Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

MONDAY, 5 DECEMBER 1898

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MONDAY, 5 DECEMBER, 1898.

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

VICTORIA BRIDGE BILL — BRITISH PHARMACOPŒIA ADOPTING BILL —SLAUGHTERING BILL.

THIRD READINGS.

These Bills were read a third time, passed, and ordered to be transmitted to the Council for their concurrence.

CASE OF MR. F. S. HELY.

On the motion of Mr. GRIMES, it was formally agreed—

That there be laid upon the table of the House the further correspondence received by the Public Service Board since the 22nd November, with reference to a certain business transaction between Mr. Frederick Strickland Hely and a cabman of the city.

MARSUPIAL PROOF FENCING BILL.

COMMITTEE.

Clauses 1 to 3, inclusive, put and passed.

On clause 4—"Application for wire-netting by owner of holding in infested area"—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: On the second reading of the Bill it was pointed out that provision should be made for boundary fences round several selections, or round parts of selections, and in order to meet the views of hon. members on that matter he now moved that the words "enclosing such holding or any parts thereof with" be omitted, with the view of inserting "affixing."

Mr. HOOD thought some specification of the fence should be made, as it was no use affixing wire-netting to a fence unless the fence was capable of carrying the netting. He pointed this out on the second reading of the Bill, and had thought that the Minister would have taken some notice of the matter. Under the Rabbit Boards Act each district fixed on a specification which they thought would carry the wire-netting.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The Babbit Boards Act does not fix that.

Mr. HOOD: No; but the regulations said that the wire-netting must be affixed to a fence of a certain specification.

Mr. KEOGH pointed out that in farming districts they had fences with a top rail, barbed wire, and two or three plain wires, and wished to know whether it would be sufficient to hang the wire-netting on the top rail in such cases?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He imagined that the persons who would have the administration of this measure would take the advice of land commissioners and Crown

lands rangers, who were experts, and much better judges of such a matter than the Minister could be. It would be quite useless for him to say in the Bill that a fence must be of a certain specification, that the posts should be not more than nine feet apart, and not less than four and a-half inches by six inches, and in framing regulations on the subject they must be guided by the advice of experts. In country where timber was plentiful the fences would probably be heavier than they would be in country where timber was scarce.

Mr. KEOGH asked if a person made application for wire-netting would the fence be examined before the netting was granted?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That matter is dealt with in the next clause.

Amendment put and passed.

After further consequential amendments had been made,

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS moved the insertion of the words "or upon the boundaries of such holding or any part thereof."

Mr. KING: It followed from the amendment that it was not necessary for an owner to fence the boundary; he could fence it in any way he pleased; and he did not know that that was not the best way. He had sent copies of the Bill to the secretaries of the farmers' associations in his district, and as they had made no comments on it, it was possible they preferred a Bill that left the matter in the hands of the individual, and did not compel grouping.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Under the Bill grouping would not be compulsory. It left it open to any set of selectors to fence the outside of their holdings, or part of one holding and part of another. In fact, it gave them a free hand.

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

On clause 5—"Power for Governor in Council to authorise Minister to provide wire-netting applied for"—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It had been asked if they would get an inspector's report. The clause provided that on receiving an application the land commissioner should give to the Minister such particulars as he might require. No inspector could be so good on the whole as the land commissioners, most of whom were thoroughly in sympathy with the small selectors, and inclined to look with a kindly eye on any small breakage of the law. They could not have anyone better than the land commissioner to report upon such a matter as that.

Mr. KERR: It was a well-known fact that with regard to fences erected under the Rabbit Boards Act, even when supervised by an inspector, the work had often been slummed. It ought to be specified that the fences should be of such a nature as would carry the netting, the strain upon which was very severe, especially after heavy rains. Was there to be any supervision over the fences at all?

Mr. KEOGH asked whether, before the wire-netting was granted to the applicant, the fence was to be examined and approved of? Was that the correct reading?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It was not exactly the correct reading. In nine cases out of ten when a selector puts up a fence he would do it with the intention of applying for wire-netting, and therefore he would put up such a fence as would satisfy the commissioner, and enable him to make the necessary recommendation.

Mr. KERR asked what would be the position of men who had erected fences years ago, and who wished to apply for wire-netting for them in future? Such fences might be quite sufficient for ordinary purposes, but not strong enough to carry wire-netting. He thought there ought to be some inspection.

Mr. GLASSEY: The point raised was a very important one. As had been pointed out, a struggling farmer might have put up fences sufficient for ordinary purposes, but not sufficient to carry netting to keep out marsupials, and it was quite probable that the commissioner would not feel justified in recommending the supply of wire-netting. Under those circumstances it would entail a considerable expense upon these men to erect sufficiently strong fences to carry the wire-netting, and as many of them could not afford it they would derive no benefit from the Bill. He observed also that there were alternatives, for the clause said "provide such wire-netting or other appliances." What were the other appliances?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Fastenings, and things of that sort.

Mr. GLASSEY: If the words "other appliances" would cover the point he had already mentioned regarding unsubstantial fences, he could understand the full bearing of the clause. The small selectors deserved to be carefully considered.

Mr. KING: It would be the fault of the farmer if he did not put up a sufficient fence to carry the wire-netting. He would have to go to considerable trouble and expense in the matter, and he was not likely to put up a fence that would only stand for a few months or a year or two. He was satisfied that the farmers would put up fences sufficiently substantial to carry the wire-netting.

Mr. SMITH thought the regulations would fix that. He did not think sufficient provision was made in regard to dividing fences. When a dividing fence was erected were the neighbours to contribute toward the cost in certain proportions?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: There is a new clase in the amendments dealing with that.

Mr. NEWELL: Many of those who were expected to apply for wire-netting were men who had taken up scrub lands which were infested with wallabies. A man might clear ten or twenty acres in one year, round which he would put up a sufficient fence for his purpose, and then he would clear a similar area in the next year, and want to shift his fence back a few chains. In cases like that it should not be expected that a man should put up a permanent fence before he was allowed to get the wire-netting. The fences might be shifted a dozen times in a few years.

Mr. GLASSEY: His point was that there were many fences erected already by struggling men, and t was possible that the commissioner would not be able to recommend them as sufficiently strong to carry netting. How could those men be protected by the provisions of this Bill? He was afraid there would not be very much benefit for anyone under it as the sum asked for in connection with it was only £2,000, but he hoped the interests of the struggling farmers to whom he had referred would be protected. He did not want the commissioner to be coming forward with an excuse in this way: "I see Thompson has applied for so much wire-netting; but, so far as my observations go, I do not think the fence he has already standing is sufficient, and therefore I cannot recommend the granting of his application." In such a case Thompson would not get any benefit from the Act, and that would mean injury to the surrounding places. He hoped the Minister would give such instructions to his officers that farmers situated in the way he had described would be able to get the full benefit of the Act.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The leader of the Opposition and himself were at one in this matter. He would be guided by the advice of the land commissioners, men who were probably less tied up in red tape than any other officers in the service. They could appreciate the difficulties of the small selector better than any other class of men who might be appointed as inspectors. And in not laying down any hard-and-fast rule they had gone a long way in the direction wished by the hon. member. He felt sure that the clause would be found to work satisfactorily.

Mr. KEOGH wished to know if the same conditions would have to be observed as in the case of rabbit-proof netting where it had to be sunk a certain depth in the ground?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: As he had already informed the Committee, he would take the advice of experts who knew more of such matters than he did. It was only an *obiter dictum*, but he thought that marsupial netting did not require to be sunk in the ground. There were members of the Committee who knew more of the subject than himself; he must confess his ignorance.

Mr. GLASSEY: There need be no confession about it as the Minister could not be expected to know everything. He was glad to think that the hon. gentleman had full sympathy with farmers situated in the way he had mentioned, and that in framing the regulations he would take care that the poorest struggling selectors would get the full benefit of the small amount at the disposal of the department under the Bill, an amount which was much too little.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We shall ask for as much as we can use.

The HON. G. THORN: Nearly all the scrub lands on the coast, except in the extreme North, had been already taken up and substantially fenced, and when the hon. member for Barcoo asked whether the netting would be supplied for those fences he understood the Minister to say that it would only be given for new fencing.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: No, no!

The HON. G. THORN understood the Minister to say that. He hoped that those who already had substantial fencing erected would be able to get the benefit of the Bill.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 6 put and passed.

Clause 7 passed with a verbal amendment.

On clause 8—"Nature of mortgage or charge"—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS moved the insertion of the following words at the end of subsection 1:—

> Subject to the provisions of this Act, such annual payment shall be payable on the same day in every year during the subsistence of the security, and the first of such payments shall be made at the expiration of one year from the date of the execution of the mortgage or charge.

It would be seen that this was a transfer of subsection 2 of clause 10.

Mr. DANIELS understood that on the second reading it was stated by the Minister in charge of the Bill that it was only to apply to small holdings of 160 acres or so. The hon. gentleman said he would see that men with 320 or 640-acre farms did not get the netting. He would like the Minister to say now whether this Bill was to apply to all agricultural farms irrespective of area, provided the farmer was willing to give a guarantee that he could get the wire to fence.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It was true that on the second reading he had said he had in his mind's eye the small settler who had taken up sixty or 160 acres, and was struggling against the marsupials, but on going through the Bill he found it impossible to draw such a definition as would limit it, so he had left it as it was.

Mr. DANIELS: Hear, hear!

Clause, as amended, put and passed.

Clause 9 put and passed.

On clause 10—"Effect of registration"—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He proposed to omit this clause, and substitute a new one, providing that in the case of land already mortgaged or encumbered, any mortgage or charge under the Bill should, with the consent of the mortgagee or encumbrancee, take priority over any existing mortgage or encumbrance. This new clause was practically the clause which obtained in the Sugar Works Guarantee Act, and had worked very well. In many places where a large number of farmers had their land encumbered, the mortgagee, at no cost to the farmer or to himself, had given the Crown notice that he released his priority, and the mortgage or encumbrance to the Crown took precedence over the existing mortgage. He thought the provision would work very well in this Bill, too.

Mr. CROSS did not think this was an improvement at all. In his opinion it was placing a barrier, in some cases an insuperable one, in the way of farmers taking advantage of the provisions of the Bill, and the Minister would do well to insist upon the mortgage given to the Crown taking priority. There were plenty of mortgagees who would refuse their consent to give priority.

Mr. SMITH: I don't think so.

Mr. CROSS: That might be, but in any case the principle had been acted upon in the other colonies that when the Crown lent money and took a mortgage that mortgage took priority of all others. If they left that principle out of the Bill the farmer would be at the mercy of the mortgagee, and he thought the Crown should insist on the priority of mortgage.

Mr. GLASSEY: Before the House met he told the Minister that he did not approve of this because it would practically make the Bill inoperative. If the mortgagee refused his consent, as in many cases he would, what was the use of the Bill? The Minister said that a provision of this kind had worked well under the Sugar Works Guarantee Act, but under that Act there was a different set of settlers. In the case of sugar-growers the land was more valuable than in the case of farmers who grew wheat, maize, and other crops, and the mortgagees in the case of sugar lands would be men of more substantial means than in the case of lands mortgaged by small farmers. If the struggling settlers were to get any benefit from the Bill the Committee should reject the amendment and pass the clause as it stood. He therefore hoped the Minister would not press the amendment.

Mr. CROSS: It had been said that the mortgagee would have no objection because the erection of this marsupial-proof netting would enhance the value of the holding, and would enable the farmer to pay off his mortgage.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Who said that?

Mr. CROSS: It had been used as an argument, and if that were so the mortgagee could have no objection to the mortgage given to the Crown taking priority. He would like to know the real reasons which prompted the Minister to propose the amendment. As the clause stood it clearly gave any mortgage taken by the Crown priority over all others, and if the mortgagee was so anxious that the farmer should be fully equipped and enabled to discharge his obligations as stated by some hon. members he would have no objection to the Crown mortgage taking priority; and if that was the case they should let the clause remain as it stood.

He did not wish to introduce any party feeling into the matter. He gave the Secretary for Lands credit for a sincere desire to assist the agriculturist. The Bill as it stood was a proof of that, but if the hon. gentleman dared to depart from it and substitute the amendment, he would be justified in charging him with insincerity and with voicing the desires of the mortgagees. He called upon every farmer's representative to mistrust the amendment. The farmers had received little enough assistance from this or any other Government, and he called upon their representatives—and particularly members of the Farmers' Union, who professed to champion the cause of the downtrodden agriculturist—to resist the amendment. The Bill as it stood established the priority of the Crown in order that the agriculturist should reap the benefit, but the new clause left the farmer at the mercy of the mortgagee.

Mr. CRIBB: It might be thought that there was some analogy between the erection of rabbit-proof and marsupial fencing for the protection of land, but there was this difference: In the case of marsupial fencing, it was not compulsory upon the farmer to erect it unless he wished to do so. It might not be advisable to erect the fencing. The mortgagee upon being consulted might very likely say, "I do not consider in this particular instance that it is necessary or advisable to go to this expense;" but in ordinary cases, if the mortgagee felt that the erection of the fencing would be the means of increasing the value of the land, there would be very little objection on his part to allowing the Crown to become first mortgagee. If the farmer was given an option as to whether he should fence or not, the mortgagee ought also to have an option. He did not think the farmer, when it was not compulsory to erect the fence, should have the power to make the mortgagee liable for that which might be absolutely unnecessary.

Mr. GLASSEY presumed the Bill was introduced for the purpose of enabling farmers to protect themselves against the incursions of marsupials, but certain interested parties, against whom he had not a word to say, had induced the Minister to introduce a provision which would place in their hands the power of saying whether the benefits conferred by the Bill should be availed of or not. Hon. members did not want that. They wanted the legislature to rule, and not the mortgagees. They wanted the farmers to have absolute protection, and the Crown to have priority. If the Bill was meant to be serious and its benefits were to be given without restriction and encumbrance, then he hoped the Committee would not accept the amendment. He trusted the amendment would not be insisted upon, because if it was the supposed benefits conferred by the Bill were the merest shadows.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It had been pointed out to him, not by an interested party, but by one who had an intimate knowledge of the inner life of the farmer, that if they permitted the owner of the land to create a new encumbrance he would not be able to borrow with the same ease as if no such power existed. It was pointed out to him that if a man with 160 acres wished to borrow £40, and after borrowing it he could by law, and at his own sweet will, encumber the property with another £40, which would take priority, the odds were that it would put an end to borrowing even of the first £40. That was pointed out to him by a man who was not an interested party, but a very good judge of the position. In consequence of that he had altered the clause in a way that he conceived would work best for everybody. Hon. members were not really conserving the interests of farmers in supporting the principle of the Crown taking priority. If the power was given to borrow over the head of the mortgagee the result would be that he would give notice to pay up, and would clew up the mortgagor. He knew that hon. members' intentions were very excellent. His were also very excellent when the original clause was drafted, but he had reason to see that it would not work as he thought it would, and he now proposed this alteration, which he hoped the Committee would accept.

The HON. G. THORN: The clause would not apply to struggling farmers at all. The Act would be a dead letter so far as they were concerned, and would only benefit speculators with land to sell—the same as the Sugar Works Guarantee Act. He had tried to induce people to go in for sugar-growing, but not one of them would agree to give the Crown priority. The result of the insertion of the clause would be that mortgagees would tell the small farmers to clear their land for themselves.

Mr. CROSS: As the Bill stood it laid down an excellent basis for assisting farmers, and he gave the Government credit for that measure of relief. He believed it would be the nucleus of relief and assistance to the farmers which had been long deferred. The Crown was to take a mortgage for the specific object of protecting the farmers from a pest which had destroyed the fertility and productiveness of the security, on which mortgagees had advanced money. They had been told at an earlier stage of the debate that mortgagees would readily endorse the proposal, because they knew that by protecting the farmers from the pest they would be in a better position to meet their obligations. If the principle laid down in the Bill was to be departed from because of what had been said by somebody who had the interests of the farmers at heart, and who had rendered them more assistance than any member of the Committee, the hon. gentleman must have been very shaky. His side of the Committee would be justified both now and hereafter in impeaching the Government with want of sincerity if they passed the amendment, and personally he would make every use of it. He knew the position of the farmers in the colony as well as any hon. member, and he knew that no farmer in Queensland would sanction the passing of this clause, because the very object of the Bill was to enhance the value of his security. There were thirty-six or thirty-nine farmers' representatives in the Committee—who claimed to be the friends of the farmers—and he asked them to decide which side they would take.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: It did not follow because hon. members did not agree with the hon. member for Clermont that they were therefore to be ranked as the enemies of the farmers. If the hon. member's course was likely to result—as he believed it would distinctly—in injury to the farmers, then every hon. member who was the friend of the farmer should oppose the hon. member's proposals, as he had been opposed for years by men who were in favour of borrowing money, when he had brought in certain Bills. The hon. member held that those proposals would be a public benefit, but other people held that they would not be a benefit. The hon. member and the leader of the Opposition showed themselves extremely short-sighted in regard to this measure. Their vision was microscopical. They could see one little item, but they could not see the question as a whole. The great object was not to take a mole-like view, but to take a sweeping and comprehensive view of every question, and not only see what a proposal was going to result in by itself, but

what it would result in collaterally—not only the immediate result, but the ultimate result. That was precisely what neither of those two hon. members had managed to do on the present occasion, and their protests therefore went for nothing.

Mr. CROSS: We insist on the Bill as it is.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: He believed in the wisdom of the amendment. What the hon. member was endeavouring to legislate against was the possibility of certain mortgagees not being willing to consent to fencing being erected. It was quite possible that some mortgagees might not fall in with the proposal to give the Crown priority; but the hon. member for Clermont, in order to get over that small risk, in this Bill, as in other measures which he was perpetually bringing in—but which, fortunately, he did not pass—endeavoured to restrict credit. If the risks which were always incidental to lending money were going to be increased in that way, farmers would probably be a great deal less able to borrow than at present. What the hon. member wanted to do was to assure those to whom farmers might have to go for accommodation—and every farmer in a bad season might find it necessary—that under no circumstances should he be able to give security for borrowed money equal to that given by anybody else. In other words, the result of attempts of that kind to do away with the security which the farmer could give would be to utterly ruin his credit. The more struggling the farmer was the more necessary it was to stop that, and in the name of the farmer and for his good he entirely objected to any action which would prevent anyone who lent money to a farmer from feeling that he had got security, because that would mean that the farmer could get no more money. It was a good thing to improve the farmer's credit, but the hon. member by putting aside the first mortgagee was acting as the worst possible enemy of the farmer.

Mr. CROSS: Almost the last words the hon. gentleman uttered were that what he (Mr. Cross) was advocating, and what the Bill as introduced really proposed, was the utter ruin of the farmer. It was a very peculiar thing that this clause, which was going to work the ruin of the farmer, was not referred to on the second reading of the Bill by those hon. members who were so anxious to protect the farmer. The hon. gentleman had in his usual unscrupulous way sneered at his (Mr. Cross's) efforts to assist the armer.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: I will withdraw the sneer.

Mr. CROSS: He had been assiduous in his endeavours to assist the farmers, and he challenged the hon. gentleman and his colleagues to go with him to any farming electorate and see the reception he would get from the farmers.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: They don't fathom you.

Mr. CROSS: The hon. gentleman had tacitly admitted that in most cases the mortgagee would recognise the benefit the farmer would get under the Bill. If that was the case, why not give priority to the Government mortgage? That could only have one effect, and that was to assist the farmer to meet his obligations to the mortgagee, and in supporting the clause as it stood and opposing the amendment he was only backing up the original proposal of the Government.

Mr. DANIELS certainly preferred the clause as it stood. With regard to the restriction of credit, he did not know that that would be an unmixed evil, for some farmers went in for too much credit. If the clause were passed in its original form it would benefit the farmers, and it would also benefit the mortgagee in spite of himself if he objected to the farmer getting wire-netting under the provisions of the Bill, because the enclosure of the land with wire-netting would enhance the value of the property and make it more certain that the mortgagee would get his money back and his interest. On the other hand, if the amendment were carried, and a mortgagee refused to give his sanction to a farmer getting wire-netting to keep out marsupials, the result would be that the farm would fall into the hands of the mortgagee. He believed, however, that there would be very few cases in which mortgagees would foreclose, but if they did foreclose so much pressure would be brought to bear on the Government that they would have to start a State bank to lend money to farmers. The proposal in the Bill to supply wire-netting to farmers was a step towards a State bank, as it recognised the necessity of the State assisting the industry financially. When the Rabbit Boards Bill was before the Committee they were not asked whether the mortgagees would object. The argument on that occasion was that the erection of rabbit netting would be a benefit to the colony, and he contended that by assisting farmers to erect marsupial-proof fencing they would benefit the colony. The farmer would have to go to the expense of putting up the netting, and if he could not pay off his mortgage the mortgagee would have the benefit of that expenditure. The clause, as originally drafted, was inserted for the purpose of protecting the farmers whether the mortgagee liked it or not, and he held that if they could fence out the marsupials so that their lands would produce two tons of cereals or other produce where they now produced only one, that would be a benefit to the colony. He hoped the Minister would withdraw the amendment, and allow the clause to pass as it stood.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS thought they were all friends of the farmers; that they on his side had quite as strong a desire as hon. members opposite to promote the farmers' interests, but he was inclined to think that they were making too much of this matter. He looked upon the marsupial plague as a temporary evil. With the advance of settlement the marsupial would disappear altogether. It was only the settlers who settled immediately round scrubs who were troubled with marsupials, and as the scrubs were hewn down and the lands brought under crop the marsupial would become a thing of the past entirely. He had recently been in the Rosewood district, and settlement had increased so rapidly and had become so close there that he believed the settlers were scarcely troubled with marsupials at all. He saw a few patches of scrub, but even that would soon be hewn down, and in a very few years marsupials would disappear entirely from the Rosewood district. With regard to settlers having the right to give a second mortgage, he questioned very much whether it could be legally done. Some of the properties might be so overloaded with debt that they would be unable to bear a second mortgage, and if a man had advanced money on a selection up to its value he would never allow the mortgagor to put an additional burden upon it, which might be done merely to spite the mortgagee. When a man had mortgaged his property he had practically parted with it, and no extra burden should be placed on it without the mortgagee's consent. But the whole thing was not worth fighting over, seeing that the evil to be combated was only a temporary one.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Either the mortgagee would allow priority or he would not. If he would not allow it, what was going to happen? He would simply foreclose. That was what would happen

under the clause as it stood, and the position taken up by the hon. member for Cambooya was inimical to the farmer in every possible way.

The HON. G. THORN: There could be no mortgage unless the farmer had got a freehold title to his land; and, such being the case, how could the Bill be of any possible benefit to the farmer? It would only benefit those, especially the sugar-growers in the North, who had 2,000 or 3,000 acres of land which they wanted to have improved at the cost of the State. Until farmers got a title the Government could not lend them money, and could not take any mortgage. As far as farmers were concerned the Bill would be, for all practical purposes, a dead letter.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He could not permit the hon. member for Fassifern to constantly misrepresent the Bill. The hon. member said the Bill would only benefit those who had got freehold titles. It was nothing of the sort. It could be availed of to-day by the man who went on to the land yesterday.

The HON. G. THORN contended that it would only be availed of by men who had large areas of freehold land which they wished to sell or sublet—such men, for instance, as the hon. member for Cambooya.

Mr. DANIELS: The hon. member for Fassifern usually spoke in such a way that hon. members did not know what he was talking about. In this case he had "gone one better"—he did not know what he was talking about himself. With regard to the mortgagee foreclosing, if that happened there were plenty of other money-lenders who would be willing to advance the money on condition that the farmer put up the wire-netting, seeing that it would enhance the value of the property. There was plenty of money available, only the security was not good enough.

Mr. LORD: And you want to make it worse.

Mr. DANIELS: It was all very well for the hon. member to talk, seeing that he had a selvage of farmers round the outskirts of his station who kept back the marsupials from him; and it was all very well for the Secretary for Railways to talk about the disappearance of marsupials from the Rosewood Scrub. But many farmers had been forced on to the ranges and mountain country, where it was impossible that there should ever be enough close settlement to extirpate the pest. At the head of the Lockyer, about Esk, and in similar places, marsupials would remain a pest for the next twenty or thirty years.

Mr. LORD: Nonsense! you don't know what you are talking about.

Mr. CRIBB: If the Bill had been of a compulsory nature, and all the holdings within the infested area had to be fenced with marsupial-proof fencing, then advances might have been made by the Government without the consent of the mortgagee. If this fencing were not compulsory, but the farmer had the option of erecting it or not, then the mortgagee ought to have some voice in the matter. There might be other persons interested in a farm besides the owner, and it was not fair to them that the liability on the land should be increased without their consent. Out of sheer malice a farmer might apply for wire-netting, and thereby further encumber a farm already mortgaged for as much as it was worth, and if the Crown were to be given priority, it would be unjust to the mortgagee.

Mr. HARDACRE: It was interesting to compare the present attitude of the Secretary for Lands towards the Bill with that taken by him on the second reading, when the hon. member for North Brisbane suggested that they should do away with the mortgage, and substitute a simple covenant. The hon. gentleman opposed it then, but he was practically adopting it now. He had a great deal of sympathy with the hon. member for North Brisbane, and if it were possible to do away with the necessity for mortgaging, he would be very pleased to assist him, and take some similar method of security; but it appeared that it was not possible to do anything else but take a mortgagee for money advanced by the Crown. The hon. member for Normanby said that land might be so loaded up with debt that it could stand no more, and therefore he wanted the mortgagee, to have the full security, but surely that argument would apply the other way also, so as to give the Crown the full security. He did not think it was safe to commence a system of this kind without having a first mortgage. As they were commencing to assist farmers by giving them advances in certain ways, the system should be established on a sound basis and on safe lines; when they advanced State funds they should be in a position to recover the money. If that principle were not adopted the system would be a failure, and every time it was proposed to assist the farmers in any other way this failure would be thrown up to them, and they would be told that it was not safe for the Crown to assist industries. That would stop all progress in this kind of legislation.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: There is only £2,000 involved.

Mr. HARDACRE: It was only a small sum, but if they could not get that back again they would be told that the system was a failure, and no more legislation of the kind would be brought in. He might also point out that, in regard to leased lands, there was no provision for the Crown having a first mortgage at all, and the owner of the lease, after having obtained an advance from the Crown, might give a mortgage to somebody else, who would have priority. Surely that should not be allowed! The key-note to the whole thing was to be found in the remarks of the hon. member for Ipswich, who thought the mortgagee should be considered. The farmer was not to be allowed to take advantage of this Bill because the mortgagee stood in the way; and therefore, if the amendment were agreed to, the Bill would become a dead letter as regarded farmers whose farms were mortgaged, because no mortgagee would permit the Crown to take a first mortgage. Altogether, he thought the clause was better as it stood.

Mr. GRIMES thought hon. members were unnecessarily alarmed about the proposed new clause. He could see no necessity for the strong appeal made to farmers' representatives and the Farmers' Union over the matter, because he did not think the interest of the farmer were likely to be jeopardised by it. No mortgagee would object to a substantial improvement upon the land which was the security for his advance.

Mr. KING: When it costs him nothing.

Mr. GRIMES: And as the hon. member said it cost him nothing. He did not think there was a case in which the mortgagee would be likely to object. But he certainly saw an objection to the 10th clause. It was a question whether it was not illegal, because the mortgagee had certain rights, and it would not be fair for the Government, without his consent, to say that they had given certain concessions to the mortgagor and would take a mortgage in priority to that of the original mortgagee. It would be a mistake to pass the 10th clause as it stood, and he saw no harm in requiring the consent of the mortgagee, which was not likely to be refused, to a proposal which would improve his security and enable the mortgagor to get into a better position to meet his bill for interest.

Mr. CROSS quite agreed with the hon. member for Oxley that a great deal had been said on the other side with respect to this proposal, which was unnecessary. If, as had been admitted, the mortgagee would agree to the proposal what was the reason for altering the Bill? The hon. member for Oxley suggested that the Government had discovered that there might be something illegal about clause 10 in giving the Government mortgage priority, but he reminded the hon. member that this was the high court of Parliament, above every other institution in the State. It was for the Supreme Court of Queensland to carry out the behests of that Chamber. The hon. gentleman spoke as if that was some innovation, but the principle had already been incorporated in the Queensland law in several places, and it was also in the statute law of the other colonies. The Secretary for Railways told them in the settled districts the pest would be passing away, but he could appeal to the hon. member for Rosewood to say whether agriculturists there were not in some instances forced up the ridges and mountain sides alongside of dense scrubs? He had stopped at one farm in the district where a man had been living for twenty-five or thirty years; it was on a ridge on the top of which there was a dense scrub which was being held by speculators, and for miles around that scrub the farmers were subject to the incursions of the pest. As the hon. member for Cambooya had pointed out, on the Downs the farmers were pushed back to the sides of the ridges. Those men wanted help, and they should not be placed at the mercy of the mortgagee. He very much questioned whether the amendment was in order. The principle of priority for the Government mortgage was one of the principles of the Bill agreed to on the second reading, and he asked the Chairman whether the new clause, negativing that principle, was in order?

The CHAIRMAN: Under our Standing Orders clauses can be negatived, and new clauses can be added. The motion now before the Committee is that clause 10 stand part of the Bill, with the distinct intimation from the Minister that this clause is to be negatived with a view of inserting the new clause. The motion now before the Committee and the new clause are quite in order.

Mr. CROSS agreed with the ruling that a clause might be negatived and a new clause put in, but that was not the point he raised. He asked whether it was in order to substitute a new clause for an old one when the new clause negatived the principle of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: When the Mining Bill was going through committee the same thing was done in several instances. It is quite competent for the Committee to omit clauses and substitute new clauses.

Mr. GLASSEY: It had been said that the credit of the farmers would be injured if they passed the Bill as it stood, but under the Bill as it stood the farmer would make his application to the department, the department would send an inspector, the inspector would make his report, and on that report the Minister would act; but if this new clause were inserted a third party came in, and he objected to that. Of course mortgagees had their rights, but he did not place the mortgagee and the selector on the same terms. It was possible that a selector might have borrowed £100 and might have paid £150 in the shape of interest. Would anyone contend that in that case the mortgagee stood in the same category as the selector? He maintained that they did not stand on equal terms at all. Under this new clause the farmer could get no benefit under the Act without the consent of the mortgagee—the individual who had been well rewarded for the money he had lent. But the person from whom the money was borrowed might have died or become insolvent, or he might be away in the old country, and there might be any number of difficulties in the way of the farmer getting the consent of the mortgagee to borrow from the Crown. How then was he going to get any protection under the Bill? During his conversation with the Minister he did not think the hon. gentleman laid so much stress on the new clause, and he asked him seriously to reconsider the matter and withdraw it if possible.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: What he had heard during the debate tended to convince him that no benefit would be got by the farmers if the clause remained as it stood; but personally he was indifferent in the matter, and was willing to take the sense of the Committee as to whether the clause should be retained or not.

Question—That clause 10, as read, stand part of the Bill—put; and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 15.

Messrs. Glassey, Jackson, Keogh, Dunsford, Hardacre, Turley, Stewart, Daniels, Maughan, Brown, Jenkinson, McDonnell, Cross, Sim, and Kerr.

NOES, 25.

Messrs. Dickson, Chataway, Dalrymple, Foxton, Bell, Philp, Murray, Leahy, Story, O'Connell, Hamilton, Stephens, Corfield, Collins, Callan, Stodart, Lord, Cribb, Bridges, Grimes, Castling, McMaster, Lissner, King, and Hood.

PAIRS.

Ayes—Messrs. Fogarty and W. Thorn.

Noes—Messrs. Smith and Moore.

Resolved in the negative.

New clause put and passed.

Clauses 11, 12, and 13 put and passed.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS proposed a new clause, providing that the provisions of the Fencing Act of 1861 should apply to every dividing fence erected for the purposes of the Act. Where an owner of land affixed wire-netting on his boundary, and where the adjoining owner subsequently used that wire-netting as one side of his wire-netted land, the first owner would be able to recover the cost of affixing the same. The clause was drawn on very much the same lines as a similar provision in the Pastoral Leases Extension Act Amendment Act of 1895. It had worked well in connection with that Act, and he believed it would work well if adopted in this case.

Mr. LEAHY asked what the position would be in regard to the fencing as distinct from the wire-netting attached? How far would the provisions of the Fencing Act apply to the affixing of the netting? If a person only contemplated fencing and only gave notice of putting up the fencing before he put up the netting, was it necessary to give notice with regard to the attachment of the netting?

The HOME SECRETARY: If the question of fencing had already been adjusted between the owners it would only be necessary to give notice with regard to the netting. If the fence had already been erected it was assumed under the Fencing Act, under which the right of action was limited to six months, that the interested parties had adjusted their affairs. If there was a fence already erected and one owner desired to put netting on it, he took it that he would give notice to the other with regard to the netting only, but his right to claim was postponed under the clause until the adjoining land had been enclosed. The last paragraph provided that, notwithstanding the provisions of the Fencing Act, he might recover after the netting had been put on the fence at any time within six months after the other man had fenced.

Mr. LEAHY: Subject to giving notice in the first instance?

The HOME SECRETARY: No doubt, because it was under the Fencing Act

Mr. LEAHY thought that was right, but it was just as well to have it explained. There was another matter he would like to call attention to. Supposing he had eighty acres on his farm which was not useful for agriculture, and he did not care whether marsupials got into it or not, and fenced off the agricultural portion of his farm. All the land round the eighty acres was in the possession of other people, and was good agricultural land. Those people enclosed their land, fencing in his eighty acres. Was that an enclosure within the meaning of the Act? Would he have to pay half the cost of the fence; or did "enclosure" mean where a man had given notice that he was coming under the provisions of the Act? Cases had arisen under the Rabbit Boards Act in which men who had not come under the Pastoral Leases Extension Act, and who derived no advantage from it, had been called upon to pay for fences which had been erected by their neighbours. The same difficulty might arise under this clause, which had been taken from the Rabbit Boards Act.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It would be very hard, but such a case as had been put by the hon. member was very unlikely to occur. If a man had worthless land fenced in on three sides by his neighbours, instead of fencing the whole of the fourth side, and thus completing the enclosure, instead of fencing, say, twenty chains, he should only fence nineteen chains, when it would be no longer an enclosure.

Mr. LEAHY: It might be necessary for him to fence the whole of the fourth side. If he did not fence off the good portion, he would be fenced all round by his neighbours. He mentioned the matter, but as it was rather complicated, they had better pass the clause, and the hon. gentleman would have an opportunity of considering it while the Bill was going through the other House.

Mr. GRIMES saw a hardship that would be inflicted upon certain small farmers if the clause was passed in its present form. In the electorate of Rosewood about 1,000 acres had been taken up, principally for timber. That land was scrub land—mostly high ridges—and was a harbour for marsupials. The farmers bordering on that land had fenced their farms with paling fences, and were still greatly troubled with wallabies. If the clause was passed as it stood, they could not recover any portion of the cost of their fences from the holder of that land, because it was not likely to be used for agricultural purposes.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: They could not deal with a case like that unless the fencing was compulsory in infested districts, and they were not prepared to go so far as that. The hon. member for Maranoa and other hon. members advocated compulsory fencing, but as the measure was tentative to a large extent, it had been thought best not to make the fencing compulsory.

Mr. KEOGH: The place alluded to by the hon. member for Oxley was a perfect hotbed for marsupials. He had referred to the matter before. The property was in the hands of the mortgagees. One man whose farm adjoined the land had had to purchase a number of traps and to put in many nights trying to keep the vermin off his land, but the pest was as great as ever. It was a great pity that the hon. gentleman in charge of the Bill could not introduce some provision which would compel the mortgagees to fence.

Mr. GLASSEY thought something should be done concerning the large area of scrub land in the Rosewood district which was practically a breeding ground for marsupials. The farmers in that part of the country had bitterly complained for years past that they had no protection against the incursion of marsupials from that land, and there was nothing in the Bill by which they could compel the proprietor or proprietors of the land to fence it in, or to bear half the cost of fencing in the event of the holders of the adjoining lands fencing their holdings. He would suggest that the Minister insert a clause in the Bill on its recommittal dealing with such cases, or have some provision inserted in the other Chamber.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He had already said that this year, at any rate, the Government were not prepared to go so far as to make the Bill compulsory. If they had made the measure compulsory he should have had no hesitation in inserting a clause such as the hon. member suggested, making it compulsory on mortgagees to fence. The position described where a proprietor kept land which was a breeding ground for marsupials which infested his neighbour's land was not a typical one, because in most cases the proprietor of such land was the Crown. In the bulk of the scrubs the settler went in and cut out eighty or 160 acres, and the scrub surrounding his holding was Crown land, and unless the Crown was prepared to destroy the marsupials in those places it would be very unfair to compel private owners of land to fence, whether they liked it or not. He must ask the Committee to leave the matter as it stood at present. The question had been very carefully thought out. The Bill was a tentative measure, and if it did not work in the way it was framed they might very well alter it next year.

New clause put and passed.

Clauses 14 to 16, inclusive, put and passed.

The House resumed; the CHAIRMAN reported the Bill with amendments, and the third reading of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

BRISBANE TECHNICAL COLLEGE INCORPORATION BILL.

SECOND READING.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Although the session is very nearly over, I do not believe that the Bill which the House has now before it is one on which there will be a very great deal of contention. The Bill is distinctly necessary in the interests of those persons who are now students at the technical college, or who may be students in time to come. The reasons for the Bill being brought in are very simple. The technical college has arrived at a stage of its existence when it has become an exceedingly large and important institution. Although in its early career it was probably judicious that it should be under the wing of some larger institution, yet there is a time when those two institutions should part, and that time has now arrived. As at present constituted the technical college is a subsidiary body to the school of arts; and this Bill will also affect to some extent the committee of the school of arts. I may say that it has been introduced at the request of the managing committees of both those bodies. The responsibility of the technical college has become too great for the school of arts to undertake. The school of arts, as hon. members are aware, is in the main an institution devoted to the provision of literature and the lending of books; and it has been found that there is not at present that true community of interests between the two bodies which is desirable. They have both very worthy aims, but it is desirable that those who have the responsibility of the technical college upon them should be more strictly connected with technical education. It will not be out of place if I run over briefly a table which will show the gradual increase in importance

of the technical college. Originally established as a mechanical branch of the school of arts, in 1882 classes were added. At that time there were eleven subjects and eighty students. In 1883 there were fourteen subjects and 100 students. In 1889, the next year for which I have the figures, there were fifteen subjects and 380 students. In the next year there were 540 students, in the next 571, in the next 582, in the next 586, in the next 667, in the next 745, in the next 845; and last year the return showed fifty-one subjects and 1,147 students. At the present time the number of students is about 1,300. What the House is asked to do now is to endow this body with a constitution. I may point out that under similar circumstances in New South Wales a somewhat similar course was pursued. For a good many years the technical college was subsidiary to the school of arts, and was managed by a sub-committee of that institution. After the lapse of years it was found necessary, in consequence of the increase of the college, that its governing body should be more in touch with the instruction given. With regard to the Brisbane Technical College I may add that it is particularly desirable that the college should be endowed with a constitution because there is a change in the circumstances. Up to the present time the technical classes have been held in a building belonging to the school of arts. The accommodation was found to be altogether insufficient, and new arrangements have been entered into whereby a building has been constructed especially in order to carry out the objects of the college. That building will be occupied by the technical college on the 1st January. They are removing from the premises which are now rented by them from the school of arts, and are establishing themselves in an entirely different place. All parties concerned believe that under those circumstances it is desirable that a constitution should be given to the technical college, which, as I have already shown, has become a very important and valuable factor in the instruction of the colony. I need not enlarge upon the great importance of technical education in the present day; but there is one circumstance which has struck me very forcibly. When we find that in a place like Khartoum, which was so lately in the hands of the Mahdi, the first thing to be done by the British is to establish a technical college, it is an admission that institutions of this character are considered very beneficial. This Bill has two objects, the first being to provide for the incorporation of the college, which should be attended to at once, so that those who go into the new college will have a government of their own selection, and the second part deals with the question of endowment. It is considered undesirable that this college should be treated in a different manner from those in other parts of the colony; therefore it is my desire, with the approval of the House, to move that clauses 12 and 13, which deal with financial arrangements, shall be negatived. We do not propose to deal with the financial aspect of the question in the Bill; but what is urgently needed is a constitution, so that the members of this institution can govern themselves.

Mr. DUNSFORD: That takes the sting out of the Bill.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: What will then be left I do not think will be at all contentious. The Bill itself is largely taken from the South Australian School of Mines Act, but several clauses have been adapted from those in Acts which exist in other colonies, and which have been found to operate successfully. I may say that I have spoken to the leader of the Opposition on the subject, and he does not see, now that the Bill has been divested of its financial aspect, that there is any great probability of any contentious debate arising from it.

Mr. GLASSEY: I think it is to be regretted that in dealing with this Bill we have not a report of the technical college before us.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: That is provided for.

Mr. GLASSEY: It is provided that in future we shall have an annual report and an annual audit, which has been very much wanted during the past few years. Of course we have the *résumé* given by the Minister of the progress made by the college in Brisbane during the past few years, and it is very satisfactory to know that such substantial progress has been made, but no doubt if this Bill becomes law the progress will be much more rapid still. If hon. members take the trouble to read the preamble and study the principles of the Bill they will see that it has a very worthy object. The preamble says that it is desirable to provide for the incorporation and government of the Brisbane Technical College, the chief objects of which are to teach, theoretically and practically, the principles of science and art, and their application to industries, trades, commerce, and domestic economy, and to aid in the enlightenment and elevation of its students. These are very worthy objects, and certainly the matters dealt with have been given a great deal of thought in different countries of the world. In Austria enormous sums of money are spent in giving instruction, more particularly in connection with agriculture and horticulture. And in Germany also the best brains of the country are employed, even in its most remote parts, in giving technical instruction upon various subjects, which has done much to increase the industries and commerce of that great and important nation. It is certainly very desirable that some machinery should be provided here to enable this institution to go ahead more rapidly than in the past, and I certainly can see no objection to this Bill. There is one matter to which the hon. member might give some attention, if he has not done so already. On page 78 of the Estimates provision is made for no less than £7,650 for grants in aid of technical colleges, and there is a considerable increase in the amount set down for the college in North Brisbane. I do not object to that increase, because I do not think the amount is too large. I would like to ask the Minister to consider whether some means could not be adopted for treating Brisbane as a centre, and incorporating the technical schools in the various other parts of the colony with the central establishment in Brisbane, so that we might have annual returns and reports from the various branches throughout the colony through the central establishment in Brisbane.

Mr. DUNSFORD: There is provision for that in clause 11.

Mr. GLASSEY: I am aware of that, but it is not as effective as I would like, and I refer to the matter now in order that if any amendment should appear necessary we may be ready to deal with it in committee. The sum given for technical instruction in a place, for instance, like Charters Towers, is, in my opinion, very inadequate.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member cannot go into that now.

Mr. GLASSEY: I merely desired to direct the attention of the Minister to the matter as one of importance for his consideration between this and the committee stage of the Bill. I am sure that every hon. member, whatever his political creed may be, is agreed that we should aim at some more complete and perfect

scheme of technical instruction than we have hitherto had. I am pleased to find that the constitution of the college proposed is framed on a fairly democratic basis. I find that out of a council of twelve three are to be elected by the subscribers, three by the associates and certificated students of the college, and six are to be appointed by the Crown. As the Minister has stated his intention to omit clauses 12 and 13, I see very little that is contentious in the Bill. Those two clauses would have afforded some little controversy. I think the Bill essential to enable the institution to carry on its operations under new arrangements in new premises. I would like to see the Minister increase the sum already mentioned with a view of having our technical education much more effective, and as a result much more beneficial to the country. I will not further continue the discussion, but I should like to see the £10,000 asked for four times £10,000, not perhaps all at once, but if the technical instruction is to be effective, I think there is room for a considerable increase. I would like to ask if the Minister has given any consideration to the question of connecting with this institution the already debated question of a school of mines?

Mr. LEAHY: Where are we going to get the funds for a school of mines?

Mr. GLASSEY: There are many ways of finding funds. We might by economy in many directions in the public departments find means sufficient to equip a school of mines in an admirable way.

Mr. KIDSTON: The Minister, when moving the second reading of the Bill, told us it was his intention when the Bill got into committee to delete clauses 12 and 13. I am very glad to hear that, but that being so, I would ask the hon. gentleman whether it would not also be better to delete from the title of the Bill the words "of the Brisbane," and make the Bill simply one for the incorporation of technicel colleges and for other purposes? It would then be a Bill applicable not to Brisbane alone, but to the whole of the colony. If this Bill is passed as it stands, and we have a technical college established in Brisbane, then, if any other town—Charters Towers, Toowoomba, or any other—wants a technical college the Government will have to come down with another Bill.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: It would only be like the Harbour Boards Bills in that case.

Mr. KIDSTON: It is very different in regard to harbour boards. The Government in this Bill are arranging the conditions under which a certain subsidy shall be granted to technical colleges, and why should we add "in Brisbane"? Is it desirable that technical education should be encouraged only in Brisbane?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: It is encouraged in other places through the schools of arts.

Mr. KIDSTON: Just so; but in framing this Bill it would be better to make it applicable to all Queensland alike. Except for a little phraseology here and there, clauses 12 and 13 are the only clauses in the Bill making it specially applicable to Brisbane, and the Minister having said that he would omit those clauses, I ask him whether he will not change this Bill into a general measure for the establishment of technical colleges in any town in Queensland where the people are willing to fulfil the necessary conditions? That would surely be a very much better way of setting about the thing. I altogether approve of the objects of the Bill; and the success which has attended the establishment of technical classes in the principal towns shows how much technical education is appreciated. If we can still further advance that by establishing these technical classes in a more permanent and better endowed way, the object is altogether worthy the attention of the Secretary for Public Instruction; but I think any measure of this sort should be applicable to the whole colony.

Mr. DUNSFORD: I had intended, if clauses 12 and 13 had not been deleted, to vote against the second reading of the Bill. The principle of giving £2 for £1 in Brisbane, while in other portions of the colony £1 for £1 is given, I do not think is at all right; however, that is outside the question now. I will just say it is somewhat surprising in this age of federation that the Government should be going in for separation. This Bill proposes to separate the technical classes from the school of arts. I do not know whether it is a good thing in small communities that we should divide up these local bodies. I think the time has come when we should federate them and have better management. We should take a lesson from the London County Council. The tendency there is to concentrate, because they find it leads to better results. One elective body in Brisbane with proper sub-committees could run the whole of Brisbane as far as local and municipal affairs go. Instead of that we weaken ourselves by giving to a few men here the right to run a little side-show, to another lot the right to run another little side-show; one digging up streets and laying down rails, another lot in conflict with them laying down some other way; one lot laying down wooden blocks, another lot digging them up to lay down pipes underneath—one working and pulling against another. I suppose there is a population of 120,000 in Brisbane and suburbs, but with your committees and sub-committees and boards and municipalities and shire councils you find every other man belongs to a board or a council. There is no sense in this sort of thing. If you had one strong central elective board, they could do it far better. Why have it appointed by the Governor in Council? It is not one of the duties of the Executive to interfere with the rights of Brisbane in regard to the local management of local concerns. That should be purely their own affair, and those who manage their affairs should be elected by them. Why should the Executive interfere and say, "We are going to elect for Brisbane——"

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: The Government find a large portion of the money.

Mr. DUNSFORD: They do that all over the colony in connection with the schools of arts, but those institutions elect their own committees. They have been run very well; they have been brought up to the present state of comparative perfection by local management—by the local committees elected by the subscribers—and now the Government say, "We are ready to step in now, and ready to carry on the work as long as we give them money." The Government have got their finger in too many pies already; they have enough work here in connection with legislation and in administering the affairs of the colony without interfering with those functions which do not belong to the State at all.

Mr. MCMASTER: I thought you believed that everything should be done by the State.

Mr. DUNSFORD: I believe in Brisbane managing its own affairs; I do not believe in the Government managing local affairs. I should object to the Government taking the local management away from Charters Towers; I should say, "This is purely a matter of local management, and let them deal with their own affairs, they are doing very well at present." And the same thing applies to Brisbane. If the Minister can show that the committee managing the Brisbane Technical College have failed in their duty, then he could give good reasons why the

Government should take the power of nominating half the committee. They tell us they have not time to do certain things, yet here is a matter in which they interfere, though it is not at all necessary. Here is a Bill dealing with a local matter that can very well be left to Brisbane. Brisbane is not in trouble. They have made the technical college very successful so far, and why should the Government step in at the tail end of the session and occupy our time? It is not asked, it is not necessary, and it is not wise.

Mr. STEWART: I think we are all agreed upon the desirability of extending technical education as much as possible. We are all well aware of the advantages technical education has bestowed in various parts of the world, and should not be slow to avail ourselves of those advantages; but I do not think this Bill is likely to do as much as is desirable in the interests of the colony. I do not see why a measure of this kind should be confined to Brisbane. We do not confine the application of the Education Act or of the Grammar Schools Act to Brisbane, and I think, with the senior member for Rockhampton, that the Government would be wise to omit the word "Brisbane," and make the Bill apply to the entire colony.

Mr. BROWNE: The same as the School of Mines Bill.

Mr. STEWART: Yes. The law should be framed in such a way that any locality which raises the required sum could avail themselves of the measure. Notwithstanding that the Minister has consented to withdraw clauses 12 and 13, upon which the Bill would probably have been wrecked, this is a covert attempt on the part of the Government to establish a technical college in Brisbane to which technical classes all over the rest of the colony shall be subsidiary, and as a country member I object to this way of dealing with the question. Besides, I think the hon. member, when replying, might tell us how he proposes to find the money for the establishment of this college. He says he is going to leave out clauses 12 and 13, but I look upon that merely as a subterfuge. He knew that if those clauses were retained the Bill would meet with a great deal of opposition, and he thinks that by withdrawing them that opposition will be got over. But we know that if the Bill becomes law a technical college will be established, and that State money will be given; and we should hear from the Minister how he proposes to find the money.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: It has been established here for the last quarter of a century.

Mr. STEWART: Yes, I know, but not under the conditions imposed by this Bill. It is intended now to establish something on a more liberal scale than the present, and I have no particular objection so long as we know what we are doing; but I do not want the hon. gentleman to try and impose on the Assembly in the manner that he proposes to do. He will withdraw clauses 12 and 13 for the purpose of getting the Bill through, but he does not tell us where he will get the money.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: If you look at the Estimates you will see.

Mr. STEWART: We know very well that the usual endowment will not be sufficient. Take the building fund for instance. The hon. gentleman proposes under clause 13 to give £2 for every £1 subscribed.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: It was passed last year in that way.

Mr. STEWART: The hon. gentleman knows perfectly well that in the outside portions of the colony the Government only give 10s. for every £1. I object to Brisbane being placed in a more advantageous position than any other portion of the colony.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: That is not proposed.

Mr. STEWART: The hon. gentleman proposes to omit these two clauses, but I am doubtful all the same. All I want to know is whether he will give the same terms and conditions to other portions of the colony as he gives to Brisbane. If he will give us an assurance on that point I shall offer no objection to the Bill.

Mr. O'CONNELL: Are you in favour of it.

Mr. STEWART: Yes, I am in favour of technical education not only in Brisbane but all through the colony wherever people can raise locally sufficient money to establish technical classes. In Rockhampton we have a technical school in connection with the school of arts, and I do not see why that school should not in the course of a few years avail itself of the provisions of a measure such as is proposed to be passed for Brisbane.

Mr. KIDSTON: They are working on the same principle now.

Mr. STEWART: They may call themselves what they like, but the essential thing is that colleges outside of Brisbane should get the same subsidy as the technical college in Brisbane. I do not think there will be much difficulty in getting the measure passed if we get that assurance. It appears that it will be absolutely necessary to erect a new building in Brisbane. The school has outgrown the present accommodation.

The HOME SECRETARY: The new building is ready for them to go into. Why do you not know something about it before you speak?

Mr. STEWART: I did not know that. It appears to me that Brisbane has been very smart on this occasion. If I thought that places outside of Brisbane were not to receive the same Government subsidy as Brisbane I should oppose the Bill notwithstanding that I believe in technical education.

Mr. MAUGHAN: I welcome this Bill although I happen to be a country member. In some respects I am inclined to differ with the remarks of the hon. member for Rockhampton North. I do not think it wise to view this class of measure from a parochial point of view. We are dealing with an institution which has been in existence for a quarter of a century and which has a very large attendance roll. It is practically the *alma mater* of all the technical colleges of the colony. We must make a start, and as far as I can see from this Bill it is purely a measure to provide for the good order and government of this particular institution. We know that for many years past things have not worked altogether harmoniously under the old *régime*—that the school of arts committee and the technical college committee oft-times come into conflict, and that fact alone is detrimental to the interests and advancement of the college. I take it that if Rockhampton, and Maryborough, and Townsville, and other large centres of population want Bills to incorporate their colleges they will get them, but in this measure we are simply making a start, and it is right and proper that a start should be made in the metropolis. As one who is most anxious to see all institutions connected with education go ahead in this colony, I am very sorry to hear that the Minister has thought fit to suggest the elimination of clauses 12 and 13 from the Bill. If we spent £20,000 or £30,000 a year in technical education we should not be spending a penny too much. Twenty-five years ago in South Australia, Victoria, and New South Wales, they were spending three or four times as much money as we spend now on technical education. In South Australia, to which colony

the Minister referred, they have a magnificent building and for many years good work has been done in connection with technical instruction in that colony. As a believer in spending money judiciously on the great cause of education in all its branches, I shall vote for the second reading of the Bill, and I hope when the Estimates come on we shall find that not only has Brisbane benefited by receiving a larger endowment, but that all the large centres of population have been equally well treated. I can only say that I am glad to think that the men who have worked so heroically for many years past, and have been connected with the management of this institution, have been at last recognised by the Government. I congratulate the hon. gentleman upon being the first Minister controlling the Education Department who seems to have taken some interest in the Brisbane Technical College, in so far as he has thought it worth while to bring it into line with similar establishments in the other colonies and establish it as a corporate institution.

Mr. O'CONNELL: I must congratulate the last speaker on the tone of his remarks, and, as one who takes a certain amount of interest in education in this colony, I also congratulate the Minister on having attempted to put technical education on a sounder footing. Some hon. members on the other side take exception to the fact that Brisbane is to be the first to benefit by the extension of the system of technical education; but although we may have to wait a short time, if the towns we represent are really in earnest in the matter, they will be able to get more help from this Assembly in regard to technical education.

Mr. KIDSTON: Why should we have to wait at all?

Mr. O'CONNELL: I may be wrong, but I do not think it possible to frame a Bill at the present moment which would be satisfactory to the different towns in the colony. Local difficulties would crop up which would render some alteration necessary. At the same time the work that has been done by the technical college in Brisbane entitles it to some recognition. It would be beneficial to the whole colony that some technical college should be recognised which would be able to give certificates to candidates presenting themselves for examination, even if they come from technical colleges in other towns in the colony. It is very advisable to institute some examining centre. Some leading institution in the colony must always exist to assist the institutions in other parts of the colony. I do not wish to detain the House at any length, but I would not like the second reading to pass without saying that the Bill has my warmest approval. As far as the colony's finances will allow it, too much money cannot be spent on technical education. I believe that the nations which spend most largely on technical education are the nations which are going to come to the front in trade and commerce.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION, in reply: With regard to the remarks which have been made by some hon. member on the other side about the sums of money on the Estimates, and the amount of money which has been given to Brisbane, I want to point out that everybody has been treated in precisely the same manner. If a large amount of money has been voted for education in Brisbane, it is purely because the Brisbane public have arranged to subscribe a large amount of money, and therefore require a larger subsidy. There has been no case, so far as I am aware, in which any electorate or town, which has subscribed a certain amount of money for technical education, has not, either at the time or afterwards, obtained the full subsidy for the money they have raised.

Mr. KIDSTON: No one ever objected to the larger amount.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: One hon. member said that it might be justifiable to bring in a Bill of this sort if we could show that the school of arts in Brisbane had failed; but, as the school of arts had not failed, it was undesirable to bring in the Bill. I have already said that it is partly at the desire of the committee of the school of arts that this Bill has been brought in. I have had deputations from the school of arts on two occasions, desiring some such measure to be introduced. Now, with regard to applying the Bill to all parts of the colony. Objections have been taken to the Bill on the score that it is not to be applicable to the whole colony. There is this difference—that no other part of the colony has approached the Minister expressing any desire whatever that their method of government should be at all interfered with; and it so happens that Brisbane has got 1,300 students, and that they are no longer desirous of working in connection with the school of arts. The subscribers to the school of arts form the electoral body for the technical college. If the college was in an infantile stage, probably that course would cause no inconvenience, but it has been pointed out that in Brisbane it has caused inconvenience. Therefore, they have approached me on the subject, and, desiring some remedy, this Bill has been brought forward. If the technical colleges of Townsville and Rockhampton find that their operations are so successful that they are no longer contented with the franchise exercised by the subscribers to the school of arts, and they want another franchise, I shall be very happy to introduce a Bill to give effect to their wishes. It is just as well to begin in a matter of this sort with the technical college in Brisbane, which numbers perhaps more students than all the other technical colleges in the colony. The best thing is to give them a constitution, and if that constitution works well—and I do not doubt that it will—it will be quite time, when the necessity appears, to extend a constitution of the same sort to other colleges. I may also point out that it is hoped that the technical college in Brisbane will extend its operations, in a friendly way, so as to embrace within the sphere of its operations by-and-by, by affiliation and otherwise, the whole of the technical colleges in the colony. I know that in New South Wales and Victoria the central technical colleges do what some of the colleges do at Oxford and Cambridge—they exercise a very large influence over all the other educational establishments in the colony—which are more or less affiliated with them. I am glad to find that, generally speaking, the Bill has received the approval of the House.

Question put and passed. The committal of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for tomorrow.

BRANDS BILL.

SECOND READING.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: This Bill is the outcome of an agitation which has been going on for a long time in Australia, having for its object the saving of the considerable loss that occurs under our present system of branding hides. In 1895 a conference was held in Brisbane of the Chief Inspectors of Stock of the colonies of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Queensland, and they came to the conclusion that it was extremely desirable that some other system of branding than the one at present obtaining should be adopted. "In 1883 a Royal Commission on the tariff in Victoria brought under notice the loss, estimated at £100,000 annually, occasioned by brands and flaying of cattle in that colony

and recommended a reform in the system. In South Australia a majority of the agricultural bureaus were strongly in favour of an alteration of the portions set apart for brands. In New South Wales the Government have on several occasions been approached on the same subject; and in Queensland an influential deputation of pastoralists interviewed the Colonial Secretary, pointing out the serious annual loss to the colony by the destruction of hides under the present system of brands." A conclusion was arrived at by that conference that it was desirable that the portions which might be branded should be increased in number, and also that the earmarks should be compulsorily registered, and not, as they are at present, merely allotted by the various district inspectors of brands. That conference was followed by another one in the following year, at which the same subject was brought up. But in this colony the principal credit of constantly keeping this matter under the public eye and urging its adoption is due to the present member for Albert, Mr. Collins. Last session, on his suggestion, a select committee was appointed to report on the matter. That committee consisted of Mr. Collins, Mr. Bell, Mr. Hardacre, Mr. Jackson, Mr. Leahy, Mr. Sim, and Mr. Stephens, and they came to the conclusion that some system such as the one that is proposed in this Bill should be adopted, with the view of saving the large annual loss which takes place under our present system of branding. It was shown by the evidence taken before that committee, and by evidence taken before previous committees, that the loss on hides under our present system of branding was between 1s. and 10s. each. Last year the cast of our cattle was 774,733, and taking the average loss on those hides at 2s., which is more approximately correct, we find that the colony lost by its system of branding somewhere about £77,473. A man who has a cast of fat cattle, say, of 10,000 in this colony, and that is not a very excessive amount, would therefore lose, at 2s. a head, £1,000 a year by the present system of branding. The system now in force was very necessary at the time it was adopted, in order to prevent cattle-stealing, and to secure the more ready identification of cattle. In the Bill before the House we propose that those who desire to adopt another, and less wasteful, system of branding shall be permitted to do so. The Bill itself is entirely permissive, and does not interfere with any existing rights. Those who desire to brand as they do at present will be allowed to do so, while those who desire to adopt this other system of branding will be permitted, on application to the Chief Inspector of Stock, to register their new brands. The Bill is divided into five parts. The second part alters the present Act in so far as that owners imprinting the first brand will have to state the portion of the body on which they intend to print their brands, instead of as at present selecting any one of the eight portions indiscriminately; and the minimum size of the brand will be reduced from one and a-half to one and a-quarter inches to permit of its being imprinted on the cheek at the discretion of the owner, as well as on any part of the body. Part III., which is the important part of the Bill, provides that in addition to the present brands consisting of two letters and a numeral, owners may be allotted a single-piece brand consisting of a device or symbol, the latter of which may be used on the cheek and so avoid the deterioration of the hides which at present takes place by the use of the three-piece branding irons. Any owner, however, using a device or symbol will have to adopt a registered earmark consisting of two letter-marks and one numeral corresponding to his registered three-piece brand, and this earmark in conjunction with the symbol-mark will be *primâ facie* evidence of ownership. Or the owner may use the two letters of his three-piece brand on the cheek in conjunction with his registered earmark, and thus avoid placing a brand on the body of the animal. There are at the present time a very large number of brands which are registered, but have never been used for years. In section 6 of their report the Select Committee say—

> It appears that brands once allotted and subsequently cancelled cannot afterwards be re-allotted; and the provisions for cancellation are so inadequate that, although there are probably 7,000 or 8,000 disused brands, only 231 have been cancelled. We think that provision should be made for requesting the owners of registered brands to surrender them when they no longer require them.

Part IV. of the Bill supplies a defect in the present Act by providing for the surrender of brands and the cancellation of all brands not in use. All surrendered or cancelled brands may be re-allotted after a period sufficient for the stock bearing them to have died out. A list of all cancelled brands is to be published in the *Gazette*. Part V. provides that, in addition to the brands as at present published, the Brands Directory shall contain a list of earmarks and distinctive brands used by owners in conjunction with their respective names. Those are briefly the provisions of the Bill, which are very simple, and which have received a very large amount of attention from the associated stockowners of Queensland, as well as from the select committee of this House, who took very valuable and extensive evidence, and came to the conclusion that the system proposed in this Bill was one which should be adopted in Queensland. There are several hon. members who have a fuller knowledge of this matter than I have, but I may say that the necessity of some alteration in our present Brands Act was brought home to me so clearly and with such force by the report of that select committee, that the Government decided that a Bill of this kind should be introduced. It was entrusted to me; I have introduced it, and I move that it be now read a second time.

Mr. GLASSEY: I cannot see any possible objection to the second reading of this Bill. On the contrary, the surprise to me is that a Bill of this kind, or even a compulsory measure, has not been introduced and passed some time ago. It is no new subject; it has been agitated for a considerable length of time, and the report of the select committee, which I have just been reading, of itself carries conviction. It shows conclusively that for years past there has been a very serious loss, not only in Queensland, but throughout Australia; and if any system can be devised which can protect cattle-owners from that serious leakage, as I may call it, it must commend itself to most members of the House. The hon. member for Albert, who, I understand, is pretty well the author of this measure, deserves every possible commendation and the thanks of the Chamber, and if it will have the effect it is supposed it will have, I do not doubt that hon. members will assist him to get it placed on the statute-book as early as possible. For my part, I certainly welcome the measure. It may be asked, from a humane standpoint, whether there are any better means by which cattle can be marked than branding them with a hot iron. I would welcome any system which would prevent that cruelty, and I should like to hear what hon. members familiar with the subject have to say upon that matter. It is, of course, impossible for me to have given that care and attention to the subject which would enable me to come to any decision, and I will not attempt it; but I know it is believed by a very large number of

persons that the present system of branding is a most cruel one. If we can improve upon it, so much the better. In the meantime, when it is admitted by the most competent authorities that this heavy loss of £70,000 or £80,000 is going on from year to year, it is our duty, if we can, to prevent it. I was not a member of that select committee, but some of my hon. friends on this side were. The hon. member for Kennedy, who has had practical experience in the raising and branding of cattle, will, I have no doubt, go more fully into the matter than I can pretend to. And the hon. member for Leichhardt, who represents a district in which there is a very large number of cattle, has no doubt considered the question as fully as a man can who is not himself a cattle-breeder. For myself, having read the Bill carefully through and the report of the select committee —and a very admirable report it is, short, precise, and clear—I see no objection to the second reading of the Bill, and if there be any defects in it they can be remedied when we get into committee. In the meantime I heartily support the measure, and hope it will pass without any unnecessary delay.

Mr. HOOD : I should be very pleased to support any measure which will tend to increase the value of any of the products of the colony, but there are some clauses in this Bill which I think will be totally unworkable. As far as reducing the size of the brands is concerned, I am quite at one with the Minister ; also that a symbol might be allowed to be used instead of a brand. But when it comes to allowing owners of stock to place the brand on the cheek instead of on the other portions of the hide, I am afraid we are allowing a very dangerous thing. It is well known that except at all the meatworks and one or two of the larger slaughtering establishments the heads are not skinned ; so that as soon as the heads are taken off the carcasses all trace of ownership vanishes. As to the earmarking system sketched out in the Bill, it seems a thing totally unworkable except amongst dairy herds and stud cattle. In the report of the select committee I notice they say a calf's ear at three months old measures two and three-quarter inches in width. We who are connected with the working of cattle know that calves are branded much nearer three weeks than three months of age, at which time we may take the width of the ear at a little over two inches. With one of the markers proposed to be used you could not take out a smaller piece than an inch, and if you take an inch out of each side of the ear, unless the ear is made of stuff very much harder than calves' ears are usually made of, it will flop and go out of all shape in a very few days after the operation is performed. The principal work in cattle camps is done by the earmark, and if you get all these kinds of earmarks mixed up in a camp of 1,000 or 1,500 cattle there will be any amount of trouble. The Bill provides that earmarks may be allotted by the Chief Inspector of Stock in Brisbane. But he might allot one of those earmarks of three pieces, which included an earmark of a station in a particular district the owner of which did not choose to take advantage of the Act. That would lead to no end of confusion. I hope hon. members will be very careful what they do in commencing to tinker with our present Act. There is no doubt we lose a good deal of money through the present system, but I am afraid that through the system proposed owners of cattle and breeders will lose a great deal more by cattle-duffing and cattle-stealing.

Mr. COLLINS : After the remarks that have fallen from the Minister in charge of the Bill and the leader of the Opposition, I do not think it necessary for me to speak at any great length as to the general merits of the Bill ; but I should like to refer to the strictures passed upon the Bill by the hon. member for Warrego. In regard to earmarks, I would remind hon. members that the present practice is for them to be allotted by the different district inspectors, of whom there are seventeen in the colony, and they are not allotted upon any principle of any kind. The only rule they go by is that the same mark shall not be allotted to any two people in the same district, but there is nothing to prevent that mark being allotted to one man in each district. One inspector does not know what the others are doing, and although each keeps a book in which they are all marked down, that book is not published. There is only one copy kept, and the mark is not recorded in the same way that registered brands are ; so that, really, earmarks have very little value as proof of ownership. Another object of the Bill is to allow branding on the cheek, so that hides will not be injured. As the ordinary three-piece brand cannot be put upon the cheek it is necessary to make it very small, and inasmuch as the requisite number of different brands cannot be got if only one-piece and two-piece brands are used, the necessity arises to have the additional evidence of the earmark. That is the justification for making the greatest possible use of earmarks. It is customary to throw discredit upon earmarks, and hon. members usually speak of the proposal as if it emanated from somebody who owned only a few head of stock and did not know much about the large stations of the interior, but I do not yield to any hon. member in regard to length or variety of experience upon large stations in the interior. I have studied this matter as much as anybody, and think I am as competent to express an opinion as anyone. In regard to earmarks being complicated, at present the district inspector gives an earmark consisting of one, two, three, or four pieces, and there is a plate attached to the report of the select committee giving diagrams of some of them ; but there is no necessity for four pieces, because three are enough, and will provide for separate earmarks corresponding to all the registered brands in the directory consisting of two letters and a numeral—three-piece brands—and the system proposed by the Bill will lead to no more complications than the present one. Hon. members will observe that the Bill does not define the shape of the earmarks ; it will only be necessary that the officers of the department shall use the experience they have gained as to the best shapes to adopt, and then decide upon twenty-five of them, which will give as many earmarks as there are brands now. As for the rest, the Bill speaks pretty well for itself, and I do not think I need say any more about it on the present occasion.

Mr. JACKSON : I think the hom. member for Warrego took a very pessimistic view of this Bill. Personally, I follow the example of the leader of the Opposition, and welcome it. No doubt it is to some extent experimental legislation, but seeing that it is not compulsory, I do not think we need take such a gloomy view of it. No doubt the hon. member for Warrego is a very competent critic of a Bill of this sort, but so is the hon. member for Albert, who has taken a great interest in this new system of branding, and his opinion is entitled to a great deal of respect, not only because he has devoted a great deal of attention to the subject, but because, as a large squatter, he is personally interested in the success of the system embodied in the Bill. If he did not believe in the system I am sure he would not advocate it, because its success will mean a great saving to him in the working of his cattle stations. There was one objection raised by the hon. member for Warrego that there might be something in, and

that was in regard to the fact that butchers do not skin the heads of cattle. We know that the use of branding is partly to prove ownership, and partly also to detect cases of cattle stealing; and it is well known that according to our law hides have to be kept for a certain time, so that in the event of cattle being stolen, inspectors can examine them and see what the brands are. If it is customary not to skin the heads, then if this system of branding on the cheek be adopted, this evidence will be lost; but that difficulty can be got over by making it compulsory to preserve that part of the head, so that there is not so much in that objection after all. With regard to the other objections of the hon. member I do not think there is anything in them. He appeared to think that this system of earmarking would be complicated, seeing that, according to him, it is customary to earmark calves at three weeks old. I think the hon. member is wrong in that; that the average age would be more like three months; at any rate there is no necessity to brand at that age. It is possible that if a man suspected his neighbours of stealing cattle they would be run in very young; but that is not the case on large stations. I know in the district I come from the cattle are often not branded till six months old, which shows that the squatters in the North have a very different class of people to deal with from those on the Warrego. Another objection the hon. member raised was with respect to the difficulty of picking out cattle on a camp; but there is nothing in an objection like that when we consider the variety of earmarks to be seen on a camp now under a system which permits of all sorts, shapes, and designs of earmarks. This Bill proposes to reduce that system to order, and to provide that there shall be a register of earmarks kept. I feel quite sure that a system of the kind proposed may be initiated, though I believe there will be some little difficulty in the printing of the register. That, however, is a detail which may be got over. With regard to the loss upon hides under the present system, I believe the estimate given by the Minister is not far out. If the Bill becomes law, the system proposed will not be universally adopted at once, but if it was we might put the saving at £70,000 or £80,000.

Mr. LEAHY: It might not be adopted at all.

Mr. JACKSON: I am quite sure it will be tried; the hon. member for Albert I have no doubt will try it at once. My opinion is that it will be tried gradually by the large squatters, and no doubt it will soon become known, and its adoption will be spread all over the colony.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member can try it now. He can register an earmark if he likes, and have no brand.

Mr. JACKSON: I understand that under this Bill the new system of earmarking cannot be adopted altogether apart from the cheek-brand. If that is so I think that rather an objection. I can see no reason why an earmark corresponding to the three-piece brand should not be permitted whether a cheek-brand is applied for or not.

Mr. COLLINS: That is so. Clause 14.

Mr. JACKSON: It is all right if that is so, but I thought the clause made it compulsory to have both earmark and cheek-brand. With respect to the reduction in the size of the three-piece brand to an inch and a-quarter, I approve of it. Under the 1872 Act the size was two inches, and we have been gradually cutting it down. I think the proposal to further reduce the size is an advantage, and hon. members must remember that it is to be optional—we may well leave it to the cattle-owners themselves to decide what size brands they will use. It may be said that we have no concern in the welfare of the other colonies, but I think we have, and the good effects of this Bill will not be confined to Queensland. If the system is proved a success here it will be followed in the other colonies, so that in this Bill we are really leading the way in a very beneficial reform. There is not much to be said about the latter part of the Bill, though perhaps the time —five years—mentioned in clause 19 is too short, and will require to be amended. I think the Bill a useful one, and one that provides for a workable system of branding and earmarking, and if it is a success it will result in a very considerable saving to Queensland. It may be argued that the squatters will not get the benefit of the saving, but I am inclined to think they will—that after a time the increased value of 2s., 2s. 6d., or 3s. on the hide will be so much on the beast. Of course the value of the saving will fluctuate with the values of hides, but we may be satisfied that it will be considerable if this new system is adopted extensively in the colony.

Mr. GRIMES: I am very glad to see this Bill introduced. Anything that can be done to prevent the loss sustained through the present branding system, as shown by the evidence given before the select committee, is a step in the right direction. This is purely a permissive Bill, and the only harm that can result from it is probably some little confusion of brands in the first instance. I do not think there is even likely to be much confusion. At present the register of earmarks is only a local register for a particular district, and we have no complete register. Under this Bill, where earmarks are used to take the place of a three-piece brand, there will be a general register kept of them. I think the measure will be availed of by farmers and those who own small herds, but it is possible that those who own very large herds in the interior of the country will not be so ready to avail themselves of it. I feel certain that it will eventually be pretty universally adopted. I have great pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. CALLAN: The hon. member who has just sat down thinks that earmarking without a brand will be largely availed of by the farmers, but there will be nothing easier than for a man to come along with a knife and cut part of the ear off and then the brand will be all gone. It is not done out West, because they cannot get hold of the calves so easily, but about Brisbane it may be easy enough. I am sorry to disagree with my friend, the member for Albert, but I have had considerable experience amongst cattle, and I am satisfied that it will not work at all. Even with the present earmarks we see the ears flapping about in all directions, and no man would think of using such earmarks as I see here attached to the report of the select committee. I call attention particularly to the 3rd, 5th, and 6th earmarks. It is all very well to look at these on paper, but it is different on the camps, and I have not the least hesitation in saying that a great number of these earmarks would be perfectly undistinguishable after being made a fortnight. Instead of standing out as they do on the plan, they would flap about; you could not tell what they were, and it would lead, not to the better keeping of the law, but to the breaking of the law. Any man with experience of cattle knows that the simplest form of earmark is the best—the one that will least disturb the appearance of the ear. I think this is useless, and worse than useless, because it would lead to a great deal of cattle-duffing. Of course the Bill is not compulsory, and such being the case it is not necessary to waste much time in the House; but I wish to impress upon hon. members that all this talk about earmarks is so much rubbish—it could not be practically carried out

at all. Another thing; suppose there is a bunch of seven or eight stations, and the owners agree on a certain earmark; they all know it, and if they go on a camp they can pick out their cattle at once, but if these things get into practice it would be interfered with at once. I do not agree at all with the branding on the cheek; you must have a brand on some other portion, so that the brand can be cut away with the hide. Even at the meatworks they do not skin the cheek, and if a beast was branded only on the cheek there would be no brand at all on the hide after it was taken off.

Mr. STEPHENS: That is wrong. At the meatworks they skin the cheek.

Mr. CALLAN: As far as my experience goes it was never thought necessary to take off the cheek piece at all, and I am sure that it is the case still in a great many instances, so that a brand on the cheek would be no means of identification of the hide. The large cattle-owners will not take the cheek; they will take some other part for the brand. As far as I am concerned, I do not care very much whether the Bill is passed or not, seeing that it is not compulsory.

Mr. STORY: I am sorry to disagree with the hon. member for Albert, who has given a good deal of care and thought to this Bill. Besides that, he has shown a large amount of skill in choosing his select committee. He picked out most of the cattle-men in the House, got them to agree to the report, so that they cannot now object; and then he has got the Secretary for Lands to put the Bill through. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that there is an enormous amount of leather destroyed by branding, and so far as branding on the cheek is concerned, I am at one with the hon. member for Albert, because that does not injure the hide like branding on the ribs or other parts. If a man wants to make the hide more valuable by branding only on the cheek there should be no objection. But it is in connection with the earmarks that I find a difficulty in the Bill. I cannot see how they are going to work at all. I do not see the necessity for them. If you give permission to brand on the cheek, what is the need of complicating the thing by putting in an earmark that is different from anything a cattle man, or boundary-rider, or drover ever learnt? There are certain simple earmarks known to all cattle-men. If you tell a man your brand is GG6 and your earmark is a back quarter on the off ear he knows what to look for, but if you say your brand is GG6 and your earmark is GG6 he says, "What sort of an earmark is that?" You say, "It is a nick in the top of the ear, a little slit out of the point of the ear, and a halfpenny out of the bottom of the ear. Another brand you have to look for is NN5. That is altogether different. That is a halfpenny out of the point of the ear, a slit on the top of the ear, and a little piece out of the bottom." I am only imagining these marks, which are entirely foreign to anything he has learned all his life. I will just call attention to two earmarks shown on a paper attached to the report of the select committee. If anyone looks at the marks representing AA5 and those representing AA3, I defy him to tell me the difference a quarter of an hour afterwards. In drafting cattle on a camp what would be the use of those marks to represent letters and numerals? If the hon. member would be content with the brand on the cheek and let people apply for the ordinary earmark, I think the Bill would be most admirable, but it is altogether complicated by this system of earmarks, which I am certain will never be learned, and will never come into general use. There are certain marks which men have been trained to look for—that they have been used to from time immemorial; and why should those marks not be used in conjunction with the brand on the cheek? When the Bill gets into committee, I hope it will be proposed to do away with this complicated system of earmarks, and adhere to the old earmarks. If that were done I should not have the slightest objection to the Bill; in fact, it would be a very good Bill indeed.

Mr. HARDACRE: After what has been said by other members I have not much to say upon this Bill. It is of great importance to pastoralists generally, and I admit there would be much difficulty in learning these earmarks from paper or from instructions. They may, however, be fairly learned from experience, and watching the system being put into operation. The one good feature of the Bill is that it is in no way compulsory. If there is any risk of losing cattle by adopting the new system, then it need not be adopted. I am sure that 90 per cent. of the cattle-owners who see this system of earmarks will laugh at it, but nevertheless that does not do away with the fact that it may turn out very useful. It will be adopted by some few cattle-owners who are desirous of seeing the system in force, and they will prove whether it is a workable system or not. If it is workable, then its adoption will extend to other cattle-owners, and if it is unworkable the system will be abandoned. At the present time cattle-owners can use ear marks, but they are not *primâ facie* evidence of ownership. This Bill will make an earmark and cheek brand combined *primâ facie* evidence of ownership. If a number of cattle-owners adopt the system, and if it is found to lead to confusion, then it will be the simplest thing in the world to abandon it.

Mr. STORY: It is not quite so easy when an owner has branded all his cattle

Mr. HARDACRE: On the other hand, I think that in a large number of cases it will work well. No doubt some of the earmarks, such as "Z" and "X," will not answer, but there are a large number which will be suitable. I do not see why we should not allow the cattle-owners to have a trial of the system. There is no risk of its doing any harm, or I would not support the second reading. Seeing that it is entirely permissive, and may turn out to be a very great advantage, I am prepared to support the Bill.

Mr. LORD: I do not rise with a view of opposing the second reading of this Bill, but I see very great difficulty in putting it into practice, so far as the earmarks are concerned. I would like to ask the hon. member for Albert how store bullocks are to be branded after this measure has been in force for some little time? The brands will be on the ears and cheek; where is the purchaser of "stores" to put his brand?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: On the other side.

Mr. LORD: That will be almost impossible. You buy stores at three or four years of age; and how are you going to brand them on the cheek in a crush? That will be a great objection to the Bill in the first instance. The great merit of the Bill is that it is simply optional. Let those try it who like. We have at present an admirable Brands Act. It has answered for very many years; and I am glad to see that there is going to be no attempt to do away with that Act. As I promised the hon. member for Albert that I would not oppose the second reading of the measure, I shall vote for the second reading; but with regard to the earmarks, I can see great difficulty. If you brand a calf when it is young, I am afraid the earmarks will overlap, and there is no question that there will be great confusion.

Mr. CROSS: I think we can congratulate the hon. member for Albert for having succeeded not only in getting the support of several cattle men, but in inducing this wonderful Government to take up his Bill as a Government measure. I do not know how he has managed it. Everybody who knows the hon. member knows that he is one of those quiet, unassuming, persuasive gentlemen who overcome mountains by their geniality and by their silent manner.

Mr. LEAHY: He ought to be a lesson to you when you want to succeed.

Mr. CROSS: I have tried the same methods myself, but I have not succeeded to the same great extent.

Mr. LEAHY: Try again.

Mr. CROSS: Well, I will try again. Of course I am not an expert in cattle like the hon. member for Leichhardt. He knows earmarks, and believes that the adoption of this measure will be extended. We have heard the speeches of experts like the hon. member for Balonne, the hon. member for Warrego, and especially the hon. member for Fitzroy. Although the hon. member is connected with the greatest and most wonderful goldmine in the world, he spent the flower of his youth and the best part of his life among cattle. We also heard the hon. member for Stanley, who is a thorough expert. I am certainly inclined to assist the hon. member for Albert as far as I can, but it is scarcely right of me to approve of the second reading of a Bill whose impracticability is generally admitted. If the ears of cattle could be starched and ironed so that they would stick out as they do in this beautiful diagram, I have not the slightest doubt that these peculiar earmarks which the hon. member for Albert has placed before us might be distinguishable, but those who know anything about cattle know that these earmarks will be indistinguishable. Of course the object of these marks is to save large sums of money to the hide industry. That object cannot be gainsaid, and the fact that the Bill is permissive is another advantage. But I do not see why this House should occupy its time over a Bill, which it is generally admitted will not be given effect to by anybody except the hon. member for Albert.

Mr. COLLINS: Don't you believe it.

Mr. CROSS: That may be. I am as anxious as the hon. member that the hides—which form such a very large export—should be as valuable as possible, and if his permissive Bill has the effect of saving to the cattle-men large sums of money it will be welcome, but after hearing the opinions of the expert members of this House, I think it wise for the House to consider the advisability of passing the second reading. Of course the Bill can be altered in committee, and the hon. member for Albert should have no difficulty in saving the main portion of the hide from brands, though even the branding on the cheek has been objected to. I shall not call for a division, but if one is called for I shall certainly vote against the second reading of the Bill for the reasons I have given.

Mr. BOLES: I do not think there should be much opposition to the second reading. I had a good deal of experience among cattle in the early days, and I am aware of the large loss which is brought about through the deterioration of the hides through branding. If it is possible for the House to give relief in this direction to the producers it will be a great benefit to them. That is the main part of the Bill. I do not know whether it is the Minister or the hon. member for Albert who is really in charge of the Bill; but if the framer of the Bill would do away with the earmark business and stick to the brands, he would get along very well. So far as my experience goes, I believe this earmark business would be a perfect farce. For a great portion of the year the hair on stock is a great deal longer than at other times, and it would be impossible on a camp to detect one earmark from another; but the branding on the cheek is quite possible. It is not altogether as convenient as branding on other parts of the body, still it might be carried out, and it certainly would reduce the loss on the hides. So far as saving the hide goes, I know slaughterers of cattle who invariably take the cheeks off with the hide, because hides are always sold by weight, and this adds a pound or so to the weight. I do not say this is done in all slaughtering establishments, but they do it in a great number. At any rate, that is a very easy matter to get over. It could be made compulsory that the cheek or the portion which is branded should be saved.

Mr. LEAHY: The present law would apply.

Mr. BOLES: I do not think that the Bill has been brought in altogether to stop cattle-duffing, but that the principal reason is to effect a saving in the hides. With that in view, the principle of branding is a good one, but I do not believe in the earmarking business. We should all be prepared to give the industry any relief we can, and in committee something may be done to make the scheme more workable than it is at present.

Question put and passed.

COMMITTEE.

Clauses 1 to 3 put and passed.

On clause 4—"Interpretation of terms"—

Mr. HOOD noticed that the term "brand" was to include "any mark made upon the ear of any stock in the manner prescribed by this Act." He hoped that after what had been said on the second reading of the Bill the Minister would see his way to omit those two lines. If he did not, they would lead to a great deal of trouble and confusion.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE could not see his way to omit those two lines, as they were necessary for the working of the third part of the Bill, which was the most important part of the measure.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 5 to 8, inclusive, put and passed.

On clause 9—"Earmark and cheek-brand may be registered"—

Mr. STORY: It was very evident from the constitution of the select committee that nearly everybody who knew anything at all about the subject was so identified with the Bill that his mouth was absolutely closed. There was no particular harm in this clause, because, as the hon. member for Albert said, it was not compulsory; anybody would adopt it or not as he chose. If a man kept his cattle branded in that way in a paddock they could not possibly do any harm, but when cattle with those earmarks got into unfenced country like that out West there would be great trouble on the camps. The clause said—

> Every registered earmark shall consist of two letter marks and one numeral.

That proposed to alter the earmarks which they had had from time immemorial, and which everybody knew; and if those new brands were adopted one man would have to hold a beast by the tail and another hold it by the nose to find out which of those letter-marks was represented on its ear, and even with a microscope they would not be able to tell one from the other. The thing would cause a lot of heart-burnings and fights on camps, and if only to put a brake on the speedy passage of the Bill, and allow somebody to get his breath, he moved that clause 9 be omitted.

Mr. LORD asked if it was not possible to devise some single letter for store bullocks, which could not be branded in the same way as calves.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member for Balonne seemed to be very much hurt at the speedy passage of the Bill, which the leader of the Opposition had said he was surprised had not been brought in earlier, seeing that it had already received so much consideration. There was not a member of the Committee who had not had the measure explained to him several times, and there was not a member who was not as capable as the Minister of judging of the Bill. At first it was supposed that the Stock Department was somewhat hostile to the Bill; but he was assured by the officers of the department that there would be no difficulty, as far as the books of the department were concerned, in working the Bill. As to difficulties occurring on Western camps in the electorate of the hon. member for Balonne, if a difficulty did occur he could assure the hon. member that the stockowners in that district had got sufficient sense not to use the Bill; and they were not compelled to use it. But there were large herds of quiet cattle in paddocks where there was no necessity for the present big three-piece brand, and where the proposed new brands would be an immense relief to the stockowners. It was for that purpose that the Bill had been introduced.

Mr. BELL did not see where the confusion would come in of which the hon. member for Balonne was so afraid, in the event of cattle getting mixed up some of which were branded under the new system and some under the old. He should have thought that the cattle branded under the system proposed by the Bill would be easily discernible by any stockman from cattle not so branded. The fact that they were not branded in the usual method ought to make them easy of identification.

Mr. STORY: There was something graver than the question of confusion in camps. With a complicated system like the one proposed there was far greater chance of dishonesty than when the brand was simple.

Mr. COLLINS did not think the proposed earmarks were at all complicated, certainly not more than the common three-piece brand.

Mr. CALLAN: Queensland had at present got the best Brands Act in all the colonies, an Act which had worked well for the last twenty-five years. It was composed of two letters and a number or two signs and a number. He would ask hon. members to look at the diagrams and see whether any stockman in the world could ever learn them. Anyone who knew anything about cattle would say that the proposed earmarks were utterly absurd, and there was hardly one of them that could be seen unless the beast was held and examined.

Mr. STEPHENS: If a man liked to be dishonest he could be so under the present system as well as under the one proposed. His opinion was that the present system of branding was a bad one, and it was about time it was wiped out. Whether the proposed earmarking was too intricate or not he could not say. What he was chiefly interested in was the branding of hides.

Mr. HARDACRE admitted that some of the earmarks were very similar in design, but it was very unlikely that the Stock Department would allot earmarks of a similar character to two neighbouring cattle-owners where it would be likely to cause confusion. It would only be in one case in 100,000 where neighbouring squatters had the same earmarks.

Mr. CALLAN: You do not understand it. What's the good of talking?

Mr. HARDACRE: He knew more about it than the hon. member for Fitzroy.

Mr. CALLAN: Rubbish! I've been forty years among cattle.

Mr. HARDACRE: Then it was said that there would be "faking" of earmarks, but there would be nothing of the kind, because, in addition to faking the earmark, they would have to fake the cheek-brand as well. He admitted that upon paper it might look intricate, but he was sure that every difficulty would be avoided in the practical working out. Certainly the difficulties referred to by the hon. member for Balonne would not occur, especially when the allotment of marks rested with the Stock Department.

Mr. STORY had much pleasure in passing a diagram containing several marks to the hon. member who had just spoken, and he would call his attention to the mark "A8A." How would he describe that brand to a stockman whom he was going to send fifty miles away? Would he tell him to look for a notch in the top of the ear, a notch in the bottom, and a notch like a half-moon, partially obscured, at the point? There were no words that would describe these brands, and it would be necessary to give a stockman a sort of brands reference to take with him.

Mr. HOOD: He must again enter his protest against this earmarking scheme. He had received a written protest against it from several large cattle-owners in various parts of the country, who said it would lead to any amount of confusion. If they wanted to make some of these marks they would have to get a calf's head in a vice, and a few weeks after they were made he would defy any stockman to distinguish them.

Mr. HARDACRE: He was not very ardent in regard to the passage of the Bill, but he thought it should have a fair show. An hon. member coming from a district where the stations contained areas of 1,000 square miles each wanted them to believe that there would be confusion because one man would not be able to tell his earmarks from his neighbours'. The stockmen on those stations knew every earmark in the district.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Or else they have deteriorated very much.

Mr. HARDACRE: A stockman might not know the "B's" or "H's," but he would know certain notches which he would recognise as the brand of a certain person. It was quite likely that the brand "AA1" might be mistaken for "AA2," but it was not likely that the next man would have such a similar brand. It was more likely to be "XX1," in which case there could be no confusion.

Mr. JACKSON could not understand the objection that the marks could not be described in words. At present when an owner wished to describe an earmark to a stockman he simply scratched it in the dust.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Rubbish! nonsense! That shows all you know about it.

Mr. JACKSON: He was surprised that the stockmen in Southern Queensland were such an ignorant lot as hon. members on the Government side tried to make them out to be, because his experience of them in the North was that they knew a beast when they saw him a second time, whatever his brands might be. Some hon. members ridiculed the marks that were on the diagram that had been handed round, but it was not a hard-and-fast system, and the details would be left to the Stock Department. When he heard so much objection raised on the other side, he could only come to the conclusion that hon. members were jealous of the hon. member for Albert for having introduced the system. The hon. member for Albert did not claim to be the originator of the system, as Mr. Shepherd was the first to suggest something of the kind; but the hon. member for Albert had given a

great deal of time to the subject, and had developed and perfected it. The members of the select committee had made experiments with pliers on a number of ears, and they had been quite successful.

Mr. COLLINS pointed out that under clause 8 a person could apply for an earmark, but if he found that the earmark corresponding to his brand would not be one he would care to use, he would not apply to have it registered.

Mr. CALLAN: The hon. member for Kennedy, who professed to be a cattle expert, had told them that the members of the select committee had made a number of experiments with dead ears, but the hon. member forgot that while a mark cut on the dead ear would remain as it was, a mark cut on a live ear would alter. Hon. members should remember that the diagrams before them belonged only to the "A" series, but they had twenty-five more letters of the "B" series to follow that, and anyone who knew anything of cattle must know that such a thing was not practicable at all. The fewer and the simpler the earmarks the better for the department and for those who had to look after the cattle.

Mr. HOOD asked whether, if this clause was carried, any cattle-owner who had a single earmark now would be debarred from using it in the future, even though he might have had it registered for the last twenty-five or thirty years?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: No owner would be debarred from using an existing earmark, and no owner would be compelled to use any earmark under the Bill.

Mr. BELL: He presumed that the owner of an existing earmark would have to register it with the central authority, otherwise someone else might come along and claim to register the same earmark. The original owner of the earmark must get his status for his brand from the central authority.

Mr. HOOD did not think the Minister had answered his question. The clause provided that every registered earmark should consist of two letter marks and one numeral mark. But present earmarks consisted of but one mark, and he wished to know if those who had used them for perhaps twenty-five or thirty years could continue to use them, or could they register them?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Of course they could go on using them under clause 5.

Mr. JACKSON thought a registered earmark would mean an earmark registered under the Bill. He took it for granted that an earmark at present registered only in the office of a district inspector would not be a registered earmark within the meaning of the Bill.

Mr. LORD: Did he understand the Minister to say that the present earmarks would not be registered by the district inspectors? The point was an important one, because some people had had earmarks for the last forty or fifty years, and they did not want to do away with them.

Mr. BELL would be glad if the Minister or the hon. member for Albert would answer his question as to whether a man who had an earmark registered locally for the last twenty years would be protected as against the man who decided to take that earmark and went off to the chief inspector and registered it with the central authority? He did not think he would.

Mr. COLLINS: The case was supposed of a man who had secured an earmark from a district inspector, and a new application for the same earmark. The orignal owner of the earmark would have his right continued, and the new applicant would have his right also. At present seventeen different people could claim the same earmark, and this would only add another to the list. There was this difference, however, that the earmark registered under the Bill would have a status given to it which the district register could not give it; it would appear in the directory as that of the new applicant.

Mr. CALLAN: That meant that the man with the registered earmark would be the owner of the beast. The hon. member said that somebody might have an ordinary earmark, and if somebody else had registered one exactly the same he would be the owner of the beast with that earmark.

Mr. COLLINS: If the person owning a registered earmark had a registered cheek-brand also, the two together would be *primâ facie* evidence of ownership.

Clause put; and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 28.

Messrs. Dickson, Chataway, Philp, Foxton, Castling, O'Connell, Leahy, Stephens, Stodart, Newell, Murray, Hardacre, Stewart, Stumm, Maughan, Corfield, Dibley, Bartholomew, Kidston, McDonnell, Kerr, King, Bell, Grimes, McMaster, Collins, Jackson, and Glassey.

NOES, 14.

Messrs. Cross, Keogh, Dunsford, Sim, Hood, Hamilton, Turley, Boles, Bridges, Jenkinson, Lissner, Callan, Story, and Daniels.

PAIRS.

Ayes—Messrs. Smith and Moore.
Noes—Messrs. Fogarty and W. Thorn.

Resolved in the affirmative.

Clauses 10 to 13, inclusive, put and passed.

On clause 14—"Registered earmark and cheek-brand together *primâ facie* evidence of ownership"—

Mr. STORY: It seemed to him that clauses 12, 13, and 14 were contradictory. The 14th said that, for the purposes of the Act or the regulations, proof that the registered earmark and cheek-brand of any owner were marked and branded on any stock, and that no subsequent registered brand was imprinted thereon, would be *primâ facie* evidence of ownership. According to clause 13, it seemed that there was only to be one registered brand on the cheek, and the man who bought the beast subsequently could not brand at all. He could not brand on the cheek.

Mr. KEOGH: He could brand on the off cheek.

Mr. STORY: Suppose the breeder of a beast had a registered earmark and a registered cheek-brand, and he put them both on the beast. When the beast was three years old it was sold. Where was the buyer to put his brand if he had a registered cheek-brand and earmark?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: He cannot put it on.

Mr. STORY: Then the fact of those brands being on was *primâ facie* evidence that the beast belonged to the man who sold it.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The buyer must have a registered three-piece brand as well.

Mr. STORY: It was a very queer arrangement. A man went to the trouble of learning all those mystic symbols, and when he bought cattle, although he had a registered cheek-brand and earmark, he could not use it because the beast was already branded on the cheek.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: There was no complication at all. The registered cheek-brands and earmarks tallied with the registered three-piece brands. Clause 8 provided for the registration of three-piece brands. Clause 12 provided that no registered earmark or cheek-brand should be made upon stock on which there was already a cheek-brand or earmark. Clause 13 provided that ear and cheek bearing a registered mark or brand were not to bear any other brand, and clause 14 provided that the registered cheek-brand and earmark combined were to form *primâ facie* evidence of ownership. There were no less than eight other places on the beast where the buyer could brand.

No owner could have a registered cheek-brand and earmark without having a registered three-piece brand. That was perfectly clear.

Mr. STORY did not think the explanation made matters much more satisfactory. It appeared that if a man bought cattle with a registered cheek-brand and earmark and wanted to re-brand he must brand on the body, so that the whole Bill only saved the beast so far as the breeder was concerned.

Mr. BELL: That is a great deal.

Mr. STORY: It was not a great deal when they considered how few men who bred cattle fattened and sold them. The whole of the Western country supplied stock for fattening purposes for New South Wales. The hon. member for Albert was apparently perfectly content that the beast should carry this cheek-brand and earmark for three years, but when he was four years old and was sold then the brand must be put on the body.

Mr. BELL: Buyers of store cattle do not brand them.

Mr. STORY: Then the brand on those cattle was *primâ facie* evidence that they belonged to the man who sold them.

Mr. BELL: The practice of buyers of store cattle was not to brand them. That could be seen by going to the saleyards and observing what a small proportion of beasts bore two brands. It was a remarkable thing that in the evidence taken by the select committee the cattle-men who expressed the strongest approval of the Bill were those who owned freehold estates and bought store cattle to fatten, while those who were hostile to the Bill were the men who bred cattle in Western country.

Mr. STORY: The number of cattle bought by men who had freehold estates was very small compared to the number who had stations and who were bound to brand their cattle. It was well known that when a number of cattle travelled through the district, and half a dozen were dropped, the best thing to do was to buy them if they had no brand, because unbranded cattle travelling in future through the district could not be claimed. It was for that reason that owners were obliged to brand, but according to the Bill they could not brand on the cheek if there was a cheek-brand there already.

Mr. COLLINS: The cheek would only carry one registered brand, but there was the other cheek and the other ear available for the buyer of stock; in addition to which clause 16 provided for the use of a single-piece brand instead of a three-piece brand, which could be put on any portion of the body. The argument of the hon. member for Balonne, that because an unlimited number of brands could not be put on the cheek, therefore the breeder's earmark should not be put there, was puerile.

Mr. KEOGH: His experience did not agree with that of the hon. member for Dalby. Wherever he had seen cattle purchased, they had always been branded by the purchasers. If they were not rebranded, and got back to the original owner, the purchaser would be unable to claim them. If the hide was to be branded after the cheek had been used, he did not see where the benefit of passing the Bill was to come in. It would be as well to leave the matter as it was at present.

Mr. LORD desired to contradict the statement of the hon. member for Dalby that store cattle were not branded. Large numbers of stores were sold at the Esk saleyards—in one year something like 30,000 had been sold. Supposing that 1,000 head came in belonging to the same owner, and were sold among twenty or thirty neighbours, if they were not rebranded, how could those men know their cattle? The thing was ridiculous! What they wanted was a simple brand which they could place on store cattle without injuring the hide more than was necessary. He did not propose putting a large brand on store cattle.

Mr. STEPHENS: If cattle which had been bought had a three-piece brand on them, it was a very simple matter to put a single letter brand on the cheek. On the other hand, if cattle had the brand on the cheek in the first instance, the buyer could put two letters and a numeral on the beast, when the hide would only have what was equal to one big brand instead of having two large brands. The Bill was in the right direction, though it did not go so far as he would like.

Mr. HARDACRE: If the two cheeks were already branded they could then follow the present practice, only they would have saved the space occupied by the first brands. Clause 16 provided for the use of symbols for second brands, which would still further save space.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 15 and 16 put and passed.

On clause 17—"Owner of brand or mark may surrender same"—

Mr. BELL repeated the observation he had made in the select committee that it was desirable that owners should have to pay an annual registration fee. It was a privilege to have a brand. If an annual fee had to be paid, men would be careful to inform the officials that they were giving up their brands, thereby preventing such an accumulation of disused brands as they had on the brands list at present.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 18 put and passed.

On clause 19—"Cancelled brand how dealt with"—

Mr. JACKSON thought the time within which brands might be reissued was rather short. Male cattle were usually all killed off within five years, but cows lived sometimes fifteen or twenty years. They might fix the period for male cattle at five years, but that would be too short for female cattle, and might lead to friction in regard to the ownership where a cancelled brand was used by its new owner in the same district, and possibly within a few miles of the station or farm, where it had been previously used.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE did not think five years was too short, but in any case that was the minimum period, and as a matter of practice a cancelled brand would not be reissued for a period considerably longer than that.

Mr. HARDACRE thought this part of the Bill, providing for the compulsory cancellation of brands, might give rise to some dissatisfaction, as though brands had not been used for some time, yet the owner might wish to use them at some future time.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Notice will have to be given to the owner, and he will show cause in that case.

Mr. HARDACRE: But if he did not show cause the brand would be cancelled. However, he was not going to oppose the clause, as its operation would benefit the colony generally.

Mr. DANIELS did not think a brand should be cancelled after it was issued and paid for, but he understood that before a brand was cancelled the department would ask the owner if he intended to use it again, and if he did it would not be cancelled

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: That is what is intended

Mr. COLLINS: The necessity for cancelling brands was not to be denied. The Chief Inspector of Stock gave evidence last year to the effect that from 7,000 to 8,000 brands had gone out of use, and the department had no power to

cancel and reallot them. As to the period of five years, that was simply the minimum; it would no doubt be extended in most cases.

Mr. DANIELS: He had a registered brand, but had not used it for about six years. He hoped, however, to use it again in the near future, and he did not see why that brand should be cancelled.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: It will not be cancelled under this provision.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 20 put and passed.

On clause 21—"Power to make regulations"—

Mr. JACKSON asked whether it was intended to issue the present earmarks, as well as those provided for in the Bill?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: In the Bill as originally drafted it was provided that the present powers of district inspectors in that respect should be withdrawn, but under the Bill as it stood it was not proposed to withdraw those powers.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 22 to 24, inclusive, put and passed.

The House resumed; the CHAIRMAN reported the Bill without amendment, and its third reading was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

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