaying business? Surely the hon. gentleman is aware that weeks ago I myself, in my official capacity, was obliged to ask the Secretary for Mines when this measure was likely to be tabled?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: You also asked me to postpone it.

Mr. GLASSEY: I will deal with that point also. Weeks ago I asked when the Government intended to introduce their more important legislation, and more particularly the measure relating to the important industry of mining. On several occasions when I put the question I was told that the Government had these matters under consideration. The late Premier had been absent—I speak with great diffidence with reference to the late lamented hon. gentleman—but we were met from time to time with the statement that owing to various exigencies—more particularly the absence of the late Premier—the Government were not in a position to place this important mining measure on the table of the House. It is but a fortnight ago since the Secretary for Mines intimated that the Government were prepared to deal with the question. I must say in justification of some little delay that has taken place—a delay of a couple of weeks—that I did apply to the Secretary for Mines to postpone the consideration of the second reading of the Bill, in consequence of the serious illness of my hon. friend the member for Croydon, and of the senior member for Charters Towers. I wish to put this matter plainly before the House and the country, and I am sure the Secretary for Mines will accept my statement when I say that I did not ask for the postponement of the Bill with a view of thwarting the Government or to cause the slightest delay. No such consideration entered into my mind, or into the mind of any hon. member sitting on this side of the House. After my two colleagues and other hon. members sitting on this side—and doubtless some hon. members sitting on the other side too—have had time to go into the details of this elaborate and comprehensive measure, they have found that there are certain provisions which would be most pernicious if passed into law, and surely there is nothing wrong in the hon. member for Croydon, with his long experience in mining, saying that at this late period of the session there is no possibility of that consideration being given to the Bill which the importance of the subject demands. Here we are at the 19th of October, and even if we devote the time between now and Christmas exclusively to this Bill, with nearly eleven years' experience in this Assembly, I say that it is impossible to deal with the Bill in such a manner as to give satisfaction to the country as a whole. I have always disliked rush in legislation. The fullest time should be given to enable us to mature our thoughts, and to put measures into as shipshape a form as possible before submitting them to the other Chamber. Supposing this House devotes the time I have mentioned to the Bill, what time will there be for the other House to consider the Bill in all its details—as they have a right to do? I do not think I am using too strong a term when I say that with all their experience in legislative and administrative work during the last few years, it does not indicate a large amount of capacity for legislative work on the part of the Government to introduce such an important measure at this late period of the session.

No hon. member has had more legislative and administrative experience than the Premier; the Secretary for Mines and several of his colleagues have had considerable experience in legislative work, and yet last session and this session their most important measures have been kept back. Is it because the Government have not had the necessary material at hand to enable them to bring them forward earlier? Or do they depend upon a number of members sitting in this Chamber, who will calmly and quietly acquiesce in the measures they are prepared to submit at any period of the year, and allow them to pass in a slipshod fashion, which is very objectionable? It is manifestly unfair to charge us, because we are disinclined to do this, with obstruction. I expected criticism of a different kind from the Premier, with all his parliamentary and Ministerial experience, than to expect us to allow the Bill to pass with all its defects in order to accommodate the hon. gentleman and his colleagues. If for no other reason than the lateness of the session, it would be manifestly unfair to go on with this measure at the present time. But there are other reasons why the Bill should be delayed—reasons which have been given in very clear and cogent language by the hon. member for Croydon; and the hon. member for Wide Bay emphasised the remarks made by my hon. friend. He said that for many years people had been calling out for a Mining Bill; but now it seems that the Government have all at once come to the conclusion that now is the time. They see, of course, that in a few short months Parliament must dissolve, and they must go to the country, and they wish to have some sort of little cry—"We were anxious to do something; but, unfortunately, those persons on the other side, with their obstructive tactics, prevented us from doing what we wished." I am very glad we have such things as parliamentary records; I am very pleased that we have such a thing as *Hansard*, to tell us when measures are submitted—not only this year, but we can take a retrospect over the last few years, and see that there is not that amount of legislative capacity and ability on the other side that we are sometimes told there is.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You have got it.

Mr. GLASSEY: We do not say we have got it; but we are always being told in the leading journals, by leading advocates of the party on the other side, and even by hon. members themselves, that those are the only men fit to govern the country in consequence of their great experience. The Secretary for Railways says we have got the capacity and ability. Well, if we cannot show a record equal, at any rate, so far as the presentation of most important measures are concerned year by year, to that of the other side, then that record is valueless. The Premier characterises the amendment as mere obstructive tactics. He says that the whole country is demanding the Bill—that the whole country is waiting in breathless attention for this Bill. There is no man in this Chamber for whom I have a greater respect than for the hon. gentleman who introduced the Bill, and to whom I listen with more attention and appreciation, and yet we are told that the whole country is waiting for this Bill. The country has been waiting for some years. Why is it, then, that we have to wait till about the first week in October before this important Bill is introduced? If we have been waiting all these years, surely it is not unreasonable to say that in consequence of the deficiencies of the Bill, which have been so ably pointed out this evening, that we cannot wait a little longer? In any case, even if we did nothing else for the remainder of the session, it is impossible to give

the Bill that attention which its importance warrants at this period of the session. The Premier says that he accepts this as a challenge from this side of the House. Does the hon. gentleman imply that he regards it as a motion of want of confidence in the Government? He deplors the fact that I did not move the amendment. Surely it is not unusual for a gentleman holding a position such as the hon. member for Croydon to be entrusted with such a matter, more particularly considering his long experience in mining. Seeing that I cannot lay claim to the same practical knowledge of mining, particularly goldmining, as my hon. friend, it does not follow that I should take charge of the amendment, but I share to the full any responsibility, and I agree entirely with the amendment. I again deny that there was any understanding arrived at between hon. gentlemen sitting on this side with regard to the amendment.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Was it not considered at a caucus?

Mr. DAWSON: We had no caucus.

Mr. GLASSEY: I have referred to a measure of this magnitude being introduced at this late period, and many of its defects have been pointed out by my hon. friend. The extension of the area from twenty-five to fifty acres is a most objectionable feature, and the hon. member for Croydon has pointed out that in future it will be left to the Minister to frame regulations from time to time to meet the exigencies of any case that may arise. The hon. member for Wide Bay hit the nail on the head when he said that we do not want so many regulations; that we want things embodied in the Act instead of leaving them to the Minister. One Minister may be favourable to certain matters to-day, and another Minister may be in office to-morrow with entirely different opinions, and may have another set of regulations framed, though rights may have accrued under the first set of regulations. Then there are the labour conditions. Now it is one man to the acre. I presume in future the regulation may be so framed that it may be one man to five acres—a most objectionable feature which will be opposed by miners in different parts of the country. Then there is another matter which deserves consideration. It will be in the recollection of hon. members that when the Land Bill—

The TREASURER: You are making a second-reading speech now.

Mr. GLASSEY: I am not addressing myself to the Bill to any extent, but more particularly to the amendment. I wish to show in passing that when the Land Bill was before the House copies were sent broadcast through the country so that the community generally might have an opportunity of considering and discussing its leading features and the Minister might receive their suggestions and embody them in the Act. There was no rush, no haste, no desire to prevent the public from having an opportunity of discussing the measure. And the same thing applies to the Local Government Bill. The late Home Secretary, Sir Horace Tozer, asked this House—and the House agreed—to permit the measure to be sent in scores and hundreds throughout the colony, so that local authorities might have an opportunity of discussing the Bill and suggesting amendments which he would be pleased to embody in the Bill. Why not give the same opportunity to the mining community in different parts of the colony? When the Mining Commission was investigating matters every person who desired to say anything was invited to do so, yet here is a measure which has, I presume, been carefully framed, and has been in the hands of Ministers weeks and months; and without these people being taken into consideration at all the

Bill is submitted, and we are asked within the period of six or seven weeks to endeavour to pass it; and because some of us take a strong objection to some of its leading features, apart from the lateness of the session, we are told by the Premier that we are pursuing obstructive tactics. That is to shield himself and his Government and his party behind those subterfuges and excuses, so that when they go before the electors they will be able to say, "We offered you a splendid bill of fare; we endeavoured to put solid and substantial food on the table, but unfortunately the gentlemen on the other side prevented us."

MEMBERS on the Government side: Hear, hear!

Mr. GLASSEY: They will claim the sympathy of the electors, and say, "Return us to power again and we will present you not only with this measure but with measures of far more benefit and more substantial than the ones we have already promised." But if they fancy that these little tactics are going to be accepted by the country, and that we will not take the opportunity of having something to say in reply, all I can say is that hon. members on the other side misjudge hon. members on this side, and will seriously misjudge the temper, feeling, and spirit of the electors generally. It is not my intention to discuss the merits of the Bill—I shall have an opportunity later on, perhaps, of saying something with regard to its main provisions—but I say, in conclusion, that I think it is rather to be regretted that the Premier has no more solid ground to stand on than the mere statement that these are obstructive tactics to prevent the business of the country being done. I hope the amendment will be carried, not that I wish to injure or prevent the full development of the mining industry—there is no man more anxious than myself to see that great industry prosper—but I do say that, considering the defects in the Bill, the lateness of the session, and the large number of persons in different parts of the colony who have not had an opportunity of considering the provisions of the Bill, it is my intention to support the amendment.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I am quite astonished at the hon. member. He must know that I gave notice of this Bill on the 22nd September. I was asked then to give a week's delay, and I did so most willingly. Unfortunately during that week the late Premier's death occurred, and a further delay occurred. When it was again brought forward we were asked to give another week or ten days; the hon. member for Croydon was sick and some other members interested were unable to be present. I gave way again.

Mr. GLASSEY: I thank you kindly for it.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: This is the thanks I get for it. I consider I have been treated most unfairly with this Bill. I want fair discussion on it, and I am not getting it. I am met with a motion to postpone it till next session. There are only nine or ten mining members who thoroughly understand the Bill. Let them discuss it, and let everybody else look on and listen to what they say. If the discussion is confined to those members who know something of it, there is plenty of time to pass the Bill before the end of the session. If there is any desire on the part of hon. members opposite to have this or any other Bill become law, there is plenty of time before the end of the session to do it. If they do not agree with the provisions of the Bill let them speak and vote against it.

Mr. McDONALD: If you are beaten, perhaps you will say this is a Bill of no importance, as you said the other night.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I said the other Bill was of no importance. It was just as simple as it looked, despite what the hon. member said about its 4th clause. With regard to this Bill, I contend that I am not being treated with fair play. After having given way on two occasions to hon. members opposite, I thought they would have shown me some consideration. But they will give nothing in return. Let us discuss the Bill on its second reading, not on a motion of this kind. It is not a fair way of fighting at all. The Bill contains a good deal of the labour of the senior member for Charters Towers, and the hon. member for Croydon admits there is a lot of good in it, although he says he thinks the bad outweighs the good. Let us go on with the Bill and discuss it, and let the consensus of opinion carry weight. If it is a bad Bill the Government will suffer when they go to the country. If it is a good Bill we will take the credit for it. There are a number of small things in the Bill as to which I am prepared to make concessions, but on the main vital features of the Bill the Government are prepared to stand or fall.

Mr. DUNSFORD: I suppose this is another of those crises we are continually having just now. It is satisfactory to know that the Premier knows where he is over this, and that the Government know where they are; that they do look upon the Mining Bill as of some importance, and are prepared, if this motion of the hon. member for Croydon is carried, to do something. That ought to be satisfactory to hon. members. We know now what we may expect. From that standpoint it seems to me that we have now two things for consideration—the Mining Bill on the one hand, and the action of the Premier in taking this as a vote of no confidence on the other. We can discuss either of those questions—either the Bill itself, giving reasons why it should be withdrawn, or the action of the Government in this or any other session during the present Parliament. We are not limited, owing to the action of the Premier himself, to the discussion of the Bill itself. That, I think, is understood. But I do not desire to get far away from the Bill. I have stated so repeatedly here that I do not think the Government should, in justice to themselves, to the House, and to the country, proceed with any important legislation at the present time, that it is not necessary to make my position clear in that connection. We know that in the past it has been one of the great causes of complaint by the Upper House, by the newspapers, and by this House, that late in the session the Government came forward with important legislation, and compel members, against their will, to pass that legislation in a hurried, ill-digested manner. That legislation leaves this House not so perfect as it would otherwise be. It goes to the other place, and there it meets a like fate. It is sent to a place where they are supposed specially to prevent anything like hasty legislation, and yet they are compelled, in spite of themselves, to pass hasty legislation. They in the past have had a good cause of complaint at the tail end of every session.

Mr. SMYTH: You do not like the Upper House, do you?

Mr. DUNSFORD: It is not of importance to the House at present, nor to the hon. member, what I think of the Upper House, nor is it of any importance what I think of the hon. member who interjects. But it puts me in mind of something I read in Charles Dickens, where an old maid, looking through the window, espied donkeys on the green, and called out, "Janet! Donkeys, donkeys!" I am inclined, seeing donkeys on the green, to call out, "Donkeys, donkeys!"

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Where does the laugh come in?

Mr. DUNSFORD: If there is one thing which the people of this country have cause to complain of it is that year after year there are numbers of Bills passed by the legislature which have not been digested and are not properly understood by the members, and which certainly would not be acceptable to the people had they an opportunity of expressing their opinions upon them. Even hon. members opposite will agree with me that this Bill is of as grave importance as the Land Bill or the Local Government Bill; and we know that it took more than one session to pass the Land Bill, and that the Local Government Bill has been repeatedly before the House. There is just as good reason why this Bill, so very important to the mining community, should—after being considered here—be considered fully by the mining community. As pointed out by the leader of this party, we have got in the Mines Commission report in some measure the collective desire of the mining community. There were public meetings in the mining centres; and representatives of miners' unions, mining managers' unions, and chambers of commerce voiced—through the report of the Mines Commission—their collective desires in this connection. But have we sent back to these people the fruit of their labours and of the labours of the Mines Commission in its concrete form in this Bill for their consideration—and if not, why not? As I said before, this forcing of legislation through the House is no new game. Complaints about it have been made repeatedly, and the *Courier* has very forcibly dealt with it. I will remember reading an article in the *Courier* after we had brought our proceedings to a close in December, 1896, bearing upon this subject, and I think this a proper time to quote from that article. I will not, of course, inflict the whole of the article upon the House.

MEMBERS on the Government side: Yes. Read the whole of it.

Mr. DUNSFORD: As the hon. members for Gympie, the hon. member for Fortitude Valley, and other hon. members on the other side have invited me to do so, I will read the whole of it. The article appears in the *Courier* of December 19th, 1896, and is headed the "The Ended Session"—

Is the manner of conducting business during the session just closed to be taken as a fair specimen of procedure in the Parliament of Queensland? And are our people content that future sessions should be framed on the same model? It is true that looking to the quantity, merely, of legislation—to the number of Bills passed, or attempted to be passed—the record seems fair enough.

I suppose that is what the Government propose to do now—place a quantity of Bills before us, and point to them and say they have done some business.

Forty-two Bills put before the House and thirty-five put through might be taken to indicate business.

Forty-two Bills in one session! And these are the people who talk of the forty planks of the Labour platform! The difference is that the forty planks of the Labour platform are something for the benefit of the people, while these Bills were something for the benefit of syndicalism, lawyerism, and boodlerism generally.

But when we look at the value of the legislation effected, when we compare it with the promise of the Governor's Speech, when we note the time of its introduction and the manner in which its place on the statute-book is secured—in short, when we look at the conduct of Parliament and set the outcome in the light of the time and talk expended—we are bound to say the result is disappointing in the extreme, and the call for amendment urgent. We are not, of course, asserting that there is nothing to set to the credit of the Government and of the House. They have done well, and

deserve well of the country in their treatment of the important but difficult and delicate matter of the Queensland National Bank.

MEMBERS on the Government side: Hear, hear!

Mr. DUNSFORD:

Sir Hugh Nelson has proved himself again an admirable Treasurer in his treatment of the finances of the country.

MEMBERS on the Government side: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: That must be the wrong article.

The SPEAKER: Order! I think the hon. member should quote only the portion of the article that is relevant to the question before the House. The part of the article he is now reading is not relevant to the question before the House.

Mr. DUNSFORD: I was invited by the interjections of hon. members opposite to read the whole article.

The SPEAKER: Hon. members had no right to make those interjections.

Mr. DUNSFORD: I shall now quote the portion which I think is relevant—

The session began in June, but putting aside routine work, the greater part of the legislation of the session was not placed before the Assembly until October, and as many as nine Bills, many of them contentious, were tabled within the last month.

If hon. members will look at the business-paper they will see that there are more than nine Bills now introduced during this month of October, and what the *Courier* so strongly deprecated at that time should now be deprecated by members of this House.

It needs no special penetration to divine the result of such a method. The wasted beginning of the session is followed by its crowded and ill-considered ending. Members complain, and with the greatest reason, that the period of the year when they are tired—when they are longing for relief, and when that sentiment itself leads to the over hasty despatch of business—is chosen as the time of heaviest loading, and even of most important loading. Such a method is capable of intentional abuse, especially as the Houses thin; and it is hard to resist the conviction that it has in some recent instances been so abused. But it is perhaps of greater consequence to point out that it reduces the Upper Chamber to a nullity. Look at the rush of Bills sent to the Council during last week, and especially during the last day or two!

There is more of the article, but I think I have quoted sufficient to show that it is not a good thing, in the middle of October, to begin to pass legislation, because certainly it will be followed by the same results as occurred on that occasion. And at that time, though there were important measures proposed, there was none so important as this Mining Bill. I had intended to discuss the merits of the Bill now, but as we will have another opportunity of doing so I will defer what I have to say until that opportunity arises.

Mr. STUMM: If there is one thing that this Parliament is committed to it is the subject of mining law reform. It was made a prominent feature in Sir Hugh Nelson's manifesto when he went to the country in 1896, and I believe it was referred to in most constituencies. I do not hesitate to say that I owe my seat in this House to my advocacy of that question before all others. It was also referred to by the late Mr. Byrnes in his speech at Warwick, and on the Address in Reply he said—

And the great mining industry of the country is given a prominent place, because we do feel that it is quite time that legislation on the various branches of mining should be gathered into a consolidated form and should be brought up to date, so that the newer light that we have gained from experience may be brought to bear on the subject. This session I do hope will see a comprehensive modern Bill dealing with mining in every phase and branch of the industry.

We all know that in the first session of this Parliament the subject was mentioned in the Address with which Parliament was opened, and that it was then stated that during the recess a Royal Commission would be appointed to inquire fully into the matter. That commission was appointed, and did make full inquiry into the matter. It was a costly commission, but I believe the information it obtained was well worth the money. The report of that commission was in the hands of members of this House last year, and it has been in the hands of the people of Queensland for the past twelve months; and seeing that this Bill is in the main founded on the recommendations of the commission, and is, after all, more a measure of consolidation than a measure of amendment, it is absurd to say that we are not fit to deal with it now. The argument all through to-night has been that there is not time to pass it. What was the history of last session? Why, we did nearly the whole of our work in the last eight weeks of the session, and we had to deal then with a Land Bill, which is a far more contentious measure than a Mining Bill.

Mr. McDONALD: What about the mining amendment the Council refused? We fell in there.

Mr. STUMM: We carried that amendment in this House, and we brought the question to a greater point than it was ever brought before.

Mr. TURLEY: The Minister has already promised an amendment of the Land Act which was then passed.

The HOME SECRETARY: No, never.

Mr. STUMM: The point I desire to make is that we are well qualified to deal with the question of mining law reform, and that there is ample time for us to do it if we make up our minds to deal with the question. But of course if we are going to wrangle over the second reading as to whether the measure shall be proceeded with or not we can do nothing. Therefore I was very glad to hear the Premier take the firm and decided stand he has taken this evening. Hon. members opposite say they are compelled to admit that this Bill affords a large measure of relief to the goldfields homesteaders of the colony, and they try to shelter themselves against the responsibility of denying that relief by saying that there are other features of the Bill which are not good. But after it is all boiled down, what do they object to? The main point of their objection is the proposed increase in the area of leases. They overlook the fact that the way the provision dealing with that subject is drafted, it does not follow that the area must be fifty acres on every goldfield in the colony. The maximum area on one field may be ten acres, on another twenty acres, and on another thirty or forty acres; but on no goldfield in the colony can it be more than fifty acres. They admit that the Bill gives relief to the people I have mentioned, but say that there are defects in other portions of the Bill. If they were sincerely anxious to give relief to the goldfields homesteaders of the colony, who are a very important body of men, they would go into committee on the Bill, and seek to amend the bad portions of it, and pass the relief.

Mr. McDONALD: What relief?

Mr. STUMM: The relief is that instead of having to pay 1s. an acre for ever for their land and being hampered in by restrictions which are imposed on no other class in the colony, a time is fixed when that rent shall cease and they shall have their holdings at a nominal rental, subject, however, to certain rights and privileges for mining purposes, as I hope will always be secured to the miner. On Charters Towers there are 3,110 goldfields homesteads, on Croydon 500, on Eidsvold 223, on Kilkivan 90, on Mount Morgan

over 1,000, on Ravenswood 210, and on Gympie nearly 1,300. When the goldfields homesteaders on those places see the account of this debate I do not think it will give them any satisfaction to have the lip-sympathy of hon. members opposite. I do not wish to speak to the measure itself at this stage—I shall do that later on—but, in conclusion, I say this is a Bill that affects one-seventh of the entire population of the colony. It affects also the farming industry of the colony, for among the best customers for the farmers' produce are the miners. We know that this Bill has been long wanted. We have the information to deal with it, and therefore I say we ought to address ourselves to it at once, and not waste time in this fashion.

MEMBERS on the Government side: Hear, hear!

Mr. STEWART: The charge of wasting time comes with very bad grace from any member on the opposite side on the present occasion. What is the position of the Government with regard to this Bill? In the first place Parliament was six weeks late in being summoned, and we were told that that was done to give the Government time to mature their measures. The country, satisfied with that excuse, and members of Parliament believing that the Government were sincere in making that assertion, acquiesced. But we find that after those six weeks were wasted, the Government go on wasting another three months before introducing important measures to the House.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: The Opposition wasted it.

Mr. STEWART: Have the Government brought in a single beneficial measure this session? Can the hon. gentleman stand up in his place and say that they had a single important measure ready to submit to Parliament? Then he charges us with wasting the time of the country.

Mr. McDONALD: They are a wasted Government.

Mr. STEWART: We have been three months waiting patiently, hopefully, and anxiously for the Government to come forward with this measure, but they have not done so. The fact is that they did not know what measures they intended to introduce, and they had none ready. The Government were in an utterly disorganised condition, and it is only within the last two or three days that they have woken up out of the long lethargic sleep into which they had sunk. The hon. member for Gympie told us that this is a very important measure, and that the country is waiting for it, and the homestead miners, and farmers, and everybody else are eagerly looking for this measure of reform. We upon this side agree that it is a most important measure, and that is the chief reason why we object to its being brought forward at this late hour.

Mr. LISSNER: It is too good for you.

Mr. STEWART: I do not quite understand what the hon. member means. In any case, that is the chief reason why we object to the measure being gone on with at present. The session is more than half over, and now is not the time to bring forward the most important business of the year. The Premier has charged this side of the House with obstruction, but if we get up to criticise any measure, or to discuss the action of the Government or say anything at all, it is all obstruction. I have not the least doubt that nothing would satisfy the Government so much as for us to say nothing, but simply acquiesce, and let their ideas become law. But we know the Government too well for that. We know what sort of laws they would pass if they had the running of the show all to themselves. We have had too much experience of them in the past. We know what they have

done, and what they desire to do, and what they would do if they had a free hand; but I am glad, and I believe the country is glad, that there is a party here which watches them continually, and prevents them from playing ducks and drakes with the resources of the colony, and handing over rich mineral areas to absentee syndicates. The Secretary for Mines got up and complained—in fact, to use an expression which is continually in his own mouth, he got up and “whined” about the position of this party. But have we no duty to perform to the country? If we consider that this is a measure which would receive fuller discussion in the next Parliament than in this, are we not quite justified in saying that the Bill should now be withdrawn? Why did the Government not bring it forward in the first hours of the session? If it be of such great importance—and we admit that it is—why did they not bring it forward in the morning hours of the session; why have they left it till the afternoon?

Mr. KIDSTON: They prefer to rush it through without discussion.

Mr. STEWART: Yes. But I can tell the Government that they will not rush this Bill through without discussion. So far as I am personally concerned, if I sit here till next June, they will not get it through without discussion. They got certain measures through last session without sufficient consideration; but I can assure them that those tactics will not succeed this session, if I have any voice in the matter.

The HOME SECRETARY: You have plenty of that.

Mr. STEWART: The hon. member has his share of it.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: He is not so insulting as you are.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member has no right to make those remarks.

Mr. STEWART: I have not the least intension of insulting the hon. member. It is said that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and when I used the word “whine” I only used a word that is oftener in the mouth of the Secretary for Mines than that of any other hon. member in this Chamber. The leader of the Government seemed rather surprised that the leader of this party did not move this motion instead of the hon. member for Croydon, but I can tell the hon. gentleman that we have no Cæsar on this side of the House. We have no man who stands up in our midst and puts his foot down, and says, “You must do this or something else will follow.” Whatever is done upon this side is done after consultation, and in accordance with the determination of the majority. We have no centurion who says, “Go and he goeth, and to another, do this, and he doeth it.” We conduct our business upon quite different lines upon this side. We conduct it upon democratic lines; and I can assure hon. members opposite that an autocrat has no position in our ranks. I think it is most important in the interests of the farmers, as the hon. member for Gympie said, and the miners, and the country generally that this Bill should be calmly and deliberately considered, without heat, or passion, or prejudice. It consists of between 200 and 300 clauses, and we know how long such a measure takes to get through this House. I know the Secretary for Public Instruction says it is in consequence of our talk.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: It is your conscience that tells you that.

Mr. STEWART: What are we sent here for but to talk and discuss? I believe the hon. member is the owner of a sugar plantation; if he is not he ought to be, seeing that he comes from Mackay. If the hon. member sent a ploughman

nto the field to plough, he would expect him to plough; and in the same way, when the country sends representatives here to discuss the business of the country, it expects them to discuss it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: That is the last thing you ever do.

Mr. STEWART: I should like the hon. member to inform us how we can discuss these matters if we remain silent. Perhaps he has discovered some other means of discussion, and, if so, no one would be more delighted than myself if he would give us the benefit of his discovery. If we could only patent it he would speedily make a fortune, and could retire from business, and, perhaps, from Parliament. I am sure it is no pleasure for me to get up and talk—

MEMBERS on the Government side: Oh, oh!

Mr. STEWART: I am simply wasting my muscular tissue, and drawing upon the reserves of my brain power, if I have any; and generally wasting my bodily and mental substance more than I have any desire to do. If the hon. member has made a discovery that will enable us to carry on our business without talk we shall be very much obliged to him if he will let us know what it is.

Mr. O'CONNELL: I understand that the hon. member for Croydon, who objects to going on with this Bill, takes exception to the fact that there are some very objectionable clauses in it. I presume what he refers to is the proposal to grant larger leases, and, possibly, reduced labour conditions. Those are the two points which would naturally be objected to by hon. members sitting opposite. I have just taken the trouble to get a map of the Gympie Gold Field, and anybody who cares to look at it will see that there are quite a number of fifty-acre leases on the field. There is the East Oriental and Glamire, the No. 1 East Oriental and Glamire, the Oriental Extended, the Oriental and Columbia Consolidated, the Columbia Consolidated, and others. The objection which has been raised to this increased area will not prevent men from taking up fifty-acre leases, because they can already get them under the existing law. What this Bill is intended to do is to legalise what has been and is being done in a roundabout way. It is utter nonsense for hon. members to contend that fifty-acre leases are not desired, because it is very evident from the number that are taken up that those who take them consider they can more easily raise the necessary capital to work a large area.

Mr. SIM: You might as well give 100 acres to them.

Mr. O'CONNELL: There is a limit to all things, and I believe that on most goldfields a fifty-acre lease is sufficient inducement to capital. Nearly all those claims I have mentioned will have to go down 1,000 feet and more before they even get the slate; they will have a great deal of prospecting work to do before they get the quartz, and when they get the quartz they might not get payable gold. Now, in reference to these fifty-acre leases I understand that the Minister is prepared to accept an amendment to the effect that a shaft put down on the boundary of two fifty-acre leases will not be considered as fulfilling the labour conditions of those two leases, so that the present practice of putting down a shaft on the boundary of two leases will not be allowed. The wording of the clause will have to be very carefully attended to, because if a shaft was put down on every fifty acres, prospecting from a neighbouring shaft, as was done in the case of No. 1 North Oriental, could not be carried on, and a great deal of expense would have to be incurred before

anything was found. Then with regard to the labour conditions, the Minister at the present moment has absolute power to gazette any labour conditions he chooses.

Mr. DAWSON: He dare not.

Mr. O'CONNELL: What is to stop him? He has the courage to say in the House that he is prepared to do it, and he can do it in the regulations.

Mr. SIM: Did you ever hear of the Eureka Stockade?

Mr. O'CONNELL: We are a long way from the Eureka Stockade just now.

Mr. SIM: Let the Minister try it.

Mr. O'CONNELL: Is it not an absurdity for the hon. member to talk about the Eureka Stockade when he knows that the labour conditions are practically not enforced all over the colony?

Mr. SIM: Let him try.

Mr. O'CONNELL: There are leases without number on Gympie at this present moment under exemption, and indeed all over the colony. If that sort of objection was really taken up in a warm manner the whole country-side would be up in arms. The miners, however, know very well why the exemptions are allowed; that in most cases there is good reason for the exemptions, and that were it not for them the ground would be abandoned. I have pointed to the two main objections to the Bill; that already the people are straining the law and getting fifty-acre leases, and that the labour conditions can be varied by regulation. Under the circumstances would it not be well that we should go on and discuss the Bill? There are a number of clauses in it that will prove most useful, especially in regard to safeguarding the lives of miners and giving the warden the assistance of juries when inquiring into accidents. In addition to those provisions there are others which will be valuable and helpful to the mining community; and I am perfectly satisfied that the Secretary for Mines is the last man in the House who would refuse to consider any reasonable amendment. If it can be shown to be a valuable amendment, he is not one to stand on his dignity and refuse to accept it. For these reasons I think the amendment should be withdrawn, and that we should be allowed to discuss the measure.

Mr. DANIELS: I do not pose as an authority on mining, but at the same time I claim to have an ordinary amount of intelligence, and I have listened with a great deal of patience and interest especially to what the last speaker has said. He has told us that practically there is nothing in the Bill that does not simply legalise that which is already being done in an illegal manner. If that is so, I should like some hon. member to tell me how the miners are going to derive such a tremendous benefit from this measure? If those who are going to support the Bill will show me where the benefit to the miners comes in, I shall be happy to listen and give consideration to their views, for I have not yet made up my mind as to what action I shall take. This is supposed to be a consolidation of the mining laws and a measure to legalise certain things. If that is so, where does the glaring injustice that the miners have been suffering from come in?

Mr. JACKSON: I intend to vote for the amendment, although I recognise, with many other hon. members who have spoken, that the Bill has a very considerable amount of merit. But there are five objections which rise in my mind which induce me to vote for the withdrawal of the Bill, in the hope that it will come along next session, after the residents on the goldfields of the colony have had an opportunity of considering it. I object to the Bill, firstly, because

of what it contains; secondly, because of what it does not contain; thirdly, because of the change of Government which has taken place recently; fourthly, on account of the lateness of the session; and, fifthly, because I think the Bill ought to be held over to enable the residents of the goldfields—irrespective, of course, of the general public of Queensland, who are interested indirectly in this matter—to express their opinion upon it. We should consider that another very important Bill—I will not say a more important Bill than this, because I think it about equal importance—that is the Land Bill—was introduced in 1896; we had a debate on it, and it was then postponed till 1897, when the present Home Secretary succeeded in carrying it through. I think, therefore, that a Bill of this importance—being a consolidation of the mining laws of the colony—ought to be given the same treatment that was given to the Land Bill in 1896. We had a little Bill—the Rabbit Bill—introduced the other week, and, at the instance of a supporter of the Government, the Government adjourned the debate in order to give hon. members time to consider the Bill. The House has not had a very long opportunity of considering this very important Bill. It is about a fortnight since the Bill was placed in our hands, and in consequence of the disturbed political atmosphere hon. members have scarcely been able to devote to the Bill that consideration which its importance deserves. Of course we have given it some attention, but we ought to give it still more, and our constituents ought to be given an opportunity of expressing their opinion upon it. Seeing that the Bill is the fruit of a Royal Commission, that it has been submitted to the wardens—I am not sure whether it has been submitted to the Chambers of Mines throughout the colony—but, at any rate, it ought to be a perfect Bill, and I am sorry to say that it is not a perfect Bill. There are some very grave defects attached to it. I shall not go over the ground covered by other hon. members any further than I can help. The hon. member for Croydon and others have pointed out some very objectionable features, such as the extension of areas, which I shall touch on very lightly further on. Then there are the labour conditions, regarding which I was very glad to hear the Minister say that he had no objection to accepting an amendment. One of the principal objections to the Bill is that too much power is proposed to be given to the Government in the matter of framing regulations. I certainly think it would be much better—even at the risk of encumbering the statute-book with a few extra clauses—to have the most important matters which are to be dealt with by regulation incorporated in the Bill itself, so that we shall know what we are doing. The present Secretary for Mines has never abused his powers so far as I know. It has been openly admitted that he has administered the mining laws with a considerable amount of fairness and justice to all parties concerned. I am only too willing to testify to that; but still we may have in the future Secretaries for Mines who will not be so scrupulous, and it is our duty to tie the Government down to a certain extent. One of the recommendations of the Mining Commission was that the whole of the goldfields of the colony should be handed over to the Mines Department.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: So they are now.

Mr. JACKSON: I do not think they are, because the Lands Department have the right to grant occupation licenses on the goldfields, and the Secretary for Mines has no control over the Lands Department.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: It is only done with the leave of the Mines Department.

Mr. JACKSON: I quite admit that the Mines Department is consulted, but at the same time a great many difficulties arise with regard to the proclamation of goldfields.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Not many.

Mr. JACKSON: The hon. gentleman knows very well that I have been agitating for the proclamation of a small goldfield in my electorate for two or three years, and it has only been done within the last two or three weeks. The commission recommended that the goldfields should be taken over entirely by the Mines Department.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: That was not the goldfields at all.

Mr. JACKSON: I am not arguing that the Mines Department should receive all the revenue derived from occupation licenses and leases. That department might collect the rents and hand them over to the Lands Department, but it would remove the friction which is caused by having two distinct authorities dealing with the goldfields. I can quote two cases which have recently come under my notice where trouble has been caused through this divided control. There was the case of a man at Mareeba, who got a title to an allotment of land under the Mining Act, and the Lands Department actually sold that allotment by auction under the Crown Lands Act, thereby giving rise to some litigation. Another case was taken before the law courts, to which I will refer only by way of illustration. The Minister knows the case. It is the case of a man in my electorate, on the Ravenswood Gold Field. He was on an occupation license, the owner of which was a certain bank. The bank took action against him in the police court to eject him from the occupation license, although it was on a goldfield reserve. The bank won its case in the police court. I do not know how it will go on appeal, but there is the fact that the bank won its case in the police court, and notice was served to evict the man from a goldfield reserve. I shall not go further into details, but I do think that the recommendation of the Mining Commission ought to have been adopted, and some provision inserted in the Bill by which the Mines Department would have had full control over the issuing of occupation licenses and leases on the goldfields. At the present time there are many goldfields reserves that are held under occupation license and under lease. Leases for twenty-one years have been granted in many cases, miners' privileges on the reserves are in a very unsettled state, and this Bill does not attempt in any way to deal with them. When the Government bring in a Bill of this sort, which aims at being a consolidation, and which pretends to remove any grievances which may exist, these things ought to have been dealt with. There is also an omission I would like to call the attention of the Minister to. If he looks at the synopsis, he will find under Part II. the following:—

GOLDFIELDS AND MINERAL FIELDS.

Provides for the proclamation of gold and mineral fields. The provisions of section 25 of the Gold Fields Act, 1874, and of section 5 of the Mineral Lands Act of 1882 are omitted, as section 253 of the Land Act, 1897 now renders the enactment of those sections superfluous.

I venture to think that whoever drafted the Bill made a great mistake in omitting section 25 of the Gold Fields Act of 1874, which is as follows:—

When any goldfield shall have been proclaimed upon any Crown lands then under lease or license for pastoral purposes, the Governor may suspend or cancel such lease or license in respect of the land comprised in such proclamation, and shall thereupon remit to the lessee or licensee such portion of the rent of such land as may be reasonable and just.

Of course this Act of 1874 was passed ten years before the Crown Lands Act of 1884, and the idea the Government seem to have got is that clause 25 can be omitted and that clause 253 of the Crown Lands Act of 1897 will meet the whole case as regards the proclamation of goldfields. But I say not. Section 253 of the Crown Lands Act of 1897 only refers to Crown lands under Part III. of the 1884 Act and under Part III. of the Act of 1897, so that in the case of Crown lands held under the Pastoral Leases Act of 1869 this clause 253 will not apply, and the Government will find that they will have to retain this clause 25 of the Gold Fields Act of 1874 so as to meet cases of proclamation of goldfields on Crown lands held under the Pastoral Leases Act of 1869. Under the Crown Lands Act of 1897 there is much more difficulty in getting a goldfield proclaimed than there was previously, because now the squatter can obtain compensation for the portion of the run which is resumed. When the Government is requested to proclaim a goldfield reserve, the first question asked is what amount of compensation would be claimed.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION : It depends on the actual damage.

Mr. JACKSON : I don't know what the hon. gentleman means by the actual damage. If twenty square miles is taken out of a run consisting of 100 square miles, and the 100 square miles is valued at £1,000, the twenty square miles would be valued at one-fifth, or £200. But I am not arguing that the runholder should not be paid compensation. I simply say that under the Pastoral Leases Act of 1869 it was a much easier matter proclaiming a goldfield, because under that Act the Government could resume four square miles by notification in the *Gazette* straight away, and had power to resume any portion or the whole of the run by giving six months' notice. I think these matters ought to be cleared up, because one of the first essentials of a Gold Fields Act is that no difficulty should be placed in the way of the proclamation and administration of goldfields. It will be in the recollection of hon. members who were here in 1894 and 1895 that the Government introduced a Gold Fields Act Amending Bill, providing for the levying of charges on stock belonging to the residents on goldfields. In 1894, after the Bill had passed its second reading it was withdrawn, but in 1895 it was introduced again by the present Minister for Mines and carried into law. That Act is incorporated in the Bill now before the House. When that Bill went through Parliament there was a division taken in which the Government secured only a majority of one, the question being as to whether the money derived by way of assessment should be paid into the consolidated revenue or should go to the local authorities; and so far as I am aware, though the Bill found a place on the statute-book, it has never been put into force but has remained a dead letter. Now, however, we find the Government incorporating it into this Bill. I am not going to condemn the Government for not having enforced it, because I think they did the correct thing in allowing it to remain a dead letter. Considering the losses suffered by residents on the goldfields, particularly in the North, during the last two or three years from ticks and droughts, it would have been cruel for the Government to have levied that assessment; and now instead of incorporating the Act in this Bill I think they ought to wipe it out altogether. The idea of levying the charge started with a conference held by the Northern local authorities, and the Government thought it was too good a thing to let slip. They saw a chance of raising revenue by levying an assessment on the stock belonging to dairymen on the goldfields, and

they embodied the idea in the Act passed in 1895. Another point that has not been cleared up by this Mining Bill—and it is a very important point indeed—is the question of the proclamation of goldfields—that is to say, of the extension of boundaries. If hon. members will look at clause 4 they will find that the Governor may, by proclamation in the *Gazette*, constitute any portion of Crown land to be a goldfield; also that he may alter or amend the boundaries of a goldfield or abolish such goldfield. There is a point of law here that has not been settled. I am not aware whether it has been referred to the Crown Law Officers or not. At any rate there are different decisions in connection with it. Supposing a goldfield was proclaimed twenty years ago, and it is now found necessary to extend its boundaries, and twenty, thirty, or forty additional square miles are taken in, the question arises whether the country taken in is new goldfield or old goldfield. If it is new goldfield no mining leases can be issued on that particular part of the goldfield. As every mining member knows, goldfields have to be opened two years before mining leases can be issued. The difficulty has cropped up in my electorate, and I can speak on the matter with authority, when the Ravenswood Gold Field was extended, whether mining leases could be issued on the extended portion of the goldfield. This is not made clear in the Bill, which shows that the Bill is imperfect and ought to be reconsidered. An important point like that ought to be inserted so that the wardens would know what to do. They do not know at present whether they ought to recommend leases in cases of that kind. It might be argued that under the Land Act of 1897 the Government have power to grant a mining lease, or any lease, in any part of the colony, and it might be found that that view is perfectly correct. Still, that would override the spirit of the Goldfields Act, which says that no lease shall be issued on any goldfield that has not been opened two years. Section 12 of the Land Act of 1897 provides that the Government may grant or lease lands anywhere in the colony, so it is possible that under that section the Government might be able to issue mining leases on an extended goldfield, but, as I said, it would be departing from the spirit of the Goldfields Act. That is another illustration of the crudeness of the Bill. It may seem rather harsh to use such an expression as that, still I think such is the case, and the defects already pointed out will show hon. members that this side is perfectly justified in keeping the Bill back until it can get further consideration. I recognise, as I said, that there are many merits in the Bill. The hon. member, Mr. Stumm, pointed out one in connection with homestead leases, extending the area, and reducing the rent. I recognise the importance of that, and I wish to give the Government every credit for the good things they have put into the Bill. There is the question of the protection of miners' wages, which I have advocated for a considerable time. It was recommended by the Mining Commission, and I am sure the miners will appreciate it very much. Probably they may condemn us for voting for the withdrawal of a Bill which contains such admirable provisions. However, we must take our chance of that. But the withdrawal of the Bill does not mean shunting it altogether. I do not think we shall be able to keep it back. I am not so sanguine as to suppose that the vote that will be taken on this motion will cause the Bill to be withdrawn; but even if we did, we all recognise that it must come forward again sooner or later. It must come forward next session, and I believe it will be a better Bill when it comes up next year. There is no doubt that besides the defects already

pointed out others will be found when it has been scanned and criticised by the newspapers and by the residents on goldfields. We are therefore justified in asking the Government to postpone its consideration for some time. There is one very important provision that has not been touched upon by hon. members who have spoken, that is the power to sublet claims and leases. That is a very admirable provision, but there is no provision that I can see for the protection of tributers who may be working in a mine at the time when that mine may be forfeited. There is another illustration of a deficiency in the Bill. At Ravenswood one of the most important mines was exempt for two years, and it is now being worked by a party of tributers who are doing very well. I could quote other cases, as no doubt could every other mining member, yet I find no provision in the Bill, not even in the regulations, under which the Government can protect tributers in a case of that kind. In Victoria it is inserted in the Mining Act, and it ought to be in this, and to postpone the Bill will be to give it a chance of being so inserted. To refer again to homestead leases, I question whether the areas proposed are not too large. The Government have not adopted the recommendation of the Royal Commission, but appear to have steered a middle course. There is a very strong objection to large areas of land on goldfields being taken up as homestead leases. It is all very well to say, as the hon. member for Gympie did, that that would not shut out miners who wished to go there and prospect. That is right enough, but, as was replied from this side, that means paying compensation, and there are many miners who have a strong objection to going inside fenced land to prospect, on that account. That is an objection to giving large areas. We might increase the present area by, say, forty acres, and there would be very little objection on this side to that, but I am not sure whether the maximum proposed, 160 acres, is not too large. Looking through the regulations, I have not been able to see that the Government have taken power to deal with the question of fencing off hot ashes heaped near a mill or mining claim. It is only the other day that I read of a case in one of the papers where a little child lost her life through walking into a heap of hot ashes adjacent to a crushing-mill. Many cases of the kind occur on the goldfields, and I am surprised that the Government have not before now framed some regulation to deal with the matter.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: We have a regulation to deal with it.

Mr. JACKSON: I should be glad if the hon. gentleman would give me the number of the regulation dealing with it. I have not been able to find such a regulation. Regulation 118 deals with the prevention of nuisances in or about the residence or place of business of the holder of a miner's right or of a mining lease or license, but the matter could not be dealt with under that. I admit it would be a very simple matter to frame such a regulation, but, so far as I can see, there is at present no regulation dealing with the subject. I am very glad to hear that on Charters Towers most of the mill-owners do fence off their ash-heaps, but on Ravenswood, and on many other goldfields, I know it has not been the practice to do so. It was not done in my time, and I have to plead guilty, as an old machine owner, to not having fenced off the ashes. I admit that it is with some feeling of regret that I feel compelled to vote against the Government on this question, recognising as I do the good there is in the Bill. Still I agree with hon. members who have spoken of the defects in the Bill, and it is in consequence of those defects that I think the Bill should be postponed for further consideration.

Mr. BOLES: I intend to say a word or two in connection with the vote I shall give upon this question, as I suppose we shall have a vote upon it. I have never regarded second-reading speeches as of any great worth to the country. No doubt they form a kind of indicator as to how the land lies, and as to the measure of support the Bill will get. I admit, with the hon. gentleman who introduced this Bill, that the mining industry is one of the most important in the country, and I believe no liberal democratic measure would be more heartily received by the country than a Mining Bill. I regret to say I do not consider this Bill one of that kind. I look upon it as intended to benefit rather the gentleman connected with boom, fizzle, and burst than the common digger or miner. I see nothing in the measure that will specially benefit the miner, and I think it is the jackal upon the miner whom this Bill is intended to suit. I must say at once that I am thoroughly opposed to the extension of leases proposed. I believe the feeling generally where auriferous mining is carried on is that twenty-five acres is quite enough, and under the existing law it may be fifty acres where contiguous leases are taken up. It would be possible for the whole of a mining field to be taken up by one or two syndicates under the provisions here proposed. I know for a fact that the wardens extend the greatest courtesy to the representatives of mining syndicates, who always get on better in applications for exemption than the ordinary digger. I say it would be against the best interests of the colony to extend these leases. The hon. gentleman in charge of the Bill should be content to leave well alone, and if those provisions of the Bill were altered he might have a reasonable chance of getting it passed. It must be remembered that the people who take up these leases are not as a rule the people who prospect the country, but people who come after the pioneer of the industry—the working miner—has discovered the gold. The men who have been searching for years for the gold generally get the worst claims, and the big men who come in afterwards generally scoop the pool. Something has been said about mining upon squatters' lands and going inside their fences. I quite agree that the existing law permits a miner to enter upon a grazing farm and other Crown lands to mine; but a miner requires a horse or two to carry on his work of prospecting, and there is no provision in the existing law to allow him to take his horse in with him on enclosed lands.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: There is in this Bill.

Mr. BOLES: Naturally, squatters object to miners going about their leaseholds, though I am quite aware that when a miner has discovered gold the warden has power to make a provisional reserve. I think a measure of this kind should meet these difficulties; and if this Bill should get as far as committee I shall endeavour to draft something in the way of an amendment to deal with this matter which will meet with the approval of the hon. gentleman in charge of the Bill. Something has also been said about the miner's right, and I think the time has come when the Government might well make a fair concession to the mining industry in this matter. The industry has not received much genuine support from the present or from past Governments, and I think the hon. gentleman might very well propose to reduce the cost of the miner's right to half what it is at present, and make it 5s. The people who live in large towns have very little idea of the number of persons who travel about the country prospecting.

Mr. BRIDGES: I rise to a point of order. Is it in order for the hon. member to discuss the details of the Bill on this amendment?

The SPEAKER: The hon. member is somewhat transgressing in discussing the details of the Bill, but under the amendment proposed much greater latitude is allowed than under a motion for the second reading of a Bill. I hope, however, that hon. members will not transgress any more than they can possibly help.

Mr. BOLES: I will not transgress any more than I can help, but as several other members have referred to the advisability of reducing the charge for miners' rights I thought I should be in order in commenting on the matter. However, I shall only add that I think the miner should carry his franchise with him as well as his miner's right. What I particularly rose to say was that I am emphatically opposed to the extension of mining leases from twenty-five to fifty acres, as I believe such an extension will be detrimental to the best interests of the colony, and of mining in general.

Mr. KIDSTON: I do not know if there has been another caucus meeting on the other side to-day, but it looks very much like it. It looks as if there was "a conspiracy of silence" there over this matter, and I very much regret it. I should very much have preferred to have heard the mining experts on the other side of the House saying what they can say in favour of this Bill. I do not go quite so far as the hon. gentleman who introduced the measure, and say that if the seven or eight mining members of the House pronounce in favour of the Bill the rest of the members would only have to sit quiet and vote as they are told.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I never said that.

Mr. KIDSTON: Well, several hon. members understood the hon. gentleman to say so. Although I should not go quite so far as that, yet I am of opinion that in dealing with a measure which chiefly affects the interests and progress of the mining industry and those engaged in it, the House would have been prepared to go a long way in that direction, and to have attached the very highest importance to what mining members had to say on the subject. For that reason I regret that mining members on the other side have not seen fit to give the House the benefit of their experience on this matter. One or two of them have got up and stated that they do not intend to discuss the Bill on a motion for its withdrawal. Surely there could be no better occasion for discussing the general principles of a Bill, for dealing with its merits and demerits, than there is on a proposal to withdraw the Bill. I cannot understand, except on the theory I have suggested—namely, that there has been a caucus meeting, and that the whip is held over them again—why hon. members opposite are so silent. At the same time if mining members on the other side will not favour us with their opinions on this subject, then members of the House who like myself are laymen in the matter will have to take their opinions from those mining members who have addressed the House. And I submit that if I am to judge this Bill by the speeches of those mining experts who have spoken on the matter, I have no option left me but to vote for the amendment of the hon. member for Croydon. Considering the importance of the measure, the Minister who introduced it made a most lame and ineffective speech. I submit that no member who heard the Minister speak, and who also heard the hon. member for Croydon, can have any doubt as to which of them has the more comprehensive grasp of the subject. There is simply no comparison between them. The hon. member for Croydon manifested an intimate knowledge of the subject, but the Minister was very lame and ineffective in his endeavour to show the necessity for the Bill, the evils that required to be redressed, and how this Bill

would remedy those evils and put the mining industry on a proper footing. Then we had the very temperate and very moderate criticism of the hon. member for Kennedy. Hon. members opposite must recognise that both the hon. member for Kennedy and the hon. member for Croydon made very moderate, critical, and damaging speeches against the Bill. Why do not hon. members reply to those speeches if they can? I never saw a dog with its tail between its legs but it had a good excuse for it, and that seems to be the position of hon. members opposite. Instead of attempting to answer the arguments advanced against the Bill, and give reasons why they should not be listened to, they charge us with obstruction. Is not that ridiculous? Does it not seem ridiculous to hon. members themselves?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: It is quite true.

Mr. KIDSTON: The hon. gentleman says it is quite true.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: What are you doing now?

Mr. KIDSTON: If this side of the House were desirous of carrying on a policy of obstruction, would it not have been manifested yesterday?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: What are you doing now? You are not talking of the merits of the Bill; you are talking to the galleries.

Mr. KIDSTON: I am talking to the amendment that the Bill should be withdrawn, and showing that we have reasons in favour of its withdrawal. I am showing, I think, that they themselves are convinced of that. Instead of replying to those arguments they tell us that we are obstructing, but if hon. members on this side had been wanting to obstruct, had we not a far better opportunity of obstructing yesterday, when the Estimates were on? And is there any day in the whole session when we have done a better day's work than yesterday? Because hon. members believe that this Bill will do an injury to their constituents, to the mining industry, and to the colony generally—in spite of the good things we admit are in it, and therefore it would be wiser to withdraw it, and introduce an improved measure—we are charged with obstruction. Could anything be more shallow and ridiculous? We were told some time ago by the hon. member for Bulloo, who was revealing some Ministerial secrets, how at a caucus meeting the Premier put his foot down—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: What has that to do with the Bill?

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member's remarks are not relevant to the question.

Mr. KIDSTON: I am trying to show the position of hon. members on the other side. We have been charged with obstruction.

The SPEAKER: I would remind the hon. member that those words have been withdrawn, and it is not customary to debate words that have been ruled out of order.

Mr. KIDSTON: I cannot understand what words were withdrawn.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member, I presume, is quoting the words used by the Premier this afternoon. Those words were taken exception to, and were withdrawn.

Mr. KIDSTON: You misunderstand me. I was not referring to what the Premier said this afternoon, but to what the hon. member for Bulloo said some days ago.

The SPEAKER: Then the hon. member is certainly out of order.

Mr. KIDSTON: I shall not refer to a previous debate, but shall simply say that a caucus meeting was held this session, and the Premier told his followers—

The SPEAKER: The hon. member is distinctly out of order in referring to that.

Mr. KIDSTON: Is it not possible for me to refer to an article that appeared in the *Courier* some few days back?

The SPEAKER: The hon. member is in order in referring to an article that appeared in the *Courier* if it is relevant, but I fail to see that it is so.

Mr. KIDSTON: I think, if you will allow me to explain my point, you will see that it is very relevant, because it will show the policy the Government are adopting to get this amendment defeated, which ought to be carried. On a previous occasion when there was some rebellion amongst hon. members on the other side—

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is entirely out of order. His remarks are not relevant to the question.

Mr. KIDSTON: This is the position: The Secretary for Mines introduced a Bill and moved that it be read a second time. The hon. member for Croydon submitted an amendment that the Bill be withdrawn, and the only argument that has been used against that amendment is that it is obstruction.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is entirely out of order. The only hon. member who used those words was the Premier, and when the point was taken he withdrew them. I must ask the hon. member to discuss the matter in an orderly way.

Mr. KIDSTON: Did the Premier withdraw the words that he would treat this as a no-confidence motion? If it was permitted to the Premier to inform the House, and—what he more particularly wanted—to inform his followers, that he would treat this as a no-confidence motion, am I not perfectly in order in arguing that the Premier was replying to the arguments of the hon. member for Croydon by a threat to his followers that it is "Dickson or dissolution?" It seems that that is the position. Instead of replying to the arguments of the mover of the amendment, the Government have simply adopted the policy of charging this side with obstruction, and threatening their followers that if they vote against the Bill, whatever they may think about it, they will have to go to their constituents.

Mr. SMYTH: Tell the truth.

Mr. KIDSTON: If the Premier did not mean that, what did he mean? It seems to me that the hon. member for Croydon gave very valid reasons why the Bill should be withdrawn, and the hon. member for Kennedy epitomised those arguments in a way that must have appealed even to the hon. members on the other side who are afraid of a dissolution, and who will have to vote for this Bill whether they like it or not.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is entirely out of order, and I warn him not to transgress again.

Mr. KIDSTON: I shall try to avoid imputing motives, but let us have a clear understanding. When the hon. member for Croydon objected to the reduction of the labour conditions, and to the extension of the areas, and to what I think is even more serious—the attempt to perpetuate and make more general the system of government by regulation—I think he gave ample reasons why the Bill should be withdrawn, and as no attempt has been made by hon. members opposite, who claim to know something about the matter, to refute his arguments, I think it is very safe for a layman like myself to say that on the whole I shall support the amendment. There is another reason why I think the Bill should be withdrawn, and which was also given by the hon. member for Croydon. He is a little sceptical of the zeal manifested by the Government for the passage of this Bill. He showed

how the Minister had been in charge of the department for five years; how the question had been continually forced on his attention; how the Government had a year ago the information which they have now—and yet only towards the end of the session are we discussing this important Bill! It seems to me that there is extremely little likelihood—whether we agree to the second reading, or whether we vote for its withdrawal—that the Bill will become law this year. We seem to be doing very much what we did in the early part of last session, when some days were wasted in discussing the Local Government Bill, which was afterwards withdrawn to make possible the passage of other Bills, which we have never seen since. On the present occasion there are some fourteen Bills on the notice-paper, only seven of which have got so far as the committee stage, while seven have reached their second reading. Does the Government propose to pass all those Bills?

Mr. McMASTER: If you don't talk too much.

Mr. KIDSTON: When I get the reputation for talking that the hon. member for Fortitude Valley has, I will be an old and grey-headed man.

Mr. HAMILTON: Good Heavens! You have got it.

Mr. KIDSTON: Whatever my ambition may be in that way, I have not the slightest hope that I will ever be able to come up to the hon. member. Is there any likelihood, when there are only six or eight weeks of the session remaining, that we shall be able to dispose of these fourteen Bills, some of them being of quite as great importance in their way as the Mining Bill? Some of them are highly necessary and important—like the Bill we disposed of the other night; and if we cannot pass all these Bills, what are we going to pass? After the House has done discussing this elaborate measure of 246 clauses, what time will there be to discuss other measures? And even in regard to this Bill hon. members opposite must be very well aware that it will lead to very lengthy discussion. In the matter of the regulations alone, there will be sheaves of amendments to get matters of importance put in the body of the Bill, rather than leave them to be dealt with by regulations. He is a very sanguine man who imagines that this Bill will get through by the end of November. I doubt very much whether the Ministry have the slightest idea of passing the Bill, and that is one of the reasons why I object to this waste of time in discussing it.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Who is wasting the time now?

Mr. McDONALD: You are, by proceeding with this Bill.

Mr. KIDSTON: The Government are wasting time, and that is notorious not only to their supporters but to the country and to the *Brisbane Courier*.

Mr. BROWNE: "What is the game?"

Mr. McDONALD: The *Courier* is the Premier.

Mr. KIDSTON: The Premier himself admits that the Government have been wasting time, and the *Courier* called upon the Government some weeks ago to go on with legislation. I think the game is very apparent. They want to get a number of Bills half through the House. They want to be able to charge this side with obstruction and go to the country with a number of half-digested measures saying, "See what we would have given you only for those Labour men who obstructed."

MEMBERS on the Government side: Hear, hear!

Mr. KIDSTON: I doubt very much whether the Minister is sincere in wishing to get the Bill through.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Certainly, if the mining members will help.

Mr. KIDSTON: Of course I do not expect the hon. gentleman to introduce a Bill and then say that he does not anticipate being able to pass it. But even if it is passed what time will the other House have for discussing it?

Mr. ARMSTRONG: Leave that to the other House.

Mr. KIDSTON: Of course we will leave it to the other side. Apart altogether from the argument that it is not fair to the Upper House—an argument that I am not very largely concerned about—I simply ask if the Upper House is likely to start discussing so extensive a Bill as this at such a late period of the year.

Mr. LISSNER: They will do anything for the good of the country, if you give them a chance.

Mr. KIDSTON: If the member for Cairns is anxious to promote the good of the country he will try to persuade the Government to withdraw this Bill, have it made more in accordance with the requirements of the country and of the mining industry, and reintroduce it when there is more chance of it passing both Houses of Parliament. Meanwhile this House can go on with some of the smaller Bills.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: You will stonewall them also.

Mr. SMYTH: The Mining Bill or nothing.

Mr. KERR: Is that the policy? "The Mining Bill or nothing."

Mr. KIDSTON: On the whole—considering the claims of this Bill and the other Bills on the paper, considering the very serious and valid objections which have been so ably urged against the Bill, considering the claim put forward for its withdrawal and reintroduction in a better form—a claim which hon. members opposite must admit there is much in—and considering the importance of some of the other Bills, which may also be killed if we go on discussing this measure—I think it would be wise for the Government, and much better for the country, if they consented to withdraw the measure.

Mr. HAMILTON: If there is one calamity more than another which this House, and indirectly the country, suffers from, it is the waste of valuable time by members who know nothing of what they are talking about. When listening to the hon. member's speech I was reminded of a saying of Mark Twain that the man who speaks most fluently about a subject generally knows least about it. I do not intend to discuss the merits of the Bill at this stage, but will refer to some of the objections which have been urged against it. Of course hon. members recognise that this is practically a motion of want of confidence, because Ministers could not remain in their positions for one moment if they were beaten on the division which is impending. This measure has been desired for many years. It was promised by the then Premier, Sir Hugh Nelson, at the beginning of this Parliament, and now the Government are fulfilling that promise. Members of the Royal Mining Commission, appointed from each side of the House, travelled through the country to the various mining centres, to ascertain the ideas of the miners in those centres, and those ideas were embodied in recommendations of the commission, most of which appear in this Bill. I shall refer to just a few of them. Hitherto a miner has had to pay 10s. for a miner's right and another 10s. for a miner's license. By this Bill the payment of 10s. entitles one to work for gold, silver, or any other mineral. Increased security of tenure is also to be given; homesteaders are to be relieved, and numerous other provisions are introduced in the interest of the miner. One can see from that how important it is to the miners of the colony that the Bill should be passed. What are the objections which have been urged to the Bill and in support of its with-

drawal? One is that one clause of the Bill enables one man to represent five acres. But the Minister has now the power to enable one man to represent five acres. Indeed he has power to exempt them from labour conditions entirely, so that that cannot be honestly raised as an objection against the Bill. Another objection is that the Bill will enable a company, or an individual, to hold fifty acres; but a company or an individual can now hold 500 acres on a gold-field, provided it is held in blocks of twenty-five acres; and I do not recollect a single witness throughout our tour urging any objection to this being done. I have not heard one argument why fifty acres is undesirable. The only argument used is that it gives a monopoly. But it has not been attempted to be shown how it is a monopoly. "Monopoly" is a good long word. They like to roll it in their mouths like the old woman used to roll "that blessed word Mesopotamia" in her mouth. The absence of this provision has actually led to a monopoly. I know fields in the North containing thousands of acres which are monopolised by kangaroos simply on account of the present conditions not offering sufficient inducement to capitalists to come to those fields. I will take the Hodgkinson Gold Field. It has been deserted practically for a quarter of a century, and one of the reasons for its desertion is that there has not been sufficient inducement to capitalists to speculate their money there. All miners can get out of ground which requires large capital to develop is wages; therefore it does not matter to them whether it is held in twenty-five-acre blocks or in fifty-acre blocks so long as they are employed. I know that within the last year leases were taken up on the Hodgkinson—I had a share in them myself—

Mr. LISSNER: And you are sorry for it?

Mr. HAMILTON: I am sorry for it. I am one of the bloated capitalists, I suppose. I have left those leases now because there were not sufficient inducements for the home speculators to go into them. An offer was made for a certain time—the offer is gone now—that if we could promise greater security of tenure, and if we could give an assurance that the areas would be increased to fifty acres, they were prepared to put in £40,000 to develop certain areas. No such assurances could be given, and I suppose those men are now finding investments elsewhere for their money. The miners on the Hodgkinson desire larger areas, because they have been waiting for the last twenty-five years, and have been unable to get capitalists to come there with the existing inducements. Hon. members who fancy that they are benefiting the working miners in refusing to offer such inducements to speculators are simply the greatest enemies those miners have. In Maytown, and nearly everywhere I have been, they are in favour of an increased area. They see there is no other way of developing the country.

Mr. KERR: Don't they want a railway?

Mr. HAMILTON: No. they are not asking for a railway—that shows what interest the hon. member takes in that part of the country. Under the present Gold Fields Act no man—and very properly so—is allowed to take up a lease until the field has been proclaimed for two years, and I would be in favour of providing that no man should be allowed to take up fifty acres until a field had been open, say, ten years. If it was then found that the areas had been insufficient to cause the ground to be taken up, I would offer fifty-acre leases as a further inducement to capitalists to take up the ground, and in that way find employment for men. Those two clauses were the only ones objected to by those hon. members who wanted to throw out the Bill, although they knew perfectly

well that they could be altered in committee. Has a Bill ever been introduced in regard to which every member was perfectly at one on every clause. Here is a Bill containing 246 clauses, and the Labour party desire to throw it out because they object to two clauses. The hon. member for Bundaberg states that the Bill should be sent to the various mining centres, although he knows that members of the Mining Commission from each side of the House went through the colony to ascertain the opinions of the various centres. He also knows that after the second reading sufficient time would elapse before going into committee to allow the various mining centres to see the Bill, and to communicate their views to this House. We are also told that the regulations should be embodied in the Bill. Upon my word! I think that is a new-chum idea.

Mr. JACKSON: Some of them should be embodied in the Bill.

Mr. HAMILTON: Some of them should be, and some of them are. The hon. member must know that in the Acts in all the colonies power is given to the Governor in Council to frame regulations. It would be a great loss of time to have to introduce an amending Bill every time it was thought desirable to make a fresh regulation. Another hon. member objected to the Bill because the Mining on Private Property Bill is not incorporated in it. Any man who has studied the question knows that before they succeeded in passing a Mining on Private Property Bill in Victoria twenty years elapsed. Year after year the Bill was introduced, but owing to the vested interests in the Legislative Council it was not allowed to pass. If the Mining on Private Property Bill was included in this Bill, possibly the Bill would be thrown out in the Council, and we would lose the whole Bill. It would have been a most unwise thing to have embodied that Bill in this measure. It is admitted by all that the Bill has merits, and it is admitted that in committee hon. members have the power to make alterations. We are told that there is no time. If so, whose fault is that? Whose fault is it that we took five weeks to discuss the Financial Statement and the Address in Reply? For every pound of talk contributed during the debate by hon. members on this side the members of the Labour party contributed two or three tons. The excuse that there is insufficient time is fictitious; the real reason is that the Labour party wish to sacrifice the mining industry for party purposes, because every practical miner knows that if this Bill is not passed that industry will suffer. Hon. members on the other side would like to point out at the end of the session that the Ministry have done nothing, though they contributed to making it a barren session with their interminable talk. Over a little trivial question like an account of half-a-crown for washing every hon. member on that side will get up and wax eloquent, each repeating what the other has said, thus occupying hour after hour; but when a question involving a million of money comes before the House they allow it to pass in a few minutes. It has been dinned into our ears by one after another that we cannot get this Bill finished by December. That is given as a reason why we should not pass this Bill, which is urgently required by the miners! Poor dears! They cannot stand the hot weather! They assume to represent a class of men who toil and sweat in the burning sun, but they are so exhausted through sitting on those soft benches for five months in the year for £300 that they cannot endure the hardship of sitting in the shade during the additional months of January and February in this House on those comfortable cushions. It is too much trouble; they therefore prefer to let miners do without a Bill which

they have been wanting for years, and which contains nearly every provision the miners have asked for.

Mr. McDONALD: I am glad the hon. gentleman has let us into Cabinet secrets; that we are going to sit in January and February.

Mr. HAMILTON: March, too, if necessary.

Mr. McDONALD: I don't care if we sit up to the moment Parliament expires, so long as it is necessary to do business. I am not one of those who hold the opinion that because we are in the last session of Parliament we are not competent to do business. I maintain that if the Government commands a majority competent to do business up to the last moment, they are entitled to do so. But under the existing state of affairs I hold a different opinion, because I believe that the Government do not command that majority.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Why not try it?

Mr. McDONALD: We will take our own time to do that; we will not consult the hon. member.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: You are afraid of a real trial of strength.

Mr. McDONALD: We are not, and when it comes the hon. gentleman will have the same long face he had on Thursday night, when he looked the picture of misery—a total wreck.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: The longing faces are always on your side.

Mr. McDONALD: I was rather surprised when the Minister for Mines moved the second reading of this Bill that he did not give us an elaborate statement concerning its provisions. He gave us a very small amount of information considering the time the Government have had at their disposal. But it was very different with the hon. member for Croydon, and if that hon. member had been in his usual state of health I have no doubt that he would have given us still more information. He gave us sufficient information, however, to show that there were a good many clauses in the Bill not calculated to benefit the miners, and he moved, in what may be termed the usual way, that the Bill be withdrawn. What does that mean? Hon. members on the other side must know that the withdrawal of a Bill does not mean that a similar Bill cannot be introduced the same session. If a Bill is withdrawn in the ordinary way it gives the Government an opportunity of embodying such suggestions as may be offered by hon. members in a new Bill which can be submitted and dealt with this session if time permits. The junior member for Charters Towers reminds me that the same thing was done with the Federation Bill last year.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Where is it now?

Mr. McDONALD: Just in the same position as this Bill will probably be before it is finished—that is, it will not become law this session, at all events. When Sir Thomas McIlwraith was Premier he brought down the important Bills early in the session, so that hon. members might have an opportunity of dealing with them as they should be dealt with, but succeeding Premiers have left most important measures to be dealt with late in the session, when they have been rushed through this House and sent to the other Chamber for consideration. The result has been that we have had to pass Bills subsequently to remedy the mistakes made in the hasty legislation of former years. I need only refer to the Land Bill, which was debated last year almost up to the end of the session, and in which a certain clause was included. Then it was sent to the other Chamber, and a clause was inserted which I feel sure the Minister, had he had time to have dealt with it,

would never have allowed to remain in the Bill—a clause that has cost the country a considerable sum of money. This session there ought to have been an Amending Bill dealing with that particular clause passed in such a hurried manner. One of the strongest points that hon. members on this side take to the introduction of this Bill at the present time is that due consideration cannot possibly be given to a measure of this magnitude at this late period of the session, unless we are going to sit during January and February. If we are going to do that, let the Government say so, and let us go on with the Bill. We shall have ample time to deal with it in that case. I am prepared to sit here, not only during January and February, but until the time Parliament has to expire. But we know that nobody cares about sitting during those months, and I question very much whether the Government could keep their own members together. My opinion is that they could not, and that hon. members on the other side are more anxious to finish the session than we are. That being so, and seeing that no legitimate legislation can possibly be passed this session, we say, Why waste the time of the House?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Hear, hear! Why are you doing it?

Mr. McDONALD: The Secretary for Mines told us that the principal portion of this legislation is that dealing with mining on private property. But that is put into a separate Bill altogether. It ought to have been included in this Bill. We are told the reason why it was not included in this Bill is that probably the Bill would not go through this Chamber or the other House. We may presume, therefore, that the most important portion of this mining legislation—namely, the Bill to mine on private property, is not going to get through this Chamber.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I am not afraid of its getting through this Chamber.

Mr. McDONALD: The hon. gentleman said he was afraid it would be knocked out in another place.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I said there was more risk of its not going through.

Mr. McDONALD: If it had been included in this Bill it would show that the Government were sincere in bringing in legislation of that kind. They could throw the onus on another place of knocking the Bill out, and it would be for the Government to say whether they were prepared to accept their amendment or not. But the hon. gentleman does not follow that course. He puts before us the least important portion of the legislation, but withholds the most important portion of it. Indeed, we have no assurance that that most important portion is going to be introduced at all.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The hon. member knows that it has already been introduced.

Mr. McDONALD: I know all about that, and we are told on the other hand that there is a great risk of its ever getting through. I always understood that when we were consolidating laws we took the whole of the laws dealing with that particular subject, and put them together in a form that was easily understood. We are supposed now to be consolidating the mining laws, and yet one part of those laws is to be put into a separate Bill. Where does the consolidation come in? Many reasons have been urged why this Bill should not be passed. One is with regard to the increased area of the leases. Strong objection to that is taken on this side. The hon. member for Musgrave showed the ridiculousness of anybody objecting to the increased area because at present companies, if they desire to do so, can have fifty acres, and pointed to a number of cases, at Gympie principally, where a

large number of the leases were fifty acres in extent. The hon. member for Cook told us that if certain people could get fifty acres on the Hodgkinson it would lead to the investment of a good deal of capital.

Mr. HAMILTON: And with greater security of tenure.

Mr. McDONALD: What does the hon. member mean by greater security of tenure?

Mr. HAMILTON: A man is now liable to forfeit a lease worth £50,000 if one man is absent.

Mr. McDONALD: I presume the hon. member wants those people to be relieved from the labour conditions.

Mr. HAMILTON: I did not suggest it.

Mr. McDONALD: If a company has spent £50,000 on a lease I do not think they are going to stick for a paltry £3 a week for a miner's wages. If it is necessary to have a man to the acre they know exactly what they have to do, and they will employ him. What would be the use of a company incurring an expenditure of £50,000 if they do not employ men? How could they get any interest on the money invested. I understand that Warden Mowbray's advice has had a good deal to do with the drafting of this Bill. What does he say on this particular point? In the report of the Royal Commission, question 170, he is asked—

170. It is a fact that numbers of companies have fifty acres held in two leases? Yes.

171. With one shaft? With one shaft.

172. So that if you increase the maximum to fifty acres and allow the same practice to go on, it will practically mean that there will be 100 acres held by one company? I think that practice ought to be stopped, but it is very hard to tell on which side of a shaft eight men are working, and on which side the other eight are working.

Here is a man who has had a very large experience of the Queensland mining laws, and that is the opinion he gives upon this particular point. Does this Bill pretend to alter that in any shape or form? Will this Bill prevent men taking up 100 acres instead of fifty acres? Again, has the hon. gentleman any definition in this Bill of what a "shaft" is? Does the hon. gentleman not know that a very large area was held some time ago on Charters Towers in connection with one shaft? I had occasion to refer to the matter in this House at the time.

Mr. HAMILTON: Will it do any harm if the claim is represented by the proper number of men?

Mr. McDONALD: It did this much harm: People were willing to put down certain shafts to prospect certain country on Charters Towers which might to-day have been a valuable asset to the colony, giving employment to hundreds of men, but they were prevented by the way in which the owners of this shaft—I refer to Mills United—held the ground. We know that they held 140 acres of land.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Not leasehold.

Mr. McDONALD: What is the use of quibbling. The hon. member knows that they practically held that area, as they held the streets, and could compel the shareholders of other claims to come to their terms, and all this was done through one shaft. The hon. gentleman has not attempted in this Bill to deal with that most important matter. The whole tenor of this Bill simply amounts to this: That the Government are prepared to extend the area of leases, and to reduce the labour conditions. We were told by the Secretary for Mines that with respect to claims not on gold—though some may be sure from the nature of surrounding claims, that they have only to sink to get on gold—the position now is that there is only one man employed to five acres. If we take the hon. gentleman's own argument we will find that if the provisions of

this Bill are passed, there will in a short time be only one man employed to every twenty-five acres.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I said I wanted to stop exemptions.

Mr. McDONALD: Does this Bill provide in any shape or form for stopping exemptions? Not a bit. They will go on just the same, and I hold that the industry may be developed sufficiently with the conditions as they are at the present time. So far as Charters Towers is concerned, I never heard of any hardship being suffered in the matter of getting exemptions. I have gone to the court on several occasions to try to prevent exemptions, and in several cases we were successful; but it was always easy enough for any company, which could show that it was legitimately trying to develop its country, to get exemption when it was required and necessary to carry on the business of the company. Certainly the proposal in this Bill of allowing a man to every five acres is going—according to the statement of the Secretary for Mines—to bring about the proportion of one man to twenty-five acres.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I said expressly the opposite.

Mr. McDONALD: The hon. gentleman said that the position now was that they had one man to five acres, and it was upon that that this proposal in the Bill was based; and I say that the result, if this change is made, will be that we shall have only one man to twenty-five acres. Where is all the necessity at the present time to give these increased areas?

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: To induce capital.

Mr. McDONALD: What guarantee have we that even if we give 100 acres we are going to have this great influx of capital? The mining industry in Queensland at the present time is sufficiently good in itself to induce capital. Any member of this House who has had experience knows that a boom has always been detrimental to a field; it has never been calculated to assist in developing it. No one can tell me that Mount Morgan was developed when the shares were at the abnormal height they reached. It was developed because it was a valuable property, and any valuable property in Queensland will be developed in spite of anyone.

Mr. SMYTH: Because the gold was on the surface.

Mr. McDONALD: That was all the better for Mount Morgan, and it is a pity there are not many more such mines. Take the case of the company I quoted a little while ago as having such an enormous area on Charters Towers. They sunk a shaft at a cost of £40,000 or £50,000 at a time when they had considerably under twenty acres. With that limited area they were prepared to put down a shaft for over 1,000 feet without knowing what they would get. Fortunately for them they struck a good reef, and then the property became very valuable.

Mr. LISSNER: Which property is that?

Mr. McDONALD: The Mills United. They had only twenty acres when they sank that shaft.

Mr. LISSNER: They had 140 acres afterwards.

Mr. McDONALD: Yes, they had 140 acres afterwards by the amalgamations. But what I want to show is that where a property is valuable people are prepared to spend large sums of money in spite of the area of ground to which they are restricted. It would be a good thing if the Government tried to develop the mining industry of the colony on legitimate lines, instead of working for these extended areas which will lead to wild speculation and assist to damage the industry. Members on this side have been accused of wasting time. That is not so. When a Bill is brought down to the House it is brought down for legitimate discussion, and I maintain

that members on this side are acting within their rights when they discuss a measure fully, provided they keep within the four corners of the rules of Parliament. If hon. members opposite talk of the waste of time, I would refer them to a regular stonewall which existed on the Government side of the House only four or five nights ago, when Government supporters stonewalled a Bill for many hours. I do not know how we can legitimately debate this Bill at the present time, seeing that immediately the hon. member for Croydon moved his amendment the leader of the Government rose in his place and said he was going to treat it as a no-confidence motion. I am surprised that the hon. gentleman with his long experience should take such a childish course. The amendment was moved by an irresponsible person—by nobody in authority—and yet the Government are prepared to treat it as a motion of want of confidence, and so try to retrieve their lost prestige. Supposing they whip up their followers and get a majority on this particular amendment, what will it amount to? Absolutely nothing. I could almost say in the words used on another occasion by the hon. gentleman who introduced this Bill that this amendment is of no serious importance. I challenge the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government to take a vote on something of more importance than a trivial matter like this.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: You are going to lose, evidently.

Mr. McDONALD: In about the same way as hon. members opposite will lose in a very short time. When members on this side give their opinion on anything, they stand to that opinion, and they cannot be whipped up to go back on a vote which they have given. When they give a vote they stand by it, and I hope that hon. members on the other side will act in the same way.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: They vote as they like here; there is no compulsion.

Mr. McDONALD: I can quite understand that, as I believe the loyal supporters of the Government number only twenty-three. Yet we have the undignified spectacle of the Premier, who talks about his dignity, carrying on with practically a minority in the House, and a number of casuals who pat him on the back one day and vote against him the next. But I think it is about time we came to a division on this matter. At the same time I hope that we shall hear some of the eloquence of members on the other side of the House. Members on this side were accused of being very quiet the other night, and I can make the same accusation against hon. members opposite to-night. I believe that we are going to get an eloquent speech from the hon. member for Maryborough, for I notice that he is preparing notes and has been for some time, and I am sure the House will be fairly delighted when he comes along with his speech, which will no doubt enlighten us on the good points which are supposed to be contained in this Bill. Whatever the result of the division may be I do not suppose it will be of very great importance, seeing that the amendment has been moved by an irresponsible person, who is only an ordinary member of the House and is not endowed with the privileges of the leadership of any party or section.

Mr. ANNENAR: In rising to make a few remarks in opposition to the amendment for the withdrawal of this Bill, I am sure that hon. members will not for a moment think that I am drawn by the eloquence of the hon. member for Flinders. As a rule, I try to make myself understood, and to answer for myself; but the hon. member for Flinders takes upon himself to

answer for other hon. members, especially for members on this side of the House. The hon. member states that the hon. member for Croydon is an irresponsible person, but I look upon that hon. member as one of the most intelligent members on that side of the House, if not the most intelligent; and I am sure the hon. member for Flinders would do well if he gave us speeches of such a practical character as we get from the hon. member whom he characterises as an irresponsible person. The hon. member also suggested that the Government had not a majority behind their back. We have been told to-night, and we have seen for a long time, that he hon. member for Bundaberg is leader of the Opposition in name only. He is discarded at every opportunity, especially by the hon. member for Flinders. There is a proper way of testing the matter, and the country is desirous of knowing whether hon. members are supporting the Premier or the hon. member for Bundaberg. The position of the latter reminds me of a play that I saw in Sydney last February, called "Claudian." Claudian stood on a platform in a beautiful temple, but by-and-by something took place and the temple fell around him, and left him standing amongst the wreck. The hon. member for Bundaberg does not stand; he sits amongst the wreck, but I must give him credit for being a much more moderate man during the last two years than he was formerly. He has been building up a structure, but by the time he has got the blocks in, and has set up the walls there are half-a-dozen wreckers upon his own side who will pull down the whole structure. The hon. member for Flinders said that members of the Government had very long faces after the division last Thursday night.

Mr. McDONALD: I only referred to one member.

Mr. ANNEAR: I do not know what for, because hon. members on this side voted in accordance with an invitation given by the Premier when he first introduced that measure—but I shall not go into that. The hon. member said the chief reason why we should not go on with this Bill is that there is not sufficient time to pass it this session; but I would remind him that he was one of a great assembly which passed a platform containing forty planks in seven days, which it would take 1,000 years to carry into effect. Hon. members opposite affect to be the friends of labour in this colony, but they have always proved by their actions that they are the greatest enemies of labour.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear! No, no!

Mr. ANNEAR: This Bill affects thousands of miners, and I will point out that hon. members on both sides are pledged to bring in a measure of mining reform and pass it in this Parliament. I contend that there is plenty of time to pass it in this Parliament. The hon. member for Flinders referred to a Bill, which I maintain was ten times more contentious than this—the Land Bill. The second reading of that Bill took five sittings, and it went through committee in thirteen sittings, and there were four more sittings to consider amendments made by both Houses. We have more time before us between this and Christmas than we had to consider that Bill.

Mr. DANIELS: Has the Land Act been a success altogether?

Mr. ANNEAR: I am glad that a farmer like the hon. member for Cambooya has made that interjection. During the last twelve months I have met hundreds of men who earn a living on the lands of this colony, but I never heard a single individual who did not praise the Land Act of 1897 in the loudest terms. That measure is settling more people on the lands of the colony

than any other Land Act we ever had. The hon. member for Flinders is very fond of accusing hon. members on this side of wasting time, but, speaking with some authority on that subject, I can say that if the time of the House is wasted it is wasted by hon. members opposite. I would ask them to copy what they call a democratic colony, South Australia, where every session they pass the whole of the Estimates in a week. When I first came into this House, and for many years afterwards, the Estimates of a whole department were passed in one night.

Mr. McDONALD: They have a democratic Government there.

Mr. ANNEAR: What is the conduct of hon. members opposite in regard to the Estimates? If it is only a boy they know, they will speak for hours with a view of raising his salary, although they know it is impossible to do that while the Estimates are under consideration. What has been done this evening but waste time? The other day the hon. member for Rockhampton asked us to believe that mining in Queensland does not pay, and has to be supported from the general revenue. But I maintain that the mining industry in this colony is the best producing industry we have, and the time has now come when Parliament should do something. This is a motion to withdraw a Bill that consolidates sixteen Acts of Parliament bearing upon the question of mining, and I contend this Bill is clamoured for by the people of the colony. I would refer hon. members to several newspapers on this subject, not the sort of papers that are upheld by the hon. member for Rockhampton North, but papers which have an interest in Queensland, and believe in dealing out fair play to the whole people.

Mr. STEWART: Keep cool.

Mr. ANNEAR: I am as cool as a philosopher. What I contend is that our present mining laws do not attract that amount of outside capital that ought to be attracted. We have a country as rich in minerals as any country in the world; but the mining industry does not employ more than 30,000 men. I am assured by the Secretary for Mines that that is more than the number. I have been in the colony for a long time, and have read what has been going on, and I know that many shafts at Charters Towers would not have been sunk had it not been for outside capital. I hold in my hand a paper called the *British Colonist* for August, 1898, and I shall read a short quotation from it for the benefit of hon. members—

There is a growing tendency in Queensland to make gold-mining regulations less restrictive; and thereby create inducements to men of capital to devote some of their surplus funds to opening up the many goldfields awaiting them. In this connection, the circular letter of the London and New Zealand Exploration Company is instructive reading for the Opposition party in the Queensland Parliament. This exploration company was formed, as its name implies, to acquire and work mines in New Zealand, that home of experimental legislation. Owing, however, to the prolonged depression in the London market for New Zealand mining shares (due mainly to want of confidence on the part of investors), and also to the harassing policy of the colonial Government towards the mining industry, the company's operations in New Zealand have been considerably curtailed, and mining rights have been obtained in China. This powerful company publishes the fact of its departure from New Zealand, but other companies are likewise quietly making for new pastures. The New Zealand Government, no doubt, knows what it is about, but the fact remains that ever since capital began to go to the colony, some three years ago, it has been so hedged round with irritating, and in many cases expensive, regulations, that to obtain further money in London for New Zealand mining enterprises is now practically out of the question. Looking to Western Australia, a petition to the Parliament of that colony, praying for a more secure title to mining leases, has just been mailed from London. The document bears the signatures of 110

companies having an aggregate issued capital of nearly £14,000,000. The Queensland Government is about to introduce a Goldfields Bill with the object, it is understood here, of giving greater security of title, larger areas, and easier labour conditions. Certainly, those who have had experience in the colony know that in practice mine lessees receive every consideration, and that titles are rarely, if ever, in jeopardy. We take it, however, that the colony wants to attract the outside capitalist, and it is here the weak spot appears. The conditions under which leases are held are not defined clearly enough, titles are liable to be forfeited for all sorts of trivial infringements. Certainly, no one ever loses a lease in such a manner, but then the stranger capitalist does not know that. He is ready to take ordinary mining risks, and is quite ready to pay fair rents, or fees, but the conditions must be in black and white, and not left to the interpretation of a warden or Minister.

I do trust the hon. member for Rockhampton and the hon. member for Bundaberg will study the little quotation which I have given from this very reliable paper.

Mr. KIDSTON: That paper says that capitalists ought to be better informed.

Mr. ANNEAR: Owing to the preaching of principles such as those advocated by hon. members opposite capital is leaving the country they so much admire—New Zealand—and going to China. I maintain that the majority of true Labour members are sitting on this side. We hear a great deal of talk about labour, but it has been asserted by a very high authority in this colony that the policy of hon. members opposite is to do no work themselves and prevent other men from working.

MEMBERS on the Opposition side: Oh, oh!

Mr. ANNEAR: Hon. members opposite are naturally annoyed. They see the consolidation of this party, and they understand now that we must not be taken for children. We have listened to the childish utterances of the hon. member for Flinders, but the true test of strength is to be found in a motion of want of confidence, and hon. members opposite have been invited to propose one. Personally I am not afraid to try conclusions with hon. members opposite, either in my own constituency or in several constituencies represented by them. This party is not afraid to face a dissolution, and when the Government do dissolve Parliament they will go to the country with a record that will be appreciated by the people of Queensland.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. DAWSON: I thought you were Chairman of Committees?

Mr. ANNEAR: Yes; when I am in the chair. But when I am here I am as free as the hon. member.

Question—That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question—put; and the House divided:—

AYES, 36.

Messrs. Dickson, Philp, Dalrymple, Murray, Chataway, Annear, Stumm, Armstrong, Bell, Hamilton, Bridges, Collins, Lord, Bartholomew, O'Connell, McGeahan, Newell, Stodart, Stephenson, Petrie, Corfield, Battersby, Finney, Cribb, Story, McMaster, Lissner, Callan, Castling, Smyth, Thomas, Grimes, G. Thorn, Smith, Moore, and Foxton.

NOES, 27.

Messrs. Glassey, Cross, Keogh, Fitzgerald, Dunsford, McDonnell, Kerr, King, Sim, Turley, Curtis, Fogarty, Boles, W. Thorn, Groom, Drake, Jenkinson, Jackson, Dibley, Browne, McDonald, Dawson, Daniels, Kidston, Stewart, Maughan, and Harcourt.

Resolved in the affirmative.

Mr. NEWELL: I move that the debate be now adjourned.

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

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