

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

FRIDAY, 9 NOVEMBER 1917

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FRIDAY, 9 NOVEMBER, 1917.

The SPEAKER (Hon. W. McCormack, *Cairns*) took the chair at half-past 3 o'clock.

QUESTIONS.

WAGES OF METROPOLITAN WATER AND SEWERAGE BOARD EMPLOYEES.

Mr. SWAYNE (*Mirani*) asked the Treasurer—

"1. Are the employees of the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board now paid rates of wages in excess of those contained in the award made by the Conciliation and Arbitration Court?

"2. If so, what were the rates provided for in the award, and what are the rates now paid?"

The TREASURER (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillagoe*) replied—

"1 and 2. With the exception of a small number of employees who by reason of long and faithful service, or who are performing special duties as in airlocks, and who are granted a slightly higher rate of pay than that provided for in the awards, the rates fixed by the awards are strictly adhered to."

GIN GIN AND BAUPLE CENTRAL MILLS.

Mr. SWAYNE asked the Treasurer—

"1. Can he give an estimate of what the operations at the Gin Gin Mill are likely to be during the present season?

"2. Is it anticipated that the operations in the Bauple Central Mill will result in a profit or a loss during the present season?"

The TREASURER replied—

"1. It is too early to form a reliable estimate of the financial results of the year which ends on 30th June next.

"2. Yes."

PASTORAL LEASES—REAPPRAISEMENT OF RENTS.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*) asked the Secretary for Public Lands—

"1. The number of pastoral leases dealt with by the Land Court for reappraisal of rents during the past twelve months?

"2. The number of pastoral leases on which the rents were raised to the maximum allowed by the Act?

"3. The number of pastoral leases on which the rents were reduced?"

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. J. M. Hunter, *Maranoa*) replied—

"1. One hundred and three.

"2. Ninety-one.

"3. Nil."

FALLEN SOLDIERS.

MOTION OF SYMPATHY WITH THE HON. MEMBER FOR NANANGO.

The TREASURER: I desire, with the permission of the House, to move a motion without notice.

The SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House that the Treasurer be allowed to move a motion without notice?

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

[*Hon. E. G. Theodore.*

The TREASURER: I desire to move the following motion:—

"That this House expresses its sincerest sympathy with the hon. member for Nanango (Mr. R. S. Hodge) in his great sorrow caused by the death of his soldier son, recently killed in action on the Western front."

I understand that the hon. member was notified yesterday morning by the military authorities that one of his sons was wounded, and he was notified again last night that another son had been killed. Hon. members can understand the great grief of the hon. member and his family on receiving the dreadful tidings. (Hear, hear!) Unfortunately, in the present war a great many families—almost every family one might say, in the land—has at some time or other during the last two years been stricken by a similar sorrow, and the sympathy which we extend to the hon. member therefore will be all the more general. (Hear, hear!) In the midst of the stern realities of the war in which the nations of the world are now engaged Mr. Hodge has, at least, the consolation of knowing that his son died in battle, manfully striving on the side of liberty and justice.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The TREASURER: On behalf of this side of the House, I desire to extend to Mr. Hodge and his family our sincerest sympathy, and I desire to express the hope that his wounded son may soon recover, and may be spared to return again to his parents and family in his home in Queensland.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. J. TOLMIE: I desire to second the motion of sympathy moved by the Acting Chief Secretary. I know that the sympathy of all members of this House goes forth to Mr. Hodge and the members of his family in the very sad affliction which they are suffering at this time.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. J. TOLMIE: The feeling that we have for Mr. Hodge is that which we have for all the parents and those who have lost their relatives in the great struggle in which we are now engaged. It is very sad that the circumstances are such as they happen to be, but we cannot help admiring the self-denial and self-sacrifice of these young men who have at this juncture done so much for the Empire—(Hear, hear!)—and when the circumstances are such as they are in this case—one has made "the great sacrifice," and the other has been wounded—we feel that we are under an obligation to express our sincere sympathy with the family in their bereavement. I enter fully into the feelings of the Acting Chief Secretary in moving this motion, and I am certain that, not only on the other side, but throughout the whole House, there is nothing but the deepest sympathy for Mr. Hodge at this juncture.

The SPEAKER: I suggest that hon. members stand while I put the motion.

The motion was carried unanimously, hon. members standing in their places.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS.

The TREASURER, in moving—

“That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended for this day as would otherwise prevent the receiving of resolutions from the Committees of Supply and Ways and Means on the same day on which they shall have passed in those Committees, and the passing of an Appropriation Bill through all its stages in one day,”

said: This is the usual motion for a Supply Bill. The appropriation granted under the last Appropriation Bill is almost exhausted, and it is necessary to get another Supply Bill passed so as to be able to pay the railway servants next Wednesday. If we pass the Bill to-day, it will give the Legislative Council an opportunity of passing it on Tuesday next. I do not think it is necessary to say any more, as we are just following the ordinary procedure.

HON. J. TOLMIE (*Toowoomba*): I am not going to offer any serious objection to this motion. If the Estimates had been taken earlier in the year, then a measure of this kind would have been obviated. There is no reason why we should not take the Estimates much earlier in the year and pass the money in the usual way without having to pass so many Appropriation Bills.

The TREASURER: If you had granted us four months' Supply last time instead of two months, it would have obviated the necessity for this measure.

HON. J. TOLMIE: The hon. gentleman is burking the question. He might as well say that if we granted him eighteen months' Supply there would be no need to take the Estimates until after the next election. We are asking for the passage of the financial measures on constitutional lines. If the Estimates had been considered fully by this time, there would have been no need for this Bill at all. When the hon. gentleman is submitting the resolution, I hope he will give us some information as to how the different funds stand, particularly the loan fund and the trust fund. I have no objection to the resolution being passed.

Question put and passed.

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

(*Mr. Bertram, Maree, in the chair.*)

The TREASURER moved—

“That there be granted to His Majesty, on account, for the service of the year 1917-18, a further sum not exceeding £900,000 towards defraying the expenses of the various departments and services of the State.”

Question put and passed.

The House resumed. The CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had come to a resolution, and the Committee obtained leave to sit again on Tuesday next.

WAYS AND MEANS.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

The TREASURER moved—

“(a) That towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty for the

service of the year 1917-18, a further sum not exceeding £500,000 be granted out of the consolidated revenue fund, exclusive of the moneys standing to the credit of the loan fund account.

“(b) That £250,000 be granted from trust and special funds.

“(c) That £150,000 be granted from loan fund.”

HON. J. TOLMIE asked for some information in regard to the condition of the various accounts. The Treasurer asked for an appropriation of £900,000, and before they passed that amount it was only right they should know the condition of the various funds. He asked the hon. member for that information when he spoke before. How did the consolidated revenue stand? Was there an overdraft? How did the trust fund stand? The Treasurer asked for £250,000 from trust and special funds and they ought to have some information as to why that amount was necessary. It was equivalent to one month's Supply. He did not know whether the Government was going to buy any more cattle stations with the money, or whether they were going in for a big iron works policy, or whether they were going to buy additional sawmills. They did not know if the Government were going to enter into competition with some of the big drapers in Brisbane or elsewhere.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It might be a newspaper.

HON. J. TOLMIE: It might be a newspaper, because one hon. member opposite, speaking last night, said that there was an endeavour to start a newspaper in Toowoomba, but the Commonwealth Government would not allow the capital to be used for that purpose.

The HOME SECRETARY: You might get a newspaper there without any capital.

HON. J. TOLMIE: They could buy the newspapers already in Toowoomba. It was only a question of price. Newspapers were for sale like any other article, and it was only a question whether the price offered was sufficiently attractive. It might be, as the Minister for Lands said, that it was the intention to start a State newspaper. Probably that was wanted badly. In fact, they might want more than one; but, nevertheless, the Opposition would like to know how the money was to be spent. The amount of £150,000 asked for from loan fund was so small that apparently the Government were following a policy of going slow.

The TREASURER: We have not spent £150,000 in the month on the average for a long time.

HON. J. TOLMIE: That accounted for the sad state of Brisbane to-day. He was told by a gentleman who knew something about the affairs of the city that distress had begun to manifest itself to an alarming extent, because of unemployment. It was most regrettable that such should be the case, and that the Treasurer should have to say that he spent so little loan money and had been doing so for some time. In one case there appeared to be an abnormal expenditure, in the sense that it was higher than usual, and in the other an expenditure, perhaps, not so great as it might be

Hon. J. Tolmie.]

The TREASURER: The hon. member on one occasion reviled the Government for its reckless expenditure during the war on objects which might be left until the war was over. On the next occasion he bitterly complained that the Government were not spending more loan money. The supply asked for on the present occasion was sufficient to carry them on for five weeks—until the final Appropriation Bill. It was anticipated that the Estimates would then have been passed, and the final Appropriation Bill approved.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: That gives us some idea of when Parliament may adjourn.

The TREASURER: No, it simply gave them some idea when they might hope to have the Estimates through and the Appropriation Bill passed. With regard to the details of the public balances, the usual quarterly statement was issued a little over a week ago, and was to be found in the "Government Gazette," p. 1822.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: We are not supplied with that.

The TREASURER: All hon. members have been notified that those who particularly desired it and who sent a note, through the Clerk, to the Treasurer, or the Government Printer, might have the "Gazette" supplied to them. The "Gazette" involved a vast quantity of matter of little use to the ordinary member, and it was only once in a while that matters appeared of general use to members, and that was why it was not being circulated amongst them. He need not give the details of the figures in the quarterly statement, but he would pass it over to the hon. member if he wished to see it.

Mr. ROBERTS (*East Toowoomba*): He wanted to emphasise his belief that there was a considerable number of men out of employment. When the Estimates were being discussed last night, the hon. member for Ipswich tried to make a comparison between employees of the State and employees of private persons, and he gathered from one of his arguments that State employees were not so likely to be put off if there were a shortage of work. That was not so. Only last week, in Toowoomba, men engaged upon the coal stage and other places there had been discharged. Some of them had looked upon their work as almost a permanency.

Mr. WEIR: How long have they been on?

Mr. ROBERTS: They had been on for twelve months or more. They asked him if he could find them employment, and he told them that the custom of the Government was that men must make application at the bureau, and they said that they had been to the bureau at Toowoomba, and it was quite impossible to find work. This week in Brisbane he had been approached by some men whom he had known in Toowoomba, and who had come to Brisbane. They found themselves out of work, too, and he was told generally that whilst Brisbane had been fortunate during the period of the war, now people here were beginning to feel the position. With regard to the matter in which the hon. member for Ipswich seemed to take some interest last night—that was, the Toowoomba foundry—he still maintained that the Treasurer, who also occupied the position of Secretary for Public Works, might have

[*Hon. E. G. Theodore.*

used his powers to remedy the position. When the men approached him and the Acting Minister for Justice with reference to the awards, if he had been the least sympathetic towards the request, as against the men in the union, who desired to maintain a high rate of wages, he would have taken steps to see that the employees engaged on agricultural machinery were provided with a special board. The judge who dealt with the case said emphatically that if applications were made, or he were asked by the Minister, he would recommend the formation of such a board.

The TREASURER: Do you want a reduction of wages?

Mr. ROBERTS: No, but they wanted the industry to be continued in Queensland on lines followed in the other States of Australia. In Western Australia, and all the other States, there was a special award for agricultural machinery implement making. It was pointed out that the men engaged in that particular class of work were not required to be so skilled. The present position was the reason why a number of men had ceased to be employed in Queensland. This particular kind of work was being done in New South Wales, and the foundries in Queensland found it impossible to compete, with the result that under those conditions men were leaving Queensland and getting employment in the other States, whilst the agents came up to Queensland and sold the machinery to customers here. In addition to that, they were losing the money they would otherwise get from the Commonwealth in respect of those men.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member is getting away from the question before the Committee.

Mr. ROBERTS: He wanted to get information as to whether there was any special sum of money included in the amount asked for that could be utilised in finding employment, particularly in the Rail-

[4 p.m.] way Department, for those men.

There was a certain amount of work to be done. For instance, the Commissioner for Railways, some months ago, promised that he would provide accommodation in the way of a small railway station on the Drayton deviation, at Toowoomba South, and he would like to know if it was possible to have that work done. He understood that the amount of money required for the station was only about £200.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: £98.

Mr. ROBERTS: He thought it was more than that. Considering the amount of money that was being spent on State works, he thought the Treasurer might make that sum available out of the amount asked for.

The TREASURER: The question of building extensions in the Railway Department was a matter decided on by the Commissioner. Certain sums were made available to the Commissioner by Parliament each year, but the Commissioner himself had control of those moneys, and was not under the direction of the Cabinet in that matter. Of course, he was under the obligation to keep within the vote, but on what works he utilised the money was practically in his own hands to decide. He had no doubt that if representations were made to him that he would be doing a good service in the way of

relieving temporary unemployment existing in any locality that it would weigh with him. He (the Treasurer) would undertake to have the matter raised by the hon. member brought before the Commissioner, so that the matter might be expedited. (Hear, hear!) Hon. members opposite had frequently referred to the alleged acute situation brought about by unemployment, but there was practically no unemployment in Queensland at the present time. Under the machinery established by the Government—labour exchanges—the Government was in close touch with the conditions in each industrial district, and they could ascertain what the state of the labour market was.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: What is the reason for the large number of unemployed mentioned in the reports?

The TREASURER: Under the system established by the Government they were bound to have registered a certain number of men seeking employment probably at every bureau throughout the length and breadth of the State. At the present time they had a record of all men seeking employment, whereas a few years ago no record was kept; but the fact that a man was registered as seeking employment in any trade or calling did not necessarily mean that he was out of employment. He might be in temporary employment and was seeking employment in a particular trade.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: The union secretaries do not say so in their reports.

The TREASURER: The hon. member was doubtless referring to the statistics published in the "Gazette" a few months ago. A large number of those men were only temporarily out of employment because of some industrial dispute. The Australian Workers' Union reported 5,000 men as unemployed, and he had a word with the secretary of the Australian Workers' Union and asked him what he meant by stating that those 5,000 men were unemployed, and he said they were not seeking employment. It was caused in the first place by the cessation of work by 1,400 men at Mount Morgan, who were not seeking work, but he included them as unemployed. They should have been reported as men out of employment through a temporary cessation of industrial activities as a result of a lockout or strike. That was precisely what it was. It was not a case of absence of employment.

Mr. ROBERTS: Did he mention that in his report?

The TREASURER: No; but he should have done so. Since then arrangements had been made to include the information in the "remarks" column, so that it would not be misleading. It was unemployment caused by industrial depression that was the real tragedy, and not that men were temporarily unemployed through any industrial lockout or strike.

Colonel RANKIN: That is another tragedy.

The TREASURER: That was a tragedy of another aspect. The real question that they had to deal with was the unemployment brought about by industrial depression and the inability of able-bodied men able and willing to work to get work and earn a livelihood for themselves and their families. That was one of the worst evils that could exist in any country, and they

must make up their minds to find a solution of that problem whenever it seriously affected Queensland. The Government had established machinery which, to a large extent, would obviate the extension of any evil of that kind in Queensland. The labour exchanges had rendered valuable services, and there was very little chance of large bodies of men being unemployed. Certainly in the Rockhampton district there was a depression in the building trade, but the Government were relieving the depression in two ways; firstly, by expediting public works contemplated in the district, and secondly, by drafting those men who were willing and able to go, to other districts where employment was to be found.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: Have they not complained that you sent men from Brisbane to Westwood?

The TREASURER: The complaint was founded on wrong information, because no men were sent from Brisbane to Westwood. What happened was that a number of men followed the foreman down from the North, and he, instead of engaging his men through the bureau, put on the men who came from the North. They had to be put off because the regulations gave absolute preference to the men in the district.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: And then the foreman resigned.

The TREASURER: Yes. He was a very good foreman, but he departed from the practice laid down, that preference must be given as far as Government works were concerned to the men registered in the local bureau.

Mr. VOWLES: Irrespective of qualification?

The TREASURER: Not irrespective of qualification, as they must have competent men. Full power was given to all foremen to dispense with any men not capable of doing the work that they were asked to perform.

Colonel RANKIN: Any preference to unionists?

The TREASURER: Yes. The first preference was given to returned soldiers, and the second preference to unionists, and as against outsiders, preference was given to local men. He was sure that was a policy which hon. members would endorse.

Mr. ROBERTS: I understand that policy has been departed from?

The TREASURER: It had only been departed from inadvertently, such as in the case of Westwood. The foreman there pretended to be ignorant of that regulation, and he felt aggrieved when he had to put off the men who came down from the North. One or two complaints had been made in regard to officers of the Railway Department putting on men instead of engaging them through the bureau, which led to complaints on the part of those men who had registered, and were waiting for employment, in some cases for some weeks, only to find that men coming from other districts had been put on by the foremen. There were only isolated cases of that kind. The system generally was working very smoothly throughout the State. All the departments were co-operating in the endeavour to solve the unemployed difficulty, and both employer and employees were making use of

Hon. E. G. Theodore.]

the exchanges. No one could say that there was not sufficient work to be done in Queensland. It was only a question of getting the men who were available and willing to work to the work that was offering, and the object of the present system was to render labour more mobile in order to meet the needs of both employers and employees.

Colonel RANKIN: It was a striking commentary on the industrial legislation of the present Government that the Treasurer had found it necessary to call in the secretary of an Australian Workers' Union and define to him a special class of unemployed—men who were unemployed, not because there was no work for them, but because they declined to work. Never before in the history of Queensland had such a state of affairs existed. They had generally registered the number of unemployed—that was, the number of men who were out of work—but now the Minister told them that the number given did not in any way indicate the number of men out of employment. It appeared that there was a large army of men—in the neighbourhood of a couple of thousand—who were unemployed, not because there was no work for them to do, but because they declined to work.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The Treasurer was not strictly in order in dealing with that question, but he was replying to an interjection made by the leader of the Opposition, and I did not intervene. The hon. member will see that he is hardly in order in dealing with that question on the motion before the Committee.

Colonel RANKIN: It seemed to him that the question he was dealing with had a bearing on the motion before the Committee. They were voting money for the upkeep of public departments, which were responsible for the employment or unemployment of our citizens. Consequently the statement he was making was very closely allied with the motion before the Committee. In the most recent issue of the "Gazette" published by the Department of Public Works, over which the hon. gentleman presided, there was printed a record of the condition of employment throughout the whole State. The information was supplied by the secretaries of unions, who could not possibly be charged with being opposed to the present Administration. What did the figures in that "Gazette" indicate with regard to the state of employment? If they took any of the big industrial centres, they would see that not only was the number of unemployed large, but that in most cases the prospects were stated to be "bad," "gloomy," "poor," or something to that effect. The position of the workers in Queensland to-day was not one which reflected credit on the present Government. It was all very well for the Treasurer to tell the Committee that the Government had set up labour bureaux. The labour bureau was no doubt a very excellent institution, but it did not meet the difficulty; it did not find employment for men who were out of work. It might, as the hon. gentleman no doubt intended, bring the man who wanted to dispose of his labour into touch with the employer who wanted to secure that labour. That was simply the extension of a principle which was adopted by previous Administrations, so that there was nothing new about it, and the hon.

gentleman could not claim any originality for the scheme. But it had not met the difficulty. The position of the workmen to-day was not one which justified the optimistic spirit manifested by the Treasurer. He should like to refer briefly to the attitude of the Government with regard to questions asked by hon. members. Certain questions dealing with money were put by the hon. member for Mirani that afternoon, asking for information which it was very desirable that hon. members should possess. A very large sum of money was invested in central sugar-mills, and it was very necessary that members should know what were the prospects in regard to those investments. The hon. member for Mirani asked the Treasurer a very straightforward question.

The TREASURER: Didn't I give him a straightforward answer?

Colonel RANKIN: No. He would read the question and answer.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: He asked for information about the Proserpine Mill and things of that kind.

Colonel RANKIN: The Secretary for Agriculture was so parochial that he could not go beyond the immediate neighbourhood of his own electorate, and failed to realise that members sitting on the Opposition side of the House took a nonparochial view of their duties. The question asked by the hon. member for Mirani was—

"Can he give an estimate of what the operations of the Gin Gin Mill are likely to be during the present season?"

The Treasurer replied that at the present time he could not give any indication of what the operations would be. The next question was—

"Is it anticipated that the operations of the Mount Bauple Central Mill will result in a profit or loss for the present season?"

The reply to that was "Yes." (Laughter.)

The TREASURER: I did not anticipate that there would be a profit or loss, but anticipated that the accounts would exactly balance, and that is a correct answer.

Colonel RANKIN: The hon. gentleman must anticipate either a profit or a loss, unless it happened that the accounts exactly squared, which was a very unlikely thing. The hon. gentleman knew quite well that he was simply evading the question. And that was not an isolated case; it had been the attitude of the Government all through when members on the Opposition side had asked for information. The leader of the Opposition had great trouble in drawing from the Treasurer the meagre fragmentary statement he made with regard to this particular vote. The hon. gentleman answered questions by giving them a statement of what the Government had done with regard to a matter which the Chairman admitted was entirely out of order. The Treasurer had given very little information with regard to the expenditure of this money. He was rather inclined to rejoice that there was some indication of economy, as the Treasurer had stated that this £1,500,000 from the loan fund represented five weeks' supply. It was, perhaps, reducing the loan expenditure, which he thought was a very desirable thing. Hon. members on his side had been preaching economy ever since they came here, and it

[Hon. E. G. Theodore.]

was absolutely necessary that they should impress upon the Government the importance of keeping down, as far as possible, the expenditure at the present time when money was scarce, and utilise it so as to give the very best results. He did not know whether one would be justified in deducing from the statement made by the Treasurer that the revenue expenditure for the year was going to be reduced to a very great extent. They had in this vote, according to the Treasurer's statement, five weeks' supply, which was equal to about a tenth of the year; that would mean that the expenditure for the year would go into the neighbourhood of £8,000,000 from all sources. Was he right in assuming that that was so, because if it was it meant a decrease of something like £4,500,000 on the expenditure of last year, which was a very big thing.

The TREASURER: The hon. member will understand that it is very difficult for me to make an estimate. As these five weeks cover a period in which payments are made for interest, there will be no comparison really between the time covered by this amount and the total for the whole year.

Colonel RANKIN: Were they not justified in assuming that this would represent a tenth of the year's expenditure? At the same time, he supposed that it would indicate the limit of the loan expenditure, because that would give them a loan expenditure of something like £1,500,000. In the best year of the Liberal Administration it was seldom that they exceeded £2,000,000.

The TREASURER: You struck £3,500,000 one year.

Colonel RANKIN: He thought they struck £3,000,000 one year, but they tried to limit it to £2,000,000 a year, which was a very wise thing; but the present Government considerably advanced upon that. If this was any indication that the Government was going to show further economy, he welcomed it as far as it went. The same thing hardly applied with regard to trust funds, because it would mean an expenditure of between £2,000,000 and £3,000,000 for the year from trust funds. Hon. members on his side of the House had always advocated the greatest economy and care in the expenditure of trust funds. He hoped that, as the Treasurer had indicated a reduction in the expenditure of loan money, they would also see greater care exercised in regard to the expenditure of trust money.

The TREASURER: The Liberal Government spent £3,300,000 in 1911-12, and £2,400,000 in another year.

Colonel RANKIN: The Liberal Government were very greatly concerned about making ends meet at the end of the year, and being able to pay their way as they went along; whereas they had now a Government which had come in with a smile on their faces and shown a great loss.

The TREASURER: You were not doing a fair thing to the public servants of the State.

Colonel RANKIN: He thought they succeeded fairly well, both in making ends meet and in meeting their obligations in other directions.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed. The CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had come to certain resolutions. The resolutions were received and agreed to.

APPROPRIATION BILL, No. 3.

ALL STAGES.

A Bill, founded on the resolutions, was then presented, passed through all stages, and ordered to be transmitted to the Legislative Council for their concurrence by message in the usual form.

HARBOUR BOARDS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION.

HON. J. A. FIDELLY (*Paddington*), in moving—

"That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to declare the rights of the Crown in the foreshores and bed of harbours, and to make provision for the granting of leases of wharfage lands, and to further amend the Harbour Boards Act, 1892, in certain particulars, and for other incidental purposes."

said: I propose to give the House some information with regard to this Bill. The part dealing with harbour boards is really an unimportant part of the measure. It is proposed to give harbour boards power to remove any obstruction in the channel. If there is any wreckage in the [4.30 p.m.] channel, the board can have it removed, and the cost charged to the owners of the wreckage. It also gives the boards some control in connection with the discharge of refuse in the river. That is a very necessary thing. It also provides that where wharves are damaged by boats, the damage must be made good by the proprietor of the ship or by the company affected. That really is an unimportant part of the Bill, dealing entirely with harbour board matters. The important part, no doubt, from the leader of the Opposition's point of view, is that dealing with the foreshores. That part of the Bill is precisely the same as the Bill introduced in the Upper House by the late Government. I am not disclosing any secrets when I tell the hon. member that, by looking up the measure introduced by the late Attorney-General in the Upper House, he will find the measure that we have incorporated here with the amendments to the Harbour Boards Act. The question of the foreshores is a very vexed one, but I think it will be premature to initiate a discussion upon it at this stage. The Government propose to do merely what the late Government proposed to do—that is to declare the rights of the Crown in the foreshores and beds of harbours, and in the property which lies between the high-water and low-water mark. The shipping companies and various proprietors of wharves have had the use of these lands for many years. In many cases they have erected buildings upon them for their own benefit and profit. The Government propose—as the late Government proposed—to pass legislation to declare that that land is vested in the Crown. (Hear, hear!) It can scarcely be contended that that land should not be vested in the Crown, but to put the matter beyond any doubt, when it is vested in the Crown, permits will be issued, and perhaps leases issued for a period of, say, fourteen

Hon. J. A. Fidelity.]

years. I have gone into rather unusual details so that the leader of the Opposition may be apprised of the contents of the Bill. The hon. gentleman will get the information in detail if he looks at the Bill that was introduced into the Upper House by the Attorney-General of his own Government.

Colonel RANKIN: Is there a similar Act in operation elsewhere?

HON. J. A. FIEHELLY: Oh, yes! About ten years ago the South Australian Parliament passed a comprehensive measure with regard to Adelaide. I do not know of any place where such legislation is not on the statute-books.

Colonel RANKIN: What about New South Wales?

HON. J. A. FIEHELLY: In Sydney the frontages are controlled by a harbour trust. The hon. member will recollect that at the time of the outbreak of bubonic plague, the Government bought most of the valuable water frontages in Sydney and vested the whole thing in a trust. However, later on we can get plenty of information about that matter.

Question put and passed.

LAND ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS moved—

“That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to further amend the Land Act of 1910 in certain particulars.”

HON. J. TOLMIE: We have not the slightest idea what are the particulars in connection with this amending Bill. We are asked to allow the House to go into Committee at the next sitting to consider the desirableness of introducing the Bill, but we have only got the bald motion of the Minister, and he has not given us any particulars about the Bill. Therefore, I do not think that we should allow him to go into Committee to consider the desirableness of introducing the Bill. It might be the worst piece of legislation that the Government ever attempted to put on the statute-book. If it be such, it is our business to scotch it at once. At any rate, I enter my protest at the present time against your leaving the chair even to consider this matter. We have had matters before this House on quite a number of occasions on which such a practice has been followed, and it is a practice that does not appeal to members on this side, nor to any person with a sense of justice at all.

The SPEAKER: It is not proposed that I should leave the chair.

HON. J. TOLMIE: I am concentrating all my efforts on whether it is desirable to introduce the Bill. I do not want to get outside the scope of the motion. The motion commences, “That the House will at its next sitting resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole,” and the next proposition states the reason why, or the purpose for which the House should resolve itself into

a Committee, that is, “to consider the desirableness of introducing a Bill” for a specific object. That object is, “to amend the Land Act of 1910 in certain particulars.” There we come right down to the gravamen of the offence, because if those particulars be not known to us, and we give permission to the Committee to amend the Act in those certain particulars, I question whether we could then alter the scope of the Bill. We might desire to widen it, or restrict it, but we are bound down to the fact that the House resolves itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the desirableness of amending this particular Act, not in the whole, but only in part, and in limited parts—in certain particulars.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Very serious!

HON. J. TOLMIE: It is. I have known very serious things to take place in the course of legislation of this kind, when trammels have been put on the House in the consideration of questions submitted to it, and it is because of that knowledge that I raise the point this afternoon, and bring it under the notice of members so that they may be as well advised as I am. If they then persist in pursuing a foolish course and allow the motion to pass, I am exonerated from having any lot or part in it, because I have done my duty to the House in having pointed it out.

Mr. GRAYSON (*Cunningham*): I think it is desirable that the Minister should state what he wishes to do, and the reasons why he wishes the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole. I have always taken a great interest in land settlement in Queensland, and I have always noticed during my term in Parliament that when it was intended to introduce a Bill to amend the Land Act, the Minister has given the House full particulars as to what the amendments are likely to be, but so far the Minister for Lands has not taken the House into his confidence. I think he would be well advised to do so, and extend to members, especially those sitting on the Opposition side, the knowledge that he has himself. We know that members supporting the Government know every particular in connection with these proposed amendments. The Bill has been thrashed out in caucus. I do not wish to labour the question, but I think the Minister might at least be more courteous when asking leave to introduce legislation of this nature.

Mr. VOWLES (*Dalby*): We are asked to consent to the desirableness of introducing a Bill “to further amend the Land Act of 1910 in certain particulars.” How can we possibly know that any amendment is desirable when not a shadow of an idea is given to us as to the directions in which these amendments are to be? The Minister gets up in his place and formally moves that the House will resolve itself into a Committee to consider something. I can imagine many directions in which it would be desirable to amend the Land Act, but I am at a loss to know what is intended by the Minister. Does the motion mean that the Minister is going to do away with the principle of perpetual lease which he established only a little while ago? Does it mean that he is going to establish the position of grazing and pastoral lessees so that existing contracts cannot be interfered with, and there

[*Hon. J. A. Fiehellly.*]

will be no repudiation? Or what is he driving at? We can only imagine what may be in his mind. How are we to be in a position to say that it is desirable something should be done when we have no idea of the direction in which his mind is working? I think it is at least a want of courtesy to this side of the House that the Minister should come along and ask us to consent to the amendment of an important Act like the Land Act—one which has been hacked about from time to time, and one which is probably going to be hacked about again—and not tell us in what direction we are asked to do so. I think it has been the invariable practice in this House, when new principles are to be imported to any legislation, that the Minister should give a cursory, if not a detailed, account of the direction in which the alterations are to affect the legislation. But apart from the discourtesy of the Minister, I say it is an unbusinesslike thing for the Opposition to sit by and submit to this treatment. Are we to remain in the dark? Are we on this side of the House to be mere ciphers who are not to be considered in any respect? I think it is unheard of, if the Minister wishes to introduce a Bill to amend the Land Act we could show him many directions in which it should be amended. If he is desirous of making it workable many suggestions have been made on this side of the House on different occasions which could be incorporated into it, but if he is going to introduce something that is offensive, something with which this House cannot agree, I think it is his duty to give us some information, so that we may know to what we are committing ourselves.

Mr. ROBERTS: I notice that in 1913, when the present leader of the Opposition proposed to introduce certain amendments in the Land Act, at the request of the then Opposition, he was good enough to intimate in what way he proposed to amend the Act. Then, in 1914 further amendments were made in the Land Act, and the present Minister for Lands, Mr. Hunter, notwithstanding that some information was given at that time, moved an amendment to widen the scope of the proposed Bill. He would not have been able to do that had it not been for the courtesy of the Minister for Lands at that time in giving certain information, and, under those conditions, I think the Minister might very well explain in what way he now proposes to amend the Land Act, so that we will have an opportunity to point out to the Minister how necessary it is to amend the Act in certain other directions. There is every justification for the request made by various speakers on this side, and I trust that the Minister will accede to our request.

Mr. MORGAN (*Murilla*): Evidently the Minister for Lands is not desirous of getting on with business, as otherwise he would have adopted the attitude adopted by other Ministers, and have explained to the Opposition exactly what he desires to do. It has been the general practice for many years for the Opposition to obtain certain information at this stage. At the present time we do not know what amendments the Minister intends to make in the Land Act. Most of us admit that the land laws are the most important that we have to deal with, and it is only right and fair that the Minister should extend to this side the courtesy of

giving us the information desired. Perhaps it is his intention to interfere with the prickly-pear conditions. At the present time the prickly-pear selections have a forty years' period, and the Minister may be anxious to extend that limit, or it may be his intention to fulfil the promise that he made to the prickly-pear selectors many years ago to allow them to obtain the freehold of the area cleared, irrespective of whether the whole of the area was cleared or not. If the amendments are in that direction, I, for one, will be very pleased to support the Bill.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You cannot turn up any statement of mine to that effect.

Mr. MORGAN: I can find a statement where the Minister said that he was in favour of bringing in an amendment of the Land Act to allow the prickly-pear selectors to make freehold certain portions of the land they had cleared, and the term for the balance to be extended until such time as it had been cleared.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Turn that up.

Mr. MORGAN: I will do so. I could turn up the report of a deputation which waited on the Minister, and which I had the pleasure of introducing, when the Minister said it would be a very desirable thing to do. The prickly-pear selectors in the Maranoa will be very much disappointed if it is not the Minister's intention to amend the Act in that direction. They felt that the Minister—knowing so much about the hardships that the prickly-pear selectors have to endure in clearing their pear—before he left for Great Britain to take up the important position of Agent-General for Queensland would have done something for them, as they have stuck to him for so many years. Up to the present the Minister had not shown any sympathy for the prickly-pear selectors. I admit that he did extend the period from thirty-five years to forty years, which was a great consideration to certain individuals, but they want further assistance. All that the Minister had done up to the present is to allow the prickly-pear selectors to mark out certain areas, and he has refrained from enforcing the provisions of the Act in regard to those areas until better conditions are forthcoming.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member cannot deal with the whole land question under this motion.

Mr. MORGAN: I want to know if it is the intention of the Minister to make amendments of that sort in the Bill which he wishes us to give him permission to introduce. Had the Minister given us the information at his disposal there would have been no necessity for any members on this side of the House to get up and make the remarks we have found it necessary to make in order to try and elicit information from the Minister in this respect. I have indicated some directions in which I wish to see the Act amended, and there is still time for this House to deal with important matters of that nature. As one representing a very large area of prickly-pear country, I say the Minister should do something to relieve the selectors of the great burden they are carrying at the present time. But the Minister is evidently determined to sit tight this afternoon, for what reason we cannot

Mr. Morgan.]

tell. We are only asking for information that we are entitled to get, and I hope the Minister will reconsider his decision and let us know what he intends to do in this Bill.

Mr. GUNN (*Carnarvon*): The Minister might very well have given us some information. When he was sitting on this side of the House we were always tucked up for half a day, and sometimes for a day, on Bills of this sort, in an endeavour by the Opposition to alter the scope of the Bill, so that hon. members opposite must not complain if they get a little of their own medicine back. It is necessary to improve the Land Act in certain particulars, but we do not know what "certain particulars" the Minister has thought of. We have "certain particulars" that we would like amended. There is one "certain particular" that I would like to get inserted in the Act. At the present time, when grazing farms are thrown open, no preference is given to the soldiers fighting for the country. There is a lot of

land thrown open for selection [5 p.m.] just now in the St. George district. The young lads of that district have gone away to the front, and are fighting for that land, and yet those who have stayed behind are able to put in applications and get land, while the men at the front are not in a position to secure holdings. Those who are patriotic enough to fight for the country should have a prior right to land when it is thrown open for selection, and I should like to alter the Land Act so as to allow of preference being given to grazing farm settlers who are fighting for the country. Therefore, I move—

"That the words 'in certain particulars' be omitted."

The motion will then read—

"That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to further amend the Land Act of 1910."

If the motion is carried in that form, we shall be able to amend the Act in any way we think fit. I have indicated one way in which we can amend the Land Act materially, and with advantage to returned soldiers. I know the Minister says that grazing farms are only selected by people who have money. That may be so, but the man who has got money and who is game enough to go to the war should surely have preference over the man who stays at home. Moreover, those who have gone to the war have friends here who will be only too glad to finance them. Only within the last few days mothers have come to me and asked that applications for selections should be put in on behalf of their sons who are away defending the country, but even if applications are put in, those men will have no preference over the men who stay at home. I hope that when the Bill is introduced we shall be able to provide for preference to returned soldiers as far as grazing farms are concerned.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*): I second the amendment, because we do not want the House to be circumscribed in making amendments to the Land Act. We all know very well that there are many ways in which the Land Act could be amended to the benefit of the country. There are certain anomalies

[*Mr. Morgan.*]

in the Act, and it would be an act of courtesy on the part of the Minister if he would accept recommendations from members on this side of the House for the rectification of some of those anomalies when he introduces the Bill to amend the Land Act. Members on the other side have not got all the knowledge of the operation of the Land Act, and, if it can be shown by members on this side that an amendment will increase settlement and be for the benefit of the country generally, the Minister should be only too glad to accept the amendment. We have not had any information from the Minister which will enable us to judge in what particulars he proposes to amend the Act, and I think he should accept the amendment so as to allow the House to amend the Act in any way that is likely to increase settlement in Queensland.

Mr. MORGAN: I am very pleased that the hon. member for Carnarvon has given us an opportunity of having more discussion on this very important motion, because the time is opportune for a general discussion of the land laws of Queensland. If we can get an opportunity of dealing with the Land Act of 1910, we shall be able to make it ever so much more favourable to settlers. The Minister is aware that land settlement has practically ceased in Queensland. He has given as one reason for that the absence of so many men at the war. But in other States there is much more land settlement, notwithstanding the war, than there is going on at present in Queensland. Unfortunately, our land laws are not liberal enough to attract settlers from other parts of Australia, and until we liberalise our land laws in such a way as will give people better opportunities for taking up land in Queensland than are to be found in other parts of the Commonwealth, we are not likely to attract settlers to this State. Some ten years ago, when people flocked to Queensland in thousands from other parts of Australia, from Tasmania, and from New Zealand, the inducements held out to persons seeking land were greater in Queensland than they were in any other State in the Commonwealth. The result was that we obtained a very desirable class of men from other parts of the world, and they are at present helping to develop the resources of Queensland. In view of the fact that settlement has practically ceased, we should endeavour to rectify any anomalies that may exist in connection with our land tenures. The Land Act may, as has already been suggested, be altered in such a way as will provide more favourable consideration for returned soldiers. I notice that the Premier, when speaking at St. Kilda on the subject of the conscription referendum, stated, according to the report in the newspapers, that if the other States would adopt the policy of the Queensland Government, and do something for returned soldiers, they would assist the Empire very much in its present exigencies. I am unable to discover what the Queensland Government are doing for returned soldiers any more than other States in Australia are doing. We know that returned soldiers are not satisfied with what the Government are doing for them, and we also know that the Government think more of their policy than they do of returned soldiers.

Mr. SMITH: Because the Labour party are doing the fair thing by the returned soldiers.

Mr. MORGAN: I am perfectly certain that they are not doing the fair thing by the returned soldiers. The returned soldiers themselves think so, and they are expressing their opinions unanimously in that direction. The Labour party think more of their policy than they do of the returned soldiers, otherwise they would be content to give the returned soldiers the option of taking up land under perpetual lease or under the freehold system. They are not even offering the man who has shed his blood for the country, and who comes back wounded, and whose conditions will not enable him to return to the front again, the opportunity of taking up land under the freehold tenure.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is getting into a general discussion of the land question, quite apart from the motion altogether.

Mr. MORGAN: Yes, the amendment is moved by the hon. member for Carnarvon, in order to enable us to enter on a general discussion on the land laws of Queensland.

The SPEAKER: I may point out to the hon. member that he will not be in order at this stage in entering upon a general discussion of the land laws of Queensland. On an introductory motion like this it is unusual to have a debate at all. If he merely asks a question of the Minister in order to find out what is the nature of the measure, that is permissible.

Mr. MORGAN: I quite agree that, in accordance with the strict letter of the Standing Orders, what you say is absolutely correct. But you will recognise that in this House for many years it has been the practice of the Opposition to ask questions, and to obtain information, as to the nature of the Bill which a Minister intends to introduce at this particular stage, and that information has been given. When you yourself and others were on the opposition benches, you religiously insisted upon getting information at this particular stage, and if we are deprived at the present time—

The SPEAKER: Order! I have no objection to the hon. member asking for information, but he is discussing matters not connected with the motion at all.

Mr. MORGAN: We are after information, and are making certain suggestions, in order that the Minister may let us know whether he will include in the Bill the subject-matter on which we are endeavouring to get information. We would like to see placed in this Bill another matter which I will refer to, and the hon. member for Carnarvon has moved the amendment in order that the scope of the Bill might not be limited. The motion states that the Bill is to amend the Land Act of 1910 "in certain particulars." We know that the moment this motion goes through the House, hon. members will be confined in the discussion to the scope of the Bill, but Opposition members wish the scope of the Bill to be so wide that it will enable us to move amendments to remove anomalies which exist. Take the agricultural farm tenure; the people who are taking up land under that tenure are dissatisfied, and are anxious to get an extension from twenty-one years to forty years, like the prickly-pear selectors got a few months ago. Knowing what those selectors have to contend with, and the work they do in clearing the virgin soil, I am of opinion that it is necessary to

give them an extension for forty years. If the motion is not amended in the direction indicated by the amendment, we will not be able to bring in the amendments we desire. There is no reason why the scope of the Bill should not be widened. If there is any restriction the Minister should state what it is. The Bill may possibly contain important amendments of the Land Act of 1910, dealing with returned soldiers, prickly-pear selectors, and agricultural farm selectors, but unfortunately the Minister will not give us the information we desire. We would be satisfied if he would tell us what the Bill contains. I do not know why he has adopted his present attitude. He is evidently looking for trouble, but if he thinks the Opposition is going to mildly submit to this treatment without protest, he is making a blunder. We intend to exercise our rights, and if the Minister wants the Bill to go through he will be wise in giving us all the information we require.

Mr. PETRIE (*Toombul*): It is to be regretted that the Minister seems to adopt a different position altogether from his colleagues in the way he withholds information from this side of the House. As an act of courtesy we should get information on important matters like the one foreshadowed in this motion; that is, "the desirableness of introducing a Bill to further amend the Land Act of 1910." Not only is the Minister always reticent, but he is sometimes irritating and that has caused trouble in the House which should never have occurred.

Mr. SMITH: Has he not given you the information?

Mr. PETRIE: He never gave us any information, but simply moved the motion. If he had given us some idea of the particulars of the Bill, it would only have been the usual courtesy which is extended to an Opposition, and he would have got through with his measure all the more quickly. All the other Ministers are courteous in giving information to the Opposition, but I cannot say the same of the Minister for Lands, whose mannerisms often bring about trouble which would not otherwise occur.

Mr. VOWLES: I desire to support the amendment. I cannot understand the oyster-like attitude of the Minister in this matter. In my opinion it is a lack of courtesy on the part of any Minister to ask the Opposition to consent to the desirableness of amending an Act of Parliament "in certain particulars," and not to say what those particulars are. I can only charitably assume that the Minister—Kerensky-like—has fled to his Under Secretary in order to become acquainted with the contents of the measure, so that when he comes back he will be able to give some information to the Chamber. If he does not I will welcome the Minister for Education, who was at one time Minister for Lands. No doubt he is thoroughly seized with the virtues of these amendments, and will be able to give us the information that the Minister cannot give.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: I do not know them all. I know some of them.

Mr. VOWLES: That is the first time I ever heard the hon. gentleman admit that he did not know everything.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: If I was as sure of anything as you are of everything, I would be very content.

Mr. Vowles.]

Mr. VOWLES: The attitude that has been adopted has been forced upon the Opposition by the Minister in charge of the Bill. If he will insist in simply putting a bare motion before us, and not telling us what the intention of it is, we must come to the conclusion that there is something he is afraid to tell us; either he does not want us to know the full purport of it, or he is not seized with the contents of the amendments and does not thoroughly understand them.

It is open for us to say in what direction we think it is desirable for the Bill to be amended. There are no members in this House more conversant with the land laws than members of the Opposition, and no members more constantly in touch with those laws than members on this side. We come into contact with the land laws in hundreds of directions, and members on this side are the ones most qualified to say whether it is desirable that the amendments are necessary. Members on this side come into contact with the practical working of our land laws in connection with the agricultural farm selectors; grazing farm selectors, prickly-pear selectors, pastoral lessees, selectors under the Closer Settlement Act, soldier settlers, and also the perpetual lease selectors, so that there are many ways in which we can suggest reasonable alterations of the present law. We do so from practical experience, and in such a way that we will be able to convince any Ministry that those amendments are desirable. I do not suppose it is intended now or at a later stage that any suggestions of that sort should be made on a large scale, but we would like to know from the Minister whether the amendments which he proposes affect the pastoral lessees or the agricultural farm tenure or whether they will affect the existing agreements between the Crown and their tenants. We would like to know whether there is anything in the Bill which savours of repudiation. If we knew that there was nothing of that kind in the Bill we would be a little easier in our minds. If we consent to the motion at this stage and stand dumbly by while the motion is being passed, we will be told that we considered it was desirable to introduce such a Bill. We are working on the blind, and if we agree to the motion to-day we will be told that we are criminally responsible because we agreed to the desirableness of introducing the Bill, no matter what is contained in it. For those reasons I protest, as a member of the Opposition, against the want of information on the part of the Minister and the persistent attitude the Minister has taken up in refraining from giving information to the Opposition. If the passage of this measure is delayed and the time of the country wasted, and the House kept back discussing measures, then the only person to blame is the Minister, who has taken up the attitude that he will refuse to give any explanation.

Mr. SMITH: You are responsible for more waste of time than most members.

Mr. VOWLES: I listened to the hon. member's speeches about sugar, and I came to the conclusion that it was only a waste of time. I consider that the action of the Minister in refusing to give information is only an act of discourtesy to the Opposition.

Mr. SWAYNE: In view of the importance of the subject, I think that our request for

[Mr. Vowles.

some information about this Bill is a reasonable one. There is a large area of land in the hands of the Crown at the present time, and there is no topic more important than this one and none deserving of more consideration. In the latest "Year Book" I find that Queensland has an area of 429,120,000 acres, and of that area 16,244,541 acres are alienated. The greater portion will be affected by this Bill so far as we know, and we should be able to find out something about it. I know that owing to the administration of the Lands Department by the present Minister it has affected settlement in my district. I know that a number of dairy farmers came from New South Wales, but because of an alteration in the Land Act they would not settle in the district at all and went back to New South Wales. That settlement would have had the effect of bringing prosperity to the district which I represent, and also to the district represented by the hon. member for Mackay. But those people were stopped from going into that settlement owing to the change in our land laws. Surely, in view of that, and in view of the many things that have occurred under this Administration, we are entitled to have some information about this measure before it is passed. In most of the measures introduced by the Minister for Lands we notice that he adopts that contemptuous attitude towards the Opposition. He is worse than any other member of the Government in that respect, and he cannot be surprised if we ask for information on the subject. I trust before the question goes to a vote that the Minister will tell us what is in the Bill.

Mr. STEVENS (*Rosewood*): I have much pleasure in supporting the amendment. I consider that it is necessary to give preference to returned soldiers in regard to grazing selection as well as other forms of settlement. We on this side of the House have consistently advocated that the returned men should have preference in both grazing selection and agricultural selection. Those young men who have left the grazing country to go away and fight for us will not take to agricultural pursuits when they return. They will naturally wish to go back to the same class of occupation that they were brought up to. We maintain it is their right to go back to that occupation and they should have preference granted to them for grazing selection as well as agricultural selection.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Go to Marburg and tell them that.

Mr. STEVENS: You go to Hong Kong and say what you like. (Laughter.) I am not going to Marburg or anywhere else at any time with or without the Minister for Lands. I am prepared to challenge the Minister for Lands to come to Rosewood and contest the seat with me, or I will go to Roma and contest his seat with him.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You had better come to Roma.

The SPEAKER: Order! Order! I suggest that the hon. member keep to the question.

Mr. STEVENS: I am not going to stand any dirty insinuations from the Minister for Lands, and I have a right to reply to him. I am convinced that you, Mr. Speaker, will uphold me in the stand I take in regard to

any such insinuations. I am glad that you uphold the attitude of members of the Opposition on this question. The Minister for Lands, when he was in opposition, invariably got up and asked for more information on resolutions such as this, although the Liberal Minister who introduced the Bill always gave an explanation of its provisions. This

Minister, however, has not given [5.30 p.m.] us one word in explanation to denote the scope of the proposed measure. The discourtesies of the Minister for Lands are well known, but one would suppose that when he anticipates taking up such an honourable position as that of Agent-General for Queensland he would at least show that he had some qualification to fit him for its duties.

Mr. GRAYSON: I shall certainly support the amendment moved by the hon. member for Carnarvon. It seems to me that the Minister has made up his mind that he is not going to give the Opposition any information at all. Why the Minister has taken up such an attitude I cannot understand, because, from my knowledge of the Minister during the time he was a private member, no member ever sat on the Opposition side of the House who tried to elicit more information on the introduction of Bills than the hon. member. I would like very much to know in what particular this Bill is going to amend the Land Act. I would like the Minister to explain one matter, and I can assure him that it is a question that is exercising the minds of a great number of people in Queensland at the present time. It is that many parents of returned soldiers are anxious that their sons should select grazing farms in Queensland. We know that the Minister has closed down on that proposition, and I am surprised more particularly that members representing pastoral constituencies, such as the hon. member for Gregory, who knows that many most excellent young men volunteered from those districts, should calmly assent to the Minister's attitude. I contend that no class of men would make better selectors than the shearers and overseers and rouseabouts on the stations in the western part of Queensland who went to the front.

Mr. H. J. RYAN: Wait until they come back.

Mr. GRAYSON: That is not the point. I say that anyone with a son at the front who is engaged in any part of the pastoral industry—such as that of overseer, or rouseabout, or shearer—or a grazing farmer with sons, is certainly entitled to get priority in securing grazing farms in Queensland during their absence at the war. We know very well that these young men have received the praise, not only of the British Empire, but also of all the nations allied with that Empire. I contend—and I speak feelingly on this matter—that every opportunity should be given to those young men who went away to battle for Australia. Would it not be right and proper for the Minister to rise in his place and inform the House whether it is intended to insert in this amending Bill a clause to that effect—to enable our returned soldiers to select, not only agricultural farms, but also grazing farms? I admit that the Government have done something for the returned soldiers in the way of providing fruit farms and poultry farms, but—I think the hon. member for Gregory will substantiate what I am going

to say—I hold that the young man who has been reared in Western Queensland will not take up a fruit farm or a poultry farm. You have to provide for the different classes of men who have gone to the front, and I contend it is the duty of this Government, or any other Government who may be in power at such a time, to make ample provision for those young men who went to fight for our country, and give them every opportunity to select land in their native country.

Mr. POLLOCK: They have the same opportunities now as other men.

Mr. GRAYSON: I say they should have priority. Fancy a returned soldier, who wishes to settle upon a grazing farm, having to take his chance of the ballot with other selectors who have not gone to the front, and will not go to the front! Several members on this side have accused the Minister of not being communicative when introducing Bills. That is not my experience altogether, and I do not know what influences him in withholding the information required by the Opposition. As a rule, I do not rise to stonewall any motion, but, at the same time, I am here to enter my strong protest against the way in which the Minister has treated members of the Opposition this afternoon in regard to the introduction of this Bill. I contend that it is his duty to rise in his place at once and explain to the House what the provisions of this Bill will be.

Mr. ROBERTS: I think the hon. member for Carnarvon is to be congratulated upon having set out definitely what he desires to put into this amending Bill. I notice some justification for his amendment in the minutes of the proceedings of the conference of Premiers and Ministers for Public Lands held at Melbourne in January, 1917. We find that all the States were represented, and also the Commonwealth. We find that from Queensland the Premier (Mr. Ryan) was there, and also Mr. J. M. Hunter, M.L.A., Secretary for Public Lands. One or two interesting things in the proceedings appeal to me, because this Government have set out definitely to claim that they are doing so much for the returned soldier, as compared with any other State.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is not in order in dealing with that question.

Mr. ROBERTS: Well, I want to show that if the object of the hon. member for Carnarvon is attained, we will be coming into line with the other States in the matter of preference to returned soldiers. We find that this matter—a very important matter—was discussed fully, and the resolutions arrived at are to be found on page 66 of the report of the debate. This is what New South Wales is doing, according to Mr. Ashford, Minister for Public Lands—

“We set land aside specially for soldiers, and only soldiers can ballot.”

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That is, like Beerburum.

Mr. ROBERTS: Mr. Wilson, from Western Australia, said—

“We propose to do that in Western Australia.”

And Mr. Vaughan said—

“In South Australia we do not hold ballots.”

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Like Stanthorpe.

Mr. Roberts.]

Mr. ROBERTS: Mr. Hutchinson, from Victoria, said—

“In Victoria we give preference in every case to the soldiers.”

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: And they did not have any land to give. (Laughter.)

Mr. ROBERTS: Mr. Hughes said—

“I think it would be a good thing if the conference were to pass a resolution favouring preference to soldiers in connection with employment.”

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We had passed an Act in this House the November before that giving preference to soldiers.

Mr. ROBERTS: Well, I am thankful to the Minister for some information, at any rate. If we cannot get what we want, I am glad that we got something by interjection.

Mr. VAUGHAN moved—That preference be given to soldiers in any Government employment.

Mr. WILSON: I second the motion.

Mr. RYAN: Other things being equal.”

That is the usual position taken up by this Government in connection with the soldiers. We find also on page—

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member will not be in order in quoting that at this stage.

Mr. ROBERTS: I contend that I am entitled to use all the arguments that I am dealing with returned soldiers and preference to them in a matter of grazing farm selection, and that is all that the amendment is asking for. If land is thrown open for selection, we are desirous of having it set apart for the returned soldiers if they desire it. There is every justification for that being done. The hon. member for Gregory said the returned soldier had the same opportunities as other people in the State. I grant that, but we contend he should have something better. It is admitted that the returned soldiers are making great sacrifices.

The SPEAKER: Order! I point out to the hon. member that he is in order in mentioning the things that he desires to include in the Land Bill, but he must not proceed to discuss them in detail.

Mr. ROBERTS: I am showing that there are good reasons for the amendment. It must be understood that we are somewhat handicapped this afternoon. I do not think you, Mr. Speaker, will say that we have been treated reasonably. The Minister came down baldly with a proposal to amend the Land Act, and for a considerable time he treated this House with considerable disrespect. When we wished to point out to him reasons why he should give information, and when he failed to give us that information and we tried to widen the scope of the Bill, he saw fit to leave this Chamber, and consequently members had to speak in his absence. It is our duty to use every opportunity of showing the necessity of giving preference to returned soldiers in the direction asked for by the mover of the amendment.

Colonel RANKIN: I wish to express my regret, in common with other hon. members on this side of the House, that the Minister has not seen fit to extend to the Opposition

[Mr. Roberts.

the courtesy which has usually been shown by a Minister towards members of the Opposition when introducing a Bill. The attitude of the Minister for Public Lands in this connection is in marked contrast to that of his colleague, the Minister for Justice, who, when he introduced a Bill this afternoon, gave us all the information desired and enlightened us as to the meaning of the proposed amendments. Here we have a Minister coming along with, perhaps, the most important Bill of the session, a Bill dealing with one of the most important elements of our national welfare—that is our land—and what does he do? He read out the formal motion and then, metaphorically, threw the Bill on the table and said, “There you are! Take it or leave it! Please yourselves.” Nobody, when in opposition, was more inclined to resent that sort of treatment than the Minister for Public Lands himself, and I say, in all fairness, that he has not treated this side even with that ordinary courtesy which one hon. member shows to another. He is asking us, as it were, to endorse a blank cheque without knowing what the objects of the Bill which he proposes to introduce are. It may mean anything. It may be so far-reaching in its effect that it may wipe out freehold tenure right throughout the length and breadth of the land. It may be in the nature of a confiscatory measure. We know that in the forefront of the platform of the Government is a plank for the abolition of freehold and the substitution of another form of tenure. It may be—I do not say it is—that it has that for its object. It may be to substitute a system of tenure which will, bad and all as the present system really is, go beyond the dreams even of the Labour party.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Do not be foolish altogether.

Colonel RANKIN: The Minister has been foolish this afternoon in the attitude he has taken up in regard to this measure. I think now he is sorry for taking up that attitude because he knows very well it is not an attitude any Minister has taken up in this House before. Nobody knows that better than himself. One can only conclude that he does not know the contents of his own measure. Either that, or for some reason or other he refuses to reply to the Opposition altogether. The Bill may be most far-reaching in its effect. It may alter the whole system of land settlement, and we are asked to take it on trust. In common with other hon. members on this side, I am not very keen on taking anything on trust from the hon. member in matters of this sort, and we have reason for our suspicion. It may not only mean a change in the whole system of land settlement, but it may mean the abolition of our Land Court. We knew that quite recently there has been some disagreement—a very serious disagreement—which rendered it necessary for a very eminent member of the Land Court to express his feelings, from his position on that court, towards the hon. gentleman. The Minister for Public Lands saw fit to write an adverse criticism on the court, dealing with most serious matters affecting land settlement. The Bill may, for anything we know to the contrary, have for its object the abolition of that court. We are absolutely in the dark and are asked to agree to the introduction of a measure which may be so far-reaching in its effect as to prove detrimental

to the best interests of the State. I admit quite frankly that it would be difficult to deal more damagingly with land settlement than the present Government have already done. You have only to look at the most recent figures to see how, as one speaker on this side has said, the Government have practically sounded the death knell to land settlement in Queensland. That has been the result of present administration and legislation, and if the Minister intends to confiscate freehold altogether, in some manner known only to himself, then it is our duty as an Opposition to see that we safeguard the interests of the people in this connection. I do not think that he can show any precedent for the attitude that he has taken up this afternoon.

Mr. SWAYNE: A most important Bill too.

Colonel RANKIN: I had said already that this is probably the most important Bill of the session—one certainly dealing with our broad acres; with our 400,000,000 acres of unalienated Crown land, and possibly with 493,000,000 acres—the whole of our territory. We know nothing about the Bill but its title. Let hon. members read the motion for themselves, and they will see that it is simply a proposal to introduce a Bill to amend "The Land Act of 1910." What is the scope of the measure? We are not asked to amend certain sections of the Act; we are not asked to deal with the Land Court; we are not asked to deal with the perpetual lease system; we are not asked to deal with freehold tenures—indeed, we are not asked to deal with any specific matter in the Act. The motion covers anything and everything in connection with land legislation. It is absolutely boundless in its scope. Yet the Minister will tell us nothing about the object of the Bill. He treats us like a lot of naughty school children.

Mr. GLEDSON: You should go to the fête to-morrow and put up your Aunt Sallies there.

Colonel RANKIN: Perhaps the hon. member for Ipswich knows the contents of the Bill. No doubt the members of the caucus considered the measure at a caucus meeting.

Mr. ROBERTS: There are not many of them here.

Colonel RANKIN: There are not many of them here; there never are many of them here, because their business is not settled here—it is settled in caucus. We are not permitted to sit at those meetings where these matters are discussed and decided, and it is only here that we can get information with regard to them. We have a right as the Opposition to insist upon the Minister telling us how far this measure is going to affect our land laws. There is absolutely no precedent for the attitude the hon. gentlemen has taken up this afternoon, and when he was in opposition there was no greater stickler for such information being supplied to the Opposition than the hon. gentleman himself. At that time he used to tell the Government of the day what their duty was on such an occasion as this, how they should give information to the Opposition, and how they should not have to be asked for it a second time. And that courtesy was extended by the members of the past Government to the

then Opposition, and they did not keep members in the dark, because their way was open. But here, we have a Minister who declines to give us any information; he will not tell us what the Bill means, or what it is intended to cover.

Mr. GLEDSON: The motion on the paper is plain enough.

Colonel RANKIN: What is the motion? Is it a motion to give leave to the Government to introduce a Bill to abolish the Land Court?

Mr. GLEDSON: You will know that when the Bill is introduced.

Colonel RANKIN: Yes, but we want the information now.

Mr. GLEDSON: You will get it when you get the Bill.

Colonel RANKIN: When this motion is passed we cannot alter the scope of the Bill. The hon. member is out of his depth in making these interjections, and I may tell him that it is now that we determine the scope of the Bill. Once this motion goes through, you cannot limit or extend the scope of the Bill. What does the motion on the business paper disclose? Simply a proposal to amend the Land Act.

Mr. GLEDSON: That is all it is.

Colonel RANKIN: That may cover any part of the Land Act. The hon. member must know that the Land Act is made up of various parts. It is not one single chapter, and is not concerned with only one single class of land settlement. It is concerned with all classes of land settlement. Still, for some reason or other, the Minister declines to tell us what the Bill contains. In this matter he has treated the Opposition in a shameless fashion. We have no means of dragging the information from him. I can only say that he is showing a lack of courtesy towards the Opposition, and that his attitude is in striking contrast with the attitude of his colleague who this afternoon introduced a Bill dealing with foreshores. The Minister who is in charge of that Bill went to all sorts of trouble to give us information; he told us what was the object of the Bill. That it was in operation elsewhere, and that we had no need to fear any ill results from passing the measure. But the Minister for Lands tells us nothing. He simply reads the motion, and then, metaphorically speaking, throws down the paper. He might just as well have taken the motion as read, and have said, "I have my men behind me; we can carry the motion; we can bludgeon it through whatever the opposition may be."

Mr. GLEDSON: You are not opposed to amending the Land Act of 1910, are you?

Colonel RANKIN: No, and the first amendment I would make in that Act would be to strike out the perpetual lease provisions. Perhaps the Minister intends to extend those provisions by this Bill, and to do away with freehold tenure entirely.

Mr. GLEDSON: That would be a blessing.

Colonel RANKIN: That is a matter of opinion, and most people in this State believe it would be a curse. But the fact that there is this difference of opinion between the hon. member for Ipswich and myself is another reason why we should know what

Colonel Rankin.]

we are asked to agree to in this motion. We may assume from what the member for Ipswich has told us that this Bill is not going to affect the perpetual lease system. Perhaps it is going to affect the Land Court. That is a question which has been exercising the mind of the Minister and the mind of Parliament for some time, but we can get no information from the hon. gentleman on that point. There is something very wrong in the action of the Minister in this matter. Whether he desires to go out of his way and take this opportunity in the closing hours of a dying Parliament to show great discourtesy to the Opposition, I do not know. But, whether intentional or unintentional, he has done that, and even now we have not the slightest indication as to what is the scope of the proposed Bill. I have endeavoured to point out the seriousness of the situation, and to show the hon. gentleman the lack of courtesy of which he has been guilty towards the Opposition. Perhaps it was unintentional, and even now he may rise in his place and give us the information we desire. I think we have every right to know how far it is intended to amend the land laws of the State, which are of such paramount importance to us, and the Opposition are entitled to know exactly what is the scope of the Bill.

HON. J. TOLMIE: I desire to speak to the amendment. I think it is very desirable that the Opposition should be informed of the scope of the Bill. We do not know what the contents of the Bill are, and consequently it is essential that we should try to make the scope as wide as possible, so that if it seems desirable to move amendments we may have an opportunity of doing so, although we may not be able to carry them. It is a good thing to have the chance of moving amendments, so that the public may see that we desire to make the land laws of this State as useful as possible. Unfortunately, the land laws are in such a condition now that settlement, instead of progressing, is going back in a large degree. The measure introduced by the Minister may not be of that formidable character which we fear, but the Minister could have dissipated our fears if he had felt so disposed. As a matter of fact, the Minister himself has often shown a thirst for information. I remember when I brought in an Amending Land Bill on one occasion, I gave a full explanation as to the scope of the measure, which led to the hon. gentleman moving an amendment to still further widen the scope. He moved that certain clauses of the principal Act should be included in the measure which the Bill before us proposed to amend. I could not see eye to eye with the Minister on that occasion, and on division the amendment was lost.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Probably that will be the fate of this amendment.

HON. J. TOLMIE: That is what I was going to remark. But, at any rate, the hon. member for Carnarvon will then have the satisfaction of knowing that he endeavoured to widen the scope of the measure so as to make it of service to the community. The hon. member for Carnarvon pointed out the directions in which he thought there was a limitation in the scope of the Bill such as to make it unserviceable for a number of would-be selectors in the State. He pointed

[Colonel Rankin.

out that quite a number of settlers desired to secure land, but that the principal Act did not allow them to obtain their wishes, and that this was a fitting opportunity to try to give effect to them. I hope the Minister will give consideration to the request of the hon. member for Carnarvon, so that the scope of the Bill will be widened. Why should there be any limitation whatever on the scope of a Land Bill? After all, the one desire is that our land laws should be made as useful as possible for the people of the State. The ideas expressed on this side of the House may not appeal to the House as it is constituted at the present time, when, as we see is the case in this Chamber, there is such a strict demarcation of parties. Hon. members opposite have discussed the Bill, and knew what the contents were before it was brought here, and they had made up their minds as to what limitation they were going to place upon it. But they might, at any rate, see the force of the contention of other hon. members who are returned to do the best they can to improve the laws of the State, and concede to them the opportunity of considering those points which are essential for the welfare of the State. There may be matters which have been overlooked by hon. members opposite, and with which they are in sympathy, and perhaps it only requires them to be brought under their notice to win their sympathy and support for the amendments which may be moved; but if the scope of the Bill is limited as set forth in the motion, we shall not have an opportunity of exercising our rights, or of introducing that legislation which we think essential, and which, as members of this House, we have the right to do. I hope the Minister is not going that far that he denies to members of the Chamber their rights and privileges in connection with the introduction and passage of legislation. He might be as liberal as members on this side in regard to that. The hon. gentleman is like the Athenians, in that he understands what is good, but he is not like the Lacedæmonians, who understand what is good and practise it. The hon. gentleman has not got the liberality of mind of a statesman to concede to members on this side the privileges and rights which the Standing Orders provide for.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Listen to the Pharisee.

HON. J. TOLMIE: The hon. gentleman understands Pharisees. I am not going to refer to his Pharisaical practices. All that I am aiming at is to induce the hon. gentleman to give us an opportunity of understanding the merits of the Bill. If he had followed the practice—and the sound practice—laid down by the Assistant Minister for Justice he would indicate what the contents of the measure are. The Assistant Minister for Justice may be younger in years than the Minister for Lands, but he is older than he is in ways of wisdom.

HON. J. A. FIDELLY: I will use that at the next election. (Laughter.)

HON. J. TOLMIE: The Assistant Minister for Justice shows tactfulness when he likes, but there are times when he does not like.

Mr. GILLES: Why do you qualify it?

HON. J. TOLMIE: Because it came to my recollection that last night he might have

shown some tactfulness. In this case though, he has profited by past experience, and exhibited a degree of wisdom this afternoon that resulted in his motion going through without debate. The Minister for Lands might have done the same thing, because he must realise that there are other stages of the Bill—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That is where you will get all the information you want.

HON. J. TOLMIE: All the hon. gentleman has succeeded in doing is being obstinate. The hon. gentleman ought to be exceedingly pleased and gratified to know that we are asking him for information on this Bill, because we are following the lines laid down by him on previous occasions. They say that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and the Minister must think himself exceedingly flattered by the attention bestowed on him this evening. I am pleased to know that there is some possibility of the contents of the Bill being made known when we get to the Committee stage. He indicates that he is going to volunteer some information then. I am sorry that we have to wait until then, because the information that he gives may lead to discussion; but if we had got the information to-night that would have been avoided, and the Bill would have gone through the Committee stages without the slightest difficulty at all. I wonder what the feelings of the Minister for Lands will be when he sees the measure introduced by the Assistant Minister for Justice going through stage after stage without any debate whatever.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It is not fair to make a threat like that. (Laughter.)

HON. J. TOLMIE: I am glad to notice that the Minister is getting into a good humour. I hope that he will give us the information he has declined to give us this afternoon. I regret that we have had this discussion this afternoon, and that we had to move this amendment; but we are only doing our duty to our constituents and to the State in trying to widen the scope of the Bill. We want to widen the Bill to the fullest extent in order that we may get a Land Bill that will be of service to the people of Queensland. I desire to make the work of the Government satisfactory to the people, and for that reason I have given them every assistance at all times. I hope we will not have to deal with the Minister for Lands. If he continues to occupy a seat in the Government, and introduces any more legislation, I hope that he will introduce it in such a spirit that it will warrant the immediate and hearty co-operation of members on this side.

Mr. FORSYTH (*Murrumba*): I agree with the amendment to widen the scope of the Bill. The hon. member has asked for leave to introduce the Bill, but he has not given us any information about it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: If you had been here I would have told you all about it.

Mr. FORSYTH: Then, I am sorry I was not here.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You ought to have been here.

Mr. FORSYTH: The hon. member has not given one single word to explain the

contents of the Bill, yet when he was in opposition himself he always asked for information about Bills that were introduced. In 1913, when the present leader of the Opposition was Secretary for Public Lands, he moved—

“That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to consolidate and amend the laws relating to the incursion and migration of rabbits.”

On that occasion the Minister for Lands gave a full explanation of the Bill, but the hon. member for Maranoa—the present Minister for Lands—wanted to get more information. On that occasion the hon. member for Maranoa said he would like to know whether the Minister intended to continue the iniquitous system of preventing trappers and others from offering the carcasses and furs of rabbits for sale. Although the Minister for Lands on that occasion explained the Bill substantially, the hon. member for Maranoa was not satisfied. In 1914, when another Bill was introduced, the present Premier asked for information. The information was given by the Minister who introduced the Bill, following the usual course. As a rule, the leader of the Opposition, whoever he may be, whether Liberal or Labour, calls “Not formal” in order to get that information. The Secretary for Agriculture in 1914 introduced a Bill to provide for advances to aid co-operative agricultural enterprises, and he gave very full information. The leader of the Opposition said—

“The Secretary for Agriculture was correct in his conclusion that I called “Not formal” to this motion for the purpose of eliciting what was the ambit of the measure that he proposed to introduce.”

That is exactly what has been done here to-day. We want to get information just the same as the hon. member wanted to get information then, even after particulars had been given. But he has not given any particulars at all, and he is at least somewhat inconsistent in his actions.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: At the next stage of the Bill that will be all right, but not at this stage.

Mr. FORSYTH: The instance I have quoted was the order of leave, and full particulars were given to the House. The hon. member was not satisfied with the information and asked for certain other information, and as a matter of fact he got it. The very same thing crops up on almost every Bill introduced, no matter whether it is introduced by a Liberal or a Labour Minister. As a rule, the Minister introducing the Bill gives a short and succinct idea of the particulars of the measure, and I cannot understand why the hon. member did not do that. Surely there is nothing to hide, because we will be able to see the Bill later on! I understand that another Minister who introduced a Bill this afternoon gave information, and I think it is the wise thing to do. We do not want at this particular stage to get all the information, but we certainly want to get some information. We are asked by the hon. member to pass this resolution and we have no information about it at all. How, then, can we say whether we believe in the principle underlying the Bill or not? Surely the hon. member must see at a glance that we are simply voting in the

Mr. Forsyth.]

dark, and that if he would only give us a few particulars it would be quite sufficient. I sincerely hope that even at this late hour the hon. member will give us some information, but, so far as anyone can judge, it is quite evident he does not intend to do so.

Mr. BAYLEY (*Pittsworth*): I do not know any reason why the Minister for Lands should refuse to give us some information at this juncture. It is all very well for the Minister, and the Government generally, to take up this attitude, because we all know well that they have already discussed this matter in its entirety in the caucus. But that is no good to the Opposition. We have a right to know what ideas they are bringing forward, and I see no reason whatsoever why the Minister should take up this new attitude. I think the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Carnarvon is a very good one. It widens the scope of the Bill very considerably. Very important alterations may be brought forward by the Government within the scope of this Bill. It is probable that on account of the falling away in the taking up of Crown land it is absolutely necessary that freehold tenure shall be resorted to once again, and it may be their intention, therefore—and very likely is their intention—to do away with the present objectionable leasehold tenure. If that is the case, surely we have the right to be “in the know.” With reference to the proposal giving preference to returned soldiers, which I think is a very good provision, we all are willing to admit that those men who have offered so much, who have given up so much for Empire, for this State, and for each one of us, have the undoubted right to preference in these matters, and if we are at all desirous—if the Government are desirous—of assisting recruiting, they should take every step possible to make the prospects held out to our returned soldiers as bright and as alluring as possible. Within the last couple of days the Premier has informed the people of Australia that he is absolutely opposed to conscription at the present time. He tells us that if we make the prospects sufficiently rosy we will have plenty of recruits—that men will come forward in ever-increasing numbers. If what the Premier has told us is correct, this is a golden opportunity for the Government to proceed on those lines, and I think the hon. member for Carnarvon deserves thanks for bringing forward an amendment which will give the Opposition an opportunity to grant preference to returned soldiers. Other States have already done it. Why is Queensland lagging behind? It is not to the credit of the Government that Queensland is the one and only State in Australia that has not done something in that respect, and I would urge the Government—I would urge the Minister for Lands, if it is not his intention to give preference to soldiers in the Bill as drafted, to accede to the request of the hon. member for Carnarvon and accept the amendment which he has proposed. It is very much to be deplored that the Opposition are met with such scant courtesy. One would never think that this was a responsible [7.30 p.m.] Government—one would never think this was a democratic Government—when one saw them absolutely refuse to give members of the Opposition the necessary information at such a stage. I earnestly hope that the Minister for Lands will relent, and even at this eleventh hour

[*Mr. Forsyth.*

give the information to the Opposition which is so much desired and which is so very essential.

Question—That the words proposed to be omitted (*Mr. Gunn's amendment*) stand part of the question—put; and the House divided:—

AYES, 28.

Mr. Barber	Mr. Land
„ Bertram	„ Lennon
„ Carter	„ Lloyd
„ Fihelly	„ May
„ Foley	„ McLachlan
„ Forde	„ McMinn
„ Free	„ O'Sullivan
„ Gilday	„ Peterson
„ Gillies	„ Pollock
„ Gledson	„ Ryan, D.
„ Hartley, W.	„ Ryan, H. J.
„ Hunter	„ Weir
„ Huxham	„ Wellington
„ Jones	„ Winstanley

Tellers: Mr. McMinn and Mr. Pollock.

NOES, 13.

Mr. Bayley	Col. Rankin
„ Bridges	Mr. Roberts
„ Forsyth	„ Stevens
„ Grayson	„ Stodart
„ Gunn	„ Swayne
„ Morgan	„ Tolmie
„ Petrie	

Tellers: Mr. Gunn and Mr. Swayne.

Resolved in the affirmative.

Original question stated.

Mr. STEVENS: I think the Minister for Lands has been in this House long enough to learn the ordinary rules of courtesy as applied to Ministers of the Crown. The hon. gentleman has wasted several hours because he would not give a few words of explanation to enable hon. members to understand the scope of the measure.

The SPEAKER: Order! I may point out that several hon. members have already used that argument, and I must ask the hon. member to introduce fresh matter.

Mr. STEVENS: Personally, I have not heard anyone use that argument yet, and I have been in the House all the afternoon. However, I must bow to your ruling, Sir. Certainly I would like to know who has used the argument that I am using. The Minister must admit that it is due to members of the House that he should give some explanation of the reason why he is introducing the resolution, and also what the resolution embraces. But if he refused to do so; if he refused to extend to the House the ordinary courtesies; then I suppose all we can do is to bow to his supreme will, and it appears to be supreme at the present time. The hon. gentleman sits there, adopts an obstinate attitude, and simply refuses to explain to us that which we have a right to know.

Question put and passed.

CLOSER SETTLEMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

* The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: In rising to move the second reading of this amending measure, notwithstanding the attitude of hon. members opposite this afternoon, I have no hesitation in expressing confidence that members on both sides of the House are fully seized of the importance of this, or any similar legislation, having for

its object increased facilities for closer settlement on the public estate, and the more generous treatment of those in occupation of the land. The limited amount of capital that men who go upon the land possess—those already upon the land as well as the large body of our people who are desirous of going on the land—has, for many years, made it increasingly evident that if the lands of the State, particularly the repurchased areas, are to be successfully and profitably occupied, then a larger share of the capital required for this purpose must be found by the State. Selectors, particularly those on the Jimbour and Inkerman estates, as well as intending selectors on the well-known Cecil Plains Estate, have not hesitated to make clear, both by letter and by petition, their views on this matter. It is with a view to meet this desire, which is so transparently necessary, that this measure is now introduced. Perhaps if I were to briefly set out the scope of the Bill hon. members would be more able to grasp all the proposals which it contains. I might say, in the first place, that the Bill provides that, as in the case of ordinary Crown lands, any repurchased estate or the unselected lands on the various repurchased estates, shall be made available for perpetual lease selection. The leader of the Opposition, when speaking to the motion for leave to introduce this Bill, suggested that a promise had been given, or a statement had been made when introducing the 1916 Act, that the Bill did not then propose to interfere with the repurchased estates. That clearly was the intention, but it was discovered afterwards that the Act really did make it impossible for any land in the State to be disposed of other than by perpetual lease selection. That was discovered on submitting to the court several applications for land—one on the Jimbour Estate and several on the Inkerman Estate. Provision is also made that any selector who has selected land on any repurchased estate may, if he so desires, convert his freehold tenure into a perpetual lease tenure. Provision is also made for fixing the capital value of the land, the method employed being similar to that provided in the principal Act. This, perhaps, will relieve the mind of the leader of the Opposition, because yesterday he had the rather romantic idea that we were going to inflate the prices of the estates with a view to getting a sufficient rent to cover interest.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: You are going to inflate the interest charges.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: If the hon. gentleman has a little patience he will see exactly what we do propose. The Bill provides also that the rent shall not exceed the rate of interest paid on the purchase money of the repurchased estate during the first period, and not exceed 5 per cent. of the capital value during a succeeding period. It will be admitted that the State should obtain a return in rents sufficient to cover the interest on the purchase money of the land that they buy.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: They must.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That is quite so, and that takes away the hon. gentleman's charge that the proposal is to inflate the interest. It also provides that town and suburban blocks may be sold by auction on the perpetual lease tenure on terms generally similar to those under which Crown lands of the State are sold, except

that 5 per cent., instead of 3 per cent., interest will be charged. There are other minor provisions in the Bill. For instance, it is provided that priority may be given to men who are already on the land comprised in an estate at the time of the repurchase, or that any selector now upon any of the estates may surrender their title and obtain a leasehold.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: That is the law to-day.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Yes, that is the law under the principal Act, but it will not be the law under this Bill, unless it is re-enacted. There is also a provision for the substitution of the capital for the purchasing price, so as to bring this measure into conformity with the Closer Settlement Act. Section 31 of the principal Act is to be repealed. A suggestion was made yesterday by the leader of the Opposition that the passing of this Bill may have some effect on the trust funds of the State. My contention is that the trust funds of the State will be no worse off, even if the worst things that can be said by the Opposition were true, than they are at the present time. At present we have areas of land open for selection on the following estates:—Kilcoy, Jimbour, Widgee, Woolooga, Gowrie, Inkerman, and Maryvale. Altogether, there are 119 portions of land on those estates, comprising 166,964 acres, and costing the State £411,536. Those lands are unselected to-day, and are lying idle. A large number of those portions are producing no revenue to the State, and are, therefore, a tax upon the trust funds of the State. No rent is being received from them, and no repayments are being made in connection with them. In addition to those areas, there are 518 blocks of land on the Jimbour, Gowrie, and Inkerman estates, comprising 163,367 acres, and costing £574,937. Those blocks have been selected, but a large number of the selectors are unable to meet their payments. It will be remembered that a Jimbour Relief Bill was introduced the session before last, in order to give relief to a number of selectors on that estate. At that time a concession amounting to some £87,000 was made to the selectors, so that there again the trust funds were called upon to make good. My contention is that if through the present land laws we have large areas of land, such as I have mentioned, unselected, or which, having been selected, are held by men who are unable to meet their engagements, it is quite time that something was done to enable people who are desirous of going on the land to obtain land at a rental which will enable them to occupy it profitably, and under conditions which will enable the trust funds which have been employed in the repurchase of the estate to be reimbursed. There is a certainty that a large number of these selections or portions will be selected under the perpetual lease system. A considerable number of the Jimbour selectors have signified their willingness to accept leasehold tenure, and a suggestion has come from a number of intending selectors in the Pittsworth district that when the Cecil Plains Estate is thrown open for selection it should be thrown open under the perpetual lease system. People are beginning to realise that the man who goes on the land, and has not an abundance of capital, requires that capital to work his farm, and is unable to pay a high price for land. The State by granting perpetual leaseholds to those intending

Hon. J. M. Hunter |

selectors will allow them to retain their capital and use it for the purpose of expanding and developing their industry. On Gowrie there are forty-nine selections, comprising an area of 10,947 acres, and valued at £48,108, the owners of which are likely to apply for the conversion of their tenure into leasehold. I think the House will realise that, under the circumstances, the Government are called upon to take some action by which these estates may be made available for the public. During the last twelve months only six selections have been taken up on repurchased estates. The experience of the men at Gowrie and Jimbour has been such as to warn men against endeavouring to select land and make homes for themselves on those areas under present conditions. It is held by hon. gentlemen opposite that the perpetual lease system is not popular. All I can say is that, as far as the repurchased estates are concerned, a large number of the men who are on the land, and a number who propose to go on the land, show a strong disposition in favour of perpetual lease, and are asking the State to be their landlord, so that they may be allowed to take up land and use it on a rental basis. Of course, it is said that the leasehold title is not a good one, and that people like to have their own freeholds. But, after all, titles are only relative in degree. A freehold title is not an absolute surrender by the Crown of the right to deal with the land in respect of which the title is held. The Crown at all times reserves the right to enter upon it, to make roads, to reserve it for any particular purpose, or to resume it, and also at any time to tax it. There is one advantage of perpetual lease—it is not taxable. Moreover, we want to remember that the very title itself—a lease in perpetuity—does not mean a lease for to-day, a ninety-nine years lease, or a 999 years lease; it means a lease for all time. The Crown has no more right to interfere with it in the matter of resumptions than what it has with land under the ordinary freehold title, with which hon. members opposite are so enamoured. It is a notorious fact that while a number of men imagine that they are owners of property, in a large number of cases they are really occupiers for the mortgagee, and the rate of interest that they pay to the mortgagee for the money which they borrow on their freehold would in many cases be double that which the State is asking for them under perpetual leasehold.

Mr. BAYLEY: Then you put a land tax on top of it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Then they have in the State what may be called a very generous and considerate landlord, who does not make a point of driving a man off his farm in a bad season or of rack-renting him in a bad time or at any time. Only a reasonable rent is asked. The outline of the Bill which I have given shows that the rent is based on the purchase money, with, of course, the usual advance of 10 per cent. to cover roads and reserves which have to be made for the public convenience. On that purchasing price the State says, "We will charge you a rental equal to the interest we are paying on the land which we have purchased." I think that if the selectors on Jimbour had started out on that basis in the beginning they would be to-day in a very much better position than they are. I am sure that if the selectors who go on the Cecil Plains Estate start out on those terms

[Hon. J. M. Hunter.

they will become a very prosperous people. The general effect of the provisions which are laid down in this Bill will be that a large area of land which has cost the State something like £800,000 or £900,000, and to-day is either unoccupied or is largely occupied by men who are unsuccessful through having to carry the enormous burden—a responsibility which they would never have taken on if they had known it, of paying off the purchase price of their costly land—those men will be relieved of that responsibility if they so wish. There is another large area of land which, to-day, nobody is wanting, because the price is such that they are not able to pay it. Under this Bill the result will be that the burden will be removed from these men if they desire it, and will, it is hoped, reimburse the trust funds of the State. It is not compulsory; they are free to do what they please, but if they wish they may surrender their present titles, and come under the perpetual leasehold system and pay the rentals on the basis provided by the Bill. I sincerely hope that the Jimbour land and the balance of the Inkerman land, when the Bill is passed, will find ready selection, and that those men who to-day are burdened with a heavy debt which they see no prospect of ever relieving themselves of will be freed from that burden and set on their way to prosperity by availing themselves of the provisions of this measure.

Mr. BAYLEY: How will they stand with regard to the money already paid?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The hon. member is asking in that quite a host of questions which he could not expect me to answer in a second reading speech.

Mr. ROBERTS: The Bill shows it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: If the hon. member has read the Bill, and it is there, there is no need to ask the question. I move—That the Bill be now read a second time.

At five minutes to 8 o'clock,

The CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES (Mr. Bertram) relieved the Speaker in the chair.

* HON. J. TOLMIE: We do not know the objects which actuated the hon. gentleman in introducing this Bill; it may be that because of legislation introduced and passed last year the Government finds itself in a hole. We have had, very frequently, passed through this Chamber legislation which has been found to be quite different to the representations made to us. The hon. gentleman has previously denied that, but now he tells us that last session we did pass through this Chamber a Bill which had that effect. I thought myself that there was some danger in connection with our closer settlement land laws, and when the Bill of 1916 was passed through the House, I asked the Secretary for Public Lands as to whether the settlers in "such and such" an estate were affected by the legislation we were then passing, and he gave me an assurance they were not.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I gave you the assurance given by the Draftsman, who understood that was the position. It is no use your trying to misrepresent the matter.

HON. J. TOLMIE: The hon. gentleman told me they were not.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I gave you the assurance I got.

HON. J. TOLMIE: The hon. gentleman gave me the assurance of the Draftsman. I do not think he is fair to the Draftsman; he should take the responsibility himself in regard to a matter of that kind. He now comes down and says that all our settlement under the Closer Settlement Act has stopped because of the legislation we passed last year.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: No. It is absolutely untrue; that is not so.

HON. J. TOLMIE: The hon. gentleman told us when persons came and sought to take up land under the Closer Settlement Act—he instanced one area on Jimbour and four or five on Inkerman—they could not have effect given to their wishes because the 1916 Act barred them.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: No. All it does is that it makes it necessary now to legalise their selections. It does not stop anybody from selecting.

HON. J. TOLMIE: Of course, it has stopped selection.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You were told in the office to-day that that was not so.

HON. J. TOLMIE: I am giving the information I have got from the office.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: No, it is quite the reverse; that it did not prevent applications being received.

HON. J. TOLMIE: I went to the office because I was not certain in my own mind.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I know you went to the office; I was told you got it.

HON. J. TOLMIE: Any time I have gone to the office the hon. gentleman has given me every opportunity to get the information I wanted. One of the provisions of the Bill I went to make inquiry about was sub-clause (4) of clause 2—

“All such applications for the same shall, at the option of the respective applicants, be deemed to have been made and accepted for a perpetual lease selection under this Act; and the applicants shall, respectively, be entitled to hold the land accordingly under the Land Act of 1910 and any Act amending or in substitution for the same and this Act.”

The question I put at the office was with regard to the word “option,” and I was told that if these selectors who have taken up, or attempted to select, land proceeded with their selections, should this Bill become law, they would get their selections, but they have not got the option to take it up under the existing Act.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You will be responsible for stopping them.

HON. J. TOLMIE: No, the existing law is responsible. These men cannot go further than they have gone to-day.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You said we have stopped selection.

HON. J. TOLMIE: I say that selection has stopped.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: No, it has not.

HON. J. TOLMIE: They cannot proceed any further than they are at the present time. They made their applications [8 p.m.] and lodged their money, but could not get a title to go on the land because of the operation of the Act.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We can issue occupation licenses.

HON. J. TOLMIE: These men went to the office and put in their money to take up land as freehold tenure under the Closer Settlement Act. When they lodged their money the Land Commissioner told them they could not take it up.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The Land Commissioner did not tell them that.

HON. J. TOLMIE: Well, the Minister told them, or somebody else. Perhaps the Land Court told them that their selections could not be confirmed because of the operation of the 1916 Act. If that is not stopping them, I do not know what is stopping them.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It did not stop selection, but it stopped the progressive stages of selection.

HON. J. TOLMIE: If they cannot get the land under freehold tenure, then selection under that tenure must be stopped. That must be patent to the intelligence of the hon. gentleman. That is the information I obtained at the office, and that is the information which the hon. gentleman gave to this House when he introduced the Bill. I am not seeking to put any other construction upon it.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Yes, you are.

HON. J. TOLMIE: Unless this Bill is passed, it is impossible for them to get their selections.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You said that we stopped selection.

HON. J. TOLMIE: I said that it was stopped through the operation of the law. I do not say that the hon. gentleman wilfully and with malice aforethought took all the means in his power to prevent these men from having their selections confirmed.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You are trying to twist it.

HON. J. TOLMIE: I am not trying to twist it. It is the hon. gentleman who is trying to twist it. Here we have one man from Jimbour and four or five men from the Inkerman Estate wanting to take up land under the Closer Settlement Act. They filled in their forms, paid their money, and when they went to the Land Court for confirmation the Land Court, possessed of more knowledge and reading the Act more carefully than the commissioners, said, “We are sorry, but you cannot go any further. We cannot confirm the application for you.” The policy of the Government is to bring all the land under leasehold in order to give these men an opportunity of taking up selections.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: And others.

HON. J. TOLMIE: And others. I do not say that the Minister is just doing it for the five or six men I have mentioned, but these five or six men will benefit. As a

Hon. J. Tolmie.]

matter of fact, it is because of the predicament in which these men are found that he has introduced this legislation.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: No, it is not. That is where you are wrong again. Scores of men on Jimbour want it.

HON. J. TOLMIE: We will come to that later on. I am dealing with the position that under Closer Settlement Act selection cannot be proceeded with unless this legislation is passed. That is due entirely to the Government's not having carefully studied the Act before they introduced it.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We know what we want in the Act.

HON. J. TOLMIE: This Bill lays down that certain sections of the 1906 Act, described as the principal Act, shall be cancelled. Those sections are the sections that deal with the opening of land, the fixing of the price of land, and the means of getting it. Those provisions are re-enacted in another form in this Bill. There are some alterations of the same effect with regard to the Act of 1913. I suppose that is necessary if there is going to be an alteration in the tenure of the land. Then comes the question of the reappraisal of the value of those properties. The practice is followed, as in the principal Act, of adding one-tenth to the value of the land, or rather one-tenth to the purchasing price. That, I take it, is for the same purpose as was followed in the principal Act. It provides for land put aside for reserves and roads. We found that that one-tenth was sufficient to cover that. I find on inquiry that the position of the Closer Settlement Act is exceedingly sound at the present time, notwithstanding that there are some areas of land still remaining. The land that has been sold compensates to the fullest extent the trust funds from which the money was taken. In that respect there is no loss on the trust funds.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That is provided for.

HON. J. TOLMIE: No, it is not. This Bill is introduced to systematise all the land laws of the State. Perhaps the Minister will not take exception to my putting it that way.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: No. That is right.

HON. J. TOLMIE: He wants to bring all the land laws of the State under perpetual lease. He has had some experience of the working of the law since he has been in office. It was one of the fads of the Labour party, one of their ill-digested schemes of administering the public estate, and immediately they came into power they proceeded to put it into operation. The result is lamentably shown in the history of land settlement ever since. The number of selections taken up last month was sixty, a minimum record for the last thirty years. There has been a diminishing demand for land ever since the Government introduced that system. Of course the Government give their reasons for that.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You don't recognise that there is a war on.

HON. J. TOLMIE: The hon. gentleman took the words out of my mouth. It is a wonder the Minister for Education is not here to tell me there is a war on. I have

realised that there is a war on, and I realise it to the fullest possible extent. I realise, with a great amount of anguish, that there is a war on, and because I realise there is a war on, and because it is painful to me, as it is to other members, to know there is a war on, that does not prevent me from discharging my public duty here in pointing out where the Government are mismanaging the affairs of the country.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Do it honestly.

HON. J. TOLMIE: If it is necessary to bring the Government to book for mismanaging the affairs of the State when there is no war on, it is more imperatively our duty to do it when there is a war on, when every possible penny is necessary to be conserved, and because of the contingencies that we know must inevitably follow the fact that there is a war on.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: What has that to do with the fact of the falling off of selection?

HON. J. TOLMIE: The hon. member realises the force of what I am saying, and I speak this way, not because of any desire on my part, but because of the fact that the hon. member has brought it upon himself by interjection. I say that settlement has fallen off, and I have pointed out the true cause—that is, the tenure that is now existing—so that people will not take up land; they cannot purchase it under these conditions. I simply appeal, if I may do so, to the meanest instincts of every person in this Chamber—the desire for possession—and I am certain that there is not a single individual who, if he saw a possibility of getting a freehold for the purpose of making a home for himself and his family, would not take it, knowing that he has that security in case trouble should come and it should be necessary to dispose of his property. Land settlement has fallen off, and fallen off, I say, in a lamentable degree. This year will be the low-water mark in Queensland, I believe, for the last forty years—that is, proceeding at the rate at which we are going now. I have gone back in the history of land settlement for over thirty-five years, and there has not been a year in the history of Queensland when we have not been able to put at least 1,000 persons on the land. The progress returns to-day show that this year we will not be able to do that, unless something extraordinary happens, by the 31st December.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You do not need to be a prophet to say we will have less next year.

HON. J. TOLMIE: We will have less next year under the conditions the Government impose. And when we go back and see that thirty years ago the population was not one-half of what it is to-day, and yet they were able to settle over 1,000 persons on the land, we must come to the conclusion that it is not the war which is preventing a double population doing at least what that population did thirty-five years ago. I regret very much the condition of settlement in the State of Queensland; I regret that it has been brought about by the action of the Government, by reason of a misconception of what is the right policy to pursue in regard to land settlement. They had the history of

[Hon. J. Tolmie.]

the whole world before them. They knew what the progress of settlement had been, not only in the older countries of the world but also in the newer countries of the world; they were aware that what has brought progress and development has been freehold tenure. And if they go to the countries that have been desolated they will find that they are those lands where leasehold tenure obtains to-day; they are following the worst experience of the world's history instead of the best in their policy of land settlement. This Bill does away with the possibility of any person acquiring any land under the Closer Settlement Act. We thought at least that was conserved to the people. Such is this selection spoken of by the hon. member, and all land under the Closer Settlement Acts that was not taken up when the 1916 Act came into force will be available for perpetual lease selection, just the same as all the other lands of the State are available for that form of tenure. They endeavour to encourage those persons with freeholds to throw up the land they already hold under that tenure or have partially made freehold, because the principle laid down here in subclause (6) of clause 2 provides that the selectors may take advantage of this Bill and throw up their present freehold lands. I know that this may be attractive to some selectors who may be struggling, but I want to warn them what the effect of this may be. That subclause provides—

“That no sums paid as rent under the surrendered lease shall be credited to the new perpetual lease, except in respect of the unexpired part of the year during which the surrender of the subsisting lease is made.”

That is, if any of these selectors have paid a very considerable amount into the Treasury in the direction of making their lands freehold, if they elect to come under the provisions of this Bill, all the money they have paid will be impounded by the State—it falls into the State Treasury and they lose it all. They lose all the value of improvements made on those lands. Everything goes by the board, except the unexpended portion of this year's rent, which may be continued as rent of the leasehold until the expiration of the year. What advantage is there, then, to the selectors to come under the operation of this Bill? Let us see how it is going to work out. The Minister has told us that a demand is being made by selectors at Jimbour and other places for a reformation of the Closer Settlement Acts in order to give them the opportunity of throwing up their freehold and taking leasehold instead. I wonder, if the Hon. the Minister explained to these would-be selectors under that tenure what the conditions are going to be, how it is going to operate in their respective cases—I wonder whether they would be so glad and so willing to come under the provisions of the Bill. The Minister has made no explanation of that. When he is proposing to make a wide sweeping alteration in our system of land tenure, as he is proposing in this Bill, do you not think it would be only right and just to the selectors, those who have urged him to bring in this legislation, to put definitely before them the conditions under which this measure is going to operate? When they find out what those conditions are I have not the slightest doubt that they will not take advantage of the measure at

all. It is not going to be to the advantage of the selectors, nor is it likely to ease them of their burdens, as the hon. member has so glibly assured us. I propose to explain the situation so that at any rate the matter may be put before this House, so that members may understand, and selectors outside this Chamber may fully realise what their position is if they take advantage of it. I have not the slightest doubt that it will be found that they will not do so well under this measure as they are doing under existing legislation, where there is a possibility, even though they have to struggle against existing conditions, of their being able to make their holdings their own. No matter how long a man struggles, if eventually the property becomes his own, he has something for his old age, something on which he can fall back, something which will relieve him if he becomes distressed. He can sell the property and live upon the proceeds, but what can he do in regard to his selection under the Bill we are now discussing?

MR. FOLEY: He can sell a perpetual lease.

HON. J. TOLMIE: Who is going to buy a perpetual lease?

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: They are being sold now.

HON. J. TOLMIE: When this land is desolated—as it sometimes is—by drought, and when men are broken, as men are broken on the land—and the Minister for Lands knows that as fully and as well as I do—what are they going to do? I have been associated with the people on the land in this State ever since I was a child, and so has the hon. member. I know what the conditions of settlement are. No man in this House can tell me any conditions in regard to settlement that I do not know of. I know the difficulties under which these men are working, and if they are broken under the tenure that is proposed by the Minister for Lands, they have nothing on which to fall back, and they drift off their selections without any substance at all.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: They may have a mortgage under freehold tenure and drift off.

HON. J. TOLMIE: If they have a mortgage they can sell their mortgage and get something for it. I asked the hon. gentleman yesterday whether the trust accounts of Queensland were going to be protected by this Bill, and he said, “Wait and see, you will see it in the Bill.” Then I pointed out that if these trust accounts were to be protected on the lines of existing legislation, that is, charged $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., the capital value of the land would have to be inflated, giving the people of the community a wrong impression as to the value of the land.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You are drawing on your imagination.

HON. J. TOLMIE: I was drawing on my imagination because I had nothing else to draw upon. I had not the information which should have been vouchsafed by the hon. gentleman to draw upon, and having nothing else to draw upon, I drew upon my imagination, which, generally speaking, is a well-ordered imagination, and I am not likely to be misled to any extent by

Hon. J. Tolmie.]

that imagination. I find now that instead of inflating the capital value of the land the hon. gentleman is inflating the interest charge.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We are charging rates of interest paid by the Government.

HON. J. TOLMIE: The present law says $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., and anything over that percentage is inflating the interest, as far as the existing law is concerned. The interest that will be charged by the hon. gentleman is the interest that is being paid on the different estates, and when we look at the various estates we find that they were all purchased at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., with the exception of Cecil Plains, which was purchased at 4 per cent., so that these estates must return $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. interest in order that the trust funds will not suffer. That is the basis on which the land is going to be leased.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Is not that cheap money?

HON. J. TOLMIE: It is cheap money if the people had an opportunity of freeholding their land, but, if they have not an opportunity of freeholding their land, how is it going to be cheap? At the expiration of 15 years this $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. is going to jump up to 5 per cent., and 15 years thereafter a Government may be in power that may raise it to 10 per cent. Let us see how this will operate.

MR. FOLEY: What an elastic imagination you have got!

HON. J. TOLMIE: There is no imagination about it.

MR. FOLEY: Like Mark Twain, you have an imagination that can be stretched to any extent.

HON. J. TOLMIE: Just like the platform of the Labour party. Let us take the Jimbour Estate, in the Dalby land agent's district. I have here portion 41, containing 593 acres 2 roods 19 perches. The capital value of that selection under this Bill—when it is passed—will be £2,370, and that land is valued at £4 per acre. On this the selector pays a rental of 2s. 9 $\frac{3}{5}$ d. per acre per annum. Altogether the man who takes up that selection bareback—without saddle or bridle, without a fence upon it, without any water, and without any house—has to pay £83 per annum. At the expiration of 15 years he will have to pay £113 10s. per annum rent on that selection.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That is not according to the Bill.

HON. J. TOLMIE: That is according to the Bill.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The Bill says not exceeding 5 per cent.

HON. J. TOLMIE: Not less than 5 per cent. I know what I am talking about. Then, take portion No. 387, valued at the present time at £4 8s. $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. per acre. The man who takes up that selection will have to pay 3s. 1d. per acre rent, or £53 10s. per annum. That selector has to put up his own yards, his own fencing, his house, wells, and everything else; and, notwithstanding that fact, he has to pay—for a period of 15 years—£58 10s. per annum rental. Under a

freehold tenure all he would have to do would be to pay a little bit more than that £53 10s. for 40 years and the land will be his own, but under these conditions the land will never become his own.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He would have to pay three times as much.

HON. J. TOLMIE: Surely the hon. gentleman is not going to allow that statement to go out as the opinion of the Minister for Lands? He knows the price is £6 10s. for the freehold and the interest is $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., and three times as much as that would be $10\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I have known farmers pay $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

HON. J. TOLMIE: To the Government?

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: No; I am talking about the private money-lender.

HON. J. TOLMIE: They were glad to get the money at $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., so that they could make the land their own. Now we turn to portion 192, parish of Macalister, containing 320 acres; £5 0s. 8d. is the capital value of that land under the Bill that we have now before us. That is 3s. 6d. an acre. The selector who takes that up will have to pay £56 a year rent. He is not going to do it. Now, let us take the Gowrie Estate, portion 13v, in the parish of Isaacs. The area is 169 acres 3 roods 37 perches, and the capital value of that is £1,700. It is valued at £10 an acre. The selector who takes that up has to pay 7s. per acre rent at the present time. As a leasehold area, for the 169 acres he has to pay £59 10s. per annum. Is that land going to be taken up under those conditions? No. Where is there going to be any easier for the selector? They are going to continue paying rent at the prices I have stated, and then, at the expiration of fifteen years, the rent is going to be raised upon them again. Do you think that this is going to be an encouragement to settlement? I have pointed out that this Bill is not going to give satisfaction to the would-be selectors of Queensland that is anticipated; that it is only going to still further add to the difficulty of land settlement in Queensland. If the Minister were wise—if the party with which he is associated were wise—they would realise the growing needs of the people of Queensland to-day. If they realised to the full extent the necessities of the people of Australia to-day, they would come down to this House and alter their system of land tenure altogether. They would widen the possibilities for people to settle upon the land, and extend to them privileges that are not extended to them at the present time, in order to induce as many people to become producers as they possibly could. If they devoted their energies solely to the object of securing land settlement and securing production—I give them this advice, as it is good advice and sound advice—then they would be doing the best possible thing that they could for the State of Queensland, without taking away from the people the incentive to go on the land. When we have hon. members declaim against the producer—as hon. members on the other side of the House are constantly doing; when every difficulty is put in his way; when his lot is made so difficult, in comparison with the lot of the men in the cities; what inducement

[Hon. J. Tolmie.]

can there be for settlement? Goodness knows there has never been any [2.30 p.m.] Government in the State who have done so little to encourage settlement as the present Government are doing. If present conditions continue, and we cannot get hold of people and induce them to go on the land, there is going to be a most disastrous time for Queensland. I have heard hon. members opposite rave at the late Government when they had as many as 300 and 500 selectors after one favourite piece of land, and when all the land that could be made available was snapped up; but there is a great difference between the paltry number of selectors who are now taking up land and the hundreds of selectors who went on the land under the previous Government. Hon. members on the other side, when they were on these benches, used to tell us that we were not doing the right thing to secure settlement, and that if they had the opportunity they would show us how this State was going to hum with the tread of thousands and thousands of men marching to take up land.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: So we would if we had the opportunities you had.

HON. J. TOLMIE: The present Government have had unlimited opportunities, but they have placed every obstacle they could in the way of people taking up land, and have hurled at those who have gone on the land epithets which have made them dissatisfied. I am not talking about things which are ephemeral; I am talking about things which are permanent. During the last two and a-half years—the period during which the present Government have held office—land settlement has gone down month by month.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: You are forgetting that there is a war on.

HON. J. TOLMIE: If the hon. gentleman had been here a little while ago he would have found that that stock argument was used by the Minister for Lands, that it was used by the hon. member for Mundingburra, and that it was used by the hon. member for Kennedy—in fact, almost every member on that side of the House has had that argument on his lips. In order to cover up the mismanagement of the Government they are blaming the appalling conditions which exist on the other side of the world.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You know that the men are not here to go on the land.

HON. J. TOLMIE: The boys of to-day are as anxious to take up land as the boys were previously. Boys of sixteen are not going to the war.

Mr. H. L. HARTLEY: They are going to the war.

HON. J. TOLMIE: I am sorry if boys of sixteen are going to the war, but we know that there are boys of that age left here, and that they want to get land and make homes for themselves. There may be hardships to put up with, but if those growing lads see independence ahead of them they will travel the hard and difficult road. When we have galvanised indifference at a premium beyond measure, how can you expect to secure land settlement?

Mr. H. L. HARTLEY: How can you have "galvanised indifference"? Talk sense!

HON. J. TOLMIE: I am speaking beyond the depths of the hon. member's comprehension, and I regret that I am doing so. Here is a Bill, ostensibly introduced for the purpose of settling people on the land, but I have pointed out that the reduced prices for land which we hear so much about are not going to be secured by the people under this measure. The people of Jimbour thought they were going to get their land at 1s. an acre and make it pay, but they know very well that they cannot make that land pay when they put their improvements on it and then find that they cannot dispose of their property if they wish to take up some other occupation. The Cecil Plains lands are hanging on the hands of the Government. A selection of 320 acres on Cecil Plains may be valued at £4 an acre. I do not know how the Government are going to fix the price, but I think that is a reasonable valuation. If a man takes up plain land under such conditions, he is not going to use it for agricultural purposes. He may use it for dairying purposes, if the Government give any encouragement to dairy farmers, but he will have to pay £60 per annum for that land before he has put a stick on it—before he has fenced it in, before he has built a house or sunk a well, or put a plough into the land. If he cannot make a living on the land, and he has to leave it, he must forfeit his improvements. What encouragement will that be to settlement?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He has not to forfeit his improvements, and you know it.

HON. J. TOLMIE: He has to forfeit his improvements if he cannot get people who are foolish enough to accept such conditions to take up the land.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You have to put a proviso into a lot of your statements

HON. J. TOLMIE: It is a proviso that intelligent men understand. I have endeavoured to show clearly to hon. members on the other side that there is not going to be cheap land settlement under the scheme proposed in this Bill, that the incentive to settlement is being taken away; and, if the incentive to settlement is destroyed, I ask how can we expect the people to go on the land? Does the Secretary for Public Lands, or any of those who are associated with him, think they are going to get men to select land under such conditions? Certainly, they are not going to get men of experience, knowledge, grit, and determination to help them in their difficulties. They will get men who are attracted by what they consider easy conditions—who are attracted by the glamour of the statements made by the Secretary for Public Lands and those with whom he is associated. They will come along thinking that 3½ per cent. on the capital value of the land, that will never be theirs, is a cheap rental to pay. But when they work upon the land and realise that, in accepting these abnormal conditions, they pay more than 15d. an acre on that land for running their sheep—if they go in for sheep—they are not going to make a return out of it. Under the conditions that will obtain

Hon. J. Tolmie.]

they can only put a certain number of dairy cattle on the place—I mean cattle in profit; the calves, apart from the dry cattle that must come along, must necessarily be destroyed as soon as they are born—they can only put a limited number of cattle on the place, and under ordinary conditions only get a limited return, which will not pay the rent and maintain them in any decency.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: And yet they pay £1 down South for every 1s. they pay here for rent.

HON. J. TOLMIE: How is settlement going to be possible under those conditions? We should make the conditions as attractive as possible to the selectors so that we may get them here, and our duty is to keep them here under any conditions whatever, because they are going to be the most valuable asset of the State in the years to come. I know that this Bill will pass this Chamber, as it has been decided on in caucus by hon. members who have very little knowledge of land settlement, and less care and thought for the people who are settling on the land. Their experience in regard to this matter is a minimum. But they have a vast amount of hope that this ill-digested measure is going to be productive of good results. I know from practical experience that it is not going to be so, and that we are passing legislation which will be immaterial as far as settlement in Queensland is concerned. It may please hon. members opposite, but it is not going to help the State.

Mr. GRAYSON: During my time in Parliament I have noticed that every Minister for Lands has had a Land Bill in his pocket. I remember in 1883 we had a Minister for Lands, the Hon. C. B. Dutton, who passed one of the best Land Bills ever enacted in the Queensland Parliament. That was the Bill which created the grazing farm selections. The Bill compelled owners of stations to allow their runs to be subdivided. The half of a run was subdivided into 10,000 or 20,000 acre blocks, with the result that we have had splendid settlement in the western part of Queensland. No one can deny that grazing farmers have increased the number of stock, and thereby the wealth of Queensland, as much as any other class of settler we have had for a great number of years.

Then again, another Land Bill was passed by the late Sir Hugh Nelson—the Closer Settlement Bill. He was the first Premier who started to cut up the large estates, particularly on the Darling Downs. That Bill was the first enactment passed in this House with a view of compelling owners to sell their estates to the Government and cutting them up into farms for closer settlement. I am safe in saying that in no electorate in Queensland were more estates purchased than in the Cunningham electorate. I think the Minister for Lands will acknowledge that. The action of the then Government in repurchasing so many estates on the Darling Downs, particularly in the south-eastern portion of the Downs, was the means of settling a splendid class of people there.

Mr. H. L. HARTLEY: The Jimbour Estate does not bear that out.

Mr. GRAYSON: I am speaking of the south-eastern portion of the Downs. I am [Hon. J. Tolmie.

quite correct in saying that more estates were repurchased under the Act in that particular district than in all the rest of Queensland. I am referring particularly to the repurchase of Glengallan, Toolburra, Clifton, Maryvale, and other estates. There is not a single acre on those estates which is not sold, unless it is a small portion of Maryvale estate. The Minister said there was a small portion unselected on Maryvale. That Act worked splendidly for a time, but the terms were not liberal enough. Under the Act, the selector had twenty years for the payment of his purchase money. But after he selected and paid his first year's deposit and portion of the survey fees he had only one year's grace. In 1906, when the late Hon. J. T. Bell was Minister for Lands, he introduced an amendment of the Closer Settlement Act. I am pleased to say that I induced that Minister to liberalise that Act by way of increasing the term from twenty to twenty-five years. After the selector had applied for a selection and paid his first instalment, he was exempt from payment of any further instalments for four years, with the result that all the selectors who came under the operation of that Act had no trouble to meet their engagements, and have been prosperous up to the present time.

With regard to the Bill before us, I consider that it is the limit of any Land Bill which has been introduced in this Assembly. I am certain that it will not be the means of increasing settlement in Queensland.

Mr. FREE: It will not allow any more land-jobbing.

Mr. GRAYSON: That is an interjection from a man who does not know anything about land settlement; his profession is pulling teeth. (Laughter.) We hear these silly interjections coming from a man sitting opposite, who I question very much ever saw the Darling Downs in his life. There has been no land-jobbing under the Closer Settlement Act. I believe the Minister for Lands will substantiate that statement.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: What about dummying?

Mr. GRAYSON: It would not pay any man to dummy land, because it is too dear. With reference to this Bill, we find that the Minister is doing his utmost to destroy the freehold tenure of land in Queensland.

Mr. LAND: Quite right.

Mr. GRAYSON: It is distinctly wrong not to allow a man who acquires a small area of land for agricultural purposes to convert it into freehold.

Mr. LAND: What about grazing selections?

Mr. GRAYSON: That is a different problem altogether. I would not think of selecting a 20,000-acre grazing selection under a freehold tenure when I could acquire it under leasehold at from 2d. to 3d. an acre rent. I would not have any grazing land under a freehold tenure.

Mr. H. L. HARTLEY: What land would you take up under freehold tenure?

Mr. GRAYSON: I consider that selectors on areas from 100 to 1,280 acres should be allowed to acquire a freehold tenure for their land, provided that the land is put to proper use. Under this Bill no selector who has taken up land from a repurchased estate will be able to convert his land into freehold. What position will the selector be in with a perpetual lease selection? I am referring particularly to estates like the Glengallan repurchased estate. Many farmers selected from that estate, and the land was valued at £8 per acre. Suppose that land was thrown open under perpetual lease conditions. Each farm averaged about 150 acres, so that would mean that, under perpetual lease, each farmer would have to pay £60 rent per annum for all time. That is the price that the farmer would have had to pay at 5 per cent.

Mr. CARTER: Perpetual lease is only 1½ per cent.

Mr. GRAYSON: The hon. gentleman is bushed again. He is referring to Crown land, while I am speaking of repurchased estates. Hon. gentlemen opposite talk a great deal in their caucus meetings advocating perpetual lease for repurchased estates, but they advocate a system that they know nothing whatever about.

Mr. SMITH: That is a very sweeping statement.

Mr. GRAYSON: The selectors on Glengallan, Toolburra, and Maryvale estates took up land valued at £8 per acre. If the then Government had thrown open the land under perpetual lease, I say that each of those farmers would have had to pay £60 rent per annum. The rent would have been reappraised after fifteen years, and probably at that time the Government would send up a valuer and he would say that the value of the land had increased to £12 per acre.

Mr. LAND: You are assuming a lot.

Mr. GRAYSON: In my opinion if this Bill is passed it will be the means of decreasing land settlement more than any Land Act that has been passed in Queensland. What has been our experience in the past regarding perpetual lease? Since that system was initiated there has been practically no land taken up under agricultural farm tenure. Less land has been taken up under agricultural farm tenure during the term of the present Government than has been taken up in the same period for the last forty years in Queensland. It is all very well to blame the war for that, but the war does not supply the whole reason for the falling-off of the land settlement in Queensland.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Do you think that if we introduced 60,000 people into Queensland it would increase land settlement?

Mr. GRAYSON: Yes, it would.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Well, would not the converse be the case? If we sent 60,000 out of the country would it not reduce settlement?

Mr. GRAYSON: At the present time if 60,000 people were brought to Queensland and they were asked to select land in small

areas under perpetual lease, there would not be any increase in settlement at all.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: They would not have a heavy mortgage round their necks for all time.

Mr. GRAYSON: I know one estate purchased by the Government and if it is thrown open for selection under the provisions of this Bill it will be a failure. If selectors are asked to take up selections on the Cecil Plains Estate they will want a minimum of 320 acres. Personally, I think the minimum area should be 640 acres. Suppose a man takes up 300 acres and the Government fix the price at £4 per acre. That will mean that the selector will have to pay £60 a year rent at 5 per cent. for all time.

Mr. LAND: You just said there would be a reappraisal in fifteen years.

Mr. GRAYSON: Yes, that would mean an increase in the value of the land, and he would have to pay more. There is no question about it. The Minister for Education for the last twenty years has strenuously advocated the perpetual lease system. We know that the late Mr. C. B. Dutton passed one of the most liberal Land Acts ever passed in Queensland, yet when he stood for reelection he was beaten by the present Minister for Education, who had not been in the country very long and knew very little about the country. That was the gratitude the people showed Mr. Dutton for passing that liberal Land Act.

Mr. LAND: Mr. Dutton was one of the most liberal land legislators we have ever had.

Mr. GRAYSON: I am very pleased the hon. member agrees with me in that. Mr. Dutton passed the 1868 Land Act, which was the most successful Land Act passed in Queensland. The Minister should bring in a different sort of Bill altogether. I remember when the 1868 Land Act was passed, and it was the means of settling hundreds and thousands of people on the land in Queensland. Under that Land Act the selections were classified into three classes. There were first-class, second-class, and third-class pastoral lands, and they were valued at 15s., 10s., and 5s. per acre respectively, and the term of repayment was fixed at ten years. That Land Act was the means of settling hundreds of people in Queensland. Those people would not have been here to-day if it had not been for that Act, and the country would have been overrun with prickly-pear and other things useless to the State. It seems to me that the Government

[9 p.m.] are placing every restriction they possibly can on every unfortunate man who has acquired a freehold in Queensland. We know for a fact that they have imposed one of the heaviest land taxes in the Commonwealth, and these all fall on the freeholder, and yet we hear members stating that the small freeholder is almost exempt from the land tax. That is not so. The small freeholder is subject to that excessive land tax, with the result that to-day it is almost impossible for a man to dispose of his freehold if he wishes to do so.

Mr. CARTER: Nonsense!

Mr. GRAYSON: I say without fear of contradiction that the land tax imposed by

Mr. Grayson.]

the present Government has reduced the price of freehold fully 50 per cent. in Queensland.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Why should a man buy a freehold when he can get a leasehold?

Mr. GRAYSON: What would be the use in a man going out into the Western country to start dairying? You need to provide land for different types of people. The dairyman wants to get land in a district where there is a good rainfall.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: It has cheapened that land 50 per cent., by your own showing.

Mr. GRAYSON: I answer only sensible interjections. The Minister for Agriculture will admit that it would be madness for a dairyman or a wheat farmer or any other farmer to go out on to the Western plains of Queensland to start dairying or to grow maize or wheat or lucerne. We have been told time after time by members sitting on the Ministerial side, when the land tax proposals were before the House, that they would be the means of cheapening land to the farmers. That was one of the arguments they used, but I hold that it is not cheapening land to farmers; it is persecuting the farmers. In my own opinion, this Bill will not be attractive to intending selectors.

Mr. SMITH: If intending selectors read some of the speeches of members on your side, they would not come here at all.

Mr. GRAYSON: I think there is land in Queensland as good as land in any other State in the Commonwealth. I do not deary the lands of the State. I have no intention of doing so, but at the same time I think the present Government should be a little more sympathetic than they have been during the last two sessions in regard to settling people on the land. They could give them a better deal than they do to-day. We find that in clause 3—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is not in order in quoting particular clauses of the Bill. He may do that in Committee.

Mr. GRAYSON: To my mind this Bill will not be the means of increasing settlement, and I trust—I know there is no hope of doing it in this House—that it will be seriously revised in the Upper House before it is placed upon the statute-book. If I thought it would be the means of assisting any of the present selectors on the repurchased estates, I would be the last person in this House to raise a voice against it. Not a single individual has approached me with a view to asking me to support this Bill; not a single one has signified his intention of coming under its operations should it be passed, and I am in close touch with the selectors in my district, in particular those on the Maryvale Estate. I am certain that such a course would not be to their advantage. I shall certainly oppose the second reading of the Bill, and I hope it will not pass this Chamber.

Mr. MORGAN: The Minister, in introducing this Bill, spoke of the benefits that would be derived from its provisions. Whatever benefit may be derived under it in connection with Cecil Plains, Mount Hutton, or

[Mr. Grayson.

any other new purchase the Government may decide to make, I feel sure the Minister would not be able to claim successfully that the people on the Jimbour Estate will derive any benefit whatever from coming under its provisions. Had the Minister been desirous of giving information to this House, he should have showed us by some concrete cases exactly what the position of some of the Jimbour settlers is under the present conditions under which they hold their lands, and under the conditions that would be applicable under this Bill. I have prepared certain figures that show exactly those relative positions. Take the case of a Jimbour settler under the present tenure. If he has land valued at £4 per acre he is called upon to pay 10 per cent. down, and then for the first four years he is free of rental, and for the balance of the term of forty years he has to pay 5s. 1d. per acre. At the end of that time the payments are extinguished, and the land becomes his freehold. A man with land valued at £4 per acre under this Bill will have to pay 4s. 5d. per acre for the first fifteen years. The land will never become his own, and it is subject to three reappraisements in the forty years, and these reappraisements may mean that the rental will increase from 4s. 5d. per acre up to anything that the Land Court may decide to place upon the land. Under these conditions the Jimbour settlers are not likely to take advantage of this Bill. Let us deal with it from a £5 per acre basis. Under present conditions the settler on the Jimbour Estate who has land valued at £5 per acre pays 6s. 3d. per acre, and at the end of forty years the land becomes his freehold. Under this Bill he will pay 5s. 6d. per acre, or only 9d. per acre less, and it will be subject to three reappraisements, and the land will never become the property of the selector. There is practically no prospect whatever of any intelligent settler on the Jimbour Estate taking advantage of this Bill, so that, as far as these people are concerned, the Minister can make up his mind that he is doing nothing to assist those persons. I am thoroughly convinced that until the capital value of the Jimbour Estate is considerably reduced the settlers on that estate will not be able to make a living. Let us also deal with the Mount Hutton proposition. We have recently discovered from the Auditor-General's report that the Mount Hutton lease is valued at £14,000, and under this Bill a tenth will be added to the purchasing price. That will mean that the total value of the Mount Hutton lease will be £15,400. Before the settlers on that resumption can get any benefit, the whole of that land will have to be valued at no less a sum than £15,400.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The Bill has nothing to do with that land. Mount Hutton is not a repurchased estate.

Mr. MORGAN: If Mount Hutton is not coming under this Bill, I am very pleased to hear it. We were under the impression that the Mount Hutton Estate would come under the Bill. I am very pleased that we have got that information from the Minister; and, therefore, as far as that estate is concerned, the conditions of settlement may be more advantageous to the settler.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: How could you imagine the Crown buying back its own land?

Mr. MORGAN: I could imagine the Minister for Lands doing almost anything, especially after his juggling with the figures in connection with Mount Hutton lease. So far as the Jimbour settlers are concerned, every one of them, according to the figures in the Auditor-Generals report, is in financial difficulties. The balance due in connection with the Jimbour Estate on the 1st July, 1915, amounted to £472,617. In 1916 it had increased to £487,029, and in 1917 it had further increased and the amount owing was £499,590. Everybody knows that the debt in connection with that estate is going up by leaps and bounds, notwithstanding the fact that only last session the Minister brought in a Bill to give relief to those settlers. Until the Government make up their minds to revalue the land on that estate at something like a reasonable figure, the settlers on that estate will not be able to make a living. I have been informed that a portion of the Jimbour Estate has been rented to a pastoralist at ls. 6d. per acre. That appears to be the largest amount it is possible to obtain for land on the Jimbour Estate from a pastoral point of view; and, knowing the country, I say that the greatest rental that should be placed upon that land in order to give the settlers an opportunity of making a living is 2s. per acre. I feel sure until the rental is fixed at not more than 2s. per acre the people who have taken up land will not have an opportunity of making a decent living upon it. If the Minister is wise, he will recognise that the Government must face a loss sooner or later, and the quicker it is done the better. The sooner the selectors on that estate become contented with their lot, the better it will be for the State. It would have been wise for the Minister to have placed before this Chamber one or two concrete cases showing the position of the average selector on Jimbour under present conditions, and what it will be after this Bill becomes law.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I will tell you in a word or two. The difference is the difference between 4 per cent. and 6½ per cent.

Mr. MORGAN: I have figures prepared and I would like the Minister to say whether they are correct or not. We must recognise that on the 6½ per cent. basis the selector will make his land freehold in forty years, but the 4 per cent. goes on for ever. It is like Tennyson's "Brook"; it never stops. As I explained when the Minister was not present—take a selection on the Jimbour Estate, which is now valued at £4 per acre. The man holding that land under the Closer Settlement Acts of 1906 and 1913 will have to pay one-tenth down, and, at the beginning of the fifth year, 5s. 1d. per acre per annum; and at the end of forty years the debt will be wiped out—the land will be freehold. Under this Bill the selector will have to pay 4s. 5d. per acre per annum for the first fifteen years, and after that period the land will be subject to reappraisal. Those figures had been prepared by settlers on the Jimbour Estate who have gone into the matter, and they are under the impression that they would be ever so much worse off under this measure than they would be if they remained as they are at the present moment. How the Bill will affect the Cecil Plains Estate is a matter for the selectors

who may come along. If they consider the conditions are liberal enough and they want a perpetual lease, no doubt they will select under the provisions of this Bill. But the Minister must know that the Jimbour settlers are not going to get any relief under this measure. I hope they will be dealt with under a Settlers Bill, which will give them permanent relief.

Mr. BAYLEY (*Pittsworth*): In my opinion this Bill is practically useless. It is merely waste paper, and it is a waste of the time of the House in discussing it. It has been said that there is a widespread desire on the part of people in the Pittsworth electorate and other parts of Queensland to secure leasehold tenure as opposed to freehold tenure. I contend that no such desire exists among intending selectors. I maintain also that this measure is absolutely unfair to the present holders of land who have gone out and pioneered the various districts of Queensland and opened up the country for settlement. A few years ago when the Liberal party occupied the Treasury benches land in the vicinity of Cecil Plains was sold at £4 10s. per acre unimproved. I know one man there who has a fine tract of freehold property, and who farms it with very great advantage to himself. Last year he paid land tax to the tune of £160 sterling. In close proximity to him there is another man who owns 3,000 acres, part of a repurchased estate, and he did not pay one penny piece in land tax last year, and will not do so until he secures his deeds. The taxable unimproved value of the whole of the Cecil Plains Estate was £2 8s. per acre, and land tax was paid on that amount, and yet the Government purchased that property with all improvements for £2 per acre.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Are you complaining that your supporters are going to get cheap land?

Mr. BAYLEY: No; I do not complain of men getting cheap land, but I say it is absolutely unjust and unfair that those men who have been pioneers and have put the savings of a lifetime into their land should be absolutely deprived of the great bulk of the value of that land.

At twenty-five minutes past 9,

The SPEAKER resumed the chair.

Mr. BAYLEY: What is the position of those men who have paid £4 10s. per acre for land in the vicinity of Cecil Plains when, as a result of the unjust legislation of this Government, the selling price of their land has been brought down to £2 per acre.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Do you say the Cecil Plains land is dear land?

Mr. BAYLEY: No. I do not say it is dear land, but I say that this Government, by their land tax, through bad legislation, and by their determination to force down the price of land and introduce the leasehold system, are doing an injury to the men who have bought land in the vicinity of that estate and elsewhere. They should give to every man, whether he has bought land in a repurchased estate or not, the right to convert his tenure into leasehold if he chooses. It is not the fault of the

Mr. Bayley.]

Government if the leasehold tenure is not favoured by the great bulk of the people of Queensland. The Government have done all they possibly could to make freehold tenure unpopular, and to bring the price of freehold land down to a very serious extent. And when members on this side of the House state that—as a result of the land tax, through price-fixing tactics and other actions—the Government have brought down the price of land, hon. members opposite tell us that that was their idea, and they glory in it. What do they care for the thousands of men who have gone out into the back blocks in the country districts and put the savings of a lifetime into their freehold land? It is a good thing perhaps to give cheap land to the men who desire land now, but it is an absolutely infamous thing to give cheap land to those people at the expense of the men who have pioneered the country districts and made it possible for the Government to introduce such a Bill as this. The Government should give a fair deal to those men—many of whom had put all they possessed into their land, or the greater portion of it.

Many of them had mortgages [9.30 p.m.] on their properties, and will have to work what is called the “dead horse” all their lives, and will have nothing to show for it. Seeing that the Government are introducing leasehold tenure, and wilfully forcing down the values of freehold land, it is an infamous thing that they are not taking steps to make provision that those men who desire to convert their freehold into leasehold should have the opportunity to do so, and that they should not be compelled to give it up for nothing, as the Government proposed that the holders of the repurchased estates should do. The Government should be prepared to give them a reasonable price for the land and the improvements on it. It is an infamous thing that thousands of settlers should be deprived of all they possess in order to gratify the whim of the Government to provide for cheap land being acquired at the present time and for years to come. It seems to be the idea with the Government that “the end justifies the means.” It does not seem to occur to the Minister, and his colleagues, that there is anything unfair in what they propose to do. If the Government intend to force down the values of freehold property, it is their bounden duty to give every man who holds freehold land the opportunity of changing it into a leasehold tenure, if he so desires, and allow him a reasonable value for his property. I quite believe in cheap land, but I strenuously object to men who wish to take up land now being given cheap land at the expense of the men and women who have put their life-long work into their holdings. It is absolutely unfair that these men should receive such treatment from this Government.

Question—That the Bill be now read a second time—put and passed.

The committal of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

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

[*Mr. Bayley.*]