

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 10 SEPTEMBER 1901

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

TUESDAY, 10 SEPTEMBER, 1901.

The SPEAKER (Hon. Arthur Morgan, *Warwick*)
took the chair at half-past 3 o'clock.

PAPERS.

The following papers, laid on the table of the
House, were ordered to be printed :—

- (1) Return to an Order, relative to Fines in-
flicted on Polynesian Islanders in the

Cairns district, made by the House on motion of Mr. Givens, on the 14th August last.

- (2) Annual Report of the Registrar-General on Vital Statistics, being for 1900.

QUESTIONS.

SUPPLY OF GOODS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES BY MEMBERS THEREOF.

Mr. GIVENS (*Cairns*) asked the Home Secretary—

1. Is it not illegal for members of local authorities, such as divisional boards and municipal councils, to supply goods or undertake any work for the bodies of which they are members?

2. Does he intend to take any action to enforce the provisions of the law in such cases?

3. If so, what is the nature of the action to be taken?

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. J. F. G. Foxton, *Carnarvon*) replied—

These are legal questions that I am not called upon to answer.

GRANTS IN AID OF DEEP SINKING AND PROSPECTING.

Mr. MULCAHY (*Gympie*) asked the Secretary for Mines—

1. What was the total amount granted by the Government during the twelve months ended 30th June, 1901, in aid of deep sinking and prospecting?

2. What amount was refunded during the same period?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. R. Philp, *Townsville*) replied—

1. The amount actually paid for deep sinking and prospecting was £7,402 11s. 2d.

2. £500 has since been refunded by the No. 1 North Columbia and Smithfield Company, of Gympie, advanced to them during the year 1897-98.

IMPROPER DEMANDS ON GOVERNMENT CHARITY.

Mr. TURLEY (*Brisbane South*) asked the Home Secretary—

1. Are the two men in the Cunnamulla district, who refused work at 30s. per week and rations, still receiving relief from the Government?

2. If so, are those persons to be allowed to obtain further relief from the Government?

3. Are those persons capable of doing the work which they refused to take at 30s. per week and rations?

The HOME SECRETARY replied—

1. I believe one is and one is not.

2. This will depend upon circumstances.

3. I am not aware.

AMENDMENT OF FACTORIES AND SHOPS ACT.

Mr. GRIMES (*Oxley*) asked the Chief Secretary—

Have the Government, after further consideration of the question, decided to introduce during the present session a Bill to amend the Factories and Shops Act of 1900?

The CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. R. Philp, *Townsville*) replied—

Yes.

PETITIONS.

LICENSING ACT—SUNDAY TRADING.

Mr. MACARTNEY (*Toowoong*) presented a petition from 685 residents of Petrie terrace, Paddington, and other districts, praying that no alteration be made in the Licensing Act with regard to Sunday trading in intoxicants.

Petition received.

Mr. JENKINSON (*Wide Bay*) presented a petition of similar purport and prayer from residents of Noosa road and Monkland.

Petition received.

RUNS AND PRE-EMPTIVES IN THE BURNETT DISTRICT.

On the motion of Hon. A. S. COWLEY (for Mr. Bartholomew, *Maryborough*), it was formally resolved—

That there be laid on the table of the House a return showing—

- (1) The names of the runs in the Burnett district.
- (2) The area of pre-emptives in each run.

QUEENSLAND STOCK INSCRIPTION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

INTRODUCTION IN COMMITTEE.

The TREASURER (Hon. T. B. Cribb, *Ipswich*), in moving that—

It is desirable to introduce a Bill to authorise the Treasurer to satisfy judgments, decrees, and orders in proceedings in the United Kingdom in respect of Queensland Stock—

said he thought it was advisable that he should explain that under the present law, in connection with Queensland stock, decrees, judgments, and orders made in Great Britain, against anyone residing in this State, could not be enforced in Queensland without new proceedings being taken in our courts. It was absolutely necessary that when any claim arose in connection with this stock that the holders of such stock should not have to go to the trouble or difficulty of having to institute proceedings in Queensland for that purpose. It was proposed by this Bill that if any judgments were obtained in England against the registrar of Queensland stock, that the Treasurer of this State should satisfy them at once, without any further reference to the House or without any special appropriation. Unless some provision of this sort were introduced, trustees in Great Britain would not consider it safe to invest in Queensland stock. At present there was a balance of our loan passed last session to be floated, and the Government had been advised by their financial agents that it was necessary some such provision as this should be made. The Bill was on similar lines to the legislation introduced in Victoria, and it would make the position of trustees willing to invest in Queensland stock perfectly safe. The Bill only applied to investors in Queensland stock and not to anything else.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed.

FIRST READING.

The Bill was then introduced, read a first time, and the second reading was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

STAMP ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

MESSAGE FROM THE COUNCIL.

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

SPECIAL SALES OF LAND BILL.

SECOND READING—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

Upon the Order of the Day being called for the resumption of the debate on Mr. O'Connell's motion, that this Bill be now read a second time—

Mr. STORY (*Balonne*) said: After the debate that took place on Thursday afternoon, it seems almost unnecessary to continue this debate now, but after the very strong criticisms made by hon. members on the other side, I think it is incumbent on hon. members on this side, in spite of what hon. members opposite may have said, to speak, think, and vote for themselves. It is

necessary, I think, that we should give some expression of opinion on this matter, otherwise it might go to the country—as is evidently wished by hon. members opposite—that hon. members on this side simply vote as they are directed by the Premier. Of course, it is unnecessary to explain to the House that that is a stock phrase, and that the Premier has made no arrangement with members on this side as to how we should vote on this Bill—the thing is absurd. I think experience in a young country like this must of necessity alter people's views on particular subjects to a certain extent. The whole of our land legislation being experimental, we must see how those experiments turn out before we pronounce upon them. When first land was dealt with here it was almost an unknown quantity, as far as quality was concerned; but now, after the object lessons we have had, we are better able to judge as to what is proper legislation in this direction than we were years ago. It seems that hon. members opposite have fixed ideas on certain subjects, which must not be altered. It is almost, in their eyes, a disgrace for a man to alter his opinions on any subject whatever. Well, unless a man is divinely inspired—if he does not alter his opinions, he must be a wise man at his birth, or a very foolish man during his life. The hon. member for South Brisbane referred to the effect that large freehold properties have had in England, because they were held under circumstances that for many years did not alter, and which certainly had militated very strongly against the welfare of the community, but there can be no parallel or comparison made between the lands we deal with in Queensland and the land that they have dealt with in England, with the climate that they have, with the resources, with the rivers, and with everything from the very start pointing to success. What was wrong there—as applied to our country, with splendid land on the coast, some good land inside, few or no navigable rivers, a most atrocious climate, which, as further and further west you go, makes it almost impossible to live—may be right here. The condition of things in England in this respect cannot be treated as parallel to things as they exist in Queensland. What may be utterly wrong there may be quite right here. I noticed that the hon. member for Rockhampton, Mr. Curtis, spoke of the sale of Crown lands as a vicious principle, as if it were not only dangerous but in some way dishonest.

MR. CURTIS: I qualified it—I said for revenue purposes in large blocks.

MR. STORY: I beg your pardon. I thought you referred to the general principle of selling land.

MR. CURTIS: No, no!

MR. STORY: Now, I want my feeble efforts to lift this question out of the fact as to what purpose the money is to be applied, and show whether it is wise or unwise to sell our public lands. The hon. member for South Brisbane, in his very powerful speech, spoke of our selling our good land. If those lands which are offered for sale now are good, and will remain good and increase in value year after year, it is a poor policy to sell them. There can be no doubt about that. The question is, Is the land that was good ten, or fifteen, or twenty years ago, as good now as it was then? Our experience and our knowledge, at any rate of the Western country, point distinctly to the fact that the public estate is deteriorating at a most fearful pace. The land you could have sold twenty years ago for 10s. an acre, you could not get a purchaser for at all now, and the land you can sell now for 10s. an acre in another twenty years, if the Government keep it, may not be able to be disposed of at all. That of course does not apply to the lands on the Darling Downs. It

has always struck me as a strange thing that members, if they do not oppose the sale of land on the Darling Downs outright, acquiesce in it at any rate to a certain extent. At any rate there is no great opposition made to it in the House. We look with a certain amount of pride on the large number of yeomanry we are settling, on the increase in our farming and our dairying industries, we are proud of the people getting homes of their own, and of closer settlement taking place, and members are invited to visit the Darling Downs to see the wheat harvests and the pleasant homes of the farmers. That is a very magnificent thing, and I am sure reflects very great credit on those who hold the helm of state. Nobody objects to the sale of land where success is assured; but, when it comes to disposing of lands hundreds of miles out, then the question arises as to whether we shall keep that land or not. It seems to me that if we are to keep any particular land we should keep the land that will increase in value from year to year, and dispose of that that people are willing to take, and which is not so likely to increase in value. But the opposite seems to be the policy which is recognised. We sell with great equanimity our good land, and the land we have no immediate applicants for we keep. When it comes to selling the land that is further out, and which must be held under worse conditions, then there is an uproar made as to the policy of doing so. The hon. member for Leichhardt said that when I spoke about this some time ago, I proved that the land was no good, and therefore could not be sold. He may adopt that principle, and if the land is offered and there are no buyers then no great damage will be done; but I hold differently. I hold that no man can tell why another man buys. A very great number of reasons induce a man to make a purchase, which is quite unaccountable to others. It is the same in all sorts of businesses. One man may make a choice which is satisfactory to himself but which astonishes other men, who think it is a mistake; and I think that when it comes to selling our lands, members here will find that the country which they did not think would find a purchaser may be applied for. The whole question is whether it is judicious, whether it is politic, to part with our patrimony, to part with the heritage of our children. If that heritage were increasing in value every year, and was likely to increase in value, we might have some little concern as to how we should face the later generation, and explain to them how it was that we parted with their heritage; but the fact of the matter is that they may call us to account for retaining that which in years to come will not be an asset but a liability. This Western country is very fast becoming a liability, and a most serious one. Anybody that knows the Western country must admit that during the last twenty years it has decreased in value. Leaving out of consideration the artesian wells and the improvements generally, and regarding the land by itself, as a grazing commodity it has decreased in value to a very great extent. There is no doubt about that. The spread of prickly pear proves that. The increase of marsupials, and the increase of dingoes, and the increase of the rabbits also proves that. We are now face to face with the necessity to fight to protect our public estate, and the question is whether it would not be more politic to allow somebody else to fight for it, instead of the Government taking up the warfare, because owners of land have certainly shown that they will protect their own property very much more successfully than they will protect the property of the Government. It is only natural that it should be so. Now, to give an instance or two, not to speak

altogether in general terms, if the House will allow me. I may mention the instance of a station out in the South-western part of Queensland. Already they are shearing sheep there in leather—leather aprons, leather gaiters, and it is almost as much as a man's life is worth to go and shear sheep there without those safeguards, because the prickly pear is so bad. The wool-rollers and others who have to deal with the wool have to use these safeguards, or they risk getting a very serious illness.

Mr. LESINA: I thought capital took all the risk.

Mr. STORY: I never heard of capital shearing sheep. Generally capital pays labour to do that. Capital certainly supplies the aprons and the necessary guards to prevent labour being unnecessarily hurt in the operation.

[4 p.m.] Well, the spread of prickly pear has simply reduced the value of hundreds and hundreds of thousands of acres, and it is impossible to prevent it spreading. When we see the impossibility of preventing it spreading, and when we remember that in 1890-91 the Balonne and Moonie met and came down a solid sheet of water extending over 40 miles, distributing the prickly pear where it had never been before, I do not see how else we are to cope with the pest than by selling the land. On the Upper Moonie there is growing a cactus to which the prickly pear is a modest violet. It is such an infernal thing that when I was there in company with the Secretary for Railways and the chief of the *Hansard* staff, the only way in which we could bring down a specimen was to enclose it in a strong tin. That stuff is growing luxuriantly all over the country, and it spreads, like bad habits, in all directions. Why, it would take as much money to clear that country as the land is worth.

Mr. BOWMAN: Do you expect to sell it?

Mr. STORY: I fancy even that land under certain circumstances could be sold. But this is the point: That land could have been sold before the prickly pear was upon it. It could have been sold before the mulga scrub was felled there, but the question is whether we can sell it now. In twenty years' time it may be impossible to sell it, and the Government will have to tax the whole community in order to keep this pest within bounds.

Mr. TURLEY: We have always advocated that system of taxing the whole community.

Mr. STORY: But is it wise to allow calamities of this kind to increase on purpose that we may tax the people? The simplest way is to give the land to those who will protect it. Now, I think if the deficit did not exist at all, and if there was a surplus ten times as great as the present deficit, it would be wise to sell what land we can. We may be perfectly certain that with the deterioration of the public estate which is going on out West—and that is the only place where it is proposed to sell land in large blocks—if the Government do not sell the land soon, the time will come when they will not be able to sell it at all; they will not even be able to let it, and then they will have to look round and flood the country with taxation in order to pay the expenses of government. Now, if I were Minister for Lands—and perhaps it is fortunate for the country that I am not—I should advocate the idea that the time has come when every lessee should be enabled to purchase a portion of his run, and every selector should be enabled to buy his selection. I would sell the land on what terms the people liked—no matter how long the terms. On the slightest default in paying the instalments I would cancel the agreement, but I contend that that is the only safeguard we have if we wish to preserve the public estate in the Western country. Other-

wise the Government have got a responsibility before them that is going to crush many and many a succeeding Government, and I do not know how the small population we have got are going to pay the taxes which will come upon them if the public estate is to be protected at all. I have nothing more to say on this question. I have altered my opinions very considerably since I came to this colony from little Tasmania. Coming from a country where the land was nearly all freehold—where, indeed, it is difficult to get a piece of land at all—I came here with visions—perhaps it was my ignorance—of a country where there was plenty of grass and a magnificent supply of water, and I imagined a large and prosperous community living on the land and contributing to the wealth and prosperity of the colony. I imagined the Government ultimately getting so much out of the land that taxation would dwindle and dwindle away, and that the rentals derivable from the public estate would pay the whole cost of the machinery of government. After living in the Western country so many years—after seeing how the people are leaving it, and how poorly those who remain have succeeded, and being a witness to the deterioration of the country year after year—I have altered my views. Where there was once dense Mitchell grass there is now nothing but roley-poley; and I can imagine in twenty years' time there will be vast areas which no man will take at a gift. I say, therefore, that the Government would do wisely to sell the land—get it into the hands of men who are not only able to work it, but who will be able to protect that portion of the public estate which remains.

Mr. FITZGERALD (*Mitchell*): It is rather amusing to hear the hon. member, who claims to be an advocate of selection, talking about Tasmania—a little apple-garden—and a very pretty one I admit, with almost every acre agricultural land—and comparing it with this immense colony of Queensland. Why, the hon. member might as well go to France for an example. There the land is all cut up into little strips. Tom, Dick, and Harry all have their little strips of land; they live on it and work it, and marry, and settle down, and families have made their home on the same piece of land for generations. Tasmania is arriving at the same stage, but in this colony we have not arrived at that stage yet. If the hon. member imagines that we have, he has only to come to my electorate, where you can travel for 25 or 30 miles without meeting a gate. The hon. member quite agrees with the Government in selling this land out West because some of it is infested with prickly pear and other pests. The hon. member compares Tasmania, a small and well settled country for its size, with a big place like Queensland, which is not half settled, and he is quite inconsistent. I am perfectly willing to argue with him if he talks about Tasmania, but it cannot be compared with Queensland. If he advocates that the principle of the Land Act of 1884 should be carried out—that is that there should be small settlement agricultural farms—I am perfectly agreeable, in places like the Darling Downs, where people will closely settle, to give them freeholds as long as they do certain things. But this Bill does not provide for that. What we want in this State is men with small holdings, if they will live on them and make their homes on them, and bring up their children there and start agriculture. I am perfectly willing to give such people freeholds, as long as the area does not exceed a certain amount, but that is not what this Bill proposes. It proposes to sell land in blocks of 40,000 or 50,000 acres, or it may be 1,000,000 acres, for there is no limit to the area that may be sold, at a minimum price of 10s. an acre. The hon.

member knows perfectly well that nobody will buy land in the country he has referred to at 10s. an acre. If this Bill is passed the very first thing the hon. member will find will be that the best pastoral lands in his own electorate will be sold by public auction, not in the electorate, but in Queen street, and the buyers will be the lessees. They will not buy the land for the purpose of settling their wives and children on it, but because some financial institution which has a hold on them desires them to buy the land. I know that some 40,000 acres of land were sold at 10s. an acre within 20 miles of Longreach under those conditions. However, coming back to the prickly pear question, I do not know what that question has to do with the Bill before the House.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: No one said it had anything to do with the Bill.

Mr. FITZGERALD: The hon. member who last spoke brought up the question of the prickly pear. Does the hon. member wish us to believe that people in his own electorate are going to buy that land and guarantee that prickly pear will not grow on it? What has the prickly pear to do with this question? Both the prickly pear! The only question we have to consider is whether it is advisable at the present time to sell our patrimony and our children's patrimony at 10s. an acre, or whether it is better to keep the land for close settlement? Hon. members opposite argue, some of them very consistently from their point of view—that it is far better to get a fair price for the land, that if it is worth 10s. an acre we should sell it for 10s. The hon. member for Balonne asked if it was likely that the heritage of future generations would increase? I say, yes. The hon. member said, no.

Mr. STORY: In value, I said.

Mr. FITZGERALD: I say it will increase in value. My argument is that for years and years to come, for years after we are all dead and gone, the land in the hon. member's district and in my district will not be worth more than 10s. per acre for pastoral purposes. It will be a very long time before we get any agriculture out there. We expect to see agriculture on the coast lands, and on the Darling Downs, but not out there. It will be a pastoral district for years to come.

The HOME SECRETARY: For ever, I think.

Mr. FITZGERALD: That was said long ago about the Darling Downs. But it may not be for ever; we may have agriculture in those districts at some future time. But at the same time I say that if a plebiscite were taken in my district to-morrow 99 men out of every 100 would say, "Do not sell one acre of land, except for town and suburban lots."

Mr. STORY: And yet they talk about a perpetual lease.

Mr. FITZGERALD: Who talks about a perpetual lease? The hon. member poses here as the representative of the selector, but he is the representative of what I call the aggregator—that is, the selector who is not satisfied with 20,000 acres for himself and 20,000 acres alongside his own block for his wife, which he can get under the 1897 Act.

The HOME SECRETARY: Do you object to that?

Mr. FITZGERALD: If the Act is properly carried out, I do not object to it. But coming back to my hon. friend, the hon. member for Balonne, he is not satisfied with 20,000 acres for himself and 20,000 acres for his wife, but wants his uncle, his cousin, and his aunt, and everybody else to dummy land for him, like they do in my district. I could point out to the Secretary for Lands selections there which have been dummed, but it is no use doing so.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You should prove it to the Land Court.

Mr. FITZGERALD: I could point it out to the hon. gentleman, and show him how to prove it. But I am digressing. The hon. member who has just sat down represents, I contend, a vicious class of settlers. (Oh, oh! and laughter.) Well, a not-wanted class of selectors. I withdraw the word "vicious." They are not satisfied with 20,000 acres for themselves and their wives, but under the sealed-tender system come along and grab and grasp more, and when a drought comes along they go to the Secretary for Lands for the time being, get down on their knees, and say, "Oh, we pay too much rent; we want a perpetual lease."

Mr. STORY: That was suggested in your own district.

Mr. FITZGERALD: I quite agree that it has been suggested in my own district, but I say it was not suggested by the real 20,000-acre selector.

Mr. STORY: I think so.

Mr. FITZGERALD: I have a letter here from the selectors' association, not from what I call the "aggregators' association," saying that they never asked for more than 20,000 acres.

Mr. STORY: They wanted a perpetual lease.

Mr. FITZGERALD: The other men to whom I refer—the men who are not satisfied with 20,000 acres—cannot be compared with the old squatter. The old squatter was a decent man compared with them. The old squatters had certain terms and certain concessions for what they gave back to the Government; but these aggregators bother the life out of the Minister for Lands, and say they represent the selectors when they do nothing of the kind. The question is, What is the best thing for the country? Is it the best thing for the country to sell our Western lands? I say "No." Hon. members opposite say "Yes," because we can lease our lands out West at anything from 3d. to 4d. or 5d. an acre; but if we sell the freehold we get 10s. an acre, which is equal in interest to 6d. an acre rent. In speaking of the Western lands I am speaking of a very rich pastoral district. In some parts of the district of the hon. member for Balonne I would increase the area; but in the Barcoo, in the Mitchell, in the Warrego, and in the Leichhardt I say that 20,000 acres is quite sufficient; and the selectors—not the aggregators—say exactly the same thing. In my district there are thousands of acres of land sold for 10s. an acre, and that land is still there as a paddock. Take a 20,000-acre paddock, for instance. If it belongs to a station you will find 2,000 or 3,000 sheep in it; but give that area to a grazing farmer, and he will make it into four paddocks, which means extra labour. And those who are in a position to know will tell you that the smaller the paddocks are the greater number of sheep can be kept on the same area. Dividing the 20,000-acre block into four paddocks means so much more labour and so many extra hands to be paid, so much extra for the Government, so much extra wire, so much extra timber brought 400 miles along the railway. Take a 40,000-acre block with two selectors—20,000 acres each. They build and settle there with their wives and families. They do three times as much fencing as the old squatter, and feed about twenty times as many mouths. There is a lot more labour employed, and all the material comes from the coast. That means that the Government gets so much per mile freight on every nail, every piece of timber, every bit of flour, sugar, and tea. It does not go into the coffers of the Minister for Lands.

The HOME SECRETARY: It goes to the federal coffers.

Mr. FITZGERALD: I do not know that the Federal Government take our railway revenue.

The HOME SECRETARY: The whole of our Customs.

Mr. FITZGERALD: I am talking about freight on our railways. I say all that goes into the coffers of the State, though not into the coffers of the Minister for Lands. It is all very well for the Minister for Lands to quote how his revenue is falling off, but you should ask the Minister for Railways how it pays him. Supposing to-morrow Bowen Downs, Wellshot, and a few other stations in the Mitchell district were thrown open in 20,000-acre blocks, I suppose there would be about six times as many sheep raised there. There would be hundreds of families settled there and thousands of people living in the district where at present there are only a few paddocks. All those people must live, and if you get real honest settlement—not aggregations—on those lands, and make it a half-penny an acre if you like, the Government will make it up out of those families afterwards in freights by their railways and in other indirect ways. If they were thrown open and properly selected I believe the line from Rockhampton to Longreach would pay 50 per cent. a year. The selections from Longreach to Muttaborra grow as many sheep as the whole of Bowen Downs, and they employ a great deal more labour, get more goods by the railway, and pay more rent to the Government.

Mr. CALLAN: And they get more frequently ruined.

Mr. FITZGERALD: I have just come from Longreach, and I can say from my position there as a business man that the only people who have been keeping Longreach going for some time are the selectors.

Mr. CALLAN: That is not so.

Mr. FITZGERALD: I will take the hon. member's opinion on mining questions, but I will not take it on this question. The question is whether it pays the Government better to sell these lands than to lease them—because hon. members opposite do not argue that it is good policy to sell our patrimony. We want money—that is the argument; and we must get it. And, when the Government say that hon. members opposite say, "If you want money, of course you must get it; and, if you want to get it, go along and sell the lands out West. Do not put a tax on us in the coast districts." And if I were a coastal man I would say exactly the same thing. But, is the principle right?

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Would you dummy?

Mr. FITZGERALD: If the Minister for Lands would let me dummy a selection to-morrow I would do it quick and lively. We are all looking after No. 1, and some of the members representing the Darling Downs, where they are buying back land, where they admit that the whole policy of selling land in large areas was wrong—some of them are supporting the Government in selling our Western lands. In years to come, I hope [4.30 p.m.] their children will be in this House and will ask that some of this land out West should be bought back.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: They will be well able to look after themselves.

Mr. FITZGERALD: Yes, more especially if there are Ministers then who will buy back land at the rates we have seen this Government buying it back lately. Forty or fifty years hence I suppose the Government will be asked to do the same thing for the Western districts. I know it is useless to attempt to influence hon. members opposite, because no doubt they have come to a conclusion on this question already, but at the same time I want to have my little say. I am talking as a Western man, and as such I protest again against this sale of land out West. Lands

out there have been attempted to be sold year after year, not under the Special Sales of Land Act, but under a general clause of the Land Act, One late Minister—the lamented T. J. Byrnes—when out West was approached on the question of the sales of land out there, and very soon after that he stopped them. That shows—we are now talking about a gentleman who is far away now from political influence—he is in a better sphere—but I am just quoting this to show that he learned, on visiting the West, that the feeling was so strong against the sale of land out there that he stopped it. I have here a resolution passed in a little shed out West by a number of shearers and workmen at Coombemartin, which shows that these men are against the sale of Crown land there, except for town or suburban lots. The same thing applies to Northampton Downs, where a similar resolution was passed. Then I have a letter here from Mr. Mayers, who writes on behalf of the selectors' association, against the sale of lands there. That brings me to one question that affects my district very seriously. The 1891 Act provided for a reserve of, I think, 25 miles from a railway. Now, there has been an agitation in this part of Queensland to get the one-fourth resumable land thrown open for selection at once. There is land at Coreena, Saltern Creek, at Aramac, at Bowen Downs available for selection, and Wellshot land is coming due next year. I am certain that if the Minister for Lands reserves that land for selection, it will all be selected very quickly. Under this Bill there is no preservation of our rights as there was under the 1891 Act. Land right up to the railway is going to be given to the old lessees at 10s. an acre, whereas if it were thrown open for selection it would be readily taken up and settled upon by large numbers of people. When the Home Secretary went out to Ilfracombe, a deputation waited on him, and he gave a very straight promise, which I hope will not be forgotten by the present Ministry.

The HOME SECRETARY: What was that?

Mr. FITZGERALD: Does not the hon. gentleman remember?

The HOME SECRETARY: What was the promise?

Mr. FITZGERALD: Then the Minister must have a very short memory.

Mr. J. HAMILTON: Refresh his memory.

Mr. FITZGERALD: The promise was that the Wellshot Resumption, when available, would be thrown open for selection in 5,000 or 10,000 acre blocks. Would it not be a pity and a shame to see the present holders getting that land at 10s. an acre, especially when it is alongside a railway, instead of throwing it open for selection when it becomes available at the end of twelve months; for then we would not only have the grazing farmers there, but their wives and families, and good settlement going on all over the country? If this Bill passes, the Minister can sell this land at 10s. an acre, with ten years to pay for it, and the people who will no doubt buy it will not put up any more fences or improvements; in fact, they will not spend another penny more on it than they have already spent. If it is sold, they will get it all, and they have the freehold, and that will be detrimental to the township of Ilfracombe, because there will be no room for expansion. The same thing happened with regard to Rockwood Station. Tangorin was proclaimed a township, and the lessees of Rockwood Station bought all the land there for 10s. an acre. The result is that men about there have been worrying me and I have been worrying the Surveyor-General and the Lands Department, in order to try and get some extra

reserve. Tangorin is half way between Muttaborra and Hughenden, on a very important stock route, and the same thing will happen if the Ilfracombe land is bought at 10s. an acre. This Bill allows that to be done, and it will prevent the settlement of hundreds of people on the land round about there. In the long run the Government will lose in such a transaction—they will lose on every bit of wire, every piece of timber, and every pound of sugar, tea, and flour that would be carried on our railways if that land were taken up by selectors. It has been said that these men pay too much rent, and we believe in an equalisation of rents.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: You are always arguing that the grazing farmer pays a higher rent, and that is the reason he should have the land.

Mr. FITZGERALD: No. The argument on this side is that the grazing farmer is the best settler we can have on those lands.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: That is a new argument.

Mr. FITZGERALD: The hon. member has not seen our platform. Shall I get you a copy of the *Worker*?

Mr. ARMSTRONG: No, please don't!

Mr. FITZGERALD: Well, if the hon. member will go there he will be able to see for himself. What we argue from this side of the House is that we want to see close settlement in the country. We do not want to see men holding thousands and thousands of acres of land and having no settlement on it. We want to have close settlement, and we are all at one on this question out West. I am sorry to detain the House so long, but this question is really one that affects the whole lot of us out West very deeply. I know I am speaking before a lot of gentlemen representing the coastal districts, and I should feel inclined to do the same thing myself if I were in their position—that is, shift this burden on to someone else. But the argument that I want to hammer in again and again is that if the Government sell our lands out West they will succeed in doing nothing of the kind. They may get their 6d. an acre interest—if they like we will admit that for the sake of argument—but they will lose revenue from their railways, and they will lose close settlement. To show the effect of that policy take the case of Maneroo. Dalgety and Co.—I am not sure of the figures—outside of Longreach bought somewhere about 40,000 acres, and it is being used simply as a paddock. The Government have got the 10s. an acre for it, but in the long run will not be the gainer. They are like myself, I suppose, in that respect. I went down the street the other day with a couple of pounds in my pocket; I met a few friends, and the couple of pounds were soon gone. The very same thing arose, only on a very much larger scale, when the Government had the £10,000,000 loan. We all remember that they had plenty of money then. They would go and build railways anywhere, and say what did it matter so long as the country flourished. But we have to come along and pay the piper afterwards, and that is probably what will happen if the Government get the power to use the money derived from the sale of lands. They will probably go in for building the thirteen lines of railways that they have not money now to build, and they will squander the money as I did my couple of pounds the other day. The Government will say, "We have plenty of money in our pocket, we have good credit at the bank, we have good assets," and then, afterwards, the future Minister, or the Minister a few years afterwards, when he wakes up and looks into things, will say, "I must make this up in some way"; and then his supporters will say, "Go and sell this land out West; never mind the people there, they have not much voting power." I protest against that sort of thing

I argue and contend that it is a bad policy to sell our lands out West; give us a chance of settling them. The hon. member for Baionne said that the Western lands are no good; that they are covered with prickly pear. Well, they are not going to pay 10s. an acre for this prickly pear country. They are going to worry the country that has been worried time after time, which has created so many protests; they are going to worry it and sell it for 10s. an acre. It was only the other day that a protest was made, and it was withdrawn—I do not know for what reason—but as soon as this Bill passes our Central lands will go, and I hope that every member who represents a Central constituency will raise his voice against this Bill.

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. J. F. G. Foxton, *Carnarvon*): Perhaps I should not have spoken if it had not been for certain references which have been made to past utterances of mine, that possibly without some explanation might seem inconsistent with the action of the Government of which I am a member. (Opposition laughter.) I hear a snigger from the other side. (Laughter.) I am not one of those cast-iron politicians who because they have once believed a thing necessarily always believe that it is correct. I trust that I am open to reason, I trust I am able to learn as I grow older, and that my education is never completed, but always improving. There are some who cannot view with the same equanimity that I am able to do—who cannot understand or appreciate anything in the way of advancement—when once they have committed themselves to an idea, no matter whether it be a correct or incorrect idea, they are unable to get away from it, and they regard it as a sort of fetish which must be for ever bowed down to and worshipped.

Mr. TURLEY: Chameleons are not fetishes, but they change their colour.

The HOME SECRETARY: I do not change my colour; my colours are always the same, but I am not above learning. I am not above changing my views, when I have been mistaken in the past.

MEMBERS on the Government side: Hear, hear!

The HOME SECRETARY: Now, hon. members need not imagine from that prelude that I am going to recant my previous statements. Not at all. I have, however, learned something. I am prepared to qualify the views which I held some years ago, and especially those I held many years ago, because I believe that what I have learned has been of such a character as to warrant my changing those views to a certain extent, or to modify them without going so far as to actually change them. Now, I have said years ago, even at the time I uttered the sentiments which have been quoted against me during this debate—I said then, and I am still very strongly impressed with the truth of what I then said—I was then of opinion that there is no worse landlord to be found in the world than the State.

MEMBERS on the Government side: Hear, hear!

The HOME SECRETARY: Because we know from experience, and the longer we live the greater is that experience, and the more thoroughly is the truth of it borne in upon us—those of us who choose to think and understand really what is going on around us—that the moment the shoe pinches in regard to Crown tenants, whether they be pastoral tenants or whether they be agricultural tenants—tenants engaged in agriculture—or any other tenants of Crown lands, the moment the shoe begins to pinch, no matter whether the pinch is through shortness of cash or from whatever it may arise, whether it be from drought, or flood, or tightness of the money market, and the consequent pressure

by the banks and financial institutions—they come, as was pointed out by Sir Hugh Nelson some years ago—"they seek the line of least resistance, and they come to the Government to obtain that relief which they cannot get elsewhere." They demand a reduction of the rent, or they demand an extension of their tenure, or they demand something in the shape of remission of either money or conditions.

Mr. JACKSON: They do not always get it.

The HOME SECRETARY: They always have a following; they always have somebody in this House who takes up their demand.

Mr. JACKSON: What did squatters get for losses by the tick fever?

The HOME SECRETARY: The hon. gentleman from his interjections shows that he is an advocate for something of the sort.

Mr. JACKSON: They do not get it. The Government do not give way.

The HOME SECRETARY: Very frequently they do give way. It is hon. members on the other side who, as a rule, protest against any such giving way, and insist that the Government, either with or without reason, shall not make any such concession. But the demands are made notwithstanding.

Mr. JACKSON: We do not say that the Government shall not make any concession when a good case is made out.

The HOME SECRETARY: It is open to anyone to exercise his own judgment whether a good or bad case has been made out. That is merely a question of fact upon which people come to different conclusions. Now, there was one expression used by the hon. member who has just sat down to which I wish to allude. He assumes that, if this Bill becomes law, there will be an inclination on the part of the administrator of the Lands Department to deny to certain Western towns the necessary reserves—town reserves I understood him to mean.

Mr. FITZGERALD: No; reserves for settlement.

The HOME SECRETARY: I thought that the hon. member was afraid that the people in the West would find themselves without the usual town reserves surrounding their townships. The policy now is to make the reserves, if anything, larger than they used to be, in order that when a town has grown, and a demand comes for its extension, the Government may share in the unearned increment which the fortunate purchasers of land in the vicinity are reaping.

Mr. FITZGERALD: We want settlement on the land.

The HOME SECRETARY: I suppose we all want that.

Mr. TURLEY: If you sell in large areas, how will you get settlement?

The HOME SECRETARY: It does not necessarily follow that you block settlement. I am quite prepared to admit that, all other things being equal, it is desirable that whatever land is alienated by the Crown should be alienated in the smallest possible areas in which the land is capable of being remunerative to the purchaser. That is a truism which I suppose everybody will subscribe to, but there are times when it is necessary to consider whether we can always get everything that we want. Now, on this occasion there is a necessity to replenish the Treasury. The hon. member says that the policy of the representatives of coastal constituencies is to make somebody else pay, and in speaking in that way I understood him to allude to the people who reside in the West. But they do not pay under the proposed system. They have no more interest in, or right to, those Western lands than the men on the coast. The land belongs to the country as a whole.

Mr. HARDACRE: But it is to the detriment of those districts that land is sold.

The HOME SECRETARY: I do not see it at all. I cannot see how there will be less progress when people have paid cash for their land, and have to pay or lose interest, as the case may be, on the money so invested, than when they are paying rent, especially when the interest on the purchase money is so very largely in excess of the highest rent which could possibly be obtained for the land. The people in the West have no more right to the land than the people in the East, and the people in the East will be relieved of no taxation simply on account of the sale of these Western lands.

Mr. LESINA: Progress is cramped by these sales.

The HOME SECRETARY: I am surprised that hon. members cannot get beyond mere theories. Has the progress of the Darling Downs been cramped because the land happens to be freehold?

Mr. LESINA: Yes.

The HOME SECRETARY: Is progress cramped in the Rosewood Scrub for a similar reason? I commend to hon. members a trip to the Rosewood Scrub, and let them see what can be done in the way of small settlement under freehold. If that does not convince them that the sooner the State gets rid of its freehold on satisfactory terms to itself the better, I really do not know what argument will convince them.

Mr. FITZGERALD: Would you sell 40,000 acres in the Rosewood Scrub in one bang?

The HOME SECRETARY: The Rosewood Scrub of to-day is not what it was when I knew it first. There was not a farm or building on it when I knew it thirty-five years ago. It was a favourite resort of mine in my younger days, and I knew every inch of it. The other day when I was at Glamorganvale, I mentioned the fact that I must be very near a particular spot, and the gentleman who was sitting next to me told me that he was the purchaser of a farm which embraced that very spot. So you see my geography was pretty good. In the days I speak of the land was all scrub. It is not so now, and 40,000 acres in those days would have been dear at 10s. an acre.

Mr. FITZGERALD: It was not sheep or cattle country.

The HOME SECRETARY: Of course it was not. I am speaking now of a general principle.

Mr. JACKSON: What is that land worth now?

The HOME SECRETARY: The land is worth £7, £8, or even £10 an acre.

Mr. CALLAN: More than that.

The HOME SECRETARY: It has been sold as high as £15 or £16 an acre with improvements, but I think every acre was parted with by the Crown at 2s. 6d. an acre.

Mr. HARDACRE: Under conditions.

The HOME SECRETARY: It was quite immaterial whether conditions were imposed or not, because nobody but those who were going in to clear it would look at it. It would have gone begging had it not been for the Germans who settled there, and it was said at the time that the Germans were mad to undertake what they did. I know of a case in which a man makes off 80 acres of land in that scrub £400 a year net profit. It is the closest settlement for any considerable area of country that we have in Queensland, and I do not think it could be exceeded in regard to the closeness of its settlement in any part of Australia—that is, for a purely rural district.

If that land were leasehold, would [5 p.m.] anything like that close settlement exist at this moment? Certainly not; the men would never have improved

that land as they have done under those conditions. Hon. members can understand the extent to which the land must be improved in order to produce such results as I have mentioned, and the case is not a solitary one. I venture to say that the land, if it were under lease, would not have been improved in the same way. Let us take as opposed to that our experience of leasehold land where there is no right of pre-emption or no right to acquire the freehold by purchase, whether conditional purchase or otherwise. The hon. member for Baloune was perfectly right when he said that a very large portion of our public estate is deteriorating day by day. Why? Because it is not freehold; because it is not held by persons whose interest it is to preserve that land from the pests which are constantly spreading upon it. These facts have been brought under my notice of late years, and it is these facts which have caused me very largely to modify the views which I had previously expressed in this Chamber. When I first represented the electorate of Carnarvon there was a considerable amount of prickly pear in that district, but I believe I am within the mark in saying that now there is twice the area under prickly pear that there was then. There is one head station, I am told, to which nobody can get on account of the pest. I have been told that there are several wagons at that head station, and somebody had an idea of buying them for the sake of the old material, but could not get them out on account of the prickly pear. I do not know how true that is, but hon. members can readily understand how the pest has spread. I can remember the time—it was before I came into Parliament—when the station was successfully worked as a cattle station. I believe there were also sheep on the place, but I did not know the station in those days, though I have heard of it by repute. Now it is a wilderness; the land is worse than valueless. It would take from £4 to £6 an acre to clear the land of prickly pear, and then it would be suitable for grazing farms. Hon. members can work out the sum for themselves, and see whether it would pay to clear that land of prickly pear for grazing purposes. That land is as absolutely lost to Queensland as if it had been taken bodily by some huge force and planted away in the Pacific Ocean. But, contrast that land with land which has been acquired as freehold in the same district. You will see against the fence of a freehold prickly pear flourishing on Crown lands, but inside that freehold you will not see a bit of prickly pear. Why? Because the little money spent from time to time by the owner of that land, because he was the owner and knew that it was to his ultimate benefit that it should be kept clean, has kept it clean. But the land which was leased is now no longer leased because it is not worth leasing. I admit that that is an extreme case, but the same principle that underlies the treatment of land infested with prickly pear underlies the treatment of all Crown lands—that is to say, unless the tenant has some vested interest in that land in the shape of a permanency he will not give the same attention to it as he would to property which was his own absolutely as freehold.

Mr. HARDACRE: Security of tenure you are speaking of.

The HOME SECRETARY: You cannot give security of tenure to those who are now occupying our lands without depriving the smaller man of the land when his time comes. That is the difficulty, and it is the difficulty which every Secretary for Public Lands will have to face in this State or in any other State.

Mr. HARDACRE: But then it is subject to re-appraisal.

The HOME SECRETARY: If it is always subject to reappraisal there is not the same incentive to keep the land clean and to farm it in the best possible way.

Mr. TURLEY: Why?

The HOME SECRETARY: Because the more the tenant improves the land the more he will have to pay for it.

MEMBERS on the Government side: Hear, hear!

The HOME SECRETARY: Hon. members may say that improvements are not to be taken into consideration. But there is something else besides mere improvements, and that is dealing fairly with the land. One man may deal fairly with his land, that is to say, while he improves it he does not overstock it, and he keeps down prickly pear and other noxious weeds and treats it as he would his own property. Another man may not do any less in the shape of actual improvements as we understand and define "improvements," but he may neglect the land. He is simply a bad farmer—using the term in its widest sense including grazing—he neglects the land, saying, "I have only an interest in this land for a certain period, and it will do me for my time." Compare those two men. The same amount of improvement has been done in both cases, but at the end of twenty-five years the one property will be worth, perhaps, four times as much as the other in the way of rental, simply because in the latter case the land has been neglected. It is not in human nature for a mere tenant to do otherwise than get all he can out of the land for the time being, without any reference to its ultimate value after he has done with it.

Mr. HARDACRE: You cannot avoid that by making freehold of it.

The HOME SECRETARY: I do not agree with the hon. member; you can avoid it by making the land freehold. The hon. member has only to go to my electorate and look at the freehold country which is free from prickly pear, and compare it with the country which was once leasehold, but is no longer leasehold as it has been rendered valueless by the spread of the prickly pear, and he will see how it can be avoided. Would those men at Rosewood, if they had only leaseholds, and their lands were subject to periodical appraisal, have done anything like the improvements they have done on their holdings? Would there be anything like the settlement there is to-day?

Mr. HARDACRE: There would not be so much sub-leasing.

The HOME SECRETARY: As far as I know there is no sub-leasing in the Rosewood district.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: Not an acre.

The HOME SECRETARY: Ninety-nine per cent. of the men in that district are freeholders living on their own land. And the smaller the area—that is the experience of France—the more is that the case. There is a fear, or at all events a professed fear, on the part of hon. members opposite that the provisions of this Bill, if it becomes law, will be used by the Government for the purpose of selling land that is capable of close settlement. The hon. member who preceded me, the hon. member for Mitchell, mentioned the fact that in the course of time much of the Western land—of course he meant the Western sheep country—would be required for close settlement and for agriculture. I saw on one of the occasions I visited the West that which convinced me that never will that land be available for agricultural purposes. Of course I know it is easy to reply to that by saying that men of larger experience in regard to land than myself predicted exactly the same

thing in reference to the Darling Downs; but it must be admitted that the conditions of the Darling Downs and the conditions of the West of Queensland are totally different.

Mr. CURTIS: It is dangerous to prophesy.

The HOME SECRETARY: I know it is dangerous to prophesy; but I am going to risk it this time. You want rainfall for agriculture, and you want a certain type of soil. One of the reasons why it was predicted of the Darling Downs—if it ever was predicted, for it has been denied—that you would never be able to grow a cabbage there was that there was not sufficient rainfall, and another was that the soil was far too stiff—too clayey. We know that in the West—speaking roughly, and taking the West as a whole—there is only about one-quarter of the rainfall there is on the Darling Downs, and I met at Ilfracombe a very intelligent man, who had the interests of the district very much at heart—I forget his name—

Mr. FITZGERALD: Mr. Mayers.

The HOME SECRETARY: A publican?

Mr. FITZGERALD: Storekeeper and selector.

The HOME SECRETARY: That's the man.

He told me he had simply broken his heart trying to cultivate that land. He had had an opportunity just before I was there of ploughing, owing to a certain fall of rain which had occurred—not at all a usual thing—but there the soil was as hard as bricks and it was absolutely impossible to harrow it.

Mr. FITZGERALD: I will show you some cabbage grown there.

The HOME SECRETARY: But let us be clear that it comes from that country. I know they can be grown with bore water on the Alice River; but the abnormal conditions which obtain there do not prevail in regard to the whole expanse of territory out there; and hon. members need not disturb their peace of mind in regard to the possibility of that land ever being required for agricultural purposes. I am convinced in my own mind that it will not—the conditions are of such a character that it will never be available for agricultural purposes.

Mr. CALLAN: For all time?

The HOME SECRETARY: For all time.

Mr. CALLAN: You are prophesying a very big thing now.

Mr. W. HAMILTON: They said the same thing of Riverina years ago.

The HOME SECRETARY: Riverina and that country are very different.

Mr. W. HAMILTON: There is not a great deal of difference.

The HOME SECRETARY: The hon. member knows that the land in the Riverina district is no stiffer than that of the Darling Downs, and that cannot be said of the Western black soil. I am speaking of the country west of Barcadine.

Mr. HARDACRE: You cannot tell what the progress of agriculture will be twenty years from now.

The HOME SECRETARY: I know that; but when a similar prophecy is quoted as having been made in regard to the Darling Downs, I at once point to the fact that the conditions of the two places are totally different both in regard to rainfall—the moisture in the atmosphere generally—and in regard to the soil.

Mr. HARDACRE: You cannot tell what will be the improvements in agriculture in twenty years—in the methods and the machinery.

The HOME SECRETARY: Suppose the time comes when that land is suitable for agriculture—for closer settlement than is possible at present. That will come I believe; and I believe it is very desirable also for the time being at all events to lease a very considerable proportion of those lands, but only with a view to their

ultimately being acquired as freeholds, because I believe it is only as freeholds that full justice will be done to them by their occupiers. Hon. members also seem to think that this Bill will increase the facilities of the Government for getting rid of land which ought not to be disposed of by public auction. It was pointed out—by interjection by my hon. colleague the Minister for Railways, I think—that we could dispose of those lands now, but that the Lands Department do not do so. In fact, there are instances where applications have repeatedly been made for the purchase of land and where they have been frequently refused. An hon. member quoted Wellshot, and asked that an expression of opinion that I gave some years ago when I was Minister for Lands should be still adhered to and carried out. I should be very much inclined to hope that it would, because the land on Wellshot immediately adjoining the railway would be selected in areas very much less than 5,000 or 10,000 acres. I believe a very large proportion will be taken up in areas of about 2,560 acres; and being close to the railway might possibly be available ultimately—in the far distant future probably—for dairying purposes. In my district, or not far from it, in the district of the hon. member for Murilla, there is a property the lessees of which have been anxious to purchase for some time, but the Government have refused, and continue to refuse, to sell that land, because it is in a district which, unlike the far Western district of which I have spoken, will quite possibly—and I venture to say quite probably—within the lives of many of us who are here to-day, become a very large wheat-producing district. That country is very much more similar in its climatic conditions to Riverina than the Western country, and also in regard to soil. In the event of these Western lands being sold under this Bill, suppose we had ultimately to purchase them back, in the same way that we have purchased back lands on the Darling Downs, is that anything that ought to frighten us in this matter? I think not. There are those who regard the repurchase of lands by the Crown from private individuals as an act of insanity. Still, if lands in the Western districts were bought for 10s. an acre the country would benefit by the purchase money being at a rate which would mean 4d. per acre per annum.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Two-thirds.

The HOME SECRETARY: The price might be 12s. 6d. per acre, and that would mean about 6d. per acre per annum, at 3½ or 4 per cent. Can anyone say that it would not be worth while for the country to purchase back lands at a price which could be realised by those coming after us, allowing them to buy at that price? That is no reason why we should hesitate to sell land at the present time.

Mr. GIVENS: The Government would have to buy back at an enhanced price.

The HOME SECRETARY: But in the meantime the country has had the interest at a rate which, if regarded as rent, would be considered exorbitant—double or three times that at which the Government could get for the land in the meantime, and owing to the fact that the would-be purchaser, twenty years hence, was willing to give to the Crown exactly what they paid—

Mr. GIVENS: They would be handicapped by having to pay too high a price.

The HOME SECRETARY: They would not be handicapped in that way. They could not expect to get it at the price it could be got for now. Some of them might be willing to sell twenty years hence at the rate they paid for it—10s. an acre—for we find that is now the experience in every district in the colony. At some period of local depression you can buy land fenced

and with buildings on it from private individuals—the original selectors—at a price which the Crown could not afford to sell it at.

Mr. HARDACRE: That is not the average experience.

The HOME SECRETARY: I do not say it is; but that very frequently happens. I can point the hon. member to a spot where this has happened, not 40 miles away from where we are now to-day, and that is on the Blackall Range. The hon. member will find land there which can be acquired at this moment for less than the cost paid by the original selectors, and that is with improvements on it. You will find that in every district throughout the colony.

Mr. HARDACRE: Let us take the average results.

The HOME SECRETARY: Yes; let us take the average results. Is it any hardship on the general taxpayer—who, of course, is the country—when somebody else coming here twenty years hence finds that the land has increased threefold in value to what it is to-day, and when the Government purchase the land back from the original selectors they are able to sell it to him without a loss. Is not the settlement brought about in that way a distinct gain to the general taxpayer? Now, the hon. member for Mitchell argued that closer settlement is good for railways; we all admit that for several reasons. All things being equal, we desire to see settlement on the closest lines, and not an aggregation of large estates. I have said before that I am not ashamed to admit that I am capable of changing my views when I am shown to be wrong. When I came into this House eighteen years ago, or thereabouts, I was a firm believer in the State maintaining the position of landlord with regard to all land. I think that is the mental condition of the hon. member for Leichhardt now, and I venture to say that, when he has been in the House eighteen years, he will think exactly as I am thinking to-day.

Mr. HARDACRE: I don't think so.

Mr. JACKSON: You were not on the Treasury bench then.

The HOME SECRETARY: That does not make any difference.

Mr. REID: Not a bit.

The HOME SECRETARY: When I said something of that sort a week ago, I was told that I grossly insulted members on the other side. I hope those hon. gentlemen will look at the matter in a different way.

Mr. JACKSON: You look at the matter through different spectacles now.

The HOME SECRETARY: I know that some members on the other side are altogether opposed to the policy of parting with the freehold of our public estate; but my experience, and especially my experience as Minister for Lands, convinces me that I was totally wrong in my former opinion. I believe the hon. member for Leichhardt received a letter from Mr. Dutton, but I did not see the letter—I heard about it; and I also understand that Mr. Dutton has changed his views with regard to this matter—that he is of opinion that the sooner the freehold of the public estate gets into private hands the better, so that we shall be able to tax it.

Mr. HARDACRE: Always accompanied by a land tax.

The HOME SECRETARY: I do not object to that. We have a land tax now, practically.

Mr. HARDACRE: He said an adequate tax. There we have something else.

The HOME SECRETARY: Who is to judge of the adequacy tax? It always comes back to that.

Mr. HARDACRE: That is the weak spot in the system.

The HOME SECRETARY: The hon. member for Leichhardt seems to be very capable of detecting weak spots in that system. Mr. Dutton and myself and many others have gone through the same experience, and we started where the hon. member for Leichhardt is now.

Mr. HARDACRE: Mr. Dutton said that was the weak spot. I did not say that.

The HOME SECRETARY: Hon. members opposite seem to be wedded to this idea of preserving the freehold in the Crown, and apparently the hon. member who has just preceded me did not object to the principle of selling town and suburban lands. I think if there are any lands to which the principle of long leases should apply it is town lots, the value of which is so much enhanced by the settlement of the country lands.

Mr. JACKSON: I always advocated that.

The HOME SECRETARY: That shows the inconsistency of some hon. members. They refuse to part with the freehold of country lands and would let the town lands go.

Mr. JACKSON: That is not the position.

The HOME SECRETARY: I am replying to the hon. member who has just sat down.

Mr. JACKSON: The objection is to the monopoly of large areas of land.

The HOME SECRETARY: The hon. member has no objection to the acquisition of town lands as freehold. If the freehold is in private hands, I venture to say it

[5.30 p.m.] will be put to the best possible use, and during that time, if it is freehold, the State will receive full value by way of interest on the money invested in that land—a very much greater sum than it would otherwise receive in rent; and when the time comes for close settlement—if such time ever does come—then the principles of the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act can be applied with gain to the State. In one way we may lose, but ultimately there will be very considerable gain to those who may take advantage of the liberal provisions of that statute.

Mr. GIVENS: Have not we made some losses under the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act?

The HOME SECRETARY: I am not prepared to admit that we have made any. Of course we may. I said myself years ago, in speaking on that measure, that it is only natural to suppose that there may be some losses, but it must be borne in mind that we compensate ourselves for that by adding 10 per cent. to the purchase money of all these estates.

Mr. LESINA: But the farmers are crying out.

The HOME SECRETARY: The people who have purchased under that Act are perfectly content with their bargains. It is the hon. members who are not farmers, who have derided the farmers, who have said they were men looking over the fence—they are the men who are crying out about the iniquities of the Act. It is not the people who have got the benefit of it.

Mr. REID: How about the land purchased on the Darling Downs in respect of which they wanted a reduction of rent?

The HOME SECRETARY: That was because they were Crown tenants for the time being, but once they get their freeholds they will be all right.

Mr. GIVENS: There may be plenty of losses yet.

The HOME SECRETARY: I do not think so.

Mr. LESINA: How about the Seaforth Estate?

The HOME SECRETARY: It is probable that there will not be a penny of loss on that estate when it is all summed up. It is easy to prophesy, and the hon. members who have prophesied that the Seaforth Estate will end in a loss may yet find that it will return a profit.

Mr. GIVENS: You will have to spend plenty of money on improvements before you get rid of it.

The HOME SECRETARY: I do not think the hon. members opposite have shown that the provisions of this Bill will be made use of for the purpose of selling land which is likely, at all events in the near future, to be required for close settlement. I have given an instance where the Government has refused, in the case of Welltown, in the Murilla district, to sell land for which cash could be paid without any request for time at all. In that case, although I am quite sure that 12s. 6d., or at any rate 10s., an acre could be got for a very large area of it, the land is being surveyed into grazing farms, and by the time that the leases of those grazing farms have expired, I venture to predict that that land will be suitable—if railway extension goes out in that direction, as I hope it will, and as I think it ought to do within the next decade or fifteen years—for agriculture, and will be some of the best land in Australia for wheatgrowing. I do not know that I have any more to say. I desired to set myself right in regard to the statements which have been quoted as having been made by me on previous occasions, otherwise I should not have spoken perhaps at all. I wish to say that, although I fully agree with the views that I then expressed—that is, that all things being equal it is desirable to part with lands under conditions of occupation, whether it be under leasehold or with the ultimate disposal of the freehold to the selector—still, nevertheless, there are times when we must face a difficulty, and consider whether it is desirable to impose more taxation on the community as a whole, or dispose of lands by some other means—always having regard to the fact that the land is always there, and under the provisions of the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act, when the time comes, it can be made available without loss to the State.

Mr. LESINA (*Clermont*): The hon. gentleman who has just resumed his seat, in the course of his remarks in favour of this measure, said that the State undoubtedly is the very worst landlord we can possibly have. If that is not an admission of incompetence on behalf of the Government I do not know what it is. The hon. gentleman, a member of the Cabinet engaged in the administration of our public lands, has publicly admitted in this Chamber that they are absolutely the worst landlords in Queensland. Well, it is an important admission. It is an admission of incompetence; it is an admission of unintelligent administration; and, if we were to look at it from a Scaforth Estate point of view, it is an admission of more or less culpable administration. I should like to use a stronger phrase about that if the Standing Orders would admit of my doing so. At any rate, we have the admission that the State landlord in Queensland has proved himself incompetent, and has proved himself a worse landlord than the worst private rack-renter that ever held a block of land. We have the authority of the hon. gentleman for that statement, and we cannot make too much use of it. We should bruit it forth wherever we go, and every member of this Chamber should ring the changes upon it on every possible occasion. Let it go right through the country from one end of it to the other, that this is a most incompetent Administration in dealing with the national estate. It is rather a pitiable thing that such an admission should have been made. The other Governments throughout Australia do not make such mistakes. The Government of New Zealand is settling the people on the land wholesale. It is bursting up the land monopolies. In New Zealand they do not admit that the State is the worst landlord in the world. I suppose in our library here you can

get fifty or a hundred authors and magazine writers who, dealing with this question of State ownership of land, show conclusively that the best policy is that the land of a country should be in the hands of the whole community, and be administered by the Government for the benefit of the whole of the country; and yet we have this Government admitting their incompetence in this matter. The New Zealand Government have made remarkable progress in land-settling settlement; they have burst up the land monopolies, and land which formerly was only carrying a sheep to the acre is carrying many happy families.

Mr. STORY: How many happy families?

Mr. LESINA: They have settled a great many happy families to the square mile, though the hon. member may have smiled at my use of the word acre instead of mile. They have settled an enormous number of happy families on the land. There can be no question of that, because any statistical work will show the amount of settlement that has been effected in New Zealand; and if this Government are incompetent—and they have admitted that they are incompetent—and cannot honestly and properly administer the public estate, that is no argument against State administration of the public estate. It is not an argument against land being owned, controlled, and operated by the people of the country. It must not be forgotten that the Government, under this Bill, are granted enormous power—power to sell land anywhere within 20 miles of a railway right throughout Queensland, and the principle of handing over to the Government such enormous power is one that is very well worth discussing. The Government are practically saying: "There is no body of members in this Chamber so capable of administering the public estate, or saying what is best for the State, as this Government of five or six persons, and we ask for power to sell land anywhere throughout Queensland under certain conditions"; and that, mind you, after they have admitted through one of their number that they are the worst administrators we have had so far. Under these circumstances we should be very careful not to give these enormous powers which the Government are so desirous of securing. During his speech the Home Secretary was asked by the hon. member for Mitchell if he would sell 40,000 acres to one man—would he sooner see one man purchase 40,000 acres, and lock it up for ever, or see it sold to twenty distinct persons who would be likely to settle upon it, and put it to a profitable use? Any person with a grain of intelligence knows that it would be better to settle twenty farmers on 40,000 acres than that one monopolist should grab it all, and lock it up for all time. It only needs the application of an infinitesimal amount of common sense to see the benefit that would accrue from the occupation of the land by twenty families rather than by one person. The hon. member for Fitzroy interjected that he would sell not only 40,000, but 400,000 acres to one man. As a matter of fact, to carry his ideas to a logical conclusion he would sell the whole of Queensland to one man if he could find a man sufficiently rich to buy it. Private ownership of land leads us to that conclusion. If 600 men have the right to own the whole of Queensland, one man has the right to own it. He has the right to own every square inch that the Government care to sell him. If you deliberately face the question, that is the logical conclusion to which you come. And if one man can own the whole colony he can give the entire population notice to quit, dictate his own terms to the Government, and do pretty well what he likes. And the same with the 600. It

is merely a question of principle, and the principle is the same in every case. If 10,000 persons have the right to own Queensland, then 600, or 500, or 200, or twelve, or one have the same right.

Hon. E. B. FORREST: The same applies to leasing. One man could lease the lot.

Mr. LESINA: Yes; but in that case there is a slight difference. If one man leased the whole lot, he would at all events have to pay rent. The rent would go into the public Treasury, and it would come back to the people in the shape of public benefits. He would not lease the whole of the land to hold it idle. But if you sell the whole of the land for ever to one man, you would get nothing at all beyond the original cost.

Hon. E. B. FORREST: Would he pay nothing for it?

Mr. LESINA: He would pay something for it, of course; but after that amount was expended people could only come here on the terms he laid down. He would be the master of the country, and he could dictate the terms upon which industry should be carried on.

Hon. E. B. FORREST: So he could if he leased.

Mr. LESINA: However, it is evident that the principle is a wrong one and is condemned, and very rightly condemned, by all political economists. It is an unfortunate fact that a great deal of our land has passed out of the hands of the people. About 13,000,000 acres have already been alienated, and much that has been sold is the best land in Queensland. The Government now propose to sell another 1,000,000 acres. Indeed they will have to sell more than another 1,000,000 at 10s. an acre in order to make good the deficit of over £500,000. Most of the land already sold has been sold, except in one instance, at 10s. an acre. In one case it realised 12s. 6d., and I notice that in every instance it has gone in large blocks into the hands of companies or private individuals. We find the result set out in a return—a very misleading return, by the way—of lands sold under the Special Sales of Land Act of 1891. It appears that the Act of 1891 lapsed, and then the Government took advantage of the clauses in the Act of 1897, and have been selling land all over Queensland. On Telemon, in the Burke district, they sold 13,980 acres to one John Laing Currie; and 4,674 acres 3 roods 14 perches of Burrandewan resumption in the Burnett district to Arthur Youngman. In the Maranoa district I find that the Australian Pastoral Company purchased 24,607 acres of the Doondi resumption, 96,420 acres of Noondoo resumption, both at 10s. an acre; 428 acres on Noondoo at 15s. an acre; 7,820 acres on Gnoolooa resumption; 17,211 acres on Colloben resumption; and 70,540 acres on Cubbie resumption, all at 10s. an acre. That has all gone into the hands of one company. It is very evident from this that if we pass this Bill, and sell more public lands, they will go into the hands of these large companies. They will be locked up for an indefinite period until settlement extends, and then either the Government will be compelled to resume them at enhanced valuations, or else population will press round the barriers until the owners drop the sliprails and let the public get on to the lands at the company's own price. In any case it means a block to progress. I know the object the Government have in view. They have dropped out the provision in the 1891 Act relating to lands within 20 miles of a railway, and have substituted navigable rivers instead, and as there are no navigable rivers in the West, they will sell lands all around Clermont, and Peak Downs, and in the Leichhardt, Mitchell, and Barcoo districts, where they are not immediately wanted for close settlement, but where they will be wanted at no

distant date. Consequently the country will suffer later on through a falling off in the railway revenue, and an excellent block will be placed in the way of the expansion of that revenue. Such a policy must inevitably prevent the expansion and development of the country, and I consider it is a policy which, at all hazards, should be avoided. However, it is contended that this is the only way in which to avoid other kinds of taxation. In the debates on the Special Sale of Land Act of 1891 it was pointed out by the Secretary for Lands, Mr. Cowley, that the passage of the Act meant that when the land was sold it would be settled on, the country would benefit by it, and the State would get the use of the money. Now, it has not assisted settlement, and the country is still locked up. As Mr. Morehead pointed out during the same debate, the selling of land under the Act did not mean the selling of 320 acres to some poor struggling person. It simply meant the selling of large areas, resumptions, and that sort of thing, to one person or to some large financial corporation. As the Hon. E. D. Morehead pointed out in 1891, so it has come to pass. I find that not only did the Australian Pastoral Company secure large areas under that Special Sales of Land Act, but that the Australian Mortgage, Land, and Finance Company bought 2,550 acres on Boombah holding at 10s. per acre, and 2,000 acres on Boombah resumption at 10s. an acre. These companies do not buy this land to put it to its legitimate use, they do not raise an extra sheep or employ an extra man through purchasing the land, they simply get the title deed to the property, and that gives them an opportunity for acquiring a monopoly which injures the community. In the Mitchell district, the Portland Downs Pastoral Company, Limited, bought 61,435 acres at 10s. an acre, and S. B. Leishmann purchased 40,000 acres on Lorne resumption at the same price. There are only two instances in which the price obtained was over 10s. an acre. One was the Aramac resumption, purchased by Simon Fraser at 12s. 6d. an acre, and the other the Burenda resumption, purchased by the Western Queensland Pastoral Company at 10s. 1½d. an acre. In nearly every instance where the Government have sold land in order to make up deficiencies the land has been acquired in large blocks by single individuals or by large corporations; and selling land under conditions which inevitably lead to monopoly is a bad thing for the country. Land monopoly is either a good thing or a bad thing for the country. If it can be proved to me that it is a good thing for the country, then I shall henceforth advocate land monopoly and the selling of every rood of the public estate until it is all locked up in the hands of private individuals or enormous corporations, because we shall then have such an era of peace and prosperity that we shall all be glad that we supported the sale of public lands. But if, on the other hand, it is a bad thing for the country—and in that view I am backed up by the opinion of nearly every political economist who has written on the subject, and by the practical experience of every country which has adopted the principle of unconditional private ownership of land—then I am convinced that the Government are doing a wrong thing in introducing this Bill, and for that reason I shall vote against the measure when opportunity offers. The Home Secretary justified the selling of the public estate on the ground that the land would always be here, that it would always be in the country, and that we could always purchase it back under the provisions of the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act, or, if necessary, impose a tax on it and tax some portion of the unimproved value of the land. But the hon. gentleman overlooked the fact that

the owner of the land can refuse to sell it back under the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act. There is no provision in the Act under which a person can be compelled to sell his estate to the Government. If an important section of country is sold to some pastoral company or some large financial corporation, and they hold it for ten or twenty years, during which time it is to a large extent lying idle, or only used for grazing a few sheep, and, in obedience to an outcry of persons who are settled around the boundaries of that estate, the Government demand that it shall be sold to them, the owner may refuse to sell it, and we have no law to compel him to disgorge his estate for a specified cash consideration. The hon. gentleman's contention is therefore wrong. The land can only be bought back at the owner's option and at the owner's price. If a man gives 10s. an acre for land, and later on through the construction of a railway or the settlement of a thriving population on some adjacent Crown lands, or owing to the discovery of a mine in the vicinity which attracts an immense population to the district, the value of that land leaps up to £3 or £10 an acre, and the Government wanted to purchase the land to assist settlement, then the owners of the estate would only sell it to the Government at their own option and at their own price. We have had a similar experience already—as, for instance, the Seaforth Estate—which was sold at a very low rate and afterwards purchased back at a high valuation. A policy like that is not a wise one, and does not betray any particular grasp of statesmanship. I am sure that the hon. gentleman who presides over the Agricultural Department, and in whose constituency that estate is located, will admit, as he admitted the other night, that the purchase of that estate at the price set upon it by the Government was undoubtedly a blunder.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: There was no price set on it by the Government; it was fixed by the Land Court.

MR. LESINA: Well, the Government, in taking the advice of the Land Court, were misled and made a mistake; and, as was pointed out by one of the officers who reported upon it, that estate might possibly be used for villa sites by persons who want to erect little tropical dwellings there. I may point out that, according to the division list in *Hansard*, the Home Secretary deserted his leader in 1891 and voted against the Special Sales of Land Bill then introduced, which was very similar to the Bill now before the House, while Sir Hugh Nelson felt so strongly on the matter that he voted with the Government. Now we find that the Home Secretary, who in 1891 did not believe in the Special Sales of Land Act, believes in this measure, and points out that the public ownership of our national estate is injurious because persons who have leased land from the Government are allowing that land to become overspread with every weed of noxious growth that comes along, and that the proper way to get rid of these pests is to sell the estate to private individuals, who would take more care of it than persons holding the lands as tenants of the Crown. The hon. gentleman forgot that the Government have power to compel persons who lease portions of the public estate to keep their land free from pests under certain penalties. If the Act does not give the Government ample power to do so, then they can amend the Act. The State has the power which private individuals exercise every day in the

[7 p.m.] week of compelling their tenants to look after that portion of the public estate which is in their hands. If a private individual takes a lease of a piece of property

from a fellow citizen, the fellow citizen lays down certain conditions under which the lease shall be held; he insists that the land shall be properly utilised, that he shall get it back in as good condition as when he let it; and very often the majority of leases, particularly now in the big cities where land is let on building lease for long terms—particularly in New South Wales and London—it is provided that all the improvements erected on the lease shall fall in at the termination of the lease, and become the property of the original owner. If a private individual can insist on his property being thoroughly well cared for and looked after whilst occupied by another individual, surely the State can insist on that being done. In that case, State leasing, instead of conducing to the depreciation of the value of the national estate, would be followed by precisely the same effects as in the letting of privately owned land by private individuals. But apparently the argument is merely used for the purpose of bolstering up the attitude the Government have assumed in connection with the sale of our national estate. The Government know as well as members on this side of the Chamber know that the selling of the national estate is an evil thing, and the only excuse they can offer now is that they want money, and they want it so badly that they are willing to sell land anywhere and at any price. When the Minister for Lands was speaking the other night he said—

Believing as I do, that we ought to sell lands—that it is a good thing, and that it is absolutely necessary to sell our lands—I don't think we should hamper this measure by trying to work the sales of lands within the 20 miles radius of a line and at the same time try to work the sale of lands outside this radius.

I interjected: "You will sell lands anywhere so long as you get money." And the hon. member went on to say—

The hon. member is not far wrong. (Opposition laughter.) I do not go behind what I propose. I think we should try to sell our public estate on the best possible terms, and if we only tried to sell our worst lands we should not get any purchasers at all.

You see the proposition therefore is this: the Government have a deficiency amounting to £528,000. They want money, they want it badly, and that is generally admitted. They have looked about in various directions to discover means of raising sufficient money to liquidate that deficiency; they have not been able to discover any means, with the exception of a small increase in the stamp tax, that will assist them in this direction, and therefore they propose to go back to a system that bankrupt Governments—Governments utterly destitute of public credit—have gone back to in all ages—they propose to sell the national estate, they propose to sell the patrimony of the people to tide over a mere financial difficulty. The *Courier* some time ago in discussing this matter pointed out—

Taking the question all round we can see that there is plenty of room for a bold policy in which knowledge, experience, and statesmanship shall be combined. In the first place the right way to tackle the financial problems of the State is to resolutely stimulate close settlement by every legitimate means on the one hand, and to resolutely keep a firm hand upon expenditure on the other. Those who cry that the two things are irreconcilable forget that every successful business firm joins enterprise to economy, and that profits in these days are only born of shrewd foresight and vigorous persistent thrift. The Government has to add statecraft to business ability, and Queensland with Nature's dower to rely upon will be speedily pulled out of the rut into which she has been dragged by drought, plague, and war.

This is an extract from a leading article in the *Courier*, a Government organ, and the knowledge, experience, and statesmanship said to be requisite in dealing with this matter has not manifested itself so far in the policy of the Government,

for in addition to the twopenny-halfpenny increase under the Stamp Act, they now propose to get power from Parliament under this Bill to sacrifice our national estate in any part of the colony in areas from 320 acres up to 5,120 acres at a minimum price of 10s. per acre, the time of payment being extended to a period of six months, and after that with interest at the rate of 5 per cent. They have already parted with 13,000,000 acres, and they want to get rid of another 1,000,000 odd acres because they will have to sell that quantity to make up a deficiency of £500,000. They expect to get £25,000 from the increase in the stamp duty, and they want another £500,000; and they must sell over 1,000,000 acres at 10s. an acre—or as much more as they can sell at public auction—to make up the deficiency.

Mr. BROWNE: They want to sell land to redeem Treasury bills to the extent of £530,000 according to the Bill.

Mr. LESINA: The Bill proposes to give the Government power to sell land so as to redeem those Treasury bills, but whether the money derived from land sales will be devoted to that purpose or not, I think the knowledge of this Government is sufficient to induce hon. members to believe it is not likely to be devoted to the purpose set forth in the Bill. The Premier some time ago backed up the Minister for Lands in the attitude he assumed—that he would sell land anywhere if he could get money for it, in any part of Queensland—north, south, east, or west—good, bad, or indifferent. He wants money, money, money, all the time. The Premier, when speaking on the question, pointed out that it would be a splendid thing for the colony if the whole of our lands were sold, and that the State landlord is the worst landlord in Queensland. We heard that argument also from the Home Secretary; and the Minister for Lands, when introducing the Bill, also pointed out what an utter failure the State had been as a landlord. Does it not strike you that the Government of the day are desirous of proving to the outside public that the State is the worst possible landlord, so that the public will come to the conclusion, based on the statements of responsible Ministers, that the sooner we get rid of the State landlord the better? I pointed out earlier in the evening that the statements of the Premier and the Home Secretary are as about as straight out admissions from Ministers of muddledom, of mismanagement, or worse, that I have ever heard. I would like to point out that if the State is the worst landlord that we can have, that only shows the incompetency of those into whose hands the administration of our public estate has been entrusted. Is the State a worse landlord than the money-lenders or the financial institutions in Queensland? Is it worse than the private landlord? Does it put poor widows and children out on the footpaths for not being able to pay their rent? Has the State done anything like that? Statements like these made by Ministers get read not only throughout Queensland, but beyond the boundaries of this Commonwealth, and they are reprinted by newspapers in the old country, and such statements as these do a considerable amount of harm to the colony. We should remember that our national estate is one of the chief assets to which the investors look for the recovery of the money they have sunk in Queensland in public and private borrowings. Now the Government propose to get rid of this national estate, I think those investors should have something to say on that matter. As I said before, statements like these are going to injure the credit of this country. There is another important aspect to be looked at: If the gentlemen composing the Govern-

ment of to-day are willing to admit that they are the worst administrators this colony has ever had, doesn't it look rather a curious thing that a body of men who pride themselves on their business management are willing to make such a statement? The Premier, above all others, prides himself on being a business man. There is no mere sentiment about his statements. He regards himself as the head of a large department, and he is dealing with that department just the same as a man would deal with a huge drapery or grocery establishment. There is no paltry sentiment about the Premier; he is a plain business man, and he admits that with regard to land his administration has been a tremendous failure, to which we all say, "Hear, hear!" Of course it does not follow that it is always to be a failure. It has been pointed out by the Minister for Lands that it is a good thing—that it is a real good thing—to sell our national estate, and if that is so why did we not advertise the sale of our lands in the largest type obtainable in the newspapers in England and the colonies—"Queensland for sale, in large or small quantities; minimum price, 10s. per acre. Let us have cash."

Mr. BROWNE: "Present directors retiring from office."

Mr. LESINA: Yes, "Directors admitting their failure in administration, wish to sell our national estate." When the directors of a woollen factory, or a tobacco manufactory, get into financial difficulties—when they find they are £528,000 on the wrong side of the ledger, they go into liquidation? Why don't the Government do the same? Because they have not the moral courage to do so. If they want to sell the public estate, why don't they advertise properly and try and realise the best possible price for our land?

Mr. HARDACRE: "Insolvency bargains."

Mr. LESINA: Yes. "Insolvency bargains Queensland for sale; any part of the State at 10s. an acre." As I said before, the suggestion to sell our chief revenue-producing asset—our national estate—is an astonishing idea, and one that could only originate from a Government which has publicly admitted its incompetency. I find that, excluding land sales, the revenue received from land for 1899-1900 was £528,683. Now, if the Government are going to sell land everywhere—if they are going to part with the whole of our national estate in this way—what will become of this source of revenue in the future?

Mr. J. C. CRIBB: Land tax?

Mr. LESINA: Will the hon. gentleman notify intending purchasers that they intend to tax them as soon as they buy land? Does the hon. member honestly say that it is the intention of the Government to impose a land tax as soon as the country is filled with landowners? Does any hon. member say that the Government really means to impose a land tax? Not at all. If the whole of our national estate is sold in this way, our revenue from land sales will disappear altogether, unless the sale of land is accompanied by a land tax.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: That is Mr. Dutton's idea.

Mr. LESINA: Yes; Mr. Dutton does not believe in special sales of land for revenue purposes or for wiping out deficits, unless accompanied by a land tax—a land tax upon land values. Apparently the Government will not adopt such a scheme. Without this revenue-producing asset, where will the Government look for revenue? Some hon. members have suggested a land tax, and others an income tax, and some both. Without some of these we have no

immediate means of raising adequate revenue, seeing that Customs have gone over to the Federal Parliament. If we impose none of these taxes, it will be absolutely necessary to tax land values or areas, preferably values. I say the better plan would be to let our lands out to the public at small rentals with proper securities, and remove taxation from the shoulders of these men as much as possible. That would gradually increase the flow of revenue into the State Treasury. Then the Government in selling land do not guarantee that the land shall be put to the best use, although they maintain that in the selling of the national estate it will be put to the best use. They contend that owners of land will put land to better use than lessees will. Now that fact is borne out by the experience of all the colonies at the present time. We have evidence that the sale of the national estate, instead of resulting in the proper utilisation of the land, has merely led to its monopoly. I find on looking over some figures given by various authorities, that, in New South Wales, 677 persons own more than half the alienated lands of that colony, and there are over 1,000,000 people there. If those 677 persons could get hold of the remainder of the unalienated lands, they would become the practical masters of the whole of the territory they exercise sway over, for the man who owns the land owns the people upon it—there can be no possible question upon that. The man who owns the land owns the people upon it. He can dictate terms to the men who live on the land, and we know man is a land animal. He has been described as a philosophical, a religious, and a reasoning animal, but undoubtedly before he is either of those things he is a land animal. He wants the land to live upon and work upon, and the man who owns the land owns the man who lives upon it. He can dictate the terms upon which the man who wants the land to use it shall use that land. These are economic truths which the Minister for Railways is thoroughly well acquainted with. In years past that hon. gentleman was a most industrious student of Henry George, and these principles were to him quite common. It is since he has joined the Ministry, and become an active and prominent politician, that he has come to the conclusion that there is nothing in the State ownership of land. The land is necessary for the people, it is necessary for their actual existence, and to hand it over from the State to private individuals, is merely to hand over the right to exploit the community to these individuals. You can imagine what has been the result of the alienation of land in New South Wales. In New Zealand, 337 persons own 45 per cent. of the alienated land. If we want further verification we only need to turn to the statistics of Victoria, South Australia, and Tasmania, or to go further afield to Great Britain, including Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, and they show that the tendency everywhere is for land in large areas to drift into the hands of a few individuals. It is an unfortunate tendency, and especially unfortunate in view of the fact that the philosophy of the hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House seems to be based upon the idea that it is necessary for each man to own a piece of land, to sit under his own vine and fig tree, to eat the bread which he has earned by the sweat of his brow—that every one has implanted in him the instinct to own a piece of land; that is the philosophy of hon. gentlemen opposite, but how do they account for the fact that in New Zealand 337 persons own more than 45 per cent. of the alienated land?

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Are they not prosperous in New Zealand?

Mr. LESINA: They are, and in New Zealand they are compelled to purchase back those estates.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They sold £300,000 worth last year.

Mr. W. HAMILTON: But not in 20,000-acre blocks.

Mr. LESINA: I shall come to that aspect of the question later on. In New Zealand, where 337 persons own nearly half the alienated land, the tendency is for land to drift into the hands of a few individuals. It falls into the hands of wealthy men, who are sometimes absentees, or else into the hands of financial corporations, which are impersonal. I ask which is the better landlord for the people—the State or the private monopolist? When did we hear of the State selling up a man who had gone back in his rent? No hon. gentleman on that side would venture to sell up an unfortunate selector whom misfortune had compelled to fall into arrears with his rent. The State is a much juster and a much more considerate landlord than the private individual. Would the Minister for Railways and many of his nationality be in Queensland now if it were not for the landlordism in Ireland? And yet when he has established himself here he wants to establish the seeds of that system here. He wants to establish in this fresh soil the seeds of this system which has driven thousands of his fellow-countrymen beyond the seas and expatriated them from their homes. Yet the system of landlordism that prevails in Ireland to-day is a better system of landlordism than prevails in Queensland to-day. It is better than the English; it is better than the American; for by special Acts of Parliament it has been shorn of many of its worst evils, but still it is an evil in itself. But there we have the old system of landlordism pure and undefiled, the absolute right of the individual, who exchanges so much coin for a piece of land, to say what he will do with it, or say he will do nothing, if he likes. Hon. members on the other side of the House have spoken of the spread of prickly pear, and of the rabbit overrunning the country. What about the landlord who in every direction throughout Queensland prevents the proper utilisation of land? Wherever I go I see vacant estates, estates locked up, and round about people compelled to herd in close, ill-ventilated dwellings in a narrow street, with no room to spread out. What would you think of two persons in a 40-acre paddock wrestling for breathing space? And yet people in Queensland struggling for land are exactly in the same position. With land everywhere around, they are prevented from spreading out and settling on the land, and the Government want to add to this evil. They want to sell the land in every direction, and add to the evil. I am totally opposed to such a system. I believe it is one of the curses of the world, and wherever it is resorted to it does a great deal of harm, and very little good. I need only to appeal to the facts of history as evidence of this. Let any hon. member read the Highlanders' experiences in Scotland, let him read the Crofters' experiences, and they will give him a very clear idea that the landlord is a ravenous tiger which must be chained up, and the only way in which he can be chained up is by the State preventing the land from going into the hands of private individuals. The area passing into the hands of private persons, I regret to say, is growing as rapidly in Queensland as in any of the colonies, and I hardly think it will be disputed that the aggregation of large estates has been increasing throughout the world. The tendency is not for the cutting up of large estates and the settling of large populations on them. The tendency is for them to drift into the hands of

corporations, so that their estates may increase in size enormously; and so long as we have a system of taxation which exempts these companies from paying a proper share towards the revenue of the country, so long will it be much more profitable to let land lie idle than to put it to use. The Government instead of selling the land should propose some system of taxation on land values. The taxation of land values such as they have in other countries would be of much greater use and be more efficient in settling this deficit, which appears to weigh on the shoulders of the Government like "the old man of the sea" on the shoulders of Sinbad. I will give an illustration in point. The Government sold a piece of land in Queen street, at a Crown lands sale nineteen years ago for £4,600. A piece of that land, 32 feet by 152 feet, was sold the other day for £16,000. Now, the enormous increase that has taken place in the value of that little block of

[7.30 p.m.] land sold by the Government so many years ago is a value that has been made by the growth of population, the expenditure of private and public capital, and the establishment of all the machinery of government.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: What block is that?

Mr. LESINA: That is Allan and Stark's block in Queen street, and it is not a corner block. Reckoning the area of the land as 530 yards, which the Government sold for £4,600, it amounts to one-ninth of an acre, and the price realised is £12,800, showing that property in that vicinity is worth £115,200 an acre. A penny in the £ on that would realise a very handsome sum indeed for the public Treasury. Three-pence in the £ would realise £1,440 a year, and a similar taxation on country lands—lands, for instance, such as the Seaforth Estate, which the Government are trying to dispose of unconditionally at £4 per acre—would yield only £24 a year, or 1s. 6d. per acre. You would think that the Government, instead of proposing to sell more and more land and add to the evils of monopoly which already exist, would impose a tax on such land values and bring in some substantial sum yearly to the public Treasury. However, that is a piece of statesmanship which is as far beyond them as the moon is from this Chamber. Other countries might indulge in that form of taxation, but perish the thought that we should follow a similar course! We will sell our Western lands about Longreach, Ilfracombe, Clermont, Barcoo, Mitchell, and Capella Stations. Wherever there is a railway open and land near it upon which we might settle a thriving industrial population, the Government will sell these lands; they will sell the country to some private individual who will lock it up and keep it locked up and idle for forty years or more. That this is evidently part and parcel of the Government policy is the opinion of a great many persons who are not even in this Chamber and who do not sit in opposition to the Government. I find that the Nanango correspondent of the *Maryborough Chronicle* makes the following remarks in dealing with the Government sales of lands—

It looks as if the Government was much more anxious to sell the lands in large blocks and build up a landed aristocracy than to help the small farmer. A couple of weeks ago several fine blocks of land, with valuable water frontages, situated at Baramba, were quietly disposed of in a Brisbane auction room without any advertisements notifying the sale having appeared in the local or district papers so that the public might have an opportunity of knowing what was going on. This land (which was worth £5 an acre to the agricultural settler) was sold at the ridiculous price of 12s. 6d. per acre, I have heard, to the adjacent station owners, who, of course, are in no way to blame for securing the best bargain they could.

Anyone else would do the same thing as a matter of business, and be glad to get the chance of such a soft snap. If this land had been effectively and liberally advertised in the district papers, as it ought to have been, the result to the Treasury would have been vastly different, and land fit for agriculture would not have reverted to mere pasturage. This is not by any means a solitary instance of official hankey-pankey, and talking to the gallery while playing into the hands of the big capitalists.

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW: That is not true; it is not agricultural land.

Mr. LESINA: Here is the Government selling land at 12s. 6d. an acre which is said to be worth £5 an acre. I am sure they get as much as they possibly can under the able administration of the hon. member for Musgrave. Perhaps they will go on selling land worth £5 an acre at 10s. an acre. There is no knowing what extraordinary circumstances tend to bring about such an extraordinary result that land worth £5 an acre was knocked down quietly in a Brisbane auction mart at 12s. 6d. an acre to some private individual. It is one of those inexplicable mysteries which no fellow can understand. I find, also, in connection with the selling of these estates, the Government organ in Rockhampton, the *Record*, made the following remarks on the 25th May. Speaking of the proposal to sell land in the Central district, that paper said—

The presumption, therefore, is that a conspiracy has been entered into between the Government and the lessees to enable the latter to acquire the freehold of an additional 50,000 acres or so in order that grazing farm settlement may be effectually blocked in that part of the country. This sale is no sudden inspiration, for the portions must have been surveyed in 320-acre lots purposely for the company. There can be no question that the sale, although perhaps warranted by a literal construction of the Land Act, 1897, is a distinct evasion of its spirit. The lands to be offered on Talavera and Weribone are on an altogether more modest scale, and being situated in the Southern division their sale may not be strongly objected to. But the protest against the sale of the Lansdowne areas will be emphatic.

The Government are very fortunate in this respect, that the papers generally support their policy. I do not know whether the newspaper support of the Government policy is more induced by love of the Government or hatred of the Labour party. I think rather that it is induced by hatred of the Labour party. However, it is very clear that if the Government of the day are perfectly satisfied with the newspaper support, the newspapers are perfectly satisfied to support the Government. It is a case of "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours." The Labour party have nothing to give, and they get nothing. But the mere statement of the fact that the newspapers support the Government policy is no argument in favour of the Government policy. Many of the American and London newspapers supported the black slave system, and fought strongly against emancipation; and though every paper in the country supported the Government, that would be no argument to my mind in favour of selling the national estate. As a matter of fact, it is not true that all the newspapers support the Government policy. There are many notable exceptions. Here is one paper that does not—the *Toowoomba Chronicle*. That paper, after quoting certain passages from the article in the Rockhampton *Bulletin*, goes on to say—

These words of our Rockhampton contemporary will appeal very forcibly to every old resident of the Darling Downs and to all others acquainted with its history. This action of the Government will be condemned in the very strongest terms. In past years land was sold on Peak Downs in huge blocks at 10s. per acre, and those large freeholds to-day are the means of preventing a large number of small grazing farmers settling in that neighbourhood. The very eyes of the land have already been picked out by the pastoralists in that locality, and we now find the present Government

following in the old lines. It looks as if the Public Lands Department was once more being administered in the interests of the large pastoralist and not in the interests of the agriculturist or small grazing farmer.

And it further says—

There is another matter in this connection to which it is well also to call attention, and that is not only the wholesale selling of the freehold of the land at nominal prices, but the locking up of the leased country for an unduly lengthened period of years. As our readers are aware, leading pastoralists in Queensland have been agitating for some time past for an extension of the Western leases, and the gentleman who is likely to be the accredited Ministerial candidate at the approaching bye-election in North Brisbane is the leader in this agitation. However justifiable it may be as regards the drought-stricken runs in the extreme South-west—and we believe that in those cases an exception may be made in common justice to the lessees who have not abandoned their country, and particularly as it is not likely to be required for close settlement for many years to come—we do not think there is any justification for an extension as regards the runs closer in. Information supplied by Mr. G. Kerr, M.L.A., shows that the very pick of the leased runs on the Barcoo, such as Portland, Alice Downs, Isis Downs, Northampton, and Terrick, will not be available before 1913. And yet the pastoral lessees want these lands to be locked up for a further term of years. As it is, closer settlement is largely blocked in that district for the next twelve years; but the pastoralists want to block it for an even much longer term. To that end they are bringing all pressure to bear upon the Government, and, considering its present composition, they are hopeful of success if the present Ministry remain in office. No doubt the action of the Lands Department in playing into their hands by the sale of the Peak Downs lands mentioned points the way.

I commend that extract to hon. members on both sides of the Chamber, because it expresses largely public opinion outside. The Government do not represent the opinion of every man outside any more than members on this side represent the opinion of every man outside. There is a big section of the public not allied to any party who do not believe in the sacrifice of our public estate for mere revenue purposes. So far no arguments have been offered by any hon. member who has spoken in this Chamber in favour of this policy of alienating our national estate. The policy of the Government appears to be, as it has been put by a member of this Chamber, "aliens and alienation"—coloured aliens on the one hand and alienation of the national estate on the other. That is their policy boiled down and written in letters of fire across their forehead. They proposed to sell a piece of land on Logan Downs in my electorate the other day. When the *Gazette* notice came out it was noticed by a prominent Ministerial supporter in the district named Mr. B. Behr, a tobaccoist. He came down to the hotel where I was staying, and said to me, "What do you think of the Government now?" He was frothing at the mouth with indignation. I said, "What is the matter?" He replied, "They propose to sell a piece of land on Logan Downs in 320-acre blocks." This the Government could do under sections 176 and 177 of the Crown Lands Act of 1897. Mr. Behr said, "We must do something to prevent the sale of that land." I asked, "What shall we do?" He said, "I think we had better call a public meeting." I said, "You can call a public meeting if you care to do so, and I will go out and see the selectors who want the land." I drafted a petition, and everybody signed it. We had a meeting of dairymen, settlers, and farmers, at which resolutions were passed condemning the action of the Government. Similar resolutions were passed by the municipal council, and the petition protesting against the sale was signed by persons of every shade of political opinion, and by some of no political opinion at all. The Rockhampton Chamber of Commerce also passed a resolution condemning the proposed sale, and the

result was that the Government, at the last moment, withdrew the land from sale. We showed by that outburst of popular indignation—which was the expression of the feeling of no particular class, but of farmers, selectors, grocers, tradespeople, townspeople, and people in every rank and walk and industry of life—that the sale of Logan Downs was an unpopular move on the part of the Government. The land was wanted for settlement; but, when the opportunity came to cut it up for that purpose, the Government proposed to sell it because it was far away from Southern Queensland. The sale was not advertised in Central Queensland. It was purely an accident that Mr. B. Behr happened to see that advertisement in the *Government Gazette*; only for that the land would have been sold in Brisbane, and we should have known nothing about it. Is this the way to treat people who have gone out in that portion of the country and opened it up to settlement? A great part of the alienated land in the same district has been sold in the same way—29,220 acres were previously sold to Frederick William Fairbairn, the present lessee, and the Government wanted to get rid of another few thousand acres privately through the office of the Brisbane auctioneer. The people of the district knew nothing about it, although they were anxiously waiting for an opportunity to settle upon the land, and make homes for themselves and their children. This is the Government that is constantly prating with these hypocritical pretensions of fatherly interest in the selector, and a desire to promote settlement in Queensland. They have no desire to promote settlement; they merely desire to sacrifice Queensland for a cash consideration; they merely want to sell our national estate so that they may handle the money. They are too frightened of their supporters outside to impose direct taxation, and they therefore propose to sell the public estate in that part of the country that returns Labour men; that part of the country that does not give them support. That is why they go to the Central district, and also to the Northern portion of the colony, to sell the national estate. They are frightened to sell land around Brisbane; they are frightened the people would be up in arms against it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: There is none to sell here.

Mr. LESINA: Other Governments have sold the land around Brisbane, so that the present Government have none to sell. They sell land in the Central district, and buy it back in the South—they place us in the hands of the land monopolists up there to free them from the land monopolists down here. No wonder that the Rockhampton *Record*, a Government organ, denounced this auction sale on Logan Downs, and the other auction sales on the Barcoo and at other places as mere mock auction sales, as conspiracies entered into between the department and the lessee to allow the pastoral lessee to get that portion of his estate which would otherwise be cut up for settlement. I find that in an excellent leading article which was published in the *Telegraph* some time ago dealing with this question the writer said—

Queensland is not without her record of recourse to sales of the public estate to tide her over emergent difficulties; and the fact that she is not alone in this matter neither qualifies nor diminishes the significance of the recital. Her experience in this regard seems to have had a regular cyclic course, particularly extending over three decades. The end of the first was in 1831. At that time it was a recognised thing that sales of the public estate should annually bring into the State coffers a moderate sum. Subsequently the sum was fixed at about £70,000. During the years 1881, 1882, and 1883 a series of special sales was effected, and the gross

proceeds enriched the Treasury to the extent of £423,990. But it must not be forgotten that contemporaneously with those special sales, sales by selection and pre-emption also went on, so that from those three sources the public exchequer benefited to the extent of £586,706. At that point, the 1884 Lands Act came into force, which provided for leasing instead of selling public lands, and the annual sale thereof fell below £70,000 per year. Then the trouble began anew. There followed five years during which the annual deficits ran up to a sum exceeding a million of money. Treasury bills were issued, and a Special Sales of Land Act was passed for the eventual liquidation of the Bills. Under that Act the sum of £432,824 was raked in. But ordinary sales from the year 1892 to 1897 produced only £202,397. On the normal average of £70,000 per annum, those years should have produced about £420,000; whereas, on account of the forced special sales, which were carried out to meet extravagant liabilities, in reality they produced only about £217,603 extra.

Furthermore, it may be shown that a similar state of affairs related to the years preceding; and that, therefore, the process was something like saving at the spigot and losing at the bung-hole. Thus had began; but worse was left behind: for notwithstanding the special sales of the public estate during the periods mentioned, current revenue regularly went to the leeway; and as pointed out, during the years covering 1890 to 1894, that leeway reached the alarming sum of over a million of money. It may be that these facts cannot be accepted as any irrefutable reason against a renewal of the system of special sales of public lands; it may be that they can; but the facts themselves remain, and from them some inferences must be drawn. Taking the periods of these special sales in all their significant relation to our general prosperity, it cannot be denied that apparently the expedient, if not a failure, was anything but a pronounced success. To deal with them in order; in 1881 they were resorted to, and still things went to the leeway; again in 1891 they were tried, with the same unfortunate result; and as a fitting *fin de siècle*, there seems to be no other alternative but that the Government, now in its present extremity, must resort to the same apparently desperate expedient. The coincidence and the crisis seem very ominous.

Speaking of our public debt and the manner in which it is secured, the *Telegraph* says—

Honestly to treat the public creditor, to whom we are indebted to the tune of about £35,000,000, this matter cannot be handled in any spirit of jaunty confidence. Mainly that debt is secured upon the consolidated revenue of this State. The term "consolidated revenue" is one of comprehensiveness. It covers every available public asset, for from those assets it is derived, and upon their maintenance it depends. They comprise not only public lands, but railways, Customs and excise, and all solvent assets of the State.

And as the Government propose to sell as much as they possibly can of our chief public asset, the continuance of such a system of alienation must eventually bring its own punishment. The time must arrive when the Government cannot any longer secure purchasers for their lands. It is questionable, after the statement of the hon. member for Balonne, whether any person in Queensland would care to pay 10s. per acre for land to raise sheep or cattle. If that hon. gentleman is speaking the truth—and there are those who believe he is speaking the truth—his statement should, to a large extent, prevent speculators from investing their spare cash in purchasing any portion of our national estate. The Minister for Lands says he will not sell the worst portions of our public estate. He must sell those portions that he can get bids for, and it is contended by those who are in the know that our best lands have already been sold, and that that which is good and not already sold is so far removed from markets that it is almost impossible to get persons to take it up, with any prospect of profit. While speaking earlier in the evening, some reference was made to the fact that 337 persons own 45 per cent. of the alienated land in New Zealand, and an hon. member asked—I think it was the Minister for Lands—Is not New Zealand prosperous? New Zealand is prosperous, and her prosperity is largely due to the fact that she has adopted

a system of getting back into the hands of the people the land which has been alienated. Some time ago Mr. Frank Carpenter, an eminent American journalist, had an interview with Mr. Richard Seddon in connection with the land policy of New Zealand, and the report of the interview was published in the *New Orleans Democrat*. Many of Mr. Seddon's statements are of considerable interest in view of the fact that it is proposed here to sell our national estate, and I propose to trouble the House with some extracts from the report. Mr. Carpenter said—

I had a talk with Richard Seddon, the Premier of New Zealand, over the policy of the Government as to its public lands. He is in perfect accord with the system of cutting up the big estates, and says that all such experiments undertaken by the Government have proved successful. Here are his own words—

"The ideal condition would be one in which the State owned all the land and leased it out to the people on a low rate of interest on certain conditions. Such a system might be introduced into a new country, but here in New Zealand we have property rights which have grown up through the past half century which prevent our adopting such radical measures. As the Government wanted money it sold the land in large tracts at prices ridiculously low. Much was bought by absentee capitalists at 10s. or thereabouts per acre. I know one man who paid 10s. per acre for 50,000 acres. That land is now worth £10 an acre. Others bought tracts of 20,000 acres, and 30,000 acres, and some 200,000 acres. This land they held, lying back and waiting for it to increase in value. In some cases they used it for grazing sheep, with, perhaps, half-a-dozen shepherds on a principality which should support several thousand farmers.

"At that time," Premier Seddon went on, "there seemed a craze for large farms. The small holders were bought out by these large ones. Corporations were formed in England to get control of the New Zealand lands.

"The lands were managed for syndicates and the tenants were squeezed in every possible way to increase the dividends. In Parliament here it was asserted that the manager of one of these absentee land companies had made a speech in a directors' meeting in London apologising because he could only declare a dividend and a bonus of 15 per cent. at that time, and stating that the shareholders must not look for higher dividends until the wages in New Zealand were reduced. The tenants were charged such high rents that there was no money in farming. The small buildings were mortgaged, so that the farmowners paid as much as the renters, and in the meantime most of the money was going to England. Times became hard and our population began to fall off. This showed us that we must change the system, and we adopted the present method to get back the lands and put them in the hands of the people.

"Our new system has been recently adopted, and it is one which is necessarily slow. We have in New Zealand all told about 34,000,000 acres occupied as farms. They are in the hands of 62,000 persons. Of these, 105 own 50,000 acres or more each, and nearly 400 own between 10,000 and 50,000 acres each. In all the holdings 82 per cent. are under 320 acres, and 58 per cent. are of 100 acres or less.

"We have already spent more than £1,000,000 buying up private estates and throwing them open to the people."

What does it profit the Government if they get £500,000 for 1,000,000 acres of land, and spend ten times the amount in ten years time to buy the land back again? It is not a profitable transaction, yet the Government are doing it in spite of these facts, because they can rely on their majority. The majority will do anything that the Government wants them to do; they never dream of thinking for themselves.

"The lands are not bought directly out of the Government funds, but the money from them is raised in England, at 3 per cent. interest, on long time. The Government guarantees the payment of the notes, and this is also secured by a mortgage on the land. The Government charges 4 per cent. to purchasers on long-time leases. It charges 5 per cent. on the lease, with the advance for improvements added, but as this is on the actual price of the unimproved land it makes a very low rental. Of the money received 3 per cent. goes to the paying of the interest, 1 per cent. pays the

"expenses of the administration, etc., and the other 1 per cent. is put into a sinking fund, which will eventually pay off the purchase notes and vest land in the Government. I refer, of course, to land leased."

The gentleman proceeds to explain the system under which lands repurchased are leased out to people. The facts I have read from the report of the interview between Mr. Carpenter and Mr. Seddon will show that in New Zealand, as a result of the system of monopoly, on account of impoverished Governments selling land at 10s. an acre, they were compelled to adopt this system. Mayhap on some other occasion, when we are dealing with our system of land administration in Queensland, the opportunity will present itself of more exhaustively discussing the methods the New Zealand Government adopted in settling people on the soil. New Zealand saw the error of her ways in selling the national estate, just as the error has been discovered in New South Wales, South Australia, and Victoria, and where they do not buy back estates they tax them back. In Queensland we have adopted neither system. We have made mistakes in selling land at 10s. an acre on the Darling Downs and Peak Downs, and for a less sum about Brisbane, and year after year we go on perpetuating the system, and no attempt is made to adopt any reasonable method to avoid the evils which have followed in the train of private ownership of land. It seems to me that the Government, in carrying out this policy of selling the public estate by auction, are doing

[8 p.m.] an immense amount of injury to those who are to come after us. It has been said by one member on this side that we should not trouble about posterity—that "posterity has done nothing for us"—but I think that is a very sordid view to take of the matter.

Mr. JENKINSON: They will have to pay our debts.

Mr. LESINA: Yes. Posterity will have to pay our debts to a certain extent. They will, at any rate, have to pay the interest on the debts contracted by their fathers before them. In fact, there is hardly a piece of useful legislation placed on our statute-books that does not affect posterity. Most of the measures we place on the statute-books may affect future generations just as legislation which was passed by legislators hundreds of years ago, as a result of their labours, affect us now, and mayhap they will have reference to generations to come. We are supposed to legislate for all ages; and whether we legislate for good or bad, it should be the duty of the generation that occupies the present administration to see that such laws as we pass will not do any harm to the generations to come. If we proceed to sell the national estate we not only impoverish ourselves directly, but by permitting private individuals to block settlement we curtail investment of capital. We also know that there is placed in the hands of this Administration the enormous power of appropriating the results of the labour of the people to come after us. That is the chief reason why I object to the selling of our national estate. If monopoly could be proved to be a good thing I would vote for it—speak for it; I would get on the highways and byways and lift my voice in behalf of it. I would take Huxley's advice—if I saw a great truth I would get on the house-tops and yell it out all over the country so that every member of the community might equally become possessors of it. If monopoly in this way is a good thing, why should not we sell the whole of the country—put it up to auction—and let it be in the possession of one, ten, or 10,000 men, so that we all get the benefits that will flow in the train? I can quite understand private ownership in clothes and

houses, because they are the result of labour on the raw material produced by Nature. I can quite understand men owning these things, because they produce them; but I cannot understand men owning land in the sense the Government intend under this Bill—that persons can purchase land from the State. I think it was Carlyle who, in a fine burst of satire, speaks of the ridiculous impossibility of selling all the land in the world for so many pennies. Now, this portion of the world is to be swopped away into the hands of private individuals for certain coin of the realm. I strongly object to that principle. The principle underlying the Bill is the private ownership of lands, and that leads to monopoly. That is one of the evils that result from the private ownership of lands. It would be a different matter altogether if the State would see that the lands were put into immediate use, for then labour would be employed, and that would lead to the prosperity of the community. Even then, I should be inclined to oppose the selling of Crown lands by the Government. I strenuously oppose the selling of pieces of Crown lands into private hands without any conditions, and I think the evil is accentuated in this way. I shall do all I can by my voice and my vote to stop legislation of this sort, because it is reactionary and retrogressive—it is a step backwards. We should keep time with the march of the people in the other colonies, and do the best we can to keep our national estate, or to so administer it that it will be of greatest use in the administration of the affairs of the country. I do not believe in getting rid of it in small parcels to private owners, and thus creating monopolies. I shall vote against the second reading of this Bill, and if the measure gets into committee I shall move certain drastic amendments which will, I think, improve it.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. D. H. Dairymple, *Mackay*): We have so often heard the hon. member's opinions on the sale of land by the Crown that they are perfectly well known. They can all be found in Henry George's works, and in other works which can be found in the library. It seems to me that the great proportion of the hon. member's remarks are not particularly relevant to the question before the House. We are not called here to reconstitute society on an entirely new basis, and unless we do that, we cannot fall in with the views of the hon. member for Clermont.

Mr. JACKSON: We are here to prevent monopolies.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: We are here, not to revolutionise society, but to make provision for the retiring of certain Treasury bills by the sale of lands. But to talk of this Bill as some new phase of legislation which is desired in many countries, and which obtains in very few, is more or less beating the air. It is not at all likely that society will submit to be remodelled, and we have been told of the terrible evils which will flow from the right of private ownership in lands. The opinions of the hon. members for Clermont and Leichhardt may be right or they may be wrong, but we must look at the outside facts and ask ourselves what other nations have done. We don't know what nations have adopted the system of private ownership in lands, but I think the examples of the United States and of the countries in Europe and nearly all civilised nations will outweigh the opinions of Henry George and a few communal savages. I believe that land is leased by the State in Egypt, also in some portions of India, in China, and Japan; so that we are told to disregard the whole practice set us by the civilised world, and to follow the hon. member for Clermont and coloured aliens. (Laughter.) I am not enamoured of the prospect. We hold

a very large area of land—I suppose 90 per cent. of it belongs to the State. So far from the system in vogue in Europe producing the terrible poverty which is pointed out to us by some persons who have somewhat eccentric views, we have actually to go to these people to borrow money to help us to carry on. According to those hon. members, these Britishers and Americans and Germans ought to be borrowing money from the people of Queensland, where so much land is held by the Crown, instead of doing exactly the opposite. There is not the slightest evidence, except the opinions of a few persons on the subject, that the passing away of land from the Crown is attended by any very disastrous consequences. If we can manage to be as prosperous as the United States of America, which last year had a surplus of £15,000,000, and a balance in trade of about £137,000,000 in its favour—if that is the result of the system, I think we can venture to follow it. But there is no proposal on the part of the Government to sell all the lands of the colony.

Mr. W. HAMILTON: Why not—if it is good to sell any, why not sell the lot?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: That is not the proposal. In the present condition of affairs the endeavour is to find some means to meet the Treasury bills which it has been necessary to issue in order to cover the overdraft of the colony. We can either do that or we can go and borrow money—always assuming that we can find someone to lend it. The hon. member who has just spoken—as other hon. members have done—has really not faced the alternatives. We have to borrow money off the European capitalists, or from the objectionable Australian capitalists; or we have to sell land, or we have to refuse to pay our debts. Those are the alternatives in which we are placed. It is suggested that we may put on more taxation. But there is no extra taxation possible by which we could not only pay our way, but also pay the interest on the public debt—which is not becoming less—and at the same time allow us to obtain £530,000 in addition next year.

Mr. JENKINSON: What taxation did you advocate at Mackay?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not want to run off the track; I have not the slightest idea what taxation I advocated there.

Mr. JENKINSON: I know from what the public Press reported, and so do others.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: If the hon. gentleman thinks he is going to get anything out of that, he is perfectly welcome to it. I have no doubt of what I said on that particular occasion, but if he wants to draw me off the track, I can assure him that I shall get back to it again. I shall not get “bushed” in the least. If the hon. member really wants to know what I said, and if it is in order to reply, I think he should give notice of the question. (Laughter.) I advocated in this House long ago that if taxation is required, probably one of the first sources which will be turned to is the income tax. I have always said that this is a most equitable tax, and I shall not oppose it if such a tax is brought in. But I do not know how this weakens the case, or alters the position with regard to the present deficit. I would like the hon. member to inform me in what way it is in the least relevant. The Labour party say, “Impose an income tax.” If a tax of that kind were imposed, would it raise £100,000 next year? Supposing it did, how is that going to be made up to £530,000? Is it not quite clear that some businesslike steps must be taken in order to balance our accounts and put them in a satis-

factory position? All the combined talent of the Opposition has not been able, so far as I know, to discover how you will get rid of the overdraft of £530,000 without borrowing money from somebody and giving an “I O U” for it. We can leave this debit balance on the wrong side of the ledger, or we can raise money by the issue of Treasury bills to cover it. We must do one of those things, except we do as they did in the middle ages—turn lead into gold. We have to be dependent on our own earnings, and when we cannot add to the burden of the taxpayers very largely, the only thing we can do is what a man would do in private business—that is, get time and spread his debit over a considerable period. That is what the Government propose to do—to issue Treasury notes and to sell land to redeem those notes—not in large quantities—not because it is desired by the Government that all the land which is dealt with in the future shall be freehold—but because money is wanted. We have a large amount of land. We have heard hon. members in this House and on the platform declaim against the selling even of a small portion of land. Suppose we sell 100,000, or even 1,000,000 acres of land, it would, comparatively, be only a small portion of our estate; but the moment it is proposed to sell land they seem to be unable to see the position. It may be a wise thing not to sell land. It may be a wise thing to lend money. It may be a wise thing not to borrow money. But when it becomes an alternative whether we shall increase our public debt or diminish it by sale of land, that is an intelligible position to take up. While we do not like selling land—as we do not like parting with gold, because it diminishes our assets—still, if by diminishing the assets in one way we can diminish our liabilities, we must be content as business people to do so. If you take any business man in the world he will say, “I am not anxious to get rid of property or of my money.” He would prefer possibly to keep his money and keep his horses and keep his stores. But if he owes a certain amount of money, he will not grudge parting with his money, or selling his land, or in some other way reducing his liability. The transaction must not be looked at in the abstract way—whether you want, or do not want, to sell the land—but whether, under the circumstances, it is the best means of meeting a particular difficulty. A vast deal too much has been made with regard to our selling land. The colony has not been injured by the fact that a certain portion of the land has been sold. We have still, I think, a small quantity of land left.

Mr. W. HAMILTON: Do you know that the area of good land is only small?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: If we get rid of a little more land we shall only be in the same position as most civilised people of the world. If we get rid of a little more land to private owners the colony is not going to meet with any catastrophe. I have no doubt hon. members opposite say they are pursuing an exceedingly wise policy, and are very much to be congratulated on the position they take up. Sir Victoria had also adopted the Henry Georgian theory, and they, too, had refused to sell their land; and say that Tasmania, following the example of its big brothers, had never parted with one single acre of the national estate. I have no doubt we should then find the condition of those colonies painted in the most glowing colours; but would it surprise hon. members opposite to know that we have got more land in this colony to sell than the colonies of New South Wales, Victoria, and Tasmania ever had.

Mr. W. HAMILTON: We do not get half the revenue they do from their land.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: That is a very good reason indeed why we should dispose of very much more land, and it does not meet the statements which I have just been making in regard to the area of ground that has been sold. I wish these facts could be grasped by the public—these facts in regard to the position of Queensland in regard to its national estate, and the fallacious and unjustifiable fears which hon. members opposite appear to entertain. I want the basis of their arguments to be exposed, because after all they are phantoms to delude the public, and I should like the real position to get into *Hansard*. Now, the whole of the area of Victoria is 56,245,760 acres, the area of New South Wales is 198,400,000 acres, and the area of Tasmania is 16,777,600 acres. The total acreage of those great colonies of the Australian Commonwealth is 271,423,360 acres. The total acreage of Queensland is 427,838,080 acres, and we have sold since 1859, the year in which separation took place, 13,323,524 acres, and the balance we have left unsold is 414,514,556 acres.

Mr. W. HAMILTON: Give us the revenue derived from the land?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member can work that out for himself. If he wants to get the information in regard to revenue it will not take him much trouble, and he had better do it on his own. Now, the acreage of Victoria, New South Wales, and Tasmania being 271,423,360, and the unsold acreage of Queensland being 414,514,556, and the sold acreage of Queensland being 13,323,524—there is a little sum I can put to hon. members, and it is this: If 13,323,524 acres have been sold in forty-two years, in what time at the same rate shall we be left with unsold land the size of the three colonies I have named?

Mr. W. HAMILTON: It all depends upon how long you are in power.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: If we take it at exactly the same rate at which we have been selling land—and in the early days of the colony it was sold in very large areas indeed; but, assuming the past rate is maintained, neither more nor less being sold, at what time will this colony be in danger of being reduced to the original area of New South Wales, Victoria, and Tasmania? How long will it take us at the present rate, which is breaking the hearts of my thoughtless friends opposite, who never go into figures and never make a calculation, to be reduced to the original condition of those three colonies? Hon. members opposite only deal in generalities in order to daze the multitude. They do not think for themselves, and they do not want the people to calculate. If they did, their present numbers would I am afraid dwindle away to nothing in a very short time. Well, before we need be in the least apprehension we should have to wait for 451 years—when I say “we,” I mean our successors—before they were reduced to the miserable condition of New South Wales, Tasmania, and Victoria, assuming that the Governments of those colonies had never sold a solitary acre. Why, anyone would suppose there would be nothing left in the colony in a few years if hon. members opposite once relaxed their efforts in regard to public economy in the way of selling land. Yet, at the past rate of disposal, we shall in 451 years have 271,423,680 acres on hand still unsold for the people's patrimony. Now, for the 13,323,524 acres which we have sold we have obtained £6,815,079. But we have got the balance of our land—the national estate as hon. members opposite are so fond of calling it, although they do not call our minerals the national estate—they allow £50,000,000 worth of gold to be sent out of the

country, in addition to £10,000,000 worth of other minerals, and they do not deplore the squandering of the national estate in that respect—they are perfectly indifferent to that huge leakage. That is the value which the land we have sold has yielded. The land has not gone out of the colony, and the £6,000,000 have come into the Treasury. If the balance was sold at the same rate only—and if the labour dogma is true, the value ought to increase with population—but if we only obtain the same price for the balance, we should then get £2,141,882,280, and it will take us, selling at the same rate as we have sold in the past, 1,110 years before we can dispose of the balance. Why, under those circumstances should hon. members opposite picture a desolate Queensland with all the land gone? I think if we attempt to provide for the next five or six generations it will be sufficient. We cannot expect to monopolise the brains of the whole of the future. Our children, doubtless, will take care of themselves, as we take care of ourselves, and I think hon. members need not be anxious about a problem which the people of the future will not be called upon to deal with for 1,100 years; and even at that time they will be in no worse position than we are to-day when we go to our bankers and ask them to lend us so much gold or silver. Under all the circumstances, I do not think there is any immediate cause for hon. members to disturb themselves. I do not know why they do it, and

I cannot believe that they are serious. [8.30 p.m.] Sometimes, I must admit, I see a twinkle in their eye, and I know how difficult it is in this Chamber for some members to shake themselves free from party politics, but I cannot see how hon. members can take seriously the position assumed by the hon. member for Clermont habitually and by the hon. member for Leichhardt periodically. They must certainly know that the colony is in debt, and that it is necessary to deal with that debt in some way. Then how are we to deal with it?

Mr. BROWNE: Put it off for 1,100 years.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The leader of the Labour party is going to out-Herod Herod, and wait for 1,100 years before he will settle this debt, but we think that might not perhaps be fair to future generations. I do not know that I need reply to the various criticisms which have been advanced in regard to the proposals of the Government. When a man makes use of the ordinary means which a business man would employ in balancing his accounts, and gets credit in one case for a commodity which he has to dispose of in order to stop a deficit in another, I do not consider that he deserves the adverse criticism which has been offered in regard to this Bill. A similar policy has been adopted in New Zealand, in Victoria, and in other Australian States, and I can give the House the precise amount of land which has been sold in those colonies. There is not the slightest proof that other colonies have received any injury from following this course. There is not the slightest proof that New South Wales has suffered from selling 40 per cent. of its land; and we are always told with regard to New Zealand that it is the most prosperous of the colonies, yet it has sold relatively ten times as much land as we have. Therefore it will be years and years before this Government can be regarded as culpable as the neighbouring colonies, none of which hon. members seem disposed to find fault with, and some of which they seem to praise. From what has been done elsewhere, I think we may fairly assume that we are doing what business people would do under the circumstances. They have not a superstitious idea that if they part with a certain ring or a certain glass ill-luck will befall the

family. If they sell a piece of ground in order to pay off a debt they do not imagine that anything unfortunate will happen. Business people do not think that, and neither do the neighbouring colonies. The neighbouring colonies have done exactly the very thing for which we are maligned or at any rate denounced by hon. members opposite. Whatever we are doing, we are merely doing to a very much less extent what other colonies have done, and when we have got more land unsold than any of the other three colonies I have mentioned, and they have sold 30, 40, or 50 per cent. of their land, why should we be afraid of selling a small portion of ours? It has been said that we are not justified in selling land to meet the deficit, because that deficit is a temporary one. I think that, however strongly one might hold the view that to sell land was undesirable, most people would admit that there are circumstances under which the desirability of selling land was manifest. It is notorious that we have had lately certain circumstances which have disarranged our finances. We believe that this disarrangement is of a temporary nature. I need not mention the drought, but I must mention the difficulties in connection with federation and the federal tariff. Those difficulties have dislocated business very largely, and they must be taken into consideration. We do not suppose that they will be permanent, but there is an overdraft, and that overdraft must be met, for it is necessary to keep up our credit. We have no reason to apprehend that the particular circumstances in connection with the childhood or infancy of federation are likely to be permanent. I may remind hon. members of a quotation which has been made from the *Sydney Telegraph* to the effect that a competent financial journal had said that the revenue of Queensland this year would be diminished by £188,000 by the Commonwealth tariff. If that is the case why should hon. members object to some small portion of this sum which we hope to raise by Treasury bills being expended in order to supplement the ordinary revenue? It is not an ordinary period at all, and if we give bills on the future for a portion of that fund it will be necessary to meet our expenses next year or the year after, and there is nothing that any reasonable statesman can object to in the proposals of the Government. It is the saving of this transaction and the justification for confidently expecting public approval that it is one of the events which we anticipate will not recur again for a considerable time. We cannot have federation again until we get a divorce, and we hope we cannot get a divorce, and that things will go on satisfactorily. The Government are taking a course which is a very obvious and very simple one, and which has been resorted to, and doubtless will be resorted to by any other colony in like circumstances in the future.

Mr. JACKSON (*Kennedy*): I think the Minister who has just sat down makes the fifth member of the Cabinet who has spoken on this Bill. It is an exceptional thing to find that so many members of the Ministry consider it their duty to get up and defend the proposals of the Government. The Secretary for Agriculture pointed out—which is a fact of course—that we are in debt, that we have a deficit to provide for, and he asks what remedies the Opposition suggest in place of the proposals of the Government? I think several members on this side who have spoken have suggested other remedies, but, apparently, to deaf ears. The hon. gentleman also says that we never make calculations. Well, I have just taken the trouble to make a small calculation, and although not quite so elaborate as some of those the hon. gentleman has favoured us with during the course of his speech, yet it will show that we have some

remedies to offer to meet the present unfortunate financial difficulty. Amongst other proposals members on this side have suggested a land tax and an income tax. I find that in New Zealand last year they obtained from land taxation £294,000, and from income tax £173,000, making altogether £468,000 from land and income taxes.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They did not get that amount last year.

Mr. JACKSON: These are the latest figures.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: From the Treasurer's Statement the other day?

Mr. JACKSON: I have the Treasurer's Statement here.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I do not think those are the figures; I do not think it was so much.

Mr. JACKSON: I think the hon. gentleman will find that these are the figures for the last financial year ending in March, but if not, they are the figures for the previous year. If Queensland is as wealthy a country as New Zealand, and the people here are as enterprising as they are in that country, it is fair to assume that Queensland would produce as much land and income tax in proportion to the population as New Zealand. If a population of 750,000 return £468,000 from land and income tax, it is only a simple sum in proportion to find that 500,000 people ought to produce £312,000. As we get £66,000 already from a dividend tax, which is a sort of an income tax, we might deduct that from the £312,000, and then we shall get a net sum of £246,000. That is the proposal I make; and I would like to ask which action would be more likely to send up our credit in the eyes of the people at home—what I have just proposed, or what the Government propose under this Bill? I say it would make our credit much better in the eyes of the people at home if we imposed a land and income tax, if we showed them that we were prepared to face this difficulty instead of selling our lands to monopolists—which is really the point at issue. If we did that we should raise our credit enormously, in my opinion, in the eyes of financiers and moneylenders. I would like here to refer for a few moments to the position the hon. member for South Brisbane took up when he spoke last Thursday. He contended that he would rather see the deficit funded than sell lands under the proposals contained in this Bill. I am not quite sure whether that is a contention that can be justified. At any rate, I do not think it would be wise to talk about funding this deficit until past deficits have been squared off. I recognise that they have been squared off to a certain extent. Table L of the Treasurer's tables shows that since the foundation of the colony we have had deficits equal to £3,055,000, while we have had surpluses amounting to £1,886,000, the difference being £1,169,000, an amount which has practically been funded. When that amount of £1,169,000 has been wiped off the slate, then there will be time enough to talk about funding the present or any future deficit. In listening to the speeches of Ministers on the Bill, I must confess that I have got into a sort of tangle. I don't want to be uncomplimentary to other members of the Cabinet, but I am afraid that if other Ministers give us as different explanations and versions and apologies as those who have spoken, I shall have to get what I have never got before—namely, some ice to cool my fevered brow.

The PREMIER: You don't look a bit excited.

Mr. JACKSON: I am not excited, but I am sorry to say that Ministers have given so many different reasons and explanations that I am really in a tangle as to the position the Government take up under the Bill. The Minister for Lands, in introducing the Bill, said the proposal was brought forward as a matter of the direst necessity. I think the Minister for

Railways remarked that we had got into a difficulty through a dispensation of Providence. When we have a deficit it appears to me that Providence is debited with it, but when we have a surplus it is otherwise, because I noticed that the Premier at a banquet some months ago, on his return from South Africa, credited Sir Hugh Nelson with a surplus. I think that is hardly a fair way of dealing with Providence.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: Providence does not mind.

Mr. JACKSON: The Minister for Lands takes up the position that the Bill is introduced because of the direst necessity, but the Minister for Railways, and I think the Home Secretary this afternoon, took a different position, justifying the selling of land because it is a good thing to sell the land—because it is a good thing to capitalise our rentals—to get 10s. capital value instead of renting it at 3d. per acre. The two reasons cannot both be true.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They are not conflicting reasons.

Mr. JACKSON: They are conflicting reasons, because if it is a good thing to sell lands it must be a good thing to sell them apart altogether from any question as to whether we have a deficit or not. Even if we had no deficit, if it is a good thing to sell lands, we ought to sell them to reduce our national debt with the money obtained from the sales. Looking at it from another point of view, one gets mixed in considering the question as to where these lands are to be sold. For instance, the Premier has told us that he expects to get from 10s. to £2 per acre for these lands. Where is he going to get that? Does he think he can get from 10s. to £2 per acre for lands when persons can select homesteads at 2s. 6d. per acre, or can select agricultural farms at a moderate price, and have twenty years to pay? Does he think men will give 10s. to £2 per acre when they can buy lands under the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act with twenty years to pay? Under this Bill the buyers will only have an average time of five years to pay.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: They have up to ten years.

Mr. JACKSON: I say they have only an average time of five years. The first buyers will have ten years, the buyers next year will have nine years, and the buyers three years hence will only have seven years, and so on, but the average time will be only five years.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: All buyers will have ten years from the time of sale.

Mr. JACKSON: If the Government can go on for ten years selling lands, and the buyers have ten years from the time of purchase, that alters my argument to a certain extent; still it does not alter the argument very much so far as the principle is concerned. I cannot understand the point raised by the Minister.

Mr. HARDAIRE: These bills must be retired within ten years.

Mr. JACKSON: Yes, these bills will be retired within ten years, and I cannot see how the point the Minister contends for comes in.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The time will not be extended over the ten years from the time of the sale.

Mr. JACKSON: The Premier the other night when speaking on this matter spoke of coastal lands. Then look at what the Minister for Railways said. That was a horse of another colour. The Minister for Railways in speaking about the Western lands last week described them in a very flagrant way—he as good as said the Western country was worthless—it had the mark of Cain on it; it was drought-stricken; there were no trees on it; it was a region of everlasting drought—and yet the Minister for

Railways thinks innocent pastoralists and the unsophisticated managers of financial institutions are going to buy these Western lands at 10s. an acre. The Premier's argument was that we should sell these lands, and the argument of the Minister for Railways was that these Western lands were worthless to the State, but they might be some good to the pastoralists and financial institutions. I think that this position will be inevitable: if we are going to sell coastal lands the agriculturists will suffer. As the *Courier* pointed out in some of its leaders, although there was drought in the West, Brisbane is as prosperous as ever. The reason is because of the close settlement on the agricultural lands around and at the back of Brisbane. I draw the attention of hon. members who represent Brisbane electorates to this: we are really on the horns of a dilemma. If the coastal lands are sold they will be bought by capitalists or financial speculators, who will only sell again to agriculturists, and make them pay for them, and this will result in blocking settlement, and if we sell the Western lands they will block the grazing farmers. That is the objection we have to this Bill. Of course, it has been contended by hon. members on this side that, if pastoralists wish to buy land under this Bill, they will buy it for strategical reasons—in order to keep out *bond fide* grazing farmers and selectors—and I do not suppose that the Western squatters or financial institutions will buy these lands out West, unless they intended to use them for purposes like that. I have very strong objections to large areas of Western lands being sold and used for monopolistic purposes. It has been contended that these Western lands would not be required for close settlement; that has been contended this afternoon by the Home Secretary; but it all depends what you mean by close settlement. I do not know a great deal about the Western country; but I have read a good deal about it, and I have met people who have travelled through it, and my opinion is that that country will be and is required now not for close agricultural settlement, but for comparatively close settlement as compared with what the settlement is to-day there. There are a great many carriers and shearers in the Western country, and if they get land in moderate areas—grazing farms of moderate areas—I am quite sure that we would have a good deal of comparatively close settlement in the Western country, and as a result the large pastoralists would have a good supply of labour for shearing and for other purposes. It may be necessary for the Government to foster this by going in for some scheme of artesian boring, in order to supply water to these grazing farmers. If they could do that, and we had a number of grazing farmers there on small areas, I am sure we would have an extensive system of settlement there. I notice that there is a tendency on the part of hon. members opposite, like the hon. member for Carpentaria, to undervalue the value of lands in Queensland. Only the other day, when discussing the Aborigines Protection Bill, the hon. member for Carpentaria made this statement in this House: that the whole of the land in the Cape York district was practically worthless except for aboriginal reserves. That shows there is a tendency on the part of some hon. members to undervalue the areas we have in Queensland. It is contended that the Western land is not wanted for agricultural settlement, as land near the Main Range or on the Darling Downs is; but I say that there are any number of men—shearers, carriers, and business people—out West who, if they had the opportunity to take land up in small areas there—if the Government would go in for a little bit of State socialism—would readily take it up

provided they could get a fair supply of water, for most of these men are poor, and co-operation is somewhat difficult in this connection.

The PREMIER: We have done that already.

Mr. JACKSON: I am speaking about artesian water, and charging the grazing farmers for the use of it.

The PREMIER: We are endeavouring to assist them.

Mr. JACKSON: It may be done on a very limited scale; and it may be that the selection of country has not been too good. These sort of schemes have to be done in a common-sense way, so as not to shut the selector out. I don't feel inclined to give the Government so much power in the disposal of large areas of our lands; and it was pointed out last week that the Royal Lands Commission reported that the Government should not sell lands in large areas without coming to Parliament for special permission for each sale. That was the recommendation of the Lands Commission appointed by the Government two or three years ago. I may say here that if this Bill gets into committee I will do my best to try and improve it. I should like to propose that a full and exhaustive report be obtained from the Land Court on any lands that the Government propose to sell under this Bill, so as to make it clear that such land is not wanted for close settlement within a reasonable time. When we get into committee on this Bill perhaps the Minister may accept that suggestion. I am simply giving notice of it now. The Minister for

[9 p.m.] Railways in replying to some arguments used by the hon. member for

Barcoo, I think misunderstood that hon. member. The hon. member for Barcoo in pointing out what the people of his district—that is Barcaldine and Ilfracombe—wanted did not contend that the residents of those districts had any special claim to any particular portion of Queensland. The hon. member's argument was that if these lands were made available for selection there were men in that district who were prepared to take them up, and the Minister for Railways—I will not accuse him of deliberately misquoting the hon. member—evidently misunderstood the position. He argued that the land of Queensland belonged to the people of Queensland, as the Home Secretary argued this afternoon; but I have never been able to make up my mind to whom the land belongs. It may be said, of course, that the land of a country belongs to the people of the country. If that is the position you may very well contend that the land of the Transvaal belonged to the Outlanders, because they were certainly in a majority. It may also be argued that the land of Queensland belongs to the people on the other side of the world just as much as it does to us.

Mr. REID: They have a good lien over it.

Mr. JACKSON: The hon. member points out that they have a good lien over it, but I am not inclined to argue that the people of the old country have a claim upon us simply because we borrowed money from them. When we got separation they handed over to us vast areas of land, and the people at that time were a very small handful, so I do not suppose that they handed it over unconditionally. It was handed over, I suppose, more by way of trust; and it behoves us to see that that land is used properly, so as not to interfere with future settlement. Before I sit down I would like to refer to an extraordinary statement made by the hon. member for Toowoomba, Mr. Tolan, last week, with regard to New Zealand. He said that New Zealand actually had a deficit of £80,000 last year—that they started with a credit of £605,000 and finished up with a credit of £532,000; that would show not quite a loss of £80,000. The

Minister for Works also insinuated that the surpluses of New Zealand were not genuine. There may be some excuse for the hon. member for Toowoomba, he being a new member, making the rash statement he did; although, as he is a pressman, I think the hon. gentleman ought to have known better. But there is no excuse for a Minister of the Crown insinuating that a certain colony concocts its balance-sheet, because that is practically what it amounted to. We know that the hon. gentleman did not mention New Zealand, but it was patent to everybody that it was New Zealand he referred to, and whatever excuse there may have been for the hon. member for Toowoomba there is no excuse for the Minister for Railways. I have here the last financial statement which arrived in the House a few days ago, a financial statement delivered by Mr. Seddon of New Zealand, and he says—

The revenue received last year exceeded my most sanguine expectations, notwithstanding the remissions granted in Customs duties, railway freights, passenger fares and the reduction in postal rates by giving the penny postage, there was a pleasant surprise in store, for, after meeting all current obligations, there was a balance on the credit side amounting to £532,564.

I have here an abstract of revenue and expenditure on public accounts for the financial year ending 31st March, 1901, which bears out exactly the short quotation I have read to the House. On the receipt side I find that the balance at the beginning of the year is £579,306, and on the expenditure side I find that there was £500,000 transferred to the public works fund from the consolidated revenue, and there was a balance left of £532,000. That is, after devoting £500,000 to the public works fund, they still had a surplus of £532,000.

Mr. HARDACRE: And last month was a record month.

Mr. JENKINSON: Do you know the amount of the reductions remitted?

Mr. JACKSON: I am not sure, but I think £150,000 was remitted in taxation, and of course hon. members know that there was £196,000 paid out of revenue last year for old age pensions. Of course the insinuations of hon. members is that New Zealand has a different system of book-keeping to ours, and there is something in their contention.

The PREMIER: It is quite different.

Mr. JACKSON: They have a public works fund, and that probably corresponds to our loan fund. I do not think it is altogether the same, but it corresponds very nearly to our loan fund. The custom has been in New Zealand to devote their surpluses from consolidated revenue to that public works fund.

The PREMIER: Where do they get that £650,000 investment account?

Mr. JACKSON: I cannot explain to the Premier where that £600,000 in the investment account comes from. I have not looked up the whole of the New Zealand accounts. I have looked through their Estimates, but I have not examined that particular item. At any rate, I have Mr. Seddon's Financial Statement, where he gives the balances, and the abstract of revenue and expenditure that the Premier has in his hands shows that his figures are correct. The Hon. the Premier may be able to find out exactly what that £600,000 is, for I cannot explain it to him. I can, however, give a few figures—some of the items of expenditure from the public works fund. I find for railways, £724,000 voted; for roads and bridges and other public works, £317,000; roads to goldfields, £48,000; telegraph extension, £53,000; and public buildings, £121,000. It is insinuated by hon. members that we build certain buildings such as school buildings, and expend money for these out of

revenue, which New Zealand does not, but spends out of the public works fund. There is a certain amount of truth in that, but still the money spent on school buildings and roads and bridges—including the subsidy to local authorities, £105,000—only comes to £156,000 altogether. That is giving credit to Queensland for £105,000 that we voted last year to the local authorities. Just one further quotation from Mr. Seddon's Financial Statement of the previous year. After pointing out that New Zealand could not depend upon obtaining the surpluses she had been having owing to the concessions made through the Customs and to the old age pension scheme, he said, "It must be, however, admitted that the moneys transferred from the consolidated fund have been expended upon works which are serviceable for all time." Now, I pointed out that £500,000 was voted to the public works fund, and Mr. Seddon stated that these works paid for out of the public works fund are serviceable for all time. That is to say they are permanent works such as we pay for out of loan. I do not intend to occupy any more time in discussing this Bill. It may not appear to some hon. members that my remarks have been very relevant when entering into the question of New Zealand surpluses. I should not have made them had it not been for the statement made by the hon. member for Drayton and Toowoomba, Mr. Tolmie, and also on account of the statement made by the Secretary for Railways. I think it is well to have that matter cleared up. If hon. members on the other side can make out a different case, they have got the balance-sheets of New Zealand before them, and it will be very interesting if they can show that the New Zealand surpluses are not genuine, which I understand is their contention.

Mr. TURNER (*Rockhampton North*): I would like to make a few remarks upon this Bill before the debate closes, although I do not wish to speak at any length. I am certainly opposed to the policy of selling country lands in large areas, and think if the Government gave a little more encouragement to the small settlers and agriculturists it would be more to the benefit of the country. When they go in for selling these large areas I cannot see where the settlement comes in, how the population is increased, or where the benefit to the country arises. We are told there are about 13,000,000 of acres already sold and I should like to know what the financial position of the country will be after the next 13,000,000 acres are sold. I do not see that we will be in a better financial position than we are in to-day. I may be wrong in my surmise, but I certainly cannot see that there is likely to be any improvement, although I should like to see a substantial improvement in our financial position as we sell our public lands. I could understand the selling of land if it was sold in small areas to *bona fide* settlers who are prepared to make their homes within the colony. From time to time I have had numbers of persons who are settled in my electorate coming to me and complaining that they have very great difficulty in getting their selections marked off, so that they may go upon them. We have in my district valuable scrub land which a number of settlers are anxious to take up. One young man told me only a short time back that he had made an application for his selection eight or nine months previously, and he was kept back through want of more expedition being displayed in the Survey Department. I do not know whether there are not sufficient surveyors engaged at that particular work, or whether their time is occupied in surveying the larger areas, but I do know that there must be something wrong when the small settlers cannot get their selections

marked off. Then, again, we are told at various times that the difficulty is to get the people to buy the land. I think the Premier told us a short time back that he had great difficulty in getting the people to buy the Telemon lands. On the other hand, we are told that there are numbers of people ready to buy the land. If the people are ready to buy it and make the land their home, I think that every encouragement should be given them to do so. A good deal has been said about a land tax, and we are told by hon. members opposite that a land tax is already imposed through the local authorities. I am bound to say that I cannot follow that argument, for the reason that the taxation levied by the local authorities is refunded to the districts where it is raised, and, in addition to that, the Government subsidy is spent in those districts. By this means the money really goes back to the people to be expended for their own benefit. I may say in this connection that I am sorry to see that the Government find it necessary to reduce the subsidy to local authorities, who are very useful bodies and do very excellent work. Certainly the money which is expended upon roads and bridges enables the formation of roads throughout the colony, and without them the settlers could not get their produce to market. We are told, also, that the land in the local government areas is often taxed beyond its value. For instance, the Secretary for Railways told us that a piece of land he bought was taxed £700 beyond the purchasing price. That has not been my experience, which is that there are a number of people in the Rockhampton North electorate who are rated at £30 a year, and yet they have voted on the property qualification, which gives a vote to persons holding property of the value of £100. I think myself that a land-value tax is one of the most equitable means of raising public revenue. I was speaking to a gentleman only a few days ago, and he told me that the corner of Queen street now occupied by Finney, Isles, and Co. was sold many years ago for £25, and at that time the purchaser thought he was giving too much for it. The value of that land has been greatly enhanced by the efforts of thousands of other persons in Queensland and the expenditure of public funds, and, if that is so, I contend that the property should be called upon to pay something towards the general revenue of the country.

Mr. McMASTER: Finney, Isles, and Co. are the largest taxpayers in Brisbane.

Mr. TURNER: Yes, for local purposes. An absentee tax is another tax which should certainly be imposed. Everyone who has given a moment's thought to the subject knows that no new country can be developed without capital being brought into it, and I maintain that when capital has been introduced into the country, whether for the development of the mining, the pastoral, or any other industry, it should receive fair remuneration; but when it comes to the absentee taking away thousands and thousands of pounds of profit out of the colony, I think he ought to contribute a fair share towards the revenue required by the Government which protects his investments. But an income tax is about the fairest way of raising revenue that could possibly be devised. In England the income tax is 1s. 4d. in the £. No hon. member would think of stating what amount should be raised by a particular tax, but I certainly think that a fair and equitable revenue might be raised from an income tax in Queensland. The hon. member for Balonne told us of the splendid settlement in Tasmania. I quite agree with him that there is a great deal of settlement in that colony,

and I wish we could see as close settlement in Queensland. I was in Tasmania a few months ago, and made inquiries as to how the people there could get land. I was told by one gentleman who had five or six grown-up sons that he had a few acres of freehold, and could rent a bit of ground from his neighbour by paying what he considered a fair rental. "But," he said, "I can only get the land from year to year, and the owner may, if he is so disposed, resume it at the end of twelve months." I said, "There is a lot of land there," indicating the land referred to, "is that not available?" He replied, "No, that is the difficulty: all that beautiful land, extending to the 90-mile lake—I do not know where that lake is—is in the hands of three persons, and the young men, who are the bone and sinew of the country, have to go to the mainland of Australia to make their living." I say that if that condition of things exists in Tasmania we should be careful not to perpetuate the same evil in Queensland. I hope the Government will find some other means of raising revenue than that of selling land, and impose an income tax, or an absentee tax, or a land tax. We should avoid selling land in large blocks, which will lead to the aggregation of estates, and instead endeavour to assist the small selectors and farmers who will settle on the land and make their homes on it.

Mr. FOGARTY (*Drayton and Toowoomba*): I desire to offer a few remarks before this debate closes. It seemed to me that the Secretary for Lands introduced this measure in a half-hearted manner. I am quite satisfied from the way in which the hon. gentleman spoke that the proposals contained in the Bill were distasteful to him.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Not at all.

Mr. FOGARTY: It is true that we have a very large territory, but the hon. gentleman in alluding to that fact forgot to say that at least one-third of our 427,800,000 acres are valueless. If land is sold wholesale there will certainly be a tendency on the part of purchasers to pick out the eyes of the country, and possibly in blocks of 100,000 acres. It is true there is a limit of 5,120 acres, but I venture to say that will not prevent the aggregation of large holdings, for, although it is well known that land may be sold in blocks not exceeding that area, immediately three or four blocks are purchased by one person application will be made to the Government to close the roads, temporarily at first, but later on permanently, with the result that these blocks will be consolidated. That has occurred in the past and will probably occur again in the future.

Mr. KERR: It is done regularly.

Mr. FOGARTY: It is a very common occurrence, I regret to say. All the members of the Government, with the exception of one, have spoken on this Bill, and they have expressed regret that the necessity has arisen for parting with the public estate, but say that it is absolutely necessary to do so in order to balance the ledger, and that if such were not the case they would not have attempted to sell the land. I think the offering of land for sale in dull times financially is detrimental to the best interests of the colony. As to the argument that this policy is necessary to make revenue and expenditure balance, I would point out that, although at the present time it is a mystery what the federal tariff will be, yet we know it is the intention of the Federal Treasurer to impose an excise duty on sugar. Sir George Turner, addressing his constituents at the time of the Commonwealth battle in the vicinity of Melbourne, said that £4 per ton would be a reasonable excise duty on sugar. Our consumption in this colony is something like 15,000 tons of sugar per annum.

THE PREMIER: Twenty-five thousand tons.

Mr. FOGARTY: I am very pleased to hear that it is 25,000 tons. In that case if an excise duty of £4 per ton is imposed, that will return us a revenue of £100,000 per annum. With such an amount as that at our disposal for raising revenue we need not feel at all alarmed at a deficit of £500,000. We propose to issue Treasury bills of ten years currency to meet the deficit, and this Bill provides for the sale of land, the proceeds of which are to be ear-marked, if possible, for the purpose of retiring those debentures at maturity. But I contend that if this additional revenue is available there is no necessity for parting with one acre of the public estate. The effects of federation will not be known for some considerable time, and if additional taxation is required, then there are different sources for raising revenue besides that of disposing of the heritage of the people. I do not care about travelling over the same lines as other hon. members have traversed, but I may say that I endorse a great deal of what has been said by several hon. members who have spoken this evening, particularly from this side of the House. If it is absolutely necessary to sell land, I do not think it is wise to sacrifice it. Why do not we fix the upset price equally as high as the parent colony? We do nothing of the sort. We are selling land for 60 per cent. less than they are getting in New South

[9:30 p.m.] Wales, and I venture to say that it is much superior land. It is all very well to sacrifice the land and say that in the near future a land tax may be imposed. It is possible that a land tax may come, but not from the State Parliament—it is more than probable that it will come from the Federal Parliament—and I venture to say that people will not be anxious to purchase land in large blocks unless it is exceedingly valuable and the key to certain positions. Would it not be better if the Government had not parted with the magnificent Darling Downs lands in the early days? If judicious legislation and encouragement had been offered to agriculturists thirty or forty years ago we would have had an immense population there now, and there would not have been the slightest danger of a deficit staring us in the face. I do not care to revive an old wound, Mr. Speaker, but your respected father on the floor of this House time after time advocated the lands of the Darling Downs being thrown open to agricultural settlement; and had the advice tendered by that gentleman been followed we would have had a population of 4,000,000 or 5,000,000 in Queensland to-day instead of hardly 500,000. I am not in favour of a land tax in the general sense, but considering that there is at least 250,000 acres of freehold land on the Darling Downs eminently suitable for agricultural purposes, I think a special Act should be passed for the purpose of reaching the owners, considering the immense increase in the value of those lands owing to their close proximity to dense settlement and the expenditure of public moneys. I say that any person holding upwards of 1,000 acres on the Darling Downs—plain country—if it is not devoted to agricultural purposes, a land tax should be imposed; and that would have a tendency of breaking up those large estates. I know one estate on the Darling Downs every acre of which is fit for close settlement, an estate of 54,000 acres of freehold land, and at the present time there is not more than 1,000 acres of that huge estate under cultivation, while the remaining portion of the estate is devoted to the purpose to which it was devoted in the early days—that of a sheep and cattle walk. If it is necessary to increase our revenue, I say let us have special legislation to reach people of that sort. Of course it is said that the lands

which it is proposed to sell in various parts of the colony are not suitable for close settlement; but the same old cry was raised more than thirty years ago in connection with the Darling Downs, and it is more than probable that as population increases these lands also will be needed, and we shall have to do exactly as we are doing now on the Downs and repurchase at a very considerable cost to the taxpayers.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They do not cost the taxpayers anything. You ought to know that.

Mr. FOGARTY: It is true that they do not cost the taxpayer as far as the repurchased land is concerned; but in the event of the vendor requiring cash, and the selector not being able to meet his engagements regularly, then the Government is approached with the view of getting assistance in the shape of additional time—and I am pleased to say it is always given, and rightly given—and therefore there is certainly a slight tax on the general taxpayer. But if we had the immense population which the Darling Downs is capable of supporting well—if we had those people there would be no necessity for a measure such as this. And I hope, if it is necessary to get money from the land, the Government will impose a land tax, such as that I spoke of, in special cases. They will derive a fairly large revenue from such a tax; and if the owners consider the burden too great, it will have a tendency to induce them to part with those magnificent lands to those who will make them reproductive, and not only a benefit to themselves, but also a boon to Queensland generally.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: What would that estate bring in with a land tax of 1d. in the £.

Mr. FOGARTY: It is a matter for calculation. If the hon. gentleman is extremely anxious to know, and you will allow me to resume my speech three minutes after reaching the table, I will give him the information. Evidently he is badly in need of the services of a State school teacher, and I am sorry to see a Minister of the Crown in such a sorry plight.

Mr. CALLAN: You are the Almighty.

Mr. FOGARTY: I am not the Almighty, but I am here to discharge my duty to the best of my ability, and I am not in the habit of hurling offensive interjections at any person who may be speaking. I think it is very bad taste on the hon. member's part; however, some things amuse small minds.

Mr. CALLAN: I gave you the greatest compliment I could.

Mr. FOGARTY: It is a compliment I cannot appreciate. The proposal of the Government is to sell land in any portion of the colony. I know of some magnificent lands in the Burnett, Dawson, and Maranoa districts—Crown lands—and all they need is the means of communication with the coast by rail, when they will become exceedingly valuable; and it would pay the Government even if they had to pay a little more for a loan, to first tap those lands by railway communication, and then if the finances of the colony were in such an unsatisfactory condition it would then pay the Government handsomely to submit those lands to auction after people had the necessary facilities; and I am satisfied that land instead of being sold for 10s. an acre would realise 30s. an acre. Therefore, any land sale at this stage is a sacrifice, and I go further and say that the custodians of the interests of Queensland at the present time will not be faithful to their trust if land is disposed of wholesale in the way contemplated by this Bill, at probably one-third of its value. The strongest reason given for the proposal was given by the Premier in pointing out that a very

large portion of the heritage of the people was destroyed by prickly pear; but I would say it is the duty of the Government to grapple with the prickly pear pest alone, and if the people will not accept some of the magnificent black soil country fit for the growth of anything, I would say—give a bonus to those who take possession of prickly pear land. Independent of any fee-simple, I would give them an additional sun per acre. I admit that the pest is a very serious one, and it is time that legislation was introduced to deal with this growing evil. The longer the matter is delayed the greater the pest will become. The Bill also proposes that no land within 20 miles of a navigable river shall come under its provisions. Well, I hope that when we reach the committee-stage railways will be included, for it is well known that we have few navigable rivers—certainly none in the Southern portion of the colony, and I think that this also applies to the Northern portion of the colony, as all the land suitable for tropical agriculture has already been alienated. But there are magnificent lands within 20 miles of the railways running into the interior. In reply to an interjection made by me, the Minister intimated that the Government expect to realise £2 or £3 an acre for some of the lands that they intend to sell. Well, if any person is prepared to give £2 or £3 an acre for a large block of land, it must be exceedingly valuable, and it is possible that it is not the actual purchase that he is so anxious to secure as to secure the back country. Land so'd even in 5,120-acre blocks is not what we would term close settlement. I have been given to understand that every Government since separation has been actuated by that principle, and, if they were not, they should have been. Certainly 5,000 acres is not a small holding, and it is likely to extend into 10,000 acres. If a capitalist has sufficient money, and is of the opinion that public money will be expended in the direction of the purchase, he will probably get as much as possible, and when he has facilities for reaching a market we will realise that instead of the State receiving the benefit it will be the private individual who will be benefited. The seasons we have lately passed through have been very bad—probably the very worst in the history of the colony from 1859 up to the present time. Well, the best guide for the future is the experience of the past, and I sincerely hope that we shall never experience such seasons as we have passed through during the last two or three years; and the country being extremely young, and, hence, elastic, I do not think that it requires any prophet to foresee that we will recover ourselves in a short time, and that there is therefore no necessity for this proposal. I trust that the Government will not insist on forcing the Bill through the House, for I know perfectly well they have sufficient voting power, and I also know that members, when they are called upon to vote on party lines, very often vote against their consciences. I happen to be in this position at the present time—that I can exercise my conscience independently, and vote for anything that I think for the benefit of the country, and I can vote the opposite way if I think it is detrimental to the interests of the country.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: How long have you been in that position?

Mr. FOGARTY: I have pointed out why I think there is no necessity for selling the land—I will go further, and say in sacrificing the land—and I shall certainly vote against the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. DUNSFORD (*Charters Towers*): There can be no doubt that the Government have to raise the wind somehow, and it has been rather a

difficult problem for them to solve. They have been trying to solve it, I believe, during the last few months. The difficulty has been how to raise the wind and at the same time not inflict fresh taxation upon any persons within the country, or who are not resident in the colony. The problem was—"Shall we sacrifice the country to the capitalists?" on the one hand, or, on the other hand, "Shall we sacrifice the capitalists to the country?" and they have resolved to sacrifice the country to the capitalists. Now, I contend that it would have been much better and much more businesslike to have footed the bill, because we are in the position of the man who has been on the spree, and who wakes up in the morning with a sore head, and, possibly, a sore heart and empty pockets, and he finds that he has stuck up a nice little bill with the landlord. That is what the Government have done. They have had their nice little spree during the recent visit of Royalty, and they have had their spree in sending men to South Africa and in various other ways, and there is nothing left now but the sore head in the morning and the bill to foot. So since it is resolved that we must pay the piper in some way they say, "Sacrifice the land." Although the Government contend that they must pay up, and although they are willing to sell land, it is somewhat remarkable that the Secretary for Lands himself specially stipulated that, although they sell the lands to-day, they may tax them to-morrow. That is a remarkable statement coming from the opposite side—selling the lands to-day and then taxing them later on. I think that is rather an inconsistent position to take up.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You can't tax them before you sell them.

Mr. DUNSFORD: You can tax them before you sell them. You can have a steady stream coming in from the land in the shape of rent, which is tantamount to a land tax, so far as the coffers of the State are concerned. It places money in the State coffers from the lands. At any rate I think the Government are taking up rather an inconsistent attitude in saying that they will sell the land to-day, and that they may be compelled to tax it to-morrow. That is repudiation of the worst sort. If I was in favour of selling land to-day I would consider it very inconsistent, very unreasonable, and very unbusinesslike to propose taxing it to-morrow. If I issue a deed saying to a purchaser of land, "This land is yours in fee simple for ever to do as you like by it," and after having sold him that land, I then come down later and tax it, it would be hardly fair. The stand I take is that we are justified in taxing land on all occasions, because we on this side refuse to sell one acre of land, considering it more businesslike not to alienate it. Of course, unfortunately, we may be compelled to come in later on and undo what Ministers like the present Secretary for Lands have done. They sacrifice the land, not so much to meet the requirements of the country as to meet the demands of those who desire to acquire strategical blocks in the Western portions of the colony. The Minister for Railways laughs, but he knows that really there would be a lot of land sacrificed to persons who wish to purchase in this manner—in order to secure frontages to roads, to the best positions for water, and so secure indirectly the use of the whole of the surrounding lands. Much of that sort of thing has been done, and I am very much afraid that that will be done, not for the purpose of bringing about close settlement, as it will be to meet the demands of those who wish to block out close settlement, by securing strategical positions. There is nothing in the Bill to prevent the Government from selling a £1,000,000 worth of lands within the next few

years, and applying the proceeds of these sales for revenue purposes, and not to retire the Treasury bills at all.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We can only use it for two years.

Mr. DUNSFORD: The present deficit is over £500,000, and if we should have—although I hope not—a deficit equal or anything approaching this for the next two years, there would be £1,500,000 to be met, and that is to be met out of the sales of land. I would not be far wrong in saying that it is just possible we would have to sell 1,000,000 acres of land and every penny-piece realised from the sales of such lands might be devoted to revenue purposes.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Is it not better to sell land than to cut down wages?

Mr. DUNSFORD: The question of wages does not come in at all. We have been told that this selling of Crown lands is simply a matter of expediency, and that the only other alternative is increased taxation, and for some reason the Government do not think it wise to face that.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Or reduce expenditure—by cutting down salaries.

Mr. DUNSFORD: At any rate, the other alternative was not faced, and it is intended to raise revenue by that means. Now, it is just possible—nay, probable—that we might have to raise within the next three or four years £1,000,000 from land sales, and every penny of that will be used for present needs—for revenue purposes. We have already the right to raise a certain sum of money by Treasury bills, and I believe that it is very probable that at the end of ten years, when those Treasury bills will have to be retired, that they will be passed along to the funded debt. That has been done in the past, and it is very probable that it will be done in the future. It is very probable that the £1,000,000 raised from sales of land will be used for revenue purposes. That is one way of passing along to those who come after us debts which should be paid to-day. No doubt that is a very handy way as far as the Government are concerned of passing along their liabilities. Touching on this point, the Minister for Lands admitted that the system of the sales of land was merely capitalising rents—that in future should come in a steady stream into the revenue—using it in a lump sum to "pay the piper" for past sprees. Is it a wise thing to draw on the future by this means? That is only another dodge added to the system of the Government, getting rid of their liabilities by floating loans. That is one way. It is something like the Western shearer who sells his only horse in order to go on a spree. I think it is the exceptional shearer who does that, but I have heard of men selling their horses in order to go on the spree on the proceeds. Now, we have had our spree already. There is not even a spree to look forward to. There might be something in it if we had, but we only have the headache left. The Government will be in just the same position as the man who sells his horse for a spree. After that he has to foot it; just the same as the artisan who sells his tools—his only means of raising a livelihood. We will be in just the same position with regard to the selling of our lands.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: There is a little bit left yet.

Mr. DUNSFORD: What?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Land.

Mr. DUNSFORD: I thought you meant headache. Another argument used by hon. members opposite is that we have still these Crown lands left after they are sold—that they cannot be put in anyone's waistcoat pocket and carried away. But I say that very much of the

land that has been already sold is in a worse condition, as far as the public are concerned, than if it had been carried away.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: How do you make that out?

MR. DUNSFORD: People have been prevented from putting it to useful purposes. A lot of it is infested with prickly pear, which the Minister complains about. Some of it is a breeding ground for marsupials and many other pests that the farmers and pastoralists suffer from to-day; so it would be better if it had been sunk under the ocean and had a clear stream of salt water running over it, than having it locked up and lying idle, and only being a breeding ground for pests of this sort.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: If it was only leased, of course, it would not have prickly pear or any of these pests on it?

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: He knows that all right.

MR. DUNSFORD: There are too many interjections. The position of the present Government reminds me of an eastern ruler in Cashmere who wanted to raise the wind. He did not want to tax the people of his own class, and he did not see his way to get money out of the pockets of the working men, so he looked around for some new means of raising revenue. Along came a windlord—not a landlord—that is a man who wished to get a monopoly of the whole of the wind supply in Cashmere.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: A bit of a blow.

MR. DUNSFORD: No; this took place there many years ago. After a lot of haggling with regard to the value of the wind, he obtained the right to use all the wind for a certain number of years. Then there was a huge laughter on the part of the people, who said, "He can't take the wind away from us." But by and by the people found they could not use the wind for their windmills, and there was lamentation and wailing throughout the land. Then they wanted to buy it back at the price this windlord had paid for it. But he said, "No, wind has gone up; it is much higher now. There is a great demand for wind." And, eventually, they had to pay about ten times the price paid by this windlord—this windjammer. That is what

[10 p.m.] the Government are proposing to do, only instead of dealing with the wind they are dealing with the land. That is one of the gifts of Nature, in the same way that water is. Why does not the Government propose to sell the ocean, or the portion of it belonging to Queen-land, and prevent the shipping companies passing over it, unless they pay a certain rate? Why do not they sell the air we breathe? There is no more right of property in the land than there is in wind or the air we breathe, or in the rain. The only right there can be, the only real property there can be in land is in what is produced from land by labour. Anything produced from land by labour is capital, and must be property, and can legitimately be taxed. You should not, and really cannot, tax that which is a gift of Nature. I hope the Minister will seriously consider this, and just by way of change tax the wind, or sell some monopolies in the wind. There is enough wind in this House, if the Minister would only store it, and sell it to a monopoly, to pay off this deficit. When the Attorney-General and the late Chairman of Committees once start, there is enough wind to sink a squadron.

THE SPEAKER: Order!

MR. DUNSFORD: I admit I have been wandering a little, and perhaps it is advisable that we should consider this serious question of how to raise the wind. In conclusion, I may say that I do not think that one inch or one acre of land

should be parted with—not one acre should be parted with by the Government except under the condition that the land should be put to some good and useful purpose. In the administration of the Mines Department that is just what is followed out. Not one piece of land should be parted with by the Mines Department excepting under some conditions. Those who take land up from this department must use it within a certain time; they must employ so much labour upon it, and the men who are working upon it must work under reasonable conditions; and so, if it is wise to deal with auriferous or mineral land in such a manner, why should it not be wise to deal with the whole of our lands on the same reasonable lines? It would not matter much under what sort of deed the land was held, whether it was under a lease or under some other deed, if there were the condition attached to it that the land must be put to some useful purpose. If it is grazing, it should be specified that so much stock must be grazed and so many improvements put up within reasonable time; and if it is agricultural land, so much agricultural cultivation must go on in connection with the land. If this were done we should not have so much trouble in Queensland. It would not pay people to lock up and to hold land merely for speculative purposes. I am sure that the lands which will be sold in the next few years, will be lands not sold for settling purposes, but to meet the requirements of those who want to extend the monopoly in land, which they have already over the leased land. They will purchase those portions which will give them the frontages to rivers and to roads, and they will purchase them to prevent the true settler coming along, because I fully believe that most of those who constitute the pastoralists body, not the individual pastoralists, but the corporative pastoralists, hate the close settler.

MR. W. HAMILTON: More than the rabbit.

MR. DUNSFORD: They do not love him, anyway. They love the rabbit more, they love the tick more, and they love the prickly pear more. So far as the squatter is concerned, not the individual squatter, but the pastoralist pawnshops are concerned, they would do anything and everything rather than have as neighbours on any portion of property near to that leased by them the close settler.

MR. RYLAND (*Gympie*): I just wish to say a word or two on this principle of selling land without conditions. I do not think it is in harmony with business principles at all; it is more the action of the spendthrift, who, having spent his money and exhausted his resources, eats up his capital. The Government are proposing to sell the land belonging to the people of the colony. The Minister for Agriculture told us to-night about the number of acres of land alienated in Queensland, but he omitted to tell us the value of land alienated, as compared with the value of the lands that are not alienated. That is a very important item in this question. I think we should know the value, because that is of more importance than the extent. If we look into this question, we find that in the city of Brisbane, which is contained within $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres, there is one-fifth of the value of the whole of the alienated land in Queensland. It is all comprised within $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres. So that when we talk about alienated lands, we cannot count these lands in acres, but we must count them in value. I read in the paper the other day that a speculator had counted up the value of our goldfields in acres, but I do not think that is a proper way of getting at the value of our goldfields, because one acre of goldfield may be worth all the rest of the goldfield. I know that I would prefer Mount Morgan to a good many goldmining leases in

Queensland. In connection with this question, we must see what we are giving away. When we talk about selling our lands, in fact we are selling the inheritance of the people, the means of living of the people who are in Queensland at the present time, and not only the people who are here at the present time, but the people who are not yet born. We are practically leading them into bondage to those who may be the possessors of the land. The latter will own the lands, and those who own the lands are masters of our services, and of those of the children who come afterwards. Consequently it is the worst kind of bondage when the lands of the country get into private hands, because the owners of the land can deprive those who are working in all the industries of everything except a bare living. I think the Secretary for Railways comes from the same country as I do, and he knows what private ownership of land has done there—the degradation it has brought on the people, and how it has brought them to the lowest standard of living it is possible for human beings to adopt.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I will not admit that they are people of the lowest standard.

Mr. RYLAND: They have the lowest standard of living of any civilised people, and submit to more indignities from those who own the land than the people of any country I have knowledge of.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That may be where you come from.

Mr. RYLAND: Yes, and where the hon. gentleman comes from too. They have to take everything from their landlord—their religion and their politics—and if they do not abide by that they are turned out of the country, and have to seek a living elsewhere. That is the system in the old country, and it is the worst feature of our civilisation. I am sorry indeed that the Governments of Australia have adopted such a system as will bring degradation upon the people of the country. They must have been familiar, if not by experience, at all events through history, with what has occurred in older countries, and they could have avoided the mistakes of the past. Now, from a business point of view the Government are making a mistake. A commercial man tries to sell in the dearest market, and buy in the cheapest. But what does the Government propose to do? When times are at their worst, and we have touched the bedrock in our financial position, they propose to sell our land, and afterwards to buy it back again. They propose to sell it cheaply, and buy it back at an extravagant price. That is not the action of a business man. The object of the business man would be to buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest. I was surprised to hear a Minister say to-day that the State was the worst possible landlord. I deny altogether that the State would be prepared to exact the same terms as the private landlord or would be guilty of such injustices. We have also been told that Mr. Dutton, who at one time was Secretary for Lands, and brought forward what I consider was a progressive form of land tenure with the object of collecting for the State the economic rent of the land, afterwards recanted and said that he was moving in a wrong direction. Now, I have read Mr. Dutton's letter to the hon. member for Leichhardt, and I have read his Land Act and the speeches made by hon. members when it was going through, and I do not see that Mr. Dutton has receded from the position he took up in 1884 in one particular. His contention was that the economic rent that was produced by all the inhabitants of the colony was to be collected for the use of the State. It does not matter whether that is done by alienating the land, or re-valuing it

periodically, or giving it right away to the people. The idea was to put it in their possession, and collect the economic rent. Perhaps the latter method is the best. In fact, in theory it is the right method, and it was the method put forward by Henry George. He never proposed to curtail the area that any individual might hold. In fact he would let one man hold the whole of the United States if he was prepared to pay the economic rent in taxation. The whole principle is that when we allow the land of the people to be taken into possession it should be on the understanding that it is to be used and occupied by the owner. I do not believe in the sale of land if for no other reason than it is giving too great power to the purchaser. Besides, I believe it often puts the buyer to great inconvenience, because he has to raise the amount of the purchase money, and often gets into the clutches of financial institutions who make him pay a high rate of interest. It would be far better if the State gave the land free to the people on the understanding that as soon as the economic rent was worth collecting it would be collected by means of a land tax. That was Mr. Dutton's idea, but of course some hon. members want to misinterpret him. If we sell land in large blocks it certainly is not put to its best use. It is monopolised by a few persons; it leads to undue speculation, and eventually to a policy of buy, borrow, boom, and burst. That is the outcome of all these great speculations in land. It has been said that if we wish to see a land tax imposed the best thing to do is to sell the land and then turn round and tax it. Is that the position of the Government? Are they going to sell this land on the understanding that for the first ten or fifteen years it will be exempt from taxation, and that after that period the increased value which is given to the land by the construction of public works, the increase in population, and all those other things which attend the advancement of civilisation, will be taxed? Or are they going to sell those lands for ever and a day? The country should know the answer to that question, and the people who are going to buy the land should know the answer.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: For ever and a day, of course.

Mr. RYLAND: Why do hon. members on the other side advocate the selling of the land with the object of by and by taxing it? Now, we are told by a Minister that the purchasers of the land will be under no obligation to pay a tax on it.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I never said that; you put that construction on my words.

Mr. RYLAND: That is not acting squarely towards the men who will buy the land; it is taking a point on them. Instead of selling land in the way proposed I should like to see the land given away to the people who want it, and then tax the land. We should deal with our lands in such a way as will secure them being put to the best use. As regards the question of area, there is nothing in that. There was nothing at one time to prevent the hunter—the aborigines—having the possession of the whole of Queensland, or of Australia, because there was no one who wanted to turn the land to better use. But by and by the pastoralists came, and the hunter had to give way to the pastoralist. Why, then, should not the pastoralist give way to the agriculturist, the agriculturist to the gardener, the gardener to the resident, and the resident to the miner? Those men who will turn the land to its best use are the persons who should have it. But shall we attain that result by selling land in large blocks as proposed by the Government? No, the land will be monopolised, and those who come afterwards and wish to use the

land will not get the benefit of these proposed sales. The legislation proposed by the Government practically means the compiling of a doomsday-book for Queensland. They really propose the selling into bondage the future generations of this country. When we look at the results of a similar policy in the old country, we find that one-third of the land in England is owned by 525 members of the peerage of England, and three-fourths of the people of that country can be turned out on a six months' notice to quit. Is that the state of affairs the Government wish to bring about in Queensland? Do they want in the quickest time on record to sell Queensland to the speculator and the monopolist? Is that their grand idea? Is that what they are going to bring the State of Queensland to? Do they want to see the country become the property of the landowner, and have all the rest of the people working as serfs, and asking for a piece of land on which they may be allowed to live? I should like to see the House reject this measure. The hon. member for Balonne told us that if he had the administration of the lands of the colony, he would allow every leaseholder to become the owner of his land if he wished. Is he prepared to go further than that? Is he prepared to legislate in the direction that every occupier or every tenant in Queensland should be put in a position to become the owner of the land he occupies? Is he prepared to go in for a system of compulsory purchase, where men are forced by conditions to become tenants at will? Is he prepared to bring in legislation establishing compulsory purchase and compelling the owner to sell to the tenant at a fair price? If one is consistent, the other is consistent, and I say we want the same idea as they have in the old country now; that is compulsory sale, under which the owner can be compelled to sell the land to the tenant at a fair price. It may be said that I am going a long way afield when I refer to a state of society in Queensland where men have practically become tenants at will. I do not think we are so far away, if we consider what has happened in this respect in some of the sugar districts. We find that there are a large number of persons engaged at the present time in the cultivation of sugar; they are renting land from the large landowners and the planters; and even on the Darling Downs and in other places there is at the present time coming in—and coming in very quickly indeed—a system of landlordism, the same as that which exists in the old country. This very proposal of the Government to sell land in large blocks will hasten the time when, instead of every man sitting under his own vine and fig-tree—instead of every man being a freeholder in the State and owning his own farm—the majority of the people in this State will be simply tenants at will. That is the tendency of the legislation which is proposed in this Bill, and I hope that the House will in its wisdom rise to the occasion and vote against the Bill. I for one should be very sorry to see the Bill pass, and I shall vote against it.

Mr. BURROWS (*Charters Towers*): As it is getting late, I propose to say very little on the Bill. As befits a junior member of the Assembly, I have listened attentively to members opposite, and have tried to take them seriously and give them credit for earnestness, but I can assure you that it has been a very hard matter. One member of the Government told us first of all that he got up hurriedly to make a few casual remarks, and that there was really no necessity to discuss the Bill at any length because of a decision previously arrived at; notwithstanding that, I noticed that he had no less than four foolscap

folios of paper closely written, so far as I could see, and with blue and red ink alternately. However he managed to get hold of blue and red ink sitting on those benches, I cannot say.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There was no red ink. It was written with pencil and there was only one sheet.

Mr. BURROWS: There were four pages.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The notes were all made while members were speaking. It was only one sheet of paper.

Mr. BURROWS: One sheet containing four foolscap folios. After informing us that there was no necessity to speak at length on the matter he gave us considerably over an hour. Since that time several other members of the Government have spoken, and they have totally disregarded the advice tendered by the Minister for Railways—they have waded in and spoken hour after hour. But notwithstanding the number of members who have spoken on the other side and the time they have occupied, not one has attempted to justify the contradictory action of the Government in selling land, while at the same time they are proposing to buy it back. What is the object of the Government in buying land at all?

Mr. KEOGH: To settle a population.

Mr. BURROWS: Just so—to provide for closer settlement. It is acknowledged that the land alienated in the past has not been put to proper use, and that close settlement has been prevented thereby. If that is so, how can they ask permission to alienate more land? Of course this selling of land will have the same effect as it has had in the past—it will prevent close settlement. The Government propose to sell land with no provision for utilising or working that land, and there is no guarantee of its use at all. If land can be sold it can be leased. If you can get people to buy it, there will be any amount who will lease it; and it will be much better to lease it—and in small blocks too. There is no doubt that with smaller holdings, the population being denser, more work will be done on the land, because each farmer will have to erect fencing and buildings. We want *bona fide* occupiers of the land, and there is no guarantee that we shall get them by selling land in this way. If we progress in the future even as we have done in the past, at no great distance of time we shall want this land back, and where is the sense of selling it? Members opposite have excused themselves buying back land at prices greatly in advance of the prices originally paid on the plea that the original price, with 5 per cent. compound interest, would amount to the price paid in buying back. That is a most absurd position for any reasonable man to take up. Just fancy applying that principle to the land sold from time immemorial! Even in Brisbane there are allotments to-day worth a considerable amount of money, and if there is any reason in the principle it should apply everywhere, and it is easy to see that the time would come when there would not be sufficient money in the whole world to buy back one allotment in Brisbane. I think it is a most fallacious argument, and I think that the selling of land anyhow is a most pernicious policy. The Secretary for Railways said that in getting 10s. per acre they were getting, in fact, 6d. per acre rent in perpetuity; but that is a most peculiar argument. All money does not bear interest, and this money does not bear interest. If it were to be put at interest there would be no necessity to sell the land. If the simple interest argument is good, why did he stop at that? Why not substitute the compound interest theory? With equal justice—or equal absurdity—he could have said that for the first fourteen years we get 6d. per acre, for

the next we are getting 1s. an acre, for the third term of fourteen years we are getting 2s. an acre, for the fourth term we are getting 4s. an acre, and so on. That would be equally as logical—or illogical—as the other. What has become of the money that has been obtained for land sold in the past? Is that money bearing that large amount of interest?

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: We have spent it. Mr. BURROWS: What has become of the interest? I think a lot of the money raised by selling land was dissipated recently. I believe there was £30,000 spent on fireworks, etc., and if that is so, we may say that 60,000 acres were burned to celebrate a certain event recently. I do not think we can afford to throw away money in that way. Why not resort to a land and income tax? Why are people taxed? Are they not taxed for services rendered—for the protection of their lives and property? And should not those who receive most protection be taxed most? The Government prate loudly that they are following the example of New South Wales, Victoria, and New Zealand, but I would point out that in each of those colonies there is a land tax. Now, if they are so enamoured of the policy pursued in those other colonies, why do they not follow their example in regard to a land tax? That would minimise the injury that will be inflicted upon the population. What has been the result of recent land sales? Even capitalistic papers that support the Government admit that the result of those sales has been to alienate strategic blocks, commanding water frontages and roads, and that the purchasers will not need now to lease the rest of their runs—that, having no roads or water frontages, they are useless to anybody else. The Government have admitted that they are the worst landlords in existence. I am not going to contradict them. They ought to know that they are bad landlords. We have known it for a long time; but I am not one to jump on any person who admits his faults. The Government are, perhaps, entitled to a certain amount of credit for their manliness in admitting that they are the worst landlords in existence. I would not contradict them if they told us that they were defective in the administration of all their departments. But what I cannot understand is that, since the members of the Government admit their incapacity to carry on the affairs of the State—since they admit their inability to look after the lands of the colony—and since they want to hand over our railways to other people to look after—I cannot understand why they do not get out of the track and let other people who are prepared to take their position pilot the colony out of its difficulties. The squatters, too, object to closer settlement. I have received circulars since I have been here putting their side of the question before the public, and it is pretty clear that they have been pulling the wires to the utmost of their ability in order to block closer settlement. They do not like the idea of the grazing farmer being allowed to take some of their land, and they point out that their rents have been raised through this action, and they point out, too, how they have evaded the Act. They have bought these grazing farmers out, and have had to pay increased rents for their holdings. They say this is an injustice. Of course it is an injustice, but it is an injustice to the State. These people should be deprived of that land, as the Act was intended to bring about closer settlement, and they have candidly admitted that they have defeated the objects of the Act. As is always the case, they know the land thoroughly, and buy only the best portions, and the consequence is that the rest of the land will never be taken up. This Bill is merely a pretext to sell lands to pastoralists. It appears to me that the pastoralists have operated very largely to secure their own ends.

It has been stated by writers in the Press and by various speakers in the House, that the Government intend to sell these lands to certain people for ulterior motives. I am not going to say they are doing so. Nothing of the kind. It has been stated, too, that the Government propose to buy the Durunder estate from a certain bank. Now, in the past insinuations have been hurled—

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. BURROWS: Well, I shall not proceed further on that matter. I was simply going to say that it would not be necessary to sell lands at all if they were to impose an income tax. It has been pointed out by various members on this side that the revenue that would be derived therefrom would wipe out this deficit easily and quickly. The reason why I strongly object to the sale of land is because it is unnecessary and is indefensible at any time, and, moreover, it is only a pretext. I am quite positive that the money that is obtained from the sale of these lands will be used in exactly the same way as the money that has been obtained from similar sales in the past, and that eventually we will have to fund the deficit.

Mr. KEOGH (*Rosewood*): After what we have heard from the hon. member who has just sat down, I am quite prepared to support the Government in connection with this Bill. I think that they have done a noble act in introducing a Bill of this description to wipe out the deficit. There are many portions of the colony where close settlement cannot take place, and I believe that that is the cue that the Government have taken in regard to the sale of land. There are a great many portions of land, particularly on this side of the range, that the Government could repurchase, and on which they could settle a close population; but that cannot be done in the outside portions of the colony, particularly in the Western districts, which I had the pleasure of going over a short time ago. I do not think it is possible for close settlement to take place from Hughenden to Winton, although I believe that some of the best lands in Queensland are to be found there. Still, the climatic conditions are not as favourable as they are in Southern Queensland. Reference was made by the last speaker to Durundur. Well, I have travelled over some portions of Durundur, and I believe that one of the best investments the Government could make would be to purchase that estate.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. KEOGH: I am very sorry that I should say anything to cause me to be called to order. Still I think there are many parts of Queensland that might be sold at the present moment, and from which the Government could obtain a certain amount of money to go towards wiping out the deficit. I am prepared to support the Government in this measure—to sell land in particular portions of the colony, where close settlement is not possible.

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

AYES, 27.

Mr. Barnes	Mr. Kent
" Bartholomew	" Keogh
" Bridges	" Leahy
" Callan	" Macartney
" Cameron	" Mackintosh
" Campbell	" McMaster
" T. B. Cribb	" Newell
" Dalrymple	" O'Connell
" Forrest	" Paget
" Forsyth	" Philp
" Foxton	" Rutledge
" Grimes	" W. Thorn
" J. Hamilton	" Tolmie
" Hanran	

Tellers: Mr. Tolmie and Mr. Forsyth.

NOES, 23.

Mr. Airey	Mr. Jackson
„ Barber	„ Jenkinson
„ Bowman	„ Kerr
„ Browne	„ Lesina
„ Burrows	„ Maxwell
„ Curtis	„ McDonnell
„ Dibley	„ Mulcahy
„ Dunsford	„ Reid
„ Fitzgerald	„ Ryland
„ Givens	„ Turley
„ W. Hamilton	„ Turner
„ Hardacre	

Tellers: Mr. Ryland and Mr. Lesina.

PAIR.

Aye—Mr. Plunkett. No—Mr. Fogarty.

Resolved in the affirmative.

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

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER: I move that this House do now adjourn. The first business to-morrow will be the consideration in committee of this Bill.

Mr. HARDACRE: I do not think that such an important Bill as this should be allowed to be taken into committee to-morrow.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is not in order.

Question put and passed.

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