

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

MONDAY, 5 DECEMBER 1904

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PUBLIC LIBRARY.

Mr. PAGET (*Mackay*), for Mr. Macartney, asked the Chief Secretary—

1. Has any correspondence passed between the department and the secretary of the trustees of the Public Library of Queensland, relating to the opening of the library to the public at night and the funds required therefor?

2. If so, will he table the same?

The PREMIER (Hon. A. Morgan, *Warwick*) replied—

1. Yes.
2. Yes.

COOLABUNIA EXTENSION.

Mr. PAGET, for Mr. Macartney, asked the Secretary for Railways—

1. Did the parliamentary plans of the Coolabunia Extension provide for general station accommodation on an extensive scale at 7½-mile (or Memerambi)?

2. Did said plans provide for similar accommodation on a lesser scale at Wooroolin?

3. Is it a fact that the accommodation provided at 7½-mile was limited to a small siding, and that general station accommodation has been provided at Wooroolin?

4. Is the accommodation provided at Wooroolin on a larger scale in any and what particular or particulars than that indicated on said plans?

5. Will he table the correspondence which has passed between the department, the Wooroolin Progress Association, the Maryborough Chamber of Commerce, Wm. Shailer, and other local bodies or persons on the subject?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. A. Morgan, *Warwick*) replied—

1. No station accommodation was shown on the parliamentary plans, but the original estimate included station accommodation at 7½ miles, which, however, has been considerably reduced.

2. No station accommodation was shown on the parliamentary plans, but the estimate provided for station accommodation at Wooroolin.

3. Yes.

4. As previously stated, no station accommodation was shown on the parliamentary plans. In the original estimate certain accommodation was provided for; the estimated expense, however, was considerably reduced.

5. The hon. member may, if he so desires, see the papers in the Commissioner's office.

MONDAY, 5 DECEMBER, 1904.

The SPEAKER (Hon. Sir A. S. Cowley, *Herbert*) took the chair at half-past 3 o'clock.

QUESTIONS.

NEW HEALTH REGULATIONS.

Mr. KENNA (*Bowen*) asked the Home Secretary—

1. Is he aware that Regulation 10 of the new Health Regulations prohibits vegetable-growers from using liquid manure?

2. Is he aware that such prohibition is likely to hamper market gardeners and flower-growers?

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. P. Airey, *Flinders*) replied—

An amendment of the regulations is under consideration.

PROSERPINE MILL—DEDUCTION FROM CROP.

Mr. KENNA asked the Treasurer—

1. What was the amount deducted per ton by the Proserpine mill management from the proceeds of the crop of a farmer named Holland?

2. What was the reason for deducting such an amount?

The TREASURER (Hon. W. Kidston, *Rockhampton*) replied—

1 and 2. Holland owes money to the mill. His crop is now being harvested at his request to meet his obligations. The proceeds are not yet ascertainable, so I am unable to give the amount per ton deducted.

[*Hon. D. F. Denham.*

RAILWAY FROM DEGILBO TO WETHERON.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS laid on the table plan, section, and book of reference of the extension of the Gayndah branch railway from Degilbo to Wetheron, in length 19 miles 17 chains, together with the report of the Commissioner for Railways thereon, and moved that the report be printed.

Question put and passed.

PAPER.

The following paper, laid on the table of the House, was ordered to be printed:—Report by Mr. George Phillips on light line railways for the Gayndah district.

SUPPLY.

RECEPTION OF RESOLUTIONS.

The resolutions passed in Committee of Supply, covering Executive and Legislative, Chief Secretary's Department, and Home Secretary's Department, were reported to the House and agreed to.

LAND ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. J. T. Bell *Dalby*), who, on rising, was received with cheers, said: I think, Sir, that when people hear that another Land Bill is to be introduced they must think that Land Bills come not singly, but in battalions. No sooner have we passed one measure which we imagine is putting our land laws on a new basis, clearing up any misunderstandings or inconsistencies that may exist, than we find that within a session or two further legislation is necessary. Now, however bewildering or annoying it may be to have this constant iteration of Land Bills, after all, if we give the matter a moment's consideration it will be evident that in a young community such as this, inhabiting a vast area of country containing many climates and many conditions, it is inevitable that there should be frequent changes in our land regulations and land system. We cannot conduct land laws on settled principles and fixedly and rigidly obey them. It is inevitable that we should avowedly be governed by opportunism in our method of dealing with the subject. Opportunism, I might describe off-hand, as an acute perception of the position of things, and that is the dominating note in the way we deal with our land matters rather than by laying down half a dozen general principles and rigidly adhering to them. So that in moving the second reading of this Bill, I am not going to contend that we are following the lines that have been hitherto observed in all the phases of this matter, but what I am going to contend—and what I am going to urge as a recommendation why this Chamber should accept the measure—is that all the clauses in this Bill are the result of actual experience in the working of our land laws. They are put here because to the Lands Department they seem to be wise proposals based upon what experience dictated; they are there for that reason and not because they happen to be in accord with some principle that may have been initiated in previous measures. Now, all Land Bills may be divided broadly into two parts, into that part which is departmental—that is, clauses that do not contain any principle of land legislation, but are put there because it has been shown that improvements should be made in the existing law in regard to the working of particular sections, which will either facilitate the work of the officers of the department or assist in the settlement of the country. There are those clauses in every Land Bill, but the most important clauses are those which contain some new principle in land legislation, or some modification or alteration of existing principles; and this particular Bill is divided up in that way. Those clauses which deal with principles of land legislation, I may also subdivide into the clauses which relate to the selector—whether the agricultural farm selector, or the agricultural homesteader, or the grazing farmer—and those which have to do with the pastoral lessee. I shall make just the briefest reference to the first division I have mentioned—that is, the clauses which are what I may call departmental, because, after all, the proper place for elaborating them is in committee. I shall just deal briefly with them, and then pass on, and make full mention of the clauses which relate to the selector and pastoral lessee. Of the clauses which I call departmental, clause 3 is the first, and is one that puts on a proper basis the method under which aliens shall select. I have in this measure made it perfectly clear that no alien who, at any rate, belongs to any Asiatic, African, or Polynesian races, shall be capable of taking up a selection. That will

put the matter on a very much more definite basis than it has hitherto been, and this also brings us into harmony with the federal naturalisation laws. If any alien, other than an alien of the Asiatic, African, or Polynesian races, does not within three years thereafter become a naturalised subject of the King, all his right, title, and interest in the land shall be forfeited. The next clause is 5, which proposes to bring the existing law into tune with the spirit that prevailed when the 1897 and 1902 Acts were passed. Under these measures certain concessions were given. Agricultural farmers and grazing farmers who lived on their holdings were allowed to take up land within certain distances, and residence upon the one holding was counted as equivalent to residence upon the other. No restrictions were placed on that right whatever, and we found that under the working of these sections a man who obtained priority by undertaking to personally reside actually did not reside at all, for residence on one sufficed for both. Although legally he performed the condition of residence, he did not actually reside on one selection. That was never the intention of the Legislature. The intention of the Legislature in all such cases was that there should always be personal residence. We propose to alter this and say whether, in regard to agricultural farmers or agricultural homesteaders—in every case where priority has obtained in the way I have mentioned—that residence—actual residence—must be performed. There will be no escape from that under the provisions of this Bill. Clauses 9, 11, 14, 16, 19, 21, 22, 23, and 24 are merely departmental clauses, which I shall deal with in committee. I propose now to deal with the clauses which I have described as containing new principles, or modifications of existing principles. I shall first deal with the clauses which relate to pastoral lessees. It will be remembered that a few months ago negotiations were going on between the Government and the representative of the pastoral lessees with regard to amending the Act of 1902, and I think the clauses in this Bill, dealing with pastoral lessees, will meet their views. The first alteration is in clause 2, which says—

The annual rent for each period after the first shall not exceed the annual rent payable for the next preceding period by more than one-half of the annual rent payable for such preceding period.

That provision was in the 1884 Act, as amended by the 1886 Act; it was omitted from the Acts of 1897 and 1902, and we propose to replace it on our statutes under this measure. That is wanted by the pastoral lessees, who are nervous on the subject; but, after all, the cases in which the Land Court has or are likely to exceed the previous rent by more than 50 per cent. are very rare indeed. [Mr. FORSYTH: It has never happened.] I do not say it has; and it will be a great revelation if such cases do happen, and they will only happen under great necessity. I do not attach much importance to this, and the reason why this clause was omitted previously was because the Act gave fuller scope to the discrimination of the Land Court, and it was considered undesirable that they should be hampered in any way. I see no reason why the pastoral lessees should object to this clause; they cannot say that they are being badly treated under it. The other clause relating to the pastoral lessees is 28, under which they can surrender their leases by giving two years' notice, and then paying all arrears of rent, and forfeiting their improvements. That clause has been distinctly asked for by the pastoral lessees. [Mr. CAMERON: Not some of the details.] The provision that this surrender should be allowed has been repeatedly demanded

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by the pastoral lessees. [An honourable member: By the financial institutions.] Well, they are fairly large factors behind the pastoral lessees, and I am bound to say that I have always considered, and do still consider, that there should be no interference with the right of surrender. There is nothing in the traditions of the Lands Department to show that there has been any impediment placed upon pastoral lessees surrendering their holdings; and I can say that in my time, and in the time of my predecessors, no compulsion has been placed on the pastoral lessees in the matter. The department has always said that if they wanted to give up their leases they could do so, and the Minister would find someone else to take them up. That has been the policy in the past; it has certainly been the policy since I have been at the head of the department. [Mr. J. LEAHY: Why do you want to alter it if it is your principle?] The pastoral lessees want it, and they say they will not come under the Act if they do not get it. In that case, if the pastoral lessees are not contented with the practice adopted in the past—if they are not prepared, as they are not prepared, to give a corresponding right to the Crown, and say “If we have the right of surrender, you also shall have the right of breaking the lease;” if they are not prepared to say that—and they are not prepared to say it—then let us put it on this basis: If you want the right to surrender you cannot do it without giving two years’ notice, paying up all your arrears of rent, and forfeiting your improvements. That is the condition we offer, and the pastoral lessees are willing to accept it—though I hold they were better off under the old arrangement than they will be under this. If a man wants to leave his holding—if a drought has decimated his herds—we let him go now even with arrears of rent. But when this clause passes and becomes law the lessee will not be able to forfeit unless he complies with those conditions. [Mr. FORSYTH: Is not the time rather long?] I think not. It must be borne in mind that the pastoral lessees are not conceding to the Crown the same rights as they are asking for themselves. The Crown are entitled to something in return, and we ask that two years’ notice must be given. [Mr. J. LEAHY: That is the last part of the clause; I should like some explanation of the former part.] I will come to that presently. I wished to take first the two clauses which deal with the subject of the correspondence between the hon. member for Brisbane North, Mr. Cameron, as representing the pastoralists, and the Government with regard to certain concessions to the pastoralists. These are the two that refer to it. Clause 27 also deals with pastoral lessees, and contains an amendment in the Act of 1902. And I am doing it in deference to a serious danger, which will be more fully dealt with in another measure which will come before the House at a later date. I refer to the rabbit question. Clause 27 makes more stringent section 13 of the 1902 Act. Under section 13 of that Act there were certain arrangements made in regard to lessees who were under the Pastoral Leases Extension Act. It will be remembered that in that Act provision was made for extending the leases of runs by seven years on condition that the leaseholders netted their runs. The leaseholder, at that time, was anxious to learn whether he was going to have an extension of lease or not. In those days there was no certainty of obtaining long leases, and in order to make sure of that seven years’ extension a number of lessees accepted the offer. In course of time, as years went on, the Act of 1902 was passed, in which, as we know, liberal

provisions were made for the extension of tenure—in some cases thirty and forty years. We find ourselves now placed in this position: That some of those lessees who, under the Pastoral Leases Extension Acts, enclosed their runs with wire-netting, and who, under the provisions of those Acts, in consideration of getting the seven years’ extension, have to maintain those fences, now find that, independent of that extension under that Act, they have a long and ample extension under the Act of 1902; and, naturally, human nature being what it is, say they will not go to the very considerable annual expense of maintaining the wire-netting fence. They want to forfeit whatever portion of that seven years’ extension may remain, because they have such a long extension under the 1902 Act; and they say they can very well afford to do it. I am talking to a House which knows something about the rabbit question. I have not to teach hon. members their A B C in matters of this kind. They know that it is not an old woman’s tale, but that it constitutes a very serious danger, and that whenever we have got netting fences up enclosing runs it is the undoubted policy of the country to see that those netting fences are maintained in an efficient condition. And in order to secure that—to prevent those pastoral lessees turning round and saying, “We will let our fences go; we can afford to lose the balance of the seven years in view of the greater extension under the 1902 Act,” I have introduced here this clause 27, which says that if a pastoral lessee under the Pastoral Leases Extension Act fails to keep his fence in order he shall forfeit three times the amount of the unexpired balance of the original lease under the 1884 Act, and of the seven years which he got under the Pastoral Leases Extension Act. [Mr. J. LEAHY: You cannot do that.] I have often heard the hon. member say that this House can do anything. We can do it without any infringement whatever of the original contract, and we are far more entitled to do it than the pastoral lessee is to allow his fences to fall into disrepair. He put that fence up on the understanding that he was going to have a seven years’ extension. [Mr. J. LEAHY: I admit it would be a very wrong thing to allow the fences to get out of repair.] I am afraid the hon. member is allowing his controversial spirit to overcome his common sense. [Mr. J. LEAHY: What you are proposing would be a gross piece of repudiation.] The hon. member should moderate his terms; he is always talking in superlatives. I was alluding just now to the question of rabbit netting. Clause 28 (15B) also deals with that subject. Of course we have various provisions dealing with the matter; but in order to encourage the lessee to do it at his own expense as much as possible, under this clause we say to the lessee, “If you will erect rabbit netting at your own expense around your holding, the Minister will have it in his discretion to remit up to 5 per cent. of the cost of erecting such netting by way of deduction from your rent.” The lessee is to purchase the netting and erect it. [Mr. KERR: For what period does this hold good?] During the term of the lease. Of course the amount allowed off the rent may be only 1 per cent. of the cost of erecting the netting, or 2 per cent. Each case will be the subject of negotiation, and the maximum will be 5 per cent. of the cost. I mentioned just now that this would be at the discretion of the Minister. It is one of the characteristics of this Bill that it gives the Minister a greater discretion than preceding measures have done. I believe that, if you are going to administer your Land Acts properly—and especially your Rabbit Acts—although that, of course, will come on later—you will have to give a much

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wider discretion to the Minister than has been the case hitherto. Under the old Lands Acts prior to 1884 the Minister had a very considerable discretion. Under the Land Act of 1884 a new order of things was initiated. That measure clipped the wings of the Minister considerably, and the tendency was to leave a large number of matters to the discretion of a land board. The wheel seems to be turning, and there is a disposition now to go in the other direction, and, although I am not going to say anything to depreciate the value of the Land Court for one moment, since I have been in the Lands Department, unquestionably it has been forced upon my notice that in a number of instances you must give the Minister the fullest control. If I am told that is a dangerous thing to do, I reply that there is such a thing as Parliament, and a triennial Parliament. [Mr. HAMILTON: The Minister has to stand the blame.] And, of course, the Minister is answerable at twenty-four hours' notice for what he does. [Mr. J. LEAHY: And he will fix up the majority. That is a nice position.] Well, I do not think the hon. gentleman would differ from what I am saying if he was in my position. I believe he recognises as much as I do that the fullest discretion should be given to the Minister in some cases. [Mr. J. LEAHY: Yes, and I recognise the danger, too.] [Mr. HAMILTON: You have done very well by the Land Court. It is no wonder you are frightened to lose it.] [Mr. J. LEAHY: I could not do anything with the Minister, because I do not sit behind him.] I think that is a very unkind remark to make after all I have done for the hon. member. I have another clause here dealing with the pastoral lessees, which has also some relation to the rabbits—that is clause 28 (15A). One of the most convenient sections in our Land Acts is section 15 of the Act of 1902. That is the section which allows the Minister to grant leases and fix the rent for the first term for areas that are not under any of the existing Acts—lands that are not under lease, the leases of which have expired, or which have not been brought under the Acts of 1884, 1886, or 1897. [Mr. J. LEAHY: Or which have been forfeited.] Or which have been forfeited—exactly. It is a most useful provision for inducing country that has been forfeited or abandoned to be taken up again. But it does not go quite far enough, because, although it gives the Minister power to arrange with the lessee what the term of his lease is to be, and to fix the rent for the first period, it does not meet adequately the pastoral situation in Queensland. I find that we have a number of leasehold areas on which prickly pear is beginning to appear, and we have a number of holdings which have been forfeited on account of rabbits; and it is in consideration of these two circumstances that I have had this clause drawn up. I found that, under the existing land legislation, I could sit in my chair in the Lands Department, in Brisbane, under the unpleasant consciousness that, while there are large areas of land under lease, those areas are really deteriorating in value every day, and when the leases expired, will be practically worthless to the Crown, and that I have no power to take steps to arrest that deterioration. You can have prickly pear on a run at the beginning of a lease, when it is of next to no account, and perhaps it does not affect the rent one shilling; and yet, when the term expires—thirty years or whatever it is—the value of the holding may be either completely exterminated or almost exterminated. I found myself the other day in the position of being asked to grant leases for two runs in the Maranoa, the leases of which had expired. They were good runs; but it was reported to me that prickly pear was appearing

along the frontage to the chief watercourse on each run, and that, if it was allowed to go unchecked—of course, I did not need to be told this, because I knew it of my own knowledge—when the twenty or thirty years' leases were up those runs would be practically valueless. I had no power to make it a condition of the leases that the lessees were to do a certain amount of clearing or to exterminate the pear, and I had to adopt a rather tortuous course in order to bring about the leasing of those runs. I first of all found out how long it would take to clear off the pear. In one case it was three years, and in the other four years. I said to each of the applicants for leases, "I will give you an occupation license for each of the runs—for three years in the one case, and four years in the other—and, if at the end of those periods you have got rid of all the pear, and it is reported to me that there is no prickly pear on the runs, I will undertake to give you a lease of the country under section 15 of the Act of 1902 for twenty years." [Mr. J. LEAHY: Is there anything in section 15 which would prevent them contracting to do that?] There is nothing in the section to permit it. The clause in this Bill distinctly gives the Minister power to do it. Of course, the Minister can only do that which the Land Acts authorise him to do. Of course, the lessees in this particular case knew perfectly well that I might be out of office and that a new man might be in my place at the end of their occupation license, and that he might decline to issue a lease under section 15, but I undertook to minute the papers that I had made that arrangement. The House will see that this was a tortuous method to have to employ, and so I had this clause drafted. When I find there is a run which has been forfeited on account of rabbits, or there is a run upon which prickly pear exists, I shall have power under this provision to negotiate with the lessee as to what term, up to thirty years, the lease shall be for, what the rent shall be, and what steps the lessee shall take during the first few years to combat either the rabbits or the prickly pear. Each lease will be a separate matter of negotiation, and it may be that only a peppercorn rent should be paid by the lessee for the first period on consideration of his undertaking to spend a certain amount of money in certain ways to combat those evils, such undertaking to be given in writing to the Minister. Then for the second period the Land Court will of course fix the rent without any reference to the amount which has been paid for the first term. I believe that this will prove a valuable provision, and be the cause of preventing a great deal of land that is now rapidly going to destruction becoming totally valueless. [Mr. J. LEAHY: How will it apply to the rabbits?] We can negotiate with the lessee, and if necessary let him have the country for nothing on his undertaking to destroy the rabbits. There are a number of cases where a provision of this nature is likely to be of some use, but the whole thing will be a matter of negotiation. It is not a remedy for the difficulty it proposes to meet, but it is in a certain degree a palliative and a convenience. I think we have all had some experience of the confusion and trouble caused by public reserves. The Crown, of course, cannot undertake the duty of clearing reserves in the country, and the local authorities appear to be quite disinclined to clear reserves. What we propose here, in order to meet that position, is to give power to the Minister to lease public reserves on a clearing lease. Each reserve will be subject to negotiation as to what steps shall be taken towards the destruction of noxious weeds, and as to what rent shall be paid.

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When a public reserve is leased, the lessee will, of course, have the right to keep off anybody else's stock other than travelling stock. This is a provision which applies more particularly to the settled districts. I think the experience of the hon. member for Stanley will confirm me in what I say, when I tell the House that, as things now stand, many reserves in the settled districts are practically of no use for travelling stock, because the adjoining landowners feed their stock on the reserves. Under the arrangement now proposed I believe it will be found that when a reserve is leased there will be really more grass for travelling stock than there is under existing conditions, because the reserve will be under the control of a responsible lessee, who will keep down the noxious weeds and keep off trespassing stock. Only his own stock will be allowed to graze on the land, and it is, therefore, probable that travelling stock will find more pasture on the reserves than they do under the present arrangement. [Mr. HAMILTON: How would that provision apply if a reserve was vested in a local authority?] A local authority would have a right to deal with a reserve if it was vested in them, but they have been very slow to take charge of reserves. In this Bill we also propose to make an alteration with regard to the time in which payments may be made for lands purchased at auction. Under the existing law a man may have three years in which to pay for land purchased by him, and there is no interest attached to the instalments. We propose in this measure to extend the time for payment, at the discretion of the Minister, up to ten years, and to provide that all instalments after the first shall carry interest at 5 per cent. Hon. members must clearly understand that this does not mean that in every case where land is advertised for sale by auction the term of payment will be ten years. Nor does it mean that we are going to do this in the interest of the sale of large areas of land. We have as much in mind, in introducing this provision, the convenience of the purchaser of small areas of 100, 200, or 300 acres, as we have the convenience of the purchaser of large areas. In the purchase of large areas there is not, as a rule, any demand for long terms. Generally speaking, terms are given to the purchasers of small areas of land. If any hon. member imagines that this provision has some sinister reference to facilities for the alienation of large areas of land, I can assure him that he is under a misapprehension. [Mr. J. LEAHY: It is a question whether the Minister likes to apply it or not.] Yes. What I desire to make perfectly clear to the House is that the department, in ascertaining what amendments were necessary in the Land Acts, had it pointed out to them that when alienating land in small areas it was a distinct advantage to the purchaser that the Minister should have a discretion as to what terms he should give. That is the reason why we propose to extend the term up to ten years rather than confine it to three. Now we come to what will

[4.30 p.m.] be, I admit, a very controversial question. We propose, under clause 18, to reduce the selling price of land from 10s. to 5s. an acre. [Mr. J. LEAHY: A most reasonable thing.] I think it is a reasonable thing, but I want the House to clearly understand that it is a proposal that I am not specially wedded to. I am not saying that I believe it is an essential part of our land system that we should thus reduce the price, and if the committee decided to strike out the provision I, for one, should not shed a tear. But we must look at the matter as practical men, and recognise that there is a great deal of land in this country that is not

likely to be utilised for the purpose of close settlement—I mean pastoral or grazing farm close settlement—that people would be prepared to buy if they could get it at less than 10s. and on reasonable terms—land which no one would contend for a moment is worth 10s. [Mr. J. LEAHY: I think the betterment will satisfy them.] The average man who wishes to buy land in the West of Queensland does not buy it for a speculative rise. I do not think anybody will really dispute that statement. [Mr. HAMILTON: It gives them a monopoly; that is the reason.] I do not know that the hon. gentleman is right in putting it on that ground. What they do buy for is to give them security of tenure. [Mr. KERR: And the key of the position.] Well, it may or may not be that. We should look at the question from all sides, and there is no reason why a man who wants to buy land should be held up to execration. Any man who knows anything about the West of Queensland will know what a futile expectation it would be if land was bought there for the purpose of benefiting by a speculative rise. That being the case, if we are going to allow in some instances the alienation of land, and if we are going to leave the minimum price at 10s. an acre, then unquestionably there are vast areas that are not fit for close pastoral settlement that no one will give 10s. an acre for. [Mr. P. J. LEAHY: And they will not give 5s. an acre for.] Yes; no doubt there are large areas for which they will not give 5s. for. [Mr. HAMILTON: That is not the land they want to buy.] What I want to say to the House is that this question of the reduction in the selling price of land should be considered dispassionately. It is merely a question whether there is really any harm done to the community by alienating land at 5s. an acre which is not worth more, while at the present time we are selling land at 10s. an acre for which 10s. is a fair price. [Mr. J. LEAHY: I should like to hear you on clauses 30 to 35.] The hon. gentleman will have the pleasure of hearing me on them directly. I suppose he has not forgotten the old motto, "*Festina lente*"? Now I pass away from the clauses dealing with pastoral land and come to those referring to selection. The House will remember that I divided the Bill up into two portions—the departmental clauses and the clauses that contained some new principle; and I divide the second part into the clauses that relate to pastoral land and the clauses that relate to selection. The earliest one is clause 4, which, I think, is distinctly liberal, and one of those which make this measure as generous a measure as has ever been introduced into this Chamber. It proposes that when land has been open for three months, and not taken up, the Minister may allow the applicant, if he thinks fit, to be exempted from paying his first year's rent and survey fee. That means, of course, that a selector can go on the land without having to pay down any money at all, and his first year's rent and survey fee is distributed over later years. That is a decidedly liberal provision. The safeguard against abuse is, of course, that the land has to be open for three months. That means that if a man with money wishes to take it up, he has priority, and the second safeguard is that each case is subject to separate negotiation. I can imagine a number of cases in which a principle of that kind will be a most useful concession to men who are likely to make good settlers. I notice the hon. member for Bulloo makes no comment upon that. [Mr. J. LEAHY: Anything that displays common sense will have my approval.] Now we come to clause 8, which is the one I have been talking about, giving the Minister discretion to remit rent and survey fees, and making

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them payable over the four or five subsequent years. As we all know, it is during the first year or two that the selector frequently has his chief struggle, and the Minister will have power to make this remission in any case after due inquiry has been made. I may say, as a matter of fact, that since I have been in office I have practically acted on that clause without any statutory authority for doing it. I have had almost innumerable applications for remission of rent, and I think there is hardly a case in which it has been refused. In fact, no case has been refused unless I have been compelled to do it. [Mr. J. LEAHY: Why did you not act under clause 15 in the same way?] The hon. gentleman is straining the comparison. There is no analogy between the two cases. The hon. gentleman desires me, under clause 15, to enter into a lot of minutiae in fixing conditions which Parliament has not given me authority for doing. Because I do not do that the hon. gentleman says if I give an extension of time to selectors I should be able to do the other thing in this particular case. [Mr. J. LEAHY: Where are you going to stop it if you take up that principle?] I am not going to take up that principle, because I am seeking legislative remedy for it at the earliest opportunity in regard to clause 15. [Mr. J. LEAHY: You will be doing something else next year.] If I do, I shall also seek legislative remedy for it. [Mr. J. LEAHY: You may not be there.] The hon. gentleman may take some consolation from that—the fact I may not be here. [Mr. P. J. LEAHY: It is quite possible.] I am glad that the hon. gentleman admits the possibility of that fact. There is another amendment I may allude to in clause 13. What is desired is that some concession should be given to the owner of an agricultural farm or agricultural selection to make him pay up for the selection before the lease has run its course. At the present moment an unconditional selector can pay up at any time he likes, but an agricultural farmer can only pay up and get the freehold after five years. As it is proposed to give the agricultural farmer and the unconditional selector ultimately a freehold, we might just as well let the selector have his freehold and all the privileges attaching to it at as early a period as possible. There is no particular advantage to the State in saying, "You shall keep on all these years paying your rent." So what we propose to do here is, in order to induce the selector to become the purchaser, to give him some inducement. We say to the agricultural farmer, "If you like after five years to acquire the freehold of your farm, we shall give you discount on your purchase money of $\frac{2}{3}$ per cent.": and it is the same, of course, with the unconditional selector, and the schedule figures which hon. members will see here are that discount worked out according to the different years. Another concession or alteration we propose to make to selectors is contained in clause 15, and also in clause 36. I might remind hon. members that under the Prickly Pear Selection Act of 1901, and under the prickly pear clauses of the 1902 Act, on prickly pear selections a certain amount of clearing had to be done each year, and a certain bonus became payable each year, but there was no provision in those Acts for paying a selector before the statutory time had elapsed if he had managed to clear the whole of the pear off his holding within the period specified. When we were passing the Prickly Pear Selections Act, and those clauses in the principal Act, we all recognised the laborious nature of work connected with clearing prickly pear, and I certainly thought nobody was likely to have cleared the pear off their selection before the seven years. It is only recently that it has been brought under my notice that there are some

cases in which the selector believes that he can have the prickly pear off his country before that time has elapsed, and he wants to know whether in such event he will receive the whole of the money payable in bonuses, or whether he will have to wait until the statutory period has elapsed. What we are proposing in clauses 15 and 36 is that when the selector does clear the whole of his pear off his country, say in one or two years instead of the statutory time, and keeps it clear, as he has to do under the Prickly Pear Act, for a period of two years, that after it has been kept clear for that period then the whole of the bonus should be paid. In clause 12 we come to a new proposal. It is a proposal which has often been urged by the Lands Department whenever a Land Bill has been brought in in previous years, but I think that this is the first time that it is actually seen—I mean the principle of it—actually seen alive in a Land Bill. It is a proposal to provide in some cases for the acquisition of the freehold of a grazing farm. [Hon. R. PHILP: It was opposed in the 1902 Act by you.] I know it was drawn up by the department, but not that it had been brought in. [Mr. J. LEAHY: I think you were the chief person in getting it opposed.] I do not remember. The hon. member must remember I was in the chair. [Hon. R. PHILP: A good many amendments were drawn up by you at the time.] I have no recollection of that incident. This clause does not propose a wholesale irresponsible unchecked conversion of grazing farms into freeholds. There are three checks provided, and abundance of safeguards. In the first place the grazing farmer applies to the Minister, and the Minister may decline to take steps in the matter at all, or he may send it on to the Land Court. The Land Court deals with the matter in open court, which means that they will have to hear any evidence that is brought against the proposal by anybody in the district who may find it inconvenient to allow this farm to be converted into a freehold. They then hear it in open court, and, if they decide that the country is not fit for either agricultural farm or dairy farm settlement, they may make a recommendation. This is the second stage. Then it comes back to the Minister again for his approval, and the Minister will have the opportunity of seeing what evidence has been given and any recommendation that the Land Court makes upon the subject, and he finally decides. Those are the three steps; but the Land Court are to certify that the land is not fit either for agricultural farm or dairy farm settlement. [Mr. J. LEAHY: The Minister fixes the rent or price, does he?] No, the Land Court fixes that. I wish to point out that, so far as the coastal districts and the Darling Downs are concerned, that the provision as to the land not being fit for dairy farming or agricultural farming must curtail very much the opportunities of conversion of the grazing farms into freeholds. I should imagine that the clause will operate mostly in Western districts. It will only operate in those coastal districts where land is found to be unfit for agriculture or dairying. [Mr. J. LEAHY: I can give you scores of agricultural farmers and agriculturists in the coastal and other districts who wanted this two years ago.] Yes; but not where there was this embargo. We must remember this, also: that, whenever the Land Court certifies that land is fit for agricultural farming or dairying, the sole element in arriving at that decision is not merely the quality of the soil, but the means of communication also; and, as the policy of this Government is to extend the means of communication in the settled districts by means of light railway construction, we are constantly reducing the area of country which the Land Court can declare

is not fit for agricultural farms or dairying selections. [Mr. LESINA: The Labour party knocked this clause out of the 1902 Act. I can show the division lists.] The hon. member says that this clause was in the 1902 Bill, but I do not know that it was identical with the clause in this Bill. Now we come to a part of the Bill which I trust hon. members will give their attention to. It is perfectly evident that we cannot allow our lands to be deteriorated by the spread of prickly pear, and we propose to take active steps in the matter. I may say that in the past the pastoral lessees and agricultural farmers, and even freeholders, have been extremely indifferent to the spread of this pest. As a matter of fact, I have seen as much of this pest on freehold land as on leasehold land, so that I do not think the argument that we have frequently heard used—that the conversion of leasehold land into freehold is the way to put down the spread of this pest—is a sound one. The position we have to face is this: Say there is a selection containing prickly pear, which could be eradicated at a cost of £20; that expenditure does not take place, and in a few years the pest covers not only that particular selection, but becomes a nursery for disseminating the seed all over the country. We have to take steps to put a stop to that, and, although the provisions contained in the Bill may appear drastic at first sight, I believe they are workable, and will result in a reduction of the pest. I propose that each land commissioner shall make a report as to the holdings—whether pastoral, farming, dairying, or agricultural—in his district, and if they are free from pear he shall give a certificate to that effect to the holders, and thereafter the holder has to keep his land free from the pest, or the holding may be forfeited with the improvements on it. In cases where the pear has taken hold of pastoral holdings, or agricultural farms or grazing farming selections, the Minister has power to direct any holder to spend 10 per cent. of the capital value of the holding in eradicating this pest; the value of the holding has to be ascertained in the way usually adopted by local authorities—that is, twenty years' rent—or, if the holder prefers it, the Minister may do it for him, and charge the cost on to the remaining period of the lease.

I would like to direct the attention [5 p.m.] of the House to the proviso in clause 30, because it tinges the whole of the clauses dealing with prickly pear, and modifies their drastic nature. The proviso says—

Provided that the Minister may, with respect to any particular holding or class of holdings, make such modifications in the said provisions as he considers to be necessary and proper for carrying into effect the true objects thereof, and all such modifications shall have full effect.

It is impossible in this matter to deal in a practical way by legislation on hard-and-fast lines. You must discriminate between those holdings where it is worth while taking some steps in the matter and those holdings—I regret to say numerous holdings—where it is impracticable to do anything at all. Therefore, you must deliberately clothe the Minister with power and allow him to step in and say, on his own judgment, that certain things shall be done in certain cases, and shall not be done in other cases. Anyone who knows anything about prickly pear country, knows that there are holdings where it would be a mere drop in the bucket to put the provisions of this Act into force—holdings which are past redemption so far as any economical means of redemption we know of at present are concerned. On the other hand, there are numerous cases of selections and grazing farms and pastoral leaseholds where an expenditure of £10 or £50 will redeem the holding from destruction. It is in those cases that those provisions will be put

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into operation. You may say the Minister may use a tyrannical power, and compel lessees to take steps that might ruin them. But it may be safely anticipated that the head of the Lands Department will be an intelligent and fair-minded man, administering his department for the benefit of all concerned; and the lessee or selector has the power of forfeiting as a protest. I think there is no need for anticipating that a power like that, placed in the hands of a Minister, would be used in a tyrannical manner. The Minister would only take steps when it was thoroughly ascertained that his intervention would be of use. We have many thousands of acres steadily deteriorating in value owing to both those causes. With regard to rabbits, which I referred to earlier, I was talking to-day to a Western pastoralist—a reliable man—about the Western country, and he declared his opinion that in five years' time the country would not be worth holding, that the rabbits were only a few miles from where he was residing, and that they are travelling at a rapid rate. [Mr. LESINA: Sir Thomas McLlwraith said the same thing in his manifesto twenty years ago.] The hon. member is entirely mistaken. It is an extraordinary thing that Sir Thomas McLlwraith, with all his experience in Victoria, never feared the rabbits. I have heard him scoffing at the idea that rabbits were likely to come seriously into Queensland. [Mr. LESINA: The rabbit bogey was invented twenty years ago.] I am not prepared to say that it is the worst bogey we have got in Queensland. [Laughter.] [Mr. LESINA: No; the coalition bogey is worse.] I have endeavoured, to the best of my ability, to explain the objects and provisions of the Bill. As I said before, we are constantly discovering that some alterations are required in our land laws, and, broadly speaking, this Bill brings our requirements up to date. [Mr. J. LEAHY: As far as we can see.] I do not think the front Opposition bench desires to legislate further than we can see. We might have been better off now if we had less legislation in the dark. To legislate as far as we can see, and no further, is a wise principle to go upon. This Bill represents what we believe to be necessary in our land legislation, and I move its second reading, believing it is a measure which deserves the good wishes of every hon. member who wishes well to Queensland.

HON. R. PHILP (*Townsville*): I do not know whether the Government expect to pass a Land Bill at the end of the session. As a rule, a Land Bill occupies pretty well a whole session to get through it properly. At the same time, if the Government are serious in trying to pass the Bill, I will place no obstacle in the way, because I recognise that there are some good things in it, and also some very bad things. In committee we may have an opportunity of eliminating the bad and retaining the good. I have always recognised the present Minister for Lands as a strong advocate for settling people on the land, and I am very glad to see that he is coming to see that there is a better way of doing it, by making land cheaper. It is not as cheap as I should like to see it, still it is an improvement on the old order of things. Only this week I received some information about the price of land in the Argentine. The writer says—

I would much have liked to have gone out west from Bahia Blanca on to the Nequen territory on the foothills of the Andes, amongst the big lakes and fine pastoral and agricultural valleys there, described as the Killarney of South America. I was invited to join a party of colonisers who were starting out under a special concession from the Argentine Government, but time pressed and I was reluctantly compelled to decline. The colony is limited to fifty persons, each with the right to select one league of land upon terms as under:—

For a total payment of 4,798 paper dollars, which includes price of land and survey fee, spread over five years, equal to a total payment of about £21, the selector becomes the absolute owner of between 5,000 and 6,000 acres of land. I thought this offered a fine chance for a small capitalist to get a home for himself in a superb climate, and where the rapid extension of the railway systems must soon bring him into close touch with markets and consequent enormous increase in value of his land. For the larger capitalist who wished to buy land as a speculation, I take the following from Buenos Ayres *Standard* of Friday, 4th September, 1904:—The auction sale of lands in Neuquen took place to-day, and 179,019 hectares were sold at an average of 89 cents (paper) per hectare, equal to about 9d. per acre.

My impressions in regard to prices of land were that outside lands were being literally given away, but that land in the province of Buenos Ayres was changing hands at near about its value. I saw one property sold—5 miles from a railway, 60 miles from a port—all wheat land—at £1 10s. per acre.

On the whole, I was bewildered with the immense future possibilities, not alone with Argentina, but Uruguay and Brazil, and only regretted I was unable to give more time on this occasion to the inspection of the country. I called at four ports on the Brazil coast, and, from information gathered there, I believe the possibilities in the pastoral line in this country are yet practically untouched.

In butter, in the Argentina, there seems to be practically hardly any limit to what they can produce. I heard of one estancia owning 10,000 milking cows, but I regretted time would not allow of my getting the information I should have liked.

I am quoting from a well-known pastoralist from North Queensland, who went over there to spy out the land. He sold out of Queensland, and he has no intention of coming back again, as he finds he can do much better in Argentina. [Mr. HARDACRE: What was his reason for leaving—a better climate?] The country has really only been settled for fifty years, because fifty years previous to that they were continually fighting with the natives, and it is only during the last fifty years that they had peace. To show how they are progressing, I may mention that last year they had 10,500,000 acres under wheat; the yield was 11½ bushels to the acre. Out of the crop of 3,380,000 tons they exported 2,400,000 tons, whilst we in Australia last year exported only 1,000,000 tons. They have about the same population as we have in Australia, but they have nothing like the same quantity of land, as we have about the same area of country as the United States. I am very pleased that the Government propose to reduce the price of land sold by auction from 10s. to 5s. per acre. [Mr. KERR: I knew that would meet with your approbation.] I would like to see no minimum at all, leaving it to the Land Court to fix the price at what the land is really worth—whether it is 1s. or 10s. When the whole of the land in Queensland is sold, I will join with the Labour party in proposing a land tax, but not before. [Mr. LESINA: Do you approve of this Bill?] I approve of some of it, and some of it I do not like at all. [Mr. P. J. LEAHY: He approves of what you disapprove.] I am very glad to see the Ministry are going to give better terms to selectors. Of course, selectors have always been given time in which to pay their rent, but it is now proposed to grant the Minister power to give terms, although I would rather see the power placed in the hands of the Land Court. I am also pleased to see that it is proposed that the rents shall not, during any period, be 50 per cent. more than they were during the preceding period. There ought to be some limit, although I do not believe they have ever been increased to that extent. As the Minister says, banking institutions and loan companies are very nervous about the present law on the subject, and they want to

see a limit put to the rent. They also want lessees to be allowed to forfeit their holdings, if necessary. I think the period of two years, which is proposed in the Bill, is too long. Most people who are fighting the elements, farmers and others, have a tendency to hold on until the very last moment before they give in. As a rule, they go on until their bankers will find them no more money. What possible chance is there of men, under those circumstances, being able to find two years' rent? The reason why monetary institutions do not care about lending money on these big leases is because they will have to pay the rent, and they do not want to pay it for two years after the lessee no longer occupies it. I really think that, when a man cannot pay his rent, he ought to be allowed to surrender his lease on forfeiture of his improvements. If a man or a body of men are prepared to leave their improvements behind them, the Crown ought to be quite satisfied to let them go, and I hope that in committee the period of two years will be omitted. A man cannot tell two years beforehand how long a drought will last. He holds on, the rain does not come, but he will not give up until his banker refuses to cash his cheques or the storekeeper refuses to supply him with any more rations. It is only as a last resort that he surrenders his lease. The Minister knows of men who have spent their lives on their holdings, and who have been compelled during the last four or five years to give them up. Sometimes they have had to walk away, not having even a horse left. How can such men be expected to pay two years' rent, seeing they do not give up until the position is utterly hopeless? [Mr. HARDACRE: I think this is a reasonable proposal.] The hon. member for Leichhardt knows a great deal about Land Bills, but he does not know much about the practical working of Land Acts or of the working of the unfortunate people on the land. [Mr. HARDACRE: It only means forfeiting two years' rent.] There are plenty of men in the hon. member's own district who have had to go out without a single shilling. [Mr. HARDACRE: Hear, hear!] Well, how can they give two years' notice? If a man has done well, he can afford to pay the Government two years' rent. He will hang on and probably make something out of it. [Mr. HARDACRE: It would be deducted from the value of his improvements.] He is quite satisfied to give them up. [Mr. HARDACRE: I do not believe in the forfeiture of improvements.] [Mr. J. LEAHY: That would be a fairer thing than this Bill proposes.] If the Minister hopes to get the Bill through, neither side can afford to make long speeches or stonewall. I certainly wish to see a Bill of some kind put through. [The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We are once more in accord.] We have not much more time to waste this session, and I hope some consideration will be shown to the people who are urging that something should be done.

Mr. KERR (*Barcoo*): The Bill, I take it, is a remedial measure. It contains a great many amendments, and will require a great deal of consideration, because there will have to be a great deal of comparison with the principal and other Land Acts to see what changes are proposed. I take it, in common with the leader of the Opposition, that there is no intention of going on with the Bill beyond the second reading, but I do not think it will be a waste of time to take the second reading. I believe that there are some good things in the Bill, and there are others that I and other hon. members object to. The discussion upon the second reading will enable hon.

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members to place their views on record in *Hansard*, and the people who are particularly concerned in the Bill will have an opportunity of considering it. The discussion will enable it to be considered during the recess. Those who are in favour of it will be able to bring down their facts in support of it, while it will also afford those who are opposed to it an opportunity of bringing forward alterations and of arriving at a proper solution of the difficulty. The Minister in moving the second reading of this measure dealt with reserves that are infested with prickly pear and other noxious weeds. There is no person who has travelled about the State and taken notice of the reserves—some of which are under the control of shire councils, and some of which are not yet vested in any local authority—but must have come to the conclusion that it is time something was done to place those reserves under proper control, and that something should be got from them. As the Minister stated, a few persons, possibly one or two, round a reserve derive most benefit from that reserve, and I am glad to see that a proposal is now made to meet that difficulty. The late Minister for Lands, Mr. O'Connell, tried in a very small way the scheme outlined in this measure. There was a police paddock on the river about 16 miles from Blackall. That paddock was infested with prickly pear, and the late Minister for Lands leased the paddock to a selector near Blackall, making it a condition of the lease that the selector should clear off a certain quantity of prickly pear each year he had the land under occupation. I allow that the Minister was not authorised by the Act to make such an arrangement, but he did make it, and from what I saw of the result of that action I think the provision in this Bill is a step in the right direction. If it can be carried out in connection with public reserves generally, it will be a very good thing. But the difficulty I see in leasing reserves is that when travelling stock come along there will be very little grass for them. I do not think the lessee of a reserve should be allowed to stock the land to its full carrying capacity. A restriction should be placed upon him in that respect, otherwise there will probably be no grass for travelling stock. There is another provision in the Bill to which I should like to refer. A seven years' extension of lease was given to pastoralists for rabbit-netting. After that extension of lease was got under the last Act that was passed, the lessees began to neglect their part of the contract. [Mr. J. LEAHY: Why were they not kept up to their contract?] The hon. member was a member of the Government at that time, and he ought to know. They were not kept up to their contract. [Mr. J. LEAHY: How could they be kept up to their contract during the drought?] They were not kept up to their contract when there was no drought. [Mr. J. LEAHY: Yes, they were.] There were some pastoralists in my own electorate who were kept up to the collar all the time, and had to keep their fences in the best repair possible, while others were permitted to allow their fences to get into disrepair, and yet had the same advantages as the men who kept their fences in the best order. They have since found that they have no need of the extension under the rabbit-netting provisions, and they want to get rid of the conditions laid down. When that measure was passed they accepted the contract under which they were to erect certain fences and keep them in repair, and I think the provision in this Bill which proposes that if they fail to keep those fences in repair a certain proportion of the extended lease shall be deducted from

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them is a step in the right direction. Why should those lessees who are not fulfilling their obligations reap the benefit that is to be obtained from an extended lease? With regard to the provision requiring a tenant who desires to surrender his lease to give notice, I believe that some hon. members think that two years is too long a period. If the Crown requires the land, the Crown has to give notice to the lessee before they can take possession, and that being so, it is only fair and reasonable that the lessee should also give notice, so that proper arrangements may be made by the department for throwing open the land for further settlement, and not have it lying idle on their hands. Then there is an amendment with regard to the extension of the period in which a selector may pay his rent. I favour that amendment, because, as everyone knows, during the initial stages of settlement selectors need all the money they can raise. In the past they have had, on taking up land, to pay the first year's rent, and one-fifth of the survey fees. If the payment of part of that money were deferred, it would be a great assistance to a large number of people who have not much money to invest in the land. With regard to clause 12, I may tell the Minister that I do not like it. This provision was in the last Land Bill. I think it will meet with a great deal of opposition. I do not favour it, but I am not going to deal with it now. [Mr. P. J.]

[5.30 p.m.] LEAHY: Do you favour the Bill?

I am endeavouring to show what I favour, and what I don't favour. [Mr. P. J. LEAHY: How will you vote?] The hon. gentleman will know that when a division is called. Then, again, I may as well tell the hon. member for Warrego that I am against the clause which has for its object the reduction in the selling price of land, because it will have the effect of parting with the very best of our Western lands, and the very best of the lands in the district I have the honour to represent, at 5s an acre. [Mr. FORSYTH: Who said so?] [Mr. P. J. LEAHY: Not at all.] Everybody knows that land is not bought at 10s. an acre for grazing purposes. It is only bought to peacock the best portions of the runs, and it is a well-known fact that the portions of the runs that have been sold have been those which give the key to the position. That is proved conclusively if you only go to Bimera, on the Barcoo. The land which was sold there at 10s. an acre was no better than land a considerable distance away from the water, but that land was bought because it had command of the water. If the railway which has passed this House, from Dartsmouth to Stonehenge or Jundah, is ever constructed, the line will run close to that land, and make it very valuable, and the Crown will then have to buy it back again. If the price is reduced under this Bill, the maximum will be 5s. an acre, and the best of the land will be picked out at that price. If this House thinks that when the price is reduced to 5s. any land will be sold at 10s. they are greatly mistaken. I believe it would be justifiable to give our land away if we could only settle it. We have a very large area, and a small population, and the crying need is for people to settle on the land. By settling people on a number of small areas they will produce more than if the land is in occupation of only one or two persons, and no one can dispute that fact. Take the pastoral holdings in the electorate I represent, and what do we find? There are stations there which are known well to the hon. member for Brisbane North, Mr. Cameron, which are producing more on the resumed areas than was produced on the leased area and the resumed portion together when held as one

large pastoral holding. That proves conclusively that when the land is cut up into small paddocks, and when water and other improvements are made, and a good class of sheep stocked, there has been greater production of wool. These smaller areas give much more employment to the people and generally speaking benefit the community to a greater extent than the large holdings. [Mr. J. LEAHY: The smaller you cut them up the more they can carry, I suppose?] The hon. member knows what I mean, but he carries the thing to an absurdity. [Mr. J. LEAHY: That is what you did.] No; I did not, and the hon. gentleman knows I did not. I am referring to grazing farms of 20,000 acres. Does the hon. gentleman call that very intense and close settlement? But there is a great difference between such areas and immense pastoral holdings, and between them and areas the size of this Chamber. All I contend is that if you reduce the large areas to the size of grazing farm selections it will bring about more production, and the hon. gentleman cannot deny it. The primary object and purpose of a Land Bill ought to be settlement of people on the land. That has always been my contention, and we should keep that aim and object well in view. The leader of the Opposition has pointed to the difference existing between the Argentine and this country, and that land was being sold in that country for a very small consideration compared with what we ask for it here. He also said it would be much better for those engaged in pastoral pursuits if they settled in the Argentine rather than in Queensland. The hon. gentleman forgets the disturbances that have taken place in the Argentine in days gone by, and there is no certainty that there may not be a revolution there any day. I now come to the prickly pear provisions, which I think are very wise and good. There are none of us who have been anywhere where the prickly pear is in evidence but must come to the conclusion that the pest is getting hold of some of the best lands in the State, and it is only by closer settlement that we are going to cope with it. It would take perhaps that close and intense settlement that the hon. member for Bulloo referred to when he said that a man should only have a piece the size of this room to cope with the pear, and we have heard again and again that it is only by making the land freehold that we can cope with the pest. When we come to some townships where land has been sold we find the pear equally as bad as on the Crown and leased lands. You have only to go to the Condamine, North Rock, and similar other townships to see prickly pear as bad as on any Crown or leased lands. I trust that if this Bill comes into committee this session—I have my doubts about that because there is not time for it—but when it comes into committee, and if it comes into committee in this form next session, it will have to be very much amended, because if it is not I certainly cannot support it.

Mr. SPENCER (*Maramba*): I should like to say a few words with regard to the amendments in the Bill before the House. I think a good many of them will be very beneficial and assist to liberalise our land laws. There are other amendments which I should like to have had brought in, and which would make the land laws more liberal than they are at the present time. Clause 10 amends paragraph 4 of section 134 of the principal Act. I think that is a good idea. Persons holding agricultural farms, after they have paid rent for a number of years, may be desirous of making the

land freehold, and I think it is only reasonable that they should be allowed to do so, and also get a rebate of interest on the purchase money paid in advance. I should like to see an amendment with regard to that clause. These agricultural farmers when they apply for reassessment of the rent and come before the Land Court, the Land Court reduces the rent, but the reduction of the rent does not necessarily carry reduction in the price of the land on the certificate. I think an amendment should be brought in that when the rent is reduced by the Land Court the purchasing price should be reduced accordingly. Clause 12 is a very good provision indeed. Possibly a man taking up a grazing farm after a few years becomes able to purchase it as freehold, and I think that it is only reasonable and a good thing for the country that he should be allowed to make the property freehold. Then clause 14 gives the Minister power to convert an agricultural homestead or agricultural farm into an unconditional selection. I think that is also required in the country. There have been many instances where men have found, after living on their selections for a few years, they are unable to comply with the conditions, and if they are enabled to convert it into an unconditional selection and go away and obtain employment somewhere, it will be a good thing, if they may be able to make the land freehold. I am running through these as quickly as I possibly can, because I know there are other hon. members who wish to speak. I hoped this Bill would be brought through this session, but I am afraid, as other speakers have said, that it will be held over till next session. [Mr. J. LEAHY: You will be able to consider the Betterment Bill at the same time.] Clause 15 is a very important one with regard to prickly pear selections, and I think it is a very good amendment indeed. The only thing is that I should have liked to see it a little more liberal. For instance, clause 15 says that a selection may be cleared in one or two years, and then, if it is cleared and the selector gets a certificate from the Crown lands commissioner, the lease will be reduced to five years, at the end of five years he will be able to obtain his title of freehold. I think it would have been better if the Minister could have seen his way to allow a man, if he had cleared his land—if he kept it clear for, say, two years—that he should then be enabled to get the freehold. I think that would be perfectly safe and ensure to the Crown that the land would be perfectly clear of pests. Then there is clause 18, reducing the selling price of land. I agree to some extent with what has fallen from the hon. member for Barcoo, and I think that very careful administration will have to be adopted with regard to selling this land. In the past many people who bought land bought it in centres where there was water and it was the chief position, and by purchasing the land where the water was they secured the use of the land for a considerable distance. [Mr. J. LEAHY: Artesian boring has altered that.] Yes; but at the same time this Act will have to be very carefully administered indeed, and to see that no pressure is brought to bear on the Minister for Lands. There is one other amendment—the Minister proposes to reduce the purchasing price of grazing land to 5s., but there is no mention of reducing the price of agricultural land, which would assist settlement. I think the price of agricultural land should be reduced to 5s. an acre. Clause 30 will have to be administered, as the Minister said, with great caution, because, if you compel some of these graziers to acquire their land or even to keep it clear, it

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simply means throwing up their holdings altogether. But I think it is necessary that a clause should be put in the Act which would have the effect, where the land was only infested to a small extent, of inducing the lessees to keep the land clear, and I think the House ought to give every encouragement to anything that can be brought forward to stop the increase of pear. There is one other amendment with regard to section 56 of the 1902 Act. Under that section the Minister has power to issue a title to the widow in case of the death of the selector, or to the next of kin or person entitled to receive it; or if they forfeit the selection he has power to hand them the value of the improvements and after it has been selected again. It only limits it to 160 acres, but I think it would be a good idea to amend it to include 640 acres; also to so amend it that he would have the power to hand over or transfer, without probate, the selection to the widow, or, if it is forfeited, that he might be able to hand over the value of the improvements which he receives from the next selector. I know many cases in my district where a selector has died, and the land, perhaps 360 acres, has not been of much value to the unfortunate widow, because she has not been able to obtain a title or to obtain the value of the improvements, because she could not afford to pay probate duty, and the value of the improvements paid by the new selector has not been paid to the widow. I would like to see the amendment I suggest made. Then there was another amendment with regard to the homesteader selector. Under section 140, if a selector took up land valued at £1 an acre, he could take up 160 acres, and if at 15s. he could take up 320 acres, and if at 10s. he could take up 640 acres. I think the homesteader should be able to get 640 acres in this way: That there should be first, second, and third class land. If he took 160 acres of first-class land, he should be able to take up third-class land sufficient to make up his area to 640 acres, provided the other land was not more than 15 miles away from the land he has originally taken up, and he should be able to comply with the residence conditions by only residing on the one selection. In many out West places 160 acres or 320 acres are not sufficient for a man to make a living on, and if he is allowed to take up 640 acres it would be a great assistance to him. With regard to the clause in this Bill providing that lessees may surrender their holdings after two years' notice, I think this matter should be put on a firm basis, for in the past lessees have been under the impression that if they forfeited their holding the Minister could compel them to pay the rent right up to the end of the lease. Of course, the Minister had that power, but he never exercised it. It is a question for consideration in committee whether the notice should be one or two years. I am afraid that section 20, dealing with special leases of reserves infested with noxious weeds and plants, or with scrub, for a term not exceeding twenty years, will not operate very well in Western districts. It may be of some use in coastal districts, but in the West, where the reserves are surrounded by selectors or are near towns, the unfortunate lessee who has tried to keep other people's stock off would have a lively time of it. There would be something like a revolution in twenty-four hours; besides, there is always so much travelling stock in the Western districts, that the reserves are perfectly bare, and the clause will have little effect there. I have nothing more to say now, but I hope that in committee the Minister will accept some other necessary amendments.

[*Mr. Spencer.*

Mr. J. LEAHY (*Bullo*): I do not think it is necessary to discuss this Bill at all. The hon. member for Barcoo has implied very clearly the position in regard to this Bill—that he did not think it could go on much further this session, and we cannot ignore the position that that hon. member holds in this House. It would be absurd for us to do so, and therefore it seems pure waste of time going on with this Bill. Why does not the Premier get up and say that the Government are going to drop this Bill, as they did the Betterment and the Gun Licenses Bills? I have no particular objection to this Bill, but I object to farces. If the Government are really going on with it, I shall offer no obstruction, and probably I shall give them some assistance. But the hon. member for Barcoo said he would not tolerate a Bill with some of the conditions contained in this Bill, and he spoke as he should have spoken, considering the position he holds and the authority with which he speaks for his party. I believe that some arrangements have been made by the leaders of the House with regard to the business for the remainder of the session, and whatever arrangement my leader has made I shall adhere to; but we do not know what may have happened since. The hon. member for Barcoo has addressed the Chamber on this Bill, and before we proceed further I want to know from the Premier how we are. I have too much respect for this House to waste time in discussing measures that are not to be gone on with, and there are other matters that could occupy our time besides this Bill. Before we rose for tea I was asking the Government whether they were really in earnest in pressing this [7 p.m.] Bill through at this stage of the session, so that if they were not I should not devote myself seriously to the measure and take up the time of the House. I did not get an answer. Perhaps the Government are in a position to give one now. Under the circumstances, surely I am justified in asking whether there is any business in it. They do not give me an answer, so I will take the Bill as I find it. Before proceeding to criticise the Bill let me say at once that I do not think this is a time for making long speeches; we are too near the end of the session for that. There is no new principle involved in this Bill. There is nothing in it that is not contained in our existing legislation. [The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The prickly pear provisions.] That is not a new principle. It is only an enlargement of the provision contained in section 12 of the Act of 1902. The Minister for Lands introduced the Bill at some length, and gave an explanation of what were the most important clauses of the Bill from his point of view. I have a little experience myself of introducing Bills in this Chamber, and if there is a weak point in a Bill the Minister is not going to bring that weak point before his supporters. There are one or two leading clauses in the Bill. The others deal with details which it would not be justifiable wasting time in referring to seeing that we have discussed them time without number, and it is only a question of the results of experience whether we shall go on as we are or make some little more or less necessary alterations. The Bill deals mainly, as any Land Bill must, with selectors and pastoral tenants of the Crown. From the pastoralists' point of view the Bill gives some things, and takes away a great deal more than it gives. I was unable to follow the Minister in going over the Bill. He did not take the various subjects in consecutive order, and deal with the Bill in the

manner most convenient to hon. members. He took up the different classes of holders and went backwards and forwards as the clauses related to the selector or the pastoralist, and it was not always easy to know where he was. But, of course, his speech has nothing to do with the matter of the Bill. I propose briefly to make a few remarks which present themselves to me as to the chief points which will have to be considered on the second reading. I have no objection to the portion dealing with selectors. In the main it is liberal, but liberality is sometimes open to abuse, and if this very benevolent principle which is laid down is to be exercised at the discretion of the Minister, ignoring altogether any influence that may be brought to bear upon him, with regard to what selectors or other persons taking up land shall get certain conditions, it will require a great deal of perspicacity and knowledge of human nature to discriminate between the man who is deserving and the man who is not; and he will have to be a man of great political strength to be able to say yes or no to the influences that may be brought to bear upon him. No doubt it is highly desirable to be satisfied as to a man's *bona fides*, but I venture to say that most people will try to be included in the class of deserving persons. I admit that no land legislation is final in a young community like this, that frequent changes are necessary to meet varying conditions. The Minister told us that the Bill met those changed conditions as far as he could see. [Mr. LESINA: What are you generalising so much for? Why don't you get to the Bill?] This is a general Bill. Is the hon. member anxious to get at it like a bull at a gate? If so, he will have an opportunity directly. I reckon I know something about land matters. I have no objection to liberality in that direction, but running right through the Bill—in the selection portion of it and in the lessee portion of it—it is “the Minister.” Everywhere “the Minister”! The hon. gentleman might have occasion to regret that at some future time. I have heard him object to the Minister being put in a position of that kind, and changes come and changes go, and men may come and men may go, but none of them go on for ever. [Mr. KENN: That is better than shuffling the responsibility on to the Land Court.] The hon. member can give us a dissertation on shuffling when I resume my seat. I deal with questions that I understand, and I leave that phase of the question to the hon. member with pleasure. I have no objection to the liberality of the measure, though it may be abused. Of course, everyone who knows anything about systems of government knows that the best system of government is that in which you have a strong honest man at the head of affairs, if you can get him. Take the Treasurer, for instance. [The TREASURER: Hear, hear!] That is the kind of man we want. I see the hon. member for Clermont nodding his head. Of course, he agrees with me. But it is not possible to get that kind of man—a man who can be here, there, and everywhere at the same time. [The TREASURER: Except one.] Yes, except the Treasurer. This provision may be abused. Having regard to our system of government, and particularly to our triennial Parliaments, and the question of majorities and responsibility, it is not wise to put too much political power into the hands of Ministers. It is for that reason that we have a tribunal. I am perfectly satisfied that, as long as a thing is purely administrative, it is a question for the Minister. But it is a judicial question, it has to be weighed according to facts, and the facts have to be determined, and then it is better that it should be deter-

mined by a tribunal and not by the Minister. The Minister here is becoming judicial as well as administrative in his functions. I do not think that is right, and it is not a sound principle at all. [The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It was the principle up to 1884.] That is so, and in 1884 it was decided that we should have a judicial tribunal. If the hon. gentleman says that the present system is working badly, I cannot agree with him, because it is not, although it is not perfect. No system is. This system will not be perfect either. This will not be the last Land Bill. If the hon. member for Leichhardt comes in as Secretary for Lands, as sure as fate he will amend this Bill. Every Minister has his own ideas of how certain things should be done. This is a mixed system, and a mixed system is always a bad system. [The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We have always had a mixed system. You have the Land Court fixing rents in some cases and the Minister in others.] You have the Minister fixing rents in the first instance when land is thrown open, but he does not really fix rents. All he does is to say, “Here is a piece of land thrown open for a certain time. You can take it for this rent if you like.” But he does not fix the rent. [Mr. HAMILTON: He fixes rents under section 15 of the Act of 1902.] No, because they are not bound to take it up; but, when the rent is fixed next time, they must take it up or lose their improvements. With all due respect to the Minister, I think this is a bad principle. The first rent should not be fixed by the Minister either. However, that is beside the question. I think this system is not likely to give the best results under the form of parliamentary government that we have, when pressure is brought to bear upon Ministers at particular times. I say, with all respect to the present Minister or to any other Minister, that at certain times pressure may be brought to bear upon him. I will not say election pressure, but there may be great public meetings or something of that kind, when he might feel it better not to act according to the strict letter of the law, and, being human, he would not act in the impartial way that the Land Court would. I say, therefore, that I condemn the principle. The Bill reminds me of a speech that was made on one occasion by Sir Henry Parkes, and there were so many “I’s” in it that they would not print it. It was “I,” “I,” here, there, and everywhere. In the Bill it is “the Minister” here; it is “the Minister” twice in some lines and three times in others. There is altogether too much of “the Minister.” It is not the present Minister that I object to—I am not making any personal objection. I am dealing with the Minister in the abstract; whoever the Minister may be, I object to it. Let us not interfere with the Land Court more than is necessary. One matter that is introduced into the Bill is that a selector shall not be allowed to take up a grazing selection because it is 15 miles away from where he lives. [The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You are not stating the case accurately. That privilege will still exist—we are not taking it away; but, if he has obtained priority for the new piece by undertaking to personally reside on it, he is not to be allowed to live on another piece.] After an experience of some years, the Legislature passed a provision enabling a man to apply for a second piece of land if he had not sufficient previously to make a living out of; and, as he could not live in two places at the same time, he was allowed to fulfil the condition of residence by residing on one of the areas. That was agreed to after careful consideration by the representatives of the people.

Supposing a man is competing against men from New South Wales and Victoria, surely it is better to give the people we have here sufficient land for them to make a living on, and why should they not have priority? The law lays down that a certain acreage is enough for a man to live on, having regard to the quality. If he has not got that sufficient area, why should he not have priority until he gets it; and, if he has sufficient already of that particular quality, he should not be allowed to take up any more. However, I am not going to argue that point. There are hon. members here who have a larger number of selectors in their districts than I have, and, if they are satisfied with it, I certainly shall not offer any objection to the proposal contained in the Bill. I think it is a wise provision that a change of tenure should be allowed in certain cases—that is, in cases where, owing to circumstances over which a man has no control, or in circumstances where it would be in the interest of the State, a change of tenure is desirable, as it may be the means of keeping settlers on the land. I have no objection to that provision, although I have not at my disposal the information which would enable me to say upon what particular cases the Minister proposes this change. [Mr. HAMILTON: It would not be right to allow a man to acquire a homestead under the homestead conditions, and give him priority, and then allow him to change his tenure into that of a grazing farm.] That would not be right as a general rule, but there may be cases in which even that might be justifiable, and what we desire is to secure more settlement on the land. It would be a matter for the discretion of the Minister to determine whether the circumstances rendered such a change desirable. Then it is proposed to allow grazing farmers to change their tenure into freehold. That I am prepared to accept. Probably the Minister, in his anxiety to get the second reading of the Bill through, did not explain this matter at such length as would enable hon. members to follow him clearly; but I think it is likely that there are cases in the Central district to which this provision will apply. I do not believe it will apply very largely to lands in the coastal district, where the primary factor in connection with land for agricultural purposes is present—that is, a reasonable and regular rainfall. But speaking generally, I do not think that selectors, who are a very large and deserving body in the State, and a body who are growing in power, will be very anxious to pay 10s. an acre for land when they can rent that same land at 1½d. per acre per annum, and get a lease for forty years. They are not likely to do that, except for the purpose of getting a strategical position near a railway, or for the purpose of securing valuable land for fattening or other purposes. With regard to provision being made for travelling stock on reserves, I entirely agree with the hon. member for Barcoo on that point. I know something about the West, having lived there for twenty years, and I know that if a reserve is rented to a man nobody else is going to get anything out of it, unless such conditions are contained in the lease as will insure rights to other persons. It might be made a condition of the lease as to how many head of cattle should be run on the reserve by the lessee, in order to make some provision for the wants of travelling stock. These reserves are not going to be leased for the amount of revenue they will bring into the Treasury, but with the view of having the land kept in order, and the growth of noxious weeds checked. But it must be remembered that the more you tie

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a man down the less he will be able to do to keep the reserve in order. If it was a question only of keeping the reserve in order, then he would probably do that so that he might make the best use he could of it. Then there is a provision with regard to the prickly pear nuisance. That is not a new feature. There is a provision in the Act of 1902 under which that matter can be dealt with by the Land Court, which is a tribunal that is not affected by political influences, which I do not regard as a subdivision or a sub-branch of the Lands Office, or a body subordinate to the Minister, but which is in the position of the Supreme Court judges, as its members can only be removed on an address from both Houses of Parliament. The provision in the Act of 1902 stipulates that lessees shall not allow their holdings to go further to the bad. We made a contract with the lessees to that effect. If a man rents a house to me, and says "You must not allow my house to get out of repair," that is a proper thing to do. It is only reasonable that I should keep it in the same state of repair as it was when I got it. But if he gives me a broken-down, ramshackle place on a lease for five or ten years, and afterwards wants to introduce a clause in the lease requiring me to put that house in repair, that would be unreasonable. It is equitable to say to a lessee that he shall not allow his land to get into a worse condition than it was when he took it on lease. [Mr. HAMILTON: You fought against that.] I was a member of a Ministry who introduced that provision in the Act, and I think it a fair provision. I know portions of the State where the condition of leaseholds is a positive shame. You will see a freehold one side of a fence which is as neat and as clean as the floor of this Chamber, and a leasehold on the other side in a shameful condition. The expenditure of a few shillings on that at one time would have preserved the estate to the public, but not one shilling has been spent on it. It is a fair thing that a man should use reasonable care to see that his property does not go to the bad. I am prepared to go that far. That provision was introduced by the late Government [7.30 p.m.] ment for the first time in this Legislature by any Government, but this House made a contract. The hon. gentleman comes now and wants to upset it without the consent of the other party. How can you do that? Parliament cannot in honesty do any such thing. If I give a man a lease under certain conditions, and then come in and tell the lessee he shall do something else, I may succeed, but is it a fair and honourable thing to do? I say it is a thing which no Legislature should attempt. [Mr. TOLMIE: Did he not make a contract too?] Is he a consenting party to the terms of this new contract? If he is, and if you are giving him a *quid pro quo*, that is a different thing. [Mr. TOLMIE: Suppose he cannot carry out the terms of the contract?] The hon. member is putting a foolish kind of conundrums. We have been told by the Secretary for Public Lands that this is a new feature in the Bill. That is the position. [The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: These proposals are not absolutely new.] These proposals are an outrage. I say, if the hon. gentleman never put them into force, it is too much power to give any man. If he never put them in force they are an outrage. It is nothing more or less than repudiation and an attempt to break a bargain. When this House makes a bargain, so long as I am a member of the Legislature, I will fight as long as I legitimately can any proposal to break that bargain. [Mr. HAMILTON:

We are breaking an agreement by allowing them to forfeit.] No; that is a mutual arrangement. He must be a consenting party. Now, I would like to ask the Minister this: If it is a desirable thing, as I believe it is, that the lessee should keep his lease clean of weeds and vermin, is it not equally desirable that the Crown should keep its waste lands clean of weeds and vermin? What does the Crown propose to do in regard to its own lands? [The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We are taking power, as you know.] I do not know anything of the kind. [The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You ought to know that we are taking power to deal with those lands in a way that has never been proposed before.] I know it, but the power the hon. gentleman is taking will not accomplish the purpose. It will be useless except in an odd case. [The PREMIER: It is an attempt to deal with it.] It is an attempt, and a foolish attempt. [The PREMIER: No.] I say I know as much about the South-western country as the hon. gentleman. At the same time I do not know that he can do more without calling upon the Treasury. But before I proceed let me finish what I was saying. I say on some of these lands you have thistles, and prickly pear, and other weeds growing wild. These are taken by the birds and blown about by the wind, and taken into the land of other persons who try to keep their land clean. If the Government are going to insist on the lessee carrying out a national obligation, how can the Crown set a bad example and sit by while their own land is going to waste, and acting as a fructifying ground for all this vermin? That is a position which the Government ought to explain. It is no use taking a stand of this kind when on the other side of the fence is Crown land which grows weeds enough to keep twenty adjoining owners busy. The hon. gentleman proposes as one of the conditions for dealing with vermin that there shall be a peppercorn rent for the first ten years. Now, suppose a man takes up 100 miles of country, and the Minister insists upon him putting a fence round it. [The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Of course each lease will be the subject of negotiation.] I am taking the most favourable case—a case in which a tenant of the Crown gets the land at a peppercorn rent for ten years. The Minister assumes that he fences the land and keeps down the rabbits. Land in that district is offered at the present time for 9s. or 10s. a mile, and will not fetch it. Now, if the tenant fences his 100 miles at £70 a mile, it will cost him £2,800, but the rent which he would have to pay would be only £50 a year, which in ten years would come to £500, and the hon. gentleman thinks the tenant is going to spend £2,800 in fencing when he can get it for a rental of £500. [The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You are putting up a bogie which you say is my case, and then proceed to knock it over. Why do you assume I am going to insist on fencing?] It would be no good if the hon. gentleman did not. [The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I have advice to the contrary.] Why, any person who knows anything about rabbits, knows that it is impossible to deal with them except by fencing. [The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You know that destruction is carried out on unfenced country.] Absolutely hopeless. I know the hon. gentleman has a few poison carts going about the country. That keeps the rabbits down for a while, and in a couple of weeks there are as many there as ever. [The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Do not assume that I am insisting on fencing.] The hon. gentleman is not going to insist on fencing, then? If he is not, I tell him candidly that

he will not deal effectively with the rabbits. He can make up his mind about that. [The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It is something to have it occupied.] I will admit that. I am not making a hostile speech; I want, as briefly as I can, to give some ideas which I think will be useful. I suppose most of the rabbits in Queensland are in my electorate; I have been there over twenty years, and ought to know something about it. If the hon. gentleman can initiate any system by which not larger areas than 10-mile blocks could be adopted, I believe the rabbits could be kept in subjection—that is to say, they would not entirely destroy the country. It might reduce the carrying capacity to some extent, but by dealing instantly with these blocks, fencing some of them in, and by poisoning and keeping the fences in order, I believe the country would not be wholly lost. But fencing is an indispensable condition, particularly if there is other vacant country in all directions where rabbits can come in. There is no other way of checking; you must have fences to keep them out; any other means is impossible. I turn now to the forfeiture for improvements, which is supposed to be such a great thing for the lessees. I regret that I could never see eye to eye with the lessees on that particular point. I do not say for a moment that I know the business of the lessees as well as they know it themselves; I am prepared to take their judgment before my own—I am only saying that in my judgment there is not the least danger. I do not think the Land Court will go to extremes, and if they did so, it would only be under suitable conditions, when things were prosperous: the only thing bad about it would be that they would continue when things got bad again. With regard to the two years in which notice has to be given before the Crown will exonerate the lessees from any claims which they would have against them, I know the 1902 Bill was brought in when the Secretary for Public Lands, Mr. O'Connell, was very ill, and he seemed to get that idea into his head and make up his mind to do it. [Mr. HAMILTON: It was first introduced in the other Chamber; they put that in after the Bill left here.] [The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: They made the amendment there.] I thought the Secretary for Public Lands did it. I know it was discussed in the Cabinet. [Mr. HAMILTON: He refused to accept it.] It is a long time to take one's memory back two years, having regard to the amount of Bills that have passed through this Chamber during that period. Perhaps it was when it came back and was discussed again. As the Secretary for Public Lands pointed out, it never has been the practice in this House to hunt out a man who was a Crown tenant and put the bailiff in and take the last pound out of him, particularly as he left his improvements behind him, and I do not think it ever will be the practice. The banks say, "That may be all very well for you as a tenant, but they do not let off a financial institution like they let off an individual, and if we lend you money we must have good security." We all admit that it is necessary that we must have capital to work an undertaking. We passed a Bill the other night for a State bank, because it was necessary for some small men to get loans at a cheaper rate from the Government than they could get it from other financial institutions, and it is necessary if a man is not a wealthy man to get a start, and if people of comparatively small means are going to get a start they must have financial assistance. A bank or financial institution is very careful, before giving assistance, to see that its security is clear, and if it

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sees things going to the bad, that there is everlasting complication during the term of the lease hanging on to their shoulders, and they can get no return out of it, they won't engage. I have tried to show financial institutions that their fears were without any foundation at all, but looking at the fact that they have lost more than private individuals, they are evidently considering their position with regard to advances on stations in the West. Some of them won't touch them at all; they have lost hundreds and thousands in the past, and they will take care they are well secured. They are so careful now as to be stupidly careful, and the result is that the securities which they would have been glad to accept in the past they won't look at just now. It is for this reason that we want to develop the country, and that it is necessary to give assistance to farmers and others, and to take away what is really a bogey. When a man wants money he does not look upon it as a bogey, but as a real terror. [Mr. HAMILTON: How was it it was never raised as a bogey before?] Does the hon. gentleman not know that all the banks of Australia have been struck over the back country? He knows all the Diamantina, all the southern portions of his electorate, at all events, and it was the same in mine. I could name fifty stations in Western Queensland which nearly ruined some banks. [The PREMIER: It is better not to mention names.] I admit that, but anyone who reads the balance-sheets and the discussions at the banks' annual meetings will see that it is so. Do you think they will make advances to people to take up that country again? If they do so, they will say they must have no burden like this hanging over them. [The PREMIER: Then why the persistent demand for long leases?] That was from the tenant. [The PREMIER: Not only from the tenant, but the financial institutions as well.] The persistent demand for long leases came in good seasons, when there was no drought at that time, like we have had since or which was just coming on. This condition only applies to a particular portion of the country; it will never apply to the Barcoo, Mitchell, or Warrego districts, or places of that kind. It will only apply to the outer margin in the West and South, and the rabbit-infested country. It will never go into areas where the country is good. [The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It applies to the whole of the State.] Of course, but somebody will always take up good country, with good rainfall, and with railway conveniences; but the further you go into arid districts this will apply, and we should hold out every possible encouragement to people to develop that country. The hon. member for Leichhardt said he would allow the improvements to be sold by the Crown, and if there was a surplus it should be given to the tenants. That is a very fair proposal. [The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That is what could have been done in the past, and has sometimes been done, and what will no doubt be done in the future.] I am very pleased to see that a new principle has been introduced into this Bill—that is, the principle of selling land in large areas wherever you can, and putting a price on the land according to its value. [The PREMIER: Where do you find that in the Bill?] You are proposing to reduce the price of some land from 10s. to 5s. [The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I was careful to say that that is not so.] I say it is in the Bill. Clause 18 says—

In section one hundred and seventy-seven of the principal Act the words "ten shillings" are repealed, and the words "five shillings" are inserted in lieu thereof.

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I am exceedingly pleased to see that the Government are again adopting the policy of their predecessors. [Mr. LESINA: What policy?] The policy of selling land whenever and wherever they can. I shall always support any Government that proposes to carry out a policy I have advocated for years. The Treasurer wants to get in more revenue, and I say it would be much better for him to sell land at 5s. an acre or less than to put on unnecessary taxation. I assume that the Government will make the best bargain they can, just the same as a private individual would when selling an article. No man in his senses would sell a racehorse for the same price as a donkey. The Government should sell the second and third class land at its value. I am exceedingly pleased to see the hon. member for Barcoo and his party returning to a reign of common sense. [Mr. HAMILTON: The hon. member for Barcoo never said anything of the sort.] I have no doubt that if hon. members opposite go on in this way, agreeing to our opinions as they are doing, we shall soon be a very happy family. They shall certainly have my support when they carry out a policy which we on this side introduced and advocated, as that will be for the best interests of the country.

Mr. HAMILTON: I agree with the remarks of the Minister that people recognise that land legislation is coming to be an annual thing. There have been forty-four land measures introduced since we have had responsible government here, and that has existed for about the same number of years. But we can only get up-to-date land legislation by watching the operation of these Land Acts and seeing how we can improve on them. There is a lot in this Bill that I am thoroughly in accord with, and a lot which I am not in accord with, and that is where I and the hon. member for Bulloo will differ. [Mr. J. LEAHY: You are straining your party principles.] No; we are not, although the hon. member and many of those who are associated with him try to make people believe that we are doing so. The legislation relating to grazing farmers, and selectors generally, will meet with my approval. With regard to the pastoral lessees, they got an extension of their leases under the 1902 Act in consideration of erecting rabbit-netting and keeping their holdings intact, and they should be held to their contract. This Bill does not break that contract. [Mr. J. LEAHY: I am not objecting to them having to keep the contract, but you should not make a fresh contract with them without their consent.] This only provides that their contract must be kept, under certain penalties—that they must keep their rabbit-netting in repair. A good deal of the spread of the rabbits has been due to these people allowing their fences to get and remain out of repair. [Mr. J. LEAHY: Why don't you enforce their repair?] Why did not the Government of which the hon. member was a member enforce their repair? [Mr. J. LEAHY: How could you do that in drought time?] The North Gregory Rabbit Board erected the netting in their district when the drought was on, and they kept their fences in repair all through the drought. I do not think that any board in Queensland has carried out its obligations in connection with rabbit-fencing better than the North Gregory Rabbit Board. [Mr. J. LEAHY: It was new fencing.] A lot of the fencing was not new.

The floods have washed them down [8 p.m.] from time to time, and only last year they were put to great expense in repairing the fences after the flood. Another provision gives the Crown power to lease reserves. That is a very good thing. I do not think this would apply in the West, because most reserves are vested in the local authorities,

who generally lease them annually, and the reserves are looked after. When I was in the Burnett district the other day I noticed a lot of reserves that nobody seemed to be taking care of—I do not know whether they are vested in the local authorities or anybody else—and they were overgrown with prickly pear and other noxious weeds. It would be a good thing if the Minister had the power to do something with those reserves in order to keep down those pests if the local authorities will not do so. The proposal to allow pastoral lessees to forfeit their holdings after giving two years' notice is a thing I shall vote against, as I did when the 1902 Act was going through. It is in my district principally where those forfeitures are taking place. I got a telegram only this afternoon informing me that a big cattle-buyer—I need not mention names—has bought all the stock on a certain station, and that as soon as they are removed it is the intention of the lessees to throw up the holding. I would not give them the power to do that. They have entered into a contract with the Government and got their land for a term of years, and I do not think it is right to allow them to take off their stock and then throw the land on the hands of the Government. If a reserve is wanted for any purpose, the Government cannot reserve without paying compensation. In the Winton district there are places where small reserves are required for travellers, and the lessees will not surrender without a *quid pro quo* in the shape of a large area from the resumed portion. A thing like that should cut both ways. Another provision is that the Government are going to allow a reduction of 5 per cent. to those who enclose their holdings with rabbit netting. That provision, I hope, extends to selectors as well as to pastoral lessees, and that is a point that ought to be made clear. I would much sooner give encouragement in that way than by giving an extension of lease, tying up the land for a further term of years. I should like to see the clause dealing with aliens go further. You stop aliens from selecting, and you allow other people to lease land to them. In the North people have taken up land—occupation licenses, selections, everything—and they are leasing that land to aliens. There are thousands of aliens in the North who have taken leases from the whites. In the Atherton district they are growing maize and other products. The same thing prevails right down the coast. In the North the system has been carried on to an enormous extent. A former member for Cairns brought in a motion to try to prevent it, but it is going on just the same. I know cases where land has been taken up under occupation license for £5 a year, and then leased to Chinese at £1 an acre. [Mr. FORSYTH: What are the Chinese doing with that land?] Growing bananas and other things upon it. There is a very good provision giving the Minister power to remit the first year's rent and survey fees. I should like to see an amendment introduced giving the Minister power, in the case of a *bonâ fide* selector willing to settle on the land and making improvements annually of a certain value, to direct that he should not be asked to pay either survey fees or rent for the first four or five years until he gets some return from the land. If that was done it would be a great incentive to people of limited means to take up land. With regard to the provision regarding the lowering of the price of land, I may be allowed to say that the Labour party have been grossly misrepresented during the past few months. People have gone about howling that the Labour party have swallowed their principles, and agreed to the sale of land in large areas. I do not know of any land that has been sold in large areas this

year. Ever since Queensland has been Queensland land has been sold. A man who takes up an agricultural farm can buy the freehold on the time-payment system extending over twenty years, and town allotments are continually being put up for sale. To that we do not object. But what I and the party I belong to object to is the system carried on in the past of selling land out West in large areas. A return was laid on the table of the House three or four years ago on my motion, showing the amount of land that had been purchased in the Western country, and in nearly every case the lands that were sold were on the resumed portions and not on the leaseholds. Strategic areas were purchased. They would buy 20,000 or 30,000 acres, which gave them command of three or four times that area. [Mr. P. J. LEAHY: What about Coongoola?] That is about the only land sold by this Government on a resumed area, and that was sold when they first came into power. Since then I do not know of any land that has been sold in large areas. [Mr. P. J. LEAHY: I say they were right in selling it.] The system adopted in the past allowed the lessees to purchase the heart of the resumption, thereby rendering the rest useless. Look at Rockwood, where they purchased 100,000 acres for a mile on either side of the creeks. [Mr. CAMERON: They are very sorry for it now.] They want to purchase more if they can get the price reduced; and it is only two years since the hon. member for Bullock, when advocating the lowering of the price, said that he had a company that was prepared to buy a large area in the West. We all know what that company was, and we all know the land they wanted to purchase. They wanted to purchase Wellshot—one of the finest holdings in the West, and with a railway intersecting the run. The railways that we have built in the past have enhanced the value of that land. [Mr. J. LEAHY: The Betterment Bill will get at that.] I want to see a straight-out land tax, and until we get that I am opposed to selling any land in large areas. That will enable the State to get some portion of the enhanced value of land. [Mr. TOLMIE: There is not much enhanced value.] There is a great deal of enhanced value. If we got the economic rents accruing from enhanced value of all the land that has been sold in Brisbane, the Government would make a very handsome amount, and they would not have to go in for some of the legislation that they have been forced to propose. I want to see a land tax on unimproved values. I am just as much opposed to selling land in the West in large areas as ever I was. As to the rumour that has been going about that the Labour party have done this and that, I say that, if any land has been sold in large areas during the last twelve months, it is unknown to me, and I believe unknown to any member of this party. [Mr. J. LEAHY: What about Coongoola?] That was sold last year. [Mr. P. J. LEAHY: It was sold last June.] [Mr. CAMERON: They sold 50,000 acres there.] That is one of the clauses that I am opposed to, as it offers an incentive to people in the West to make still further purchases in the hearts of their resumptions. I cannot support the principle, because I know of the mischief the system has wrought in the past. I can mention any amount of holdings where the rest of the resumption has been rendered useless for close settlement through the sales that have been made. Every penny that is derived from the sales of land should be earmarked and should go towards extending our railways or in other public works, such as irrigation. The country should be made to pay its way. The people should be prepared to raise sufficient money by taxation to carry on the government of the

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country and provide for all necessary public works. There is another good thing in the Bill which I would like to see go still further, and that is giving grazing farmers who had their licenses at the time of the passing of the Land Act of 1902, but who had not got their leases, all the benefits that were granted under that Act, the same as to those who had obtained their leases prior to the passing of the Act. This Bill allows those selectors to come under the Act. Many of those who selected in the early stages of the drought suffered nearly as much as those who selected previous to the drought, and we should be as generous and as sympathetic with both classes of selectors, and we might even allow some of those who took up land twelve months subsequent to the passing of the Act to take advantage of its provisions. [Mr. CAMERON: What about clause 12, giving grazing selectors the right to acquire a freehold?] I am dead against it, for this reason—that most of the grazing farms in the Central and Western districts to-day are owned by financial institutions, and they came to the selectors and said, "You get some provision put into the Act of 1902 by which you can get a freehold, and we will find the money for you to put up your improvements and pay your rents." They held that over any amount of selectors. I do not see any difference between a selector being allowed to acquire a freehold of 60,000 acres and a pastoral lessee obtaining a freehold for the same area. The whole thing is bad. We know very well that under the Act of 1902 we extended the area of grazing farms from 20,000 acres to 60,000 acres. [Mr. P. J. LEAHY: Where the country was poor.] Yes, according to the quality of the land. It is just as bad to allow a financial institution to make a freehold of 60,000 acres on a grazing farm as to make a freehold in the heart of a resumption. [Mr. P. J. LEAHY: They would not give 5s. an acre for it.] I am not in favour of the alienation of land in large areas to anyone, no matter whether he is a grazing farmer or a pastoral lessee. [Mr. JENKINSON: You have safeguards. First, you have the Minister, and then the Land Court.] I am very glad the Minister is going to take more power into his own hands, because I have noticed in my travels through the country that the Minister gets blamed for a great deal of what the Land Court does. I am not one of those who are in love with the Land Court. I did think at one time that if we had a judicial body like the Land Court we would get fair play; but I have watched the Land Court, and I have watched their dealings—

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. HAMILTON: It is a great pity we cannot discuss that matter, because I have a lot I would like to say about it; but, if I would be out of order in discussing it, I shall have to drop it. I am very glad to see that the Minister is taking more power into his own hands, because there has been too much delegated to the Land Court in the past. As far as the Bill goes, it is a mixture of good and evil. What I see good in it, the hon. member for Bulloo considers bad. The Bill does not give greater facilities for selling land in large areas than exist at the present time; still, it gives a greater incentive to people to purchase. Under our present Acts, the Government could sell the whole of Queensland. They could sell land in hundreds of thousands of acres if they wished. [Mr. JENKINSON: They could not take it away.] Under the Act of 1891 the quantity of land the Government could sell in any one year was limited, but that limitation was wiped out by the Act of 1902, and now the Government can sell any quantity they please. The only thing the

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clause in this measure does is to lower the price of land, and so give a greater incentive to people to acquire the freehold. It that would conduce to settlement I should not have so much objection to it, but the provision would only be availed of to block closer settlement and grazing farmers.

Mr. CAMERON (*Brisbane North*): After the pronouncement which the hon. member for Barcoo made earlier in the afternoon, and the expression of opinion which has just fallen from the hon. member for Gregory, I hardly think it is worth while discussing the principle of this Bill at any length. The hon. member for Barcoo, in effect, said there is no business in it and he was going to oppose it, and the hon. member for Gregory says the same thing. [Mr. HAMILTON: He did not.] [The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I do not think the hon. member for Barcoo said he was going to oppose the Bill.] I understood the hon. member to say that he would oppose the second reading of the Bill because it contained certain provisions, one of which was the provision with regard to the sale of land. However, there are a few points in connection with the measure to which I should like to draw attention. As affecting the pastoral tenants, the following clauses call for consideration:—Clause 2 may be of use in preventing more than 50 per cent. increase in rent at each succeeding period of the lease. The Minister, in his speech this afternoon, said the pastoralists have got in this Bill what they have asked for. That is not quite correct. The pastoralists asked that the maximum increase should be limited to 25 per cent. [The PREMIER: What they asked for was a limit.] A limit of 25 per cent. But to my mind there is not much in this matter one way or the other. The Secretary for Lands said there was no danger of a greater increase being made in the future. But it is a good thing to know what we may expect. Clause 18 has been referred to by the hon. member for Gregory. That is the clause which provides that the minimum price of land on resumptions shall be reduced to 5s. an acre. So far as I am concerned, I think that is a very good provision. At the same time, I am of opinion that the men who buy land in the Western country at 5s. an acre are very foolish. I would not buy the best land there at 5s. an acre. If a pastoral tenant cannot make a success of his undertaking on leasehold, I am perfectly positive that he will never make a success of it in the Western country on land—even the best of the land—bought at 5s. an acre. The hon. member for Gregory said that these purchases were made with the object of picking out the best portions of the resumptions. It is not so very long since the hon. member and other hon. members spoke of the very unfair way in which resumptions had been secured, and said the pastoral tenants had managed by some improper means to secure the best portions of their resumed holdings. [Mr. HAMILTON: I never said that. There have been fair divisions in most instances.] I am glad to hear the hon. member say that. But if what other members said was true, the resumed portions were not the best parts of the holdings, and would not command a purchaser. I am aware that in many cases where land has been sold the water frontages have been secured, and if I were foolish enough to buy land I would get the best of it, and so would the hon. member for Gregory. [Mr. HAMILTON: Yes, but I would not give you the power to buy it.] I only wish to add that I thoroughly believe in selling land—sell as much of it as you can. It is no use to talk about taxing the land until you have sold it. I would sell land to anybody who would be fool

enough to buy it. I would not buy a single acre; I do not own an acre of land in Western Queensland, and I do not wish to own any. With regard to clause 23, it has the effect of extending the right to depasture travelling stock for half a mile on each side of "any road declared a stock route," in addition to a road "ordinarily used" for travelling stock. I think that is a very dangerous provision. It puts it into the power of the Minister to declare that any road is a stock route, and this might result in injury to the pastoral tenant. [Mr. HAMILTON: There is no definition of a stock route at the present time.] One of my principal objections to this Bill is that it takes away from the Land Court certain powers and vests them in the Minister. In saying that, I am not making any reflection on the gentleman who holds the position of Secretary for Lands. He has always been sympathetic towards the pastoral tenants to a degree, but he will not always be there, and I contend that there is danger in taking away from the Land Court any power they possess and putting it into the hands of the Minister. Clause 27 alters section 13 of the Act of 1902 *re* rabbit-proof fencing. The forfeiture is altogether too drastic, and there is no safeguard as between the pastoral tenant and the Minister. Previously we had the Land Court. If the Bill goes into committee, that clause should be amended so as to provide for certain safeguards which are not there now. Clause 26 may be useful, as it provides against more than 50 per cent. increase of rent. Clause 28 is not likely to be successful; the powers retained by the Minister are too great; but as the clause is permissive only it does not prejudice present tenants, who need not take advantage of it. Clause 28 (15c) deals with the right to surrender leases. When the Act of 1902 was passing through the House, I proposed an amendment granting the right to surrender without notice at all. Later on the pastoralists approached the Premier, and they asked for the right to surrender at twelve months' notice. I think that was a mistake, and that two years' notice is altogether too long. It seems to me that when a man is unable to go any further—when he is absolutely beaten—he should be allowed to surrender his lease without any notice. The Minister for Lands stated this afternoon that pastoral tenants had never been pursued for rent after the abandonment of their holdings. That is absolutely true as far as I know, and I speak from very long experience. But conditions are changed. The Act of 1902 gives the Crown certain powers for the recovery of rent which they did not possess before, and which might be exercised. That was the reason why the pastoralists were anxious about this. It has been said that a great many of these holdings belong to the [8.30 p.m.] financial institutions, but that is not the case. A great many of them appear in the names of the financial institutions, but they are certainly not the equitable owners of them in one case out of fifty. Now, with regard to clauses 30 to 35, I think the provisions are very drastic, dangerous, and I may say unfair. They deal with the question of prickly pear, and require very careful consideration. Under section 12 of the 1902 Act the tenant has to take such reasonable steps as the court may direct to prevent the spread of noxious weeds, and in default the Minister may, on the certificate of the court, do the work at the tenant's expense. But these clauses impose a much greater load on the pastoral tenant; in fact, the clauses are highly contentious and debatable. They actually make tenants not only prevent the spread of prickly pear, but clear infested land at the risk of forfeiture of the holding, and the Minister and the commissioner are the persons to take action.

There is no intervention of the Land Court under this Bill. It is true that in clause 34 there is a maximum amount provided to be spent by the Crown tenant, but it is very heavy—10 per cent. of the holding's purchasing price, calculated at twenty times the annual rent. These clauses, 33, 34, and 35, are a distinct departure from the 1902 bargain, and impose very serious loads on tenants, at the will of the commissioner and Minister, and at the risk of forfeiture of lands and improvements; and the tenant's obligations attach, whether adjoining Crown or other lands are free from pest or not. Such provisions would undoubtedly prejudice holdings as securities. I suggest the omission of those clauses, as they are a distinct breach of the 1902 statutory bargain, and without any corresponding advantage. [The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Are you prepared to let the prickly pear go on increasing?] I do not propose that, but I should propose to deal with the matter in quite a different way to that proposed in the Bill. I am not going into the Bill at any further length, but if it goes to a second reading I will support it for the good that is in it. I believe there is some good, and a great deal of harm, too. As far as the pastoral tenants are concerned, I do not really see that this Bill will put them in a more advantageous position; in fact, I believe it will put them in a worse position.

Mr. LAND (*Balonne*): There is no doubt that the land laws have been amended a good many times, and it is hard to tell what the law really is. I am very sorry that this amendment has been brought in at such a late stage of the session, because I should have liked to have seen the whole subject thoroughly dealt with. I should have liked to have seen a rabbit act amendment Bill introduced in conjunction with a land Bill. [Mr. LESINA: I would rather see the workmen's compensation Bill.] I look upon the Land Act as the most important of all our statutes, because, unless you have a good land law, well administered, there is very little chance of people succeeding on the land. Clause 12 enables the grazing farmers to purchase their holdings. Now, if it only applied to a small agricultural or grazing farmer, who wanted to make his land freehold so that he and his family might live on it, I would not mind, but this deals with grazing selections of 20,000 acres each, of which there are in the West groups of five and six, and this would give a man the chance of purchasing 80,000 acres at a time. Selection, as a rule, takes place on good country, and you would have under this all the best land purchased in large areas. Clause 18 reduces the selling price of land to 5s. an acre. The Secretary for Lands says that people in the West do not buy land for speculative purposes. I agree with the hon. gentleman; but they buy it to secure fixity of tenure, and to secure a great quantity of land that would otherwise be selected. On Thurulgoona 50,000 acres was sold. [Mr. JENKINSON: Who sold it?] The late Government arranged for its sale, and this Government could not go in for repudiation. [Mr. P. J. LEAHY: That is not so.] Well, there were 100,000 acres behind that 50,000; but when all the best was sold, intending selectors went away and would not select at all. I would like to see land cheapened; in fact, I would feel inclined to give it away, because if we had small selectors and farmers along our railway lines, it would not only mean increased population, but they would bring traffic to the railways. When the Minister is endeavouring to lease the land along the lines, I think if he reduces the rate and sells it in small portions it will be a lot better for the people of Queensland. With

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regard to some of the reserves about Brisbane which are overrun with prickly pear, lantana, and other noxious weeds, it seems to me that there is no one to look after them, and that they are not required, and it may be right enough for the Minister to lease those areas; but in the Western country, for instance the Balonne, where there are hundreds of thousands of cattle and sheep—in fact, more cattle and sheep travelling on the roads there than on the whole of the railways in Queensland—it would not be a good thing to lease the reserves to selectors and squatters, because they are the only men who can use them, and it is only natural to assume that they would eat the whole of the grass out, and practically stop the thoroughfares. There may in some places be land reserved in much larger quantities than is required, and which are practically breeding grounds for rabbits and noxious weeds, and it would be advisable to lease those reserves as long as they were properly looked after. Clauses 30 to 35 of the Bill relate to the prickly pear on leaseholds. In a portion of the Balonne, near St. George, the prickly pear is very thick on holdings and small farms as well as large leaseholds. It is necessary that the Minister should take active steps to try and check the spread of the pest; but he would require to be very careful, because there are some lands so heavily infested with pear as to render it impossible for anyone to clear them on account of the expense. [Mr. J. LEAHY: He can only put 10 per cent. on it anyhow.] Ten per cent. would not clear it. I was speaking to a man who had bought a station not long ago, and he told me he had locked up 50,000 acres on his holding, and kept his sheep off it, because it was so badly infested. I think if the Minister is not careful, he will leave out some of the smallest and best men in the district.

Mr. P. J. LEAHY (*Warrego*): It may be some relief to hon. members who wish to speak on this Bill to say that I do not intend to speak at any considerable length. Most things in life are mixed with good and evil, and I do not know whether this Bill is any exception to the general rule. [Mr. J. LEAHY: Evil is predominant.] I would not like to go so far as that. When I read the Bill a first time I was rather favourable to it, the second time I was less favourable, and at the present moment I think it is rather doubtful whether the good or evil predominates. Some of the provisions are undoubtedly useful, and some of the provisions are more or less objectionable. I agree, for the most part, with that portion of the Bill which gives the Minister power to extend the time for paying selectors' rents. I think we all recognise that selectors, whether large or small, are a most desirable class of settlers. I have many among my constituents and they are a most intelligent lot, and I think it is wise to give the Minister the necessary power in order to allow them to remain on the land. I also agree with that portion of the Bill which gives the power to so-called agricultural farmers to convert their farms into grazing farms. It would be rather strange if I did not approve of that, because it is a clause I was the means of inserting in the 1902 Act, and I am glad to see the clause has worked so satisfactorily that the Minister proposes in this Bill to extend the time in which people will have an opportunity of availing themselves of the benefits of this section. I also agree with clause 12 with regard to the sale of land. It seems to me that, although it has been denounced, it is a thing that should be encouraged. I think, if land is to be sold at all, there is less objection to selling to the grazing farmers the land they occupy than selling large areas. [Mr. J. LEAHY: 20,000 acres

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is a large block.] Twenty thousand acres is a large block, but not so large as the 50,000 acres sold at Coongoola last June. I think this may be the proper time to deal with the question of selling land, which is dealt with in clause 18 of the Bill. I think it is to the advantage of this State to sell land, but I am perfectly convinced that we cannot sell large areas if we are not prepared to materially reduce the price. Consequently, I think the Minister is quite right in reducing the price from 10s. to 5s. per acre. If I have any fault with the clause as it stands, it is that the price is not low enough. There are millions of acres in the Western country which are not worth 5s., or even 2s. 6d., an acre, and even with a minimum of 5s. per acre it will be impossible to sell any portion of that Western land. In the fixing of rents of lessees, I believe there is no minimum. I know that in the 1884 Act there was a minimum for the first term, but the Supreme Court held that there was no minimum for the subsequent terms of years; and if there is no minimum in the case of the rent, I do not see any particular reason why there should be any minimum in the selling price of land. That is a matter we might very well do away with, because, unless it is a low minimum, it will prevent the sale of any land, except the most valuable. The hon. member for Barcoo has said that in the past a great deal of peacocking has been done in connection with the sale of lands, but that was because the minimum price of land—10s.—was prohibitive in many districts, and so people had to pick out the very best pieces—pieces of strategic importance—where there was good water, and so on. If "peacocking" is an evil it can be prevented by bringing down the price of land, so as to enable people to take inferior land at its proper value. It has been assumed—erroneously, I think—that because the minimum price is fixed at 5s. an acre, that that will be the maximum; but I do not think that the Government will be inclined to sacrifice the land, but that they will sell inferior land at a lower price than 10s. per acre, and that will be a good thing for the country. Under clause 177 of the principal Act—or a clause near it—it is provided that the area of each lot shall be 320 acres, and if anyone wanted to take up land in larger areas it would be necessary to survey for subdivision areas of 320-acre blocks, and that is unnecessary waste of public money. We have been told that the land at Cunnamulla was practically sold by the late Government, and the inference was that the present Government would not have been in favour of selling that land. The hon. member for Balonne emphasised that point by saying that it would have been repudiation if the present Government had not sold that 50,000 acres at Coongoola. I have not the slightest objection to the present Government selling that land, for I think it was a right thing to do; but I have the greatest objection to the matter being presented unfairly to the country. I want to make my meaning clear. There was no obligation imposed on the present Government by their predecessors to sell the land, and, if they had not sold the land, there would have been no question of repudiation. I think there are ample safeguards in the Bill with respect to selling land to grazing farmers. In the first place, the matter has to be referred to the Minister, then to the Land Court, by whom it has to be fully considered. They fix the price, and the matter does not rest there, because it has again to be referred to the Minister. If the Minister or the Land Court had to decide the matter, there might be some reason for doubt; but under such a combination as the Minister and the Land Board, I think no injustice could be done. It is only fair

to say, in passing, that when I have had occasion to ask the Minister to grant requests—not for myself, for I have never asked for anything—but reasonable requests for others, he has always considered the matter sympathetically, and where he was in a position to give relief he has done so. Now, we have been told that the Labour party have been opposed to selling land; but are they? On these present Estimates I find that the Treasurer expects to get from the sales of lands by auction £80,000; and from the sales of land under the Special Sales of Land Act £21,200—something over £100,000 from the sales of lands. [Mr. J. LEAHY: The biggest amount from the sales of land for many a year.] Then under the last clause in this Bill, the Treasurer can, if the Governor in Council so directs, during the year ending the 30th June next, apply all or any money arising from these special sales of land to “ordinary purposes.” The Treasurer is not satisfied with applying the £80,000 he expects to get from the ordinary sales of land to revenue purposes, but he wants to apply the £21,200 to revenue purposes as well. Previous Governments applied this money from special sales of land to paying off deficits, and yet we find this Government, a large proportion of whose supporters say they are opposed to the selling of land, selling land under the Special Sales of Land Act, and endeavouring to use the proceeds as revenue. Yet members of the Labour party support a Government which believes in these sales of land. I protest against their hypocrisy—

The SPEAKER: Order, order!

Mr. P. J. LEAHY: If that word is improper, I will say I protest against their insincerity in saying, on the one hand, that they do not believe in the sale of land, and, on the other, backing up a Government which has recently sold the largest amount of land that has been sold for many years. If that is not inconsistency and insincerity I do not know what it is.

[9 p.m.] That is also a useful provision in the Bill extending the time during which men may come under the Act of 1902 up to March, 1905. A great deal has been said by the hon. member for Gregory and others about the alleged fact that those persons who got an extension of their leases under the Pastoral Leases Extension Act do not keep their rabbit fences in repair. There is no doubt some truth in this, but I venture to say that in the great majority of instances the men who got their leases under the condition that they were to keep their fences in repair have observed the conditions of their contract. I admit that some have not, and I say that if a man makes a contract he ought to be kept up to it if possible. But it is only fair to say that during the recent prolonged drought it was next to impossible in certain portions of the arid Western country to keep the fences in repair. That did not so much matter during the period of the drought, because the rabbits died off as well as the stock, but when the drought broke up most of the fences were put in repair. While willing to hold a man to his contract, I do not believe in that provision in the Bill which says that if a man's fence has not been kept in a thorough state of repair for, say, three years he shall have nine years taken off his lease. [Mr. J. LEAHY: It is gross repudiation.] Perhaps I shall not be out of order in saying a word or two with regard to rabbits. As far as this Bill goes in dealing with the rabbit question, I agree with it. What I would like to impress upon the House is that it only enables the Minister to deal with forfeited country. There is nothing to enable the Minister to deal with rabbit-infested runs.

Mr. WOODS: I rise to a point of order. Is not the hon. member dealing with a subject that ought to be dealt with in committee?

The SPEAKER: So far the hon. member has not transgressed the rules of order.

Mr. P. J. LEAHY: I was saying that the Bill only enabled the Minister to deal with vacant land. [The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: How can I deal with existing leases?] I do not say you can under this Bill. What I meant to say was that while it is very desirable to give the Minister power to deal with unoccupied land in the way proposed, it is only reasonable that something should be done, either in this or some other Bill, to enable the rabbits to be kept down or exterminated on that poor Western country. This is only touching the fringe of the question—a question of greater importance to the welfare of the State even than that of the prickly pear. [Mr. J. LEAHY: Fence the rabbits on to the prickly pear.] That is a suggestion worthy of serious consideration, whether made in jest or earnest. In times of drought the rabbits would be compelled to eat the prickly pear, and the result might be the destruction of pear and rabbits. It has been said, and with some truth, that rather too much power is given to the Minister under this Bill. If I could be quite certain that we were always to have the present Minister in that position I might, perhaps, not object to it, but that is not likely to be the case, and as a Minister's nature is just like that of ordinary men, I am inclined to think that the powers given to whoever may occupy the position are too drastic. If the Bill ever reaches the committee stage, we may deal with the matter then. There is one portion of the Bill I strongly disapprove of; that is the portion which empowers the Government to compel a man to keep the prickly pear down. If a man takes up land with a condition that he shall keep it down, well and good, because he does it with his eyes open, but to compel a tenant, who has taken up land under ordinary conditions, to expend 10 per cent. of the purchasing price of his holding in keeping it down is not a fair thing, especially as there is no provision for the reduction of his rent by the Land Court. It is compelling a man to do that to which he is not a consenting party. I trust that clause will be negated in committee. I will only refer to one or two other matters, as time is pressing. The first is the right of lessees to throw up their holdings. The invariable practice all over Australia hitherto has been that if a man did not choose to occupy his country he threw it up. I think I am justified in saying that that is the understanding upon which a great portion of the land of this country was taken up, because ever since the first land was taken up that has been the practice. It has been the practice in New South Wales and other States—although, in recent years, the New South Wales Government have inserted a clause in leases giving lessees power to throw up their leases on giving one year's notice. If a man has expended a large amount in improvements—and most of them have done that—there is nothing inequitable in permitting him to throw up his country if he cannot pay the rent; and if there is any value in the improvements, let him have that value, or, as the hon. member for Leichhardt interjected—and the Minister seemed to approve of it—sell the improvements, paying any rent that may be due, and handing the balance over to the lessee. I think that this period of two years is too long. There should be no necessity for any notice. If a man does not wish to pay, let him throw the country up. It is perfectly obvious that no man will throw up a run on which he has expended a large amount of money if he can

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possibly make it pay, and why should we penalise these men who have developed the Western wilderness, and spent the best years of their lives there, by making them lose their improvements, and by making them pay two years' rent in addition? I do not think it is a fair thing at all. There are many other things I would like to allude to, but I am not selfish, and I want to give other hon. members an opportunity of speaking. In conclusion, I can only say that, though I am somewhat doubtful as to whether the good or the evil predominates in the Bill, I shall give my vote for the second reading, in the hope that it may be made a more useful measure if it goes through the ordeal of committee.

Mr. LESINA (*Clermont*): The hon. gentleman who has just resumed his seat has informed the House that it is his intention to vote for the second reading. I am not surprised at that. Anybody professing the political opinions which the hon. member has done over a long series of years cannot do anything else than vote for a Bill of this description. [Mr. FORSYTH: Are you not going to support the coalition Ministry? I am not going to support the second reading of this Bill. I will support the second reading of no Bill that proposes to sell public lands at a reduced price, and which practically gives no guarantee to the people in the district I represent that the resumptons that will soon be falling due on half a dozen stations will not be put up to public auction to satisfy the demands of a necessitous Treasury. It seems almost supernatural, but this Government appears to be followed by some malevolent sprite—some mischievous Puck—[Mr. J. LEAHY: That is what they think themselves.] [Mr. P. J. LEAHY: What district does he represent?—that continually prods the Ministry into making mistakes in regard to the legislation they bring down. Two or three measures have been submitted for our consideration that have led to a storm of disapproval in the country, and members on this side have torn them to tatters in a passion, and here we have another measure brought down, which, so far, every member sitting on this side who has spoken has practically condemned. The thing that strikes me above all others in connection with the Bill is that it is a Bill for reducing the selling price of Crown lands; secondly, it proposes wholesale alienation. [The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Where does it propose wholesale alienation?] By reducing the selling price of land, it practically encourages people to buy it. Then again, it sets aside—a thing that none of our previous legislation has done—for ordinary revenue purposes, revenue derived from the sale of land which has hitherto been earmarked for a special purpose. The final clause of the Bill proposes—

37. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Special Sales of Land Act of 1901, all or any part of the moneys received pursuant to section ten of that Act may, if the Governor in Council so directs, during the year ending on the thirtieth day of June, one thousand nine hundred and five, be applied in payment of any sums appropriated by Parliament for the services of that year.

That simply means that land which has hitherto been earmarked for certain specific purposes shall be used by the Treasurer for such purposes as necessity may demand. It may be used to send travellers to the East or to North America selling Cape gooseberries. Land sold in Central Queensland may be used to keep up the "Lucinda" on an even more luxurious scale. Surely the Government will not go the length of handing over to the Treasurer funds hitherto held sacred, and letting him use the money

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for any purpose he likes. [Mr. HAMILTON: It never was held sacred. The late Government did that. The Act of 1901 provided that the money should be used for the purchase of Treasury bills.] The Bill also proposes to permit grazing farms to be turned into freeholds. That is a thing the party sitting behind this Government fought vigorously against when they were in opposition, and, although the hon. member for Warrego was successful in securing the introduction of the principle into the Act of 1902, and he will vote for its retention in this Bill, it should be the mission of those who opposed it in 1902 to oppose it again on the second reading of this Bill, and I shall do so as I did then. I do not know what has happened since 1902 to alter my opinions with respect to the power given to any Government to permit grazing farms to be turned into freeholds. [Mr. P. J. LEAHY: That was not my clause at all. It dealt with the conversion of agricultural farms into grazing farms.] The principle of clause 12 is the one I opposed on that occasion, and I shall oppose it on the present occasion. In the Act of 1897 the Governor in Council was authorised to sell up to 150,000 acres in any one year, and in the Act of 1902 the area was extended to 500,000 acres. In this Bill power is given, not only to sell the lands wholesale, but to reduce the selling price. [The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: There is no provision in this Bill for selling lands wholesale.] What satisfied former Governments evidently does not satisfy this Government. I understood that this Government would not pursue the wasteful policy of sacrificing the national estate in every direction; but, from facts I have discovered during the past few days in answer to queries I have submitted, it appears that they have been selling land in a more reckless and improvident fashion than any previous Government for many years past, and, not only that, they contemplate selling more. According to Table A in the tables accompanying the Treasurer's Financial Statement, they received last year £21,200 under the Special Sales of Land Act, 1901, and £63,475 from auction and selection. About a fortnight ago I asked the Premier—

What is the total area of Crown land sold privately or by auction since the present Government came into office?

The hon. gentleman replied—

Privately—74 acres 3 roods 13 perches. By auction—111,089 acres 1 rood 7 perches.

In reply to a further question as to what was the amount realised, the hon. gentleman said it was "£61,917 10s. 8d., of which £40,220 10s. has been paid. These figures relate to country lands only." I asked to what purpose the money thus raised was devoted, and the answer was the "consolidated revenue." This policy of selling land is one which I have always condemned ever since I have been in this House, and have always contended that it is an evil for the country. The Government now propose to reduce the price at which this land can be sold from 10s. an acre to 5s. an acre. I cannot contemplate with equanimity the passage of such a measure into law, as I look at the matter from the same standpoint now as I did two years ago or ten years ago. Will not this sudden cheapening of land, by reducing the price from 10s. to 5s. an acre, have an injurious effect on the credit of the country? Must it not have a disturbing effect industrially and commercially? This is a matter that is worthy of more than passing attention. It is a matter that was discussed at some length when the Land Act of 1902 was before this Chamber. Prior to that the Government had power to sell land to the extent of 150,000 acres per annum. The then Minister for Lands, the late Mr. O'Connell, proposed to

repeal that provision, and to make the area 500,000 acres per annum. The hon. member for Leichhardt pointed out that the proposal—

was a most remarkable departure from the past policy of dealing with the Crown lands. In the clause, as it stood, the hon. gentleman proposed to sweep away all restrictions, but he now proposed to limit the area that should be sold in any one year to 500,000 acres—the original limit was 150,000 acres. They might just as well have no limit at all, because during the last ten years all that had been sold by auction was 672,000 acres. Such a departure from the settled policy of the country should have been submitted to the electors at the general election. Under the Special Sales of Land Act of 1901 there were two safeguards—that the land sold should not be nearer than 2½ miles to a railway and that it should not be nearer than 20 miles to a navigable river. In the Special Sales of Land Act of last year they omitted the safeguard with reference to proximity to a railway, but retained that referring to proximity to a navigable river.

The proposal was, however, embodied in the Bill, and from that time the Government have had power to sell land to the extent of 500,000 acres per annum. If that is not sufficient for any ordinary Government, I do not know what is. Why does the Government want to sell more land? Why do they want to sell that land at a lower price, and put the proceeds into ordinary revenue to be used for ordinary purposes? I do not know whether that provision—clause 37—has been inserted at the instance of the Treasurer, but if it has it is remarkable, for I find that in 1902 he moved the following new clause to follow clause 45 of the Bill then before the Committee—

All moneys received by the Treasurer from or on account of the sale of Crown lands under the provisions of this Act or any other Act shall, within thirty days after such receipt, be paid to the trustees of the public debt reduction fund, and shall be applied by them toward the purchase and cancellation of debentures; and, notwithstanding the provisions of any Act to the contrary, no such moneys so received shall be used or applied for any other purpose whatsoever.

In moving that new clause the present Treasurer made a very good speech, in the course of which he said—

Whatever might be said of the policy of selling land for the purpose of promoting settlement—and a great deal could be said in its favour—the question was altogether different when land was being sold for the purpose of raising revenue for current expenditure. He considered the raising of revenue for current expenditure by the sale of land was an altogether illegitimate course of action. It was not good to make it too easy for the Government to get possession of large sums of money to spend in any way they pleased. And raising revenue for current expenditure by the sale of land would not prevent the borrowing of further sums for the purpose of carrying out what were called reproductive works.

He further said—

Apart from that, if there was to be any pretence of even paying our way, then the money raised by the sale of land should be devoted to the cancellation of a portion of our public debt.

The present Secretary for Lands was then Chairman of Committees, and, under section 18 of the Constitution Act, he ruled the new clause out of order. Here is an extraordinary change in two years. The Chairman who ruled that proposition out of order is now in charge of a Bill in which the Treasurer, who moved that amendment, has inserted clause 37, under which he has power to collar, for the necessities of the State, all the revenue derived from the special sales of land. The Premier of that day—the present leader of the Opposition—opposed the proposal. The late Mr. W. H. Browne, the then leader of the Opposition and since a member of the present Cabinet, said he was in favour of selling land to pay off the public debt, but not for ordinary revenue purposes. What an extraordinary thing it is that such a change should have come over the Treasurer's dream. What he condemned two years

ago he is now anxious to see passed by this Chamber, with the consent of the party who assisted to do all it possibly could to prevent it. The Labour party has hitherto had a reputation for sincerity and for deep attachment to its platform and principles, and I hope they will not now permit this Government or any Government, no matter what flag it may sail under, to sell large quantities of land for ordinary revenue purposes. Messrs. Kenna and Burrows also spoke in favour of the proposed new clause. The present Home Secretary "strongly protested" against the proposal of the Government of that day to extend the area of land that might be sold to 500,000 acres per annum, and said—

If it had been proposed in Parliament in days gone by, it would have been strongly opposed and defeated; but this Parliament had become so demoralised, that more than one-half its members were prepared to accept this without protest.

What prophetic words those are read to-night! Two years ago he said one-half of the House had become so demoralised that they [9.30 p.m.] allowed such a proposition to be made without protest, and here we have a precisely similar state of things taking place to-night; and the very Minister who uttered those words is not in his place to protest against this attempt to decrease the price of land for revenue purposes. I denounced it on the other side. I denounce it here on this side. The Home Secretary went on to say—

The money that would be raised from the sale of lands would not be devoted to the reduction of the State's debt, or to the construction of public works, but to revenue purposes pure and simple. If this clause was accepted, land could be sold wholesale, and close settlement would be blocked, for large areas would be locked up indiscriminately in the hands of a few people; and it would be the good country that would be sold and not the inferior country. This was all going to be done to meet the needs of the Treasury. They had been asked what they (the Opposition) would do, and—reluctant as he was to say it—he would rather have recourse to loans to surmount our present difficulties than see the good lands of the State sold under such conditions—without any reservations being made for close settlement.

That is the kind of language I liked to hear in days gone by. I would like to hear him again to-night in denunciation of a proposal which is every whit as bad as that of the late Government when they proposed to sell 500,000 acres at 10s. But this Government have gone one better. They propose to sell our public estate at 5s. an acre. [Mr. J. LEAHY: This Government does things in a large way.] [Mr. FORSYTH: You must enlarge your ideas.] I say it is well worth more than the passing consideration of this Chamber, and of the people of the country who are opposed to the sale of public land, and that attention should be directed to the important statements made by Mr. Airey when he was not a member of the Cabinet. He went on to say—

The primary object of the Government of Queensland in proposing to sell land in this wholesale fashion was to assist in wiping out the deficit. This proposition was of peculiar interest to members coming from the Centre and North of Queensland, because it was the Centre and North which were going to suffer, and they were going to suffer for the benefit of Queen street principally. The proposed limitation of 500,000 acres a year meant nothing; it was only a bit of a blind, and the power of sale might just as well be unlimited. The Premier asked the other night what would an ordinary man do in difficulties? What the ordinary man would do under such circumstances was no criterion as to what they should do in the present state of the country, because when an ordinary man got into difficulties he was a terrible fool, and would sacrifice anything to relieve himself of temporary embarrassment.

Then he wound up by saying—

Years ago there were men in this Chamber—and they were not confined to one side of the Chamber—who

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always joined in a vigorous protest against any attempt to sacrifice the lands of the State for any purpose but settlement. But that was all over now, and the present policy was to sell the land, sell the railways, sell anything, so that they might get out of their present trouble, and let the future take care of itself.

Is that not exactly the position of the present Home Secretary to-night? Can anyone deny it? Why is he not now in the Chamber, making it ring with his denunciation of the proposal of his own Government to sell land at 5s. an acre? The men of the North will expect it of him before long. Only to-day I got a wire from the Australian Workers' Union of Charters Towers, in which they congratulate me on the stand I have taken against the sale of land, and urge me to divide the House before it prorogues. My own organisation at Clermont has wired to a similar effect, and a letter follows in which they say they are strongly opposed to any violation of platform pledges on which I was elected. They object to this or any other Government selling land, and they say they expect me to oppose the proposal and to vote against it. It matters not to me what party is in power. I am here to give effect to the solemn pledges made to my constituents on the public platform, and without that my constituents will not be satisfied. [Mr. J. LEAHY: Do these people outside think they run the Labour party? They proved at the late elections, who they ran, and they will prove it again before very long if the present policy of drift and shuffle continues. In the debate I quote from, Mr. Cameron followed the member for Flinders, Mr. Airey, and replied to his strictures on the sale of land, pointing out that it was a good thing, and far better to obtain money by that than any other means. To-night he says the same thing. He is consistent; and he will cross the floor of the House to support a coalition Government who will sell land in any quantity. I am consistent, too. I will cross the floor of the House to vote against them, because I am diametrically opposed to any such outrageous policy. Mr. Grant, of Rockhampton, took a hand in the deal, and said—

No doubt the people whom the hon. member for North Brisbane represented approved of the sale of land, because they got the benefit of it. By the sale of land in the Central district, Brisbane got dredges, a public library, a new Lands Office, and so forth, so that they would be fools if they objected to this policy of alienation. The new Lands Office would cost £250,000, and there was a deficit of £30,000 between the harbour dues received and the money spent in dredging the Brisbane River, making a total of £500,000. That would mean that 1,000,000 acres of land would have to be sacrificed in Central Queensland in order to satisfy the greed of the people of Brisbane.

Mr. Lamont, of South Brisbane, strongly supported the proposition of the Government. He is not here to-night, but if he had sat here instead of Mr. Reinhold or Mr. Bouchard, he would support this Government who propose to sell our land at 5s. an acre. Mr. William Hamilton replied to Mr. Lamont, and said—

To listen to the last speaker and one or two who preceded him, it might be thought that the sale of land was an innovation to relieve a temporary depression, whereas it had been going on for years, although perhaps not to the same extent. Members representing constituencies on the Darling Downs and in the Southern portion of the colony were continually asking the Government to repurchase estates in their districts to promote close settlement, and yet they were willing to sell land so long as it was outside their own districts. If anything showed the unwisdom of selling the public estate, it was the necessity for repurchasing estates on the Darling Downs. The land that had been sold in the Western districts had not settled a single person. It had merely been purchased for the purpose of keeping someone else out. At present many leaseholds were carrying as many sheep as the whole runs carried

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before the resumptions were made: while the resumed areas, under the grazing-farm form of selection, also carried as many sheep as the original holdings; so that the closer they settled the land the greater its productive powers, because it was improved to a far greater extent than if held as freehold.

Then did the member for Gregory, as I am pleased to say he did again to-night, denounce this proposition to exploit the settlers of Western Queensland and lock up valuable country from close settlement in order that the money might be spent in Brisbane in the maintenance of the "Otter" and "Lucinda," and in repurchasing estates on the Darling Downs. Mr. Forsyth, the member for Carpentaria, also quoted some useful figures for the consideration of the committee. I now come to the leader of the Labour party, Mr. Kerr, and I must say that I have heard him better forty times before on this subject than I heard him to-night. He appeared to labour under the fear that he had a weak case to maintain in the apologetic attitude he assumed on behalf of the Government, I find him almost apologising for the Government which, in the closing days of the session, introduces legislation which they know in their heart of hearts it is absolutely impossible to put through. And what is the object, then, of introducing it? Is it to placate the hon. member for Brisbane North, Mr. Cameron, and his friends, the members of the Pastoralists' Union? [Mr. CAMERON: That is news to me.] There may be some provisions in the Bill which he does not like, but he cannot expect to get everything he would like. There are many of the provisions in it which he and the members sitting around him have advocated for years. But whose recommendation has been carried into effect in this Bill? [Mr. CAMERON: Not mine.] Our recommendation that land selling should be stopped at once as an improvident policy which destroys the capital of the country and ruins it in the long run, or the policy which hon. gentlemen opposite have year after year recommended, that of reducing the price of our Crown lands and parting with them at the smallest possible price? His policy has been adopted in this Bill, and naturally he will support it. I will go over to the other side and vote against it. Now, the hon. member for Barcoo, who made a speech in partial defence of this measure, also spoke on that occasion, and said—

If there was no danger of the land being sold in any great quantity, why did the Government want power to sell the land? The Government needed money, and no doubt the Government Printing Office would be getting out large posters—"Selling off regardless of cost! Splendid land in the Central district, close to the railway!" and so forth.

The disinterring of these ghosts from the depths of *Hansard* is to me a very pleasant occupation to-night—

Were the lands in the Western portion of the colony to be sold to assist the people living in the large centres of population? The argument was that if land was made freehold, the owners would produce more from it. He was in North Rockhampton a few months ago, where the land was all freehold, and he did not think a more dejected looking place for prickly pear could be seen in the whole of the State. They had been told by a Minister who had passed away that if a person was given a rock, and it was freehold, it would be seen to blossom forth like a rose, but that if a man was given a leasehold it would deteriorate. He happened to be over on Kangaroo Point a few days ago, and he saw any amount of prickly pear and Bathurst burr growing on land which was all freehold.

And he added, finally, that he was opposed to the selling of Crown lands and would vote against the amendment of the hon. member for Wide Bay, who attempted to cut down the amount in any one year from 500,000 acres to

200,000 acres. Mr. Turner, member for North Rockhampton, also made a few casual remarks upon the policy of selling land—

He could not allow this proposition to pass without entering his protest. He thought they had come to a most deplorable state when they had to adopt this means of replenishing the Treasury. They were really being asked to make up for the extravagances of past Governments.

Is not that precisely what we have been asked in this Bill? I do not want to say it is the extravagance of the present Government, but it is the extravagance of the Government led by the hon. member for Bulloo and his friends which we are now asked to make up for, by permitting the Government to reduce the price of Crown lands from 10s. to 5s. per acre, and sell them wholesale for revenue requirements. [THE PREMIER: In what clause is that provision made?] In the final clause of the Bill. I have already demonstrated that the Premier himself, in answer to a question I asked the other day, showed that public land is being sold by public auction throughout this State, and the receipts going into the consolidated revenue. [THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes, and your constituents returned you to support the Morgan Government after the greater part had been sold.] My constituents sent me to oppose the selling of the public estate. [THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: After making them perfectly aware of the fact that the Government had sold that land, your constituents returned you to support the Government.] Nothing of the sort. They know the selling of land has been a continuous evil spread over a number of years and practised by most Governments who have not got the courage to put on a straight-out land tax. [THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: If you do not like it, why do you not clear out to the other side of the House?] I stop here because I prefer to be in the company of this Government rather than in the company of the discredited gang occupying the front Opposition benches.

The SPEAKER: Order, order! The hon. member must know that it is very unparliamentary to speak of any section of this House as a "discredited gang."

Mr. LESINA: I will say a discredited party. They are discredited by the public outside and the House. The House threw them out twelve months ago, and the country reduced their numbers to vanishing point, so that it cannot be said that they are anything like accredited in the opinion of the House or the country. And I tell the Secretary for Lands that I prefer to sit behind a party which certainly makes an effort—sometimes mistakenly—but still makes an effort to go right, than a party which went wrong for the whole of the time they were sitting on this side of the Chamber. [THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (referring to Mr. J. Leahy): There is your political boss.] There is your political boss, sitting at the end of the table (referring to Mr. Cameron). (Laughter.) [THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He holds you in the hollow of his hand.] No man holds me in the hollow of his hand. [MR. J. LEAHY: No, everyone from this side holds him in horror.]

The SPEAKER: Order, order! I must ask hon. members to allow the hon. member for Clermont to proceed without these unseemly interjections.

Mr. LESINA: In continuation of the discussion which then took place on this very principle, which is the vital principle of the Bill, the hon. member for Gympie said—

He was totally opposed to the sale of large areas of Crown lands, and he would vote against the proposi-

tion. The hon. member for Carpentaria had said that only one twenty-seventh of the lands of the State had been alienated, and the Premier the other night said that only 4 per cent. of the lands had been alienated, but that was not correct, for in value 77 per cent. of the lands had been alienated and only 23 per cent. remained unalienated, for they had not only to take into consideration the area alienated, but the value of the lands alienated. The value of the freehold lands alienated was £32,000,000 and unalienated £3,000,000, allowing £10,000,000 unimproved value for the mines alienated, and £5,000,000 for the unalienated. One hundred and thirty million acres had been for reserves, roads, and public gardens, for Parliament House grounds and for other purposes, so that the total alienated was £42,000,000, and unalienated £13,000,000. Being in value about 77 per cent. alienated, and 23 per cent. in the hands of the State.

Mr. Cowap, the hon. member for Fitzroy, then followed, and briefly said that he was opposed to the sale of land under any circumstances. He will not draw back from that to-night, because within a week or two ago the Labour party in his own district carried resolutions condemning the sale of Crown land. He said—

He was opposed to the sale of land under any circumstances. He believed that the revenue and expenditure could and should be made to balance by strict economy, and then there would be no need to sell land in the wholesale manner proposed by the Government. Two-thirds of the land which has been sold in Queensland was situated in the Central district, and the money derived from the sale of that land had been mostly spent or wasted in Brisbane. He protested against this policy of sacrificing the public estate, particularly in the Central district, and objected to giving the Government power to sell 500,000 acres, or even 100,000 acres, per annum in the Western districts, when those lands were wanted by the people for settlement.

Mr. Burrows, the hon. member for Charters Towers, briefly indicated his attitude in the matter, and said that the policy of selling land had been condemned by the most enlightened statesmen throughout the world. He proceeded to vigorously condemn it himself, and said—

He objected to the selling of land, because it was an attempt to meet current expenses by parring with capital. If land could be sold to any extent, it was possible that the time might come when the whole of this State would be in the hands of a few individuals, who might give the Government notice to quit. He hoped the clause would be negated.

I might finally point out that Mr. Kidston, the present Treasurer, before the matter went through, pointed out that he was not in favour of selling land, with or without any restriction. I say it is only a fair, a reasonable, and an honourable thing for a member of this Chamber who has long been associated with members of that party, and whom I know to be strongly opposed to the continual sale of Crown lands by this or any other Government, to enter a vigorous protest to-night against this being done. The introduction of this Bill is an invitation to those hon. members who do not believe in the sale of the national estate, to get up and denounce it. Hon. members will notice that for some weeks I have had a resolution on the business-paper to the same effect; so that I am thoroughly consistent. I desire to get an expression of opinion in this House on the policy of selling land in large areas—a policy which I believe inexpedient, economically wrong, and opposed to the best interests of the State. The Secretary for Public Lands has interjected that I was returned to support this Government after land had been sold by the Government in my district. But the Government have sold other land in the electorate of the hon. member for Barcoo and at Coongoola—100,000 acres in twelve months, putting about £40,000—the proceeds of these sales—into the Treasury. I say that that should be stopped. If no one else wants to see it stopped I do, therefore, I protest against it. I support the Morgan Government because it is a

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coalition which portended a change of affairs in public administration—it portended economical government and reforms in various directions—and I thought that it portended—which was the best thing—the non-selling of the public estate. I have always regarded it as possible that the Government would have to make various compromises in matters of detail, but never on questions of principle, and the selling of land is a question of principle of paramount importance. I could quite understand that there might be small questions of taxation which the Government were pledged to, which it might be my duty to assist them to carry out, although I did not altogether consider expedient. But I am certainly not justified in agreeing to them sacrificing principles, chopping up, throwing them overboard, and carrying out the policy of their predecessors' platform. [The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The lands you refer to were sold before the election; why did not you criticise them during the election? How did I know that the hon. gentleman was going to propose to sell land in this wholesale way? [The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: All that you are criticising happened before the general election.] I don't know about that. All these sales of lands have been going on—[The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Why didn't you criticise them then?] I was elected as a straightout Labour man, and to give this Government a conditional support—a support conditional on the kind of legislation they would bring forward and on the administration they would effect. But during the past few months I have discovered that they have been selling land and maladministering some public affairs, and as the organisations in my electorate have called upon me to protest against this sort of business, I intend to do so. Matters like these, which reach throughout the length and breadth of Queensland—the Labour organisations and the workers' unions—I say that they will touch the flame that will cause these organisations to fight, and if those who now represent them do not protest, the fiat will go forth, and plebiscites will be taken, and you will find plenty of men ready to take the places of those hon. members who will not stick to their planks. (Laughter.) Could I be expected to flout the expressions and requests of my electors, which I have received by letter and by wire, and which I have seen in the Press? No, and I am not going to do it. I will here read a letter dated 23rd November, 1904, which I received from a political opponent at Clermont. He says—

You will be pleased to hear that we have had copious rains, and everyone is in good form. Visited the Black Ridge last week, and have every confidence that this field will "turn up trumps." There is a vast area of country, and living is fairly cheap, and conditions favourable, so I anticipate there will be a good prosperous population there in the near future. Will you kindly ascertain when the Logan, Kilkummin, Retro, Gordon, Wolfram, and other resumptions from leases under the 1884 Act will be open for selection. There are a considerable number of people looking for sheep country, and in vain. I would suggest that these areas should not be less than 10,000 acres, and they would be readily selected. I cannot understand the delay. The Crown should know that there is practically no demand for cattle selection. Several selectors approached me on the matter.

I have been asked to make inquiries. How do I know how the operations under this measure will affect the Retro, Gordon, and Wolfram resumptions? What guarantee have I that this Government, which is practically a Southern Government hungering for cash out of auction sales, will not lock up these lands by selling them by auction in large areas? There are many persons there anxious to get land, and they cannot get it. Of course the Southern people like this

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measure. What is to prevent the Government selling land at Peak Downs, and using the funds to buy estates at Dalby? [The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That will not be done.] But the people want to have some guarantee about that. What has happened in the past? The hon. member for Rockhampton, Mr. Grant, and the hon. member for Gregory, Mr. Hamilton, have proved that no less than two-thirds of the land sold under the 1891 Act was sold in Central Queensland. Those lands were practically sacrificed—closed to settlement. The people left the district, and country which under other conditions

[10 p.m.] would have been to-day carrying a much larger and more prosperous population in a backward state, largely because of this among other conditions. The continuous sales of land in the Central and South-western districts at a low price have undoubtedly been largely responsible for the backward state of settlement there; and we protest against it. I protest, at least, on behalf of my district and those people who have asked me to do so throughout Queensland, against a Government having the power any longer to sell the public estate at ruinously low prices—at prices lower than it has been sold by any previous Government—to be placed in the Treasury and used probably for the repurchase of estates on the Darling Downs or the building of white elephant land offices; and I do so because I believe the alienation of the national estate is the greatest curse that can possibly befall a country. I am compelled to do so by my platform pledges and by my lifelong conviction—held since I was seventeen or eighteen years of age—that land-selling at any time is a wrong suffered by the State. I should not be doing my duty if I did not protest against this power of selling land to pay our way. It reminds me of the story of the traveller who, with his dog, lost his way one night in the midst of a large plain. There was no possible hope of rescue. He wandered round for a long time, and at length a happy thought struck him—he had no food—as it appears to have struck this Government. He built a fire, cut off his dog's tail and made a bowl of soup from it. Then he drank the soup, and fed the animal upon the remains of his own tail. I do not know whether the Government consider the Labour party the tail of the coalition, but they are certainly taking the first course off the tail and we are getting the bones and nothing more. What sort of a tale have we to go back to our constituents with? One hundred thousand acres of land sold in twelve months—nothing else. How can I see my way to support a Government which has done that? One hon. member said that this Bill contained many good things and also some evil things; the good things he agreed with, the evil things he did not. That is my policy. But this thing is largely an evil, and the good things have been put in that make it palatable, like the sugar on the pill, so that it may be swallowed the more readily. I will not swallow it. There is no necessity to have evil things in a Land Bill at all. Let us get rid of the evil things that already exist. I object to coloured labour, to a piebald alien as well as to any other kind. This is a piebald Bill. It has a few white spots in it, but it is still a coloured alien Bill. But a pill coloured with carmine and carefully coated with frosted sugar is not more palatable to a man who does not want the medicine. I do not want this particular medicine, and the Labour party throughout the country does not want it, and for that reason I shall vote against the second reading of the Bill.

The PREMIER (Hon. A. Morgan, Warwick): The speech just delivered by the hon. member

for Clermont would more appropriately have come from a member sitting opposite. [Government members: Hear, hear!] He calls himself a supporter of the present Government. I venture to say that any dispassionate observer of recent events in this House, who did not know where parties usually sat, would have said, without hesitation, after hearing the hon. member, "That is a member of the Opposition." [Government members: Hear, hear!] Though he pretends to support the Government, he is, generally speaking, against it. I say the hon. member's right course, if he holds the opinions he has to-night given expression to, and to which he has given expression any time during the past fortnight, should be, as a matter of justice to himself and fair play to the Government, to change sides in this Chamber. [Mr. J. LEAHY: But we believe in selling land.] Yes, and would turn out of office, if they could, a Government which proposes the policy they believe in. The hon. member who has just sat down has told us to-night in the most emphatic terms, and with a smile upon his face the whole time, that he was returned to the House pledged to oppose the sale of Crown lands in large areas. Well, Sir, let me say, before I deal with that question in its entirety, that since this Government came into office they have not sold Crown lands in large areas. They have sold land on a very moderate scale. The hon. member says they have sold 100,000 acres since they came into office. That may be true, and yet the statement the hon. member has made may not be justified; it is not justified. The hon. member says he is opposed to the sale of Crown lands by auction in large areas. We have not sold Crown lands in large areas by auction. He was returned to oppose that policy, and he is going to continue to oppose it. That is the statement of the hon. member. I propose to quote, for the information of the House, from a speech delivered by the hon. member to his constituents in Clermont in the month of August last. He delivered a speech at Black Ridge, in the Assembly Hall of that place, on Wednesday of the week ending on Saturday, 13th August. [Mr. J. LEAHY: What paper is that?] [Mr. KERR: The Peak Downs Telegram.] I believe it is a paper that is friendly to the hon. gentleman. [Mr. J. LEAHY: Why, that paper is a supporter of ours.] I suppose "ours" means the hon. member for Bulloo and the hon. member for Clermont. [Government members: Hear, hear! and laughter.] It is just as well that I should place on the records of the House what the hon. member said on that occasion. He made a long speech—a capable speech, as he always does—dealing generally with the political situation and the programmes placed before the country by Sir Arthur Rutledge—who was then leading, not the hon. member for Clermont, but the hon. member for Bulloo, and the hon. members whom I see opposite—and myself. [Mr. J. LEAHY: Look at the speech you delivered at Warwick!] The hon. gentleman can quote that speech as much as he likes, for all the satisfaction he will get out of it. This is the passage from the speech of the hon. member for Clermont, who was then the only candidate for that electorate—

They had to make a choice between those two policies. Mr. Morgan's policy closely accorded in its leading principles with that of his rival, Sir Arthur Rutledge, but there the resemblance ended. There was no ambiguity about the Premier's manifesto, and he boldly asserted that it deserved an extended trial. Roughly speaking, the leading features of that policy were summarised as follows:—(1) Political reform; (2) industrial reform; (3) taxation reform; (4) financial reform, with cessation of the borrowing policy and an honest attempt to pay their way and reduce our annual interest bill; (5) land reform, the construction of light lines of railway through Crown settlement, and the utilisation for the next three years of the loan money

in hand for that purpose; (6) national work, proceeds of land sales to be used in constructing railways and other development works—

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

(7) Miscellaneous, including civil service reform, law reform, and revision of the railway tariff. In brief, that was the Morgan programme. Mr. Lesina pointed out that, whilst the fundamental principle at the approaching election was undoubtedly the amendment of the electoral laws, the policy of the Government during its ten months' tenure of office was on trial, and they desired to be judged on that.

And in those ten months, Mr. Speaker, we had sold the great bulk of the land the sale of which the hon. member is now condemning. [Mr. LESINA: I do not know of it.] The hon. member ought to have known of it, because it was proclaimed in every journal of any consequence in the State. [Government members: Hear, hear!] And hon. members opposite were not above scoring a point against the Government and of directing the attention of the hon. member and of the electors generally to it. [Government members: Hear, hear!] I say that when the hon. member made that speech he was perfectly well aware that the land sales which he now condemns had taken place. [THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Hear, hear!] To continue the quotation—

Mr. Morgan's Government was pledged to make economy its first and immediate care, and to refrain from further burdening the taxpayers until it was shown that retrenchment and economy could only be pushed further at the expense of efficiency. To side with Mr. Morgan at the coming battle of the ballot-box was to side with clean, honest, and economical administration, political reform, and sound progressive government. The Premier's programme was, so far, in advance of anything shown by the late Administration. The atmosphere surrounding it was cleaner and sweeter, and there were large hopes for the future. In the event of a contest, he counselled them to choose Mr. Morgan as their leader and fight under his banner.

[Government members: Hear, hear!] That is what the hon. member said with regard to the thing for which he has been denouncing us to-night. The speech was delivered at a time when the hon. member had ample opportunity for knowing, since the fact was proclaimed in all the public journals of the State, that the most of the land sales for which he has so strongly condemned us this evening had already taken place. [Mr. FORSYTH: It was sold in June.] [THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: This was said in August.] It was sold long before June, because the money was paid in June; and the hon. member was aware of it. [Mr. J. LEAHY: It was sold on the last day of May.] The hon. member was aware of it when he was speaking in the middle of August. On the 22nd of July I issued, through the electors of Warwick to the electors of the State, the manifesto of the party which I was leading, and in that manifesto—of which the hon. member was clearly aware, since his speech bears evidence of his knowledge—this passage occurs—

The practice of treating as revenue money raised by the sale of land is open to serious objection, but it would be quite permissible to realise annually upon a larger area of the national estate if the proceeds were devoted to the construction of railways and other development works which would promote settlement and add to the value of lands remaining in the possession of the State. Under such a system it might be advisable to reduce the minimum price prescribed by our present land laws, which often renders sales impossible, and to adjust prices in a manner corresponding to the situation, as well as to the varying qualities of our Crown lands.

[Mr. J. LEAHY: That is not what you are doing.] That is the passage in the manifesto of the present Premier dealing with sales of Crown lands—a passage of which the hon. member for Clermont was then aware, as he is now aware of it, and to which he made

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approving reference in his speech when he was seeking the suffrages of the electors of Clermont. I ask hon. members on the other side, in all fairness, how do his remarks, with the fulness of knowledge that he then possessed, contrast with the speeches we have heard from him to-night and during the past few days in this Chamber? [Mr. J. LEAHY: How do your actions contrast with your speeches?]

The SPEAKER: Order!

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Are you defending him?

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. LESINA: I am able to defend myself against any of you.

The PREMIER: The hon. member is quite capable of defending himself. [Mr. J. LEAHY: I am talking to you, and not to him.] I want to place clearly on record the contrast between the hon. member's position on this question when he was seeking the suffrages of the electors of Clermont and his position now, and I say that his position then—only three or four months ago—was absolutely irreconcilable with the position he has assumed to-night, and his knowledge then was as full as the knowledge he now possesses, when he is telling the House and telling the country, through the medium of the official record, that the Government are proposing now to do something which he was quite unaware they proposed to do when he was speaking to his electors three or four months ago. I have shown that his knowledge of our proposals then was as complete as it is now. [Mr. LESINA: I was returned as a Labour man, pledged to vote against the sale of Crown lands.] No; the hon. member was elected to support a programme which included the passage which I have just read dealing with the sale of Crown lands. [Mr. LESINA: There was no mention of a reduction to 5s. an acre.] The hon. member was returned to support that programme, which contained an absolutely clear pronouncement of the views of the Government upon the question. [Government members: Hear, hear!] And now he says that his objection is not so much to the sale of Crown lands as to treating the proceeds of those sales as revenue. I am entirely in accord with him on that point. I do not think that under ordinary circumstances the proceeds of sales of Crown lands should be treated as revenue, because it is not revenue—it is realised capital, and ought to be treated as such. The policy of this Government is to treat the proceeds of auction sales of Crown lands as realised capital, and not as revenue, and to devote it to the purposes to which borrowed capital has hitherto been devoted. We are proposing to sell land, and to apply the proceeds of sales to the construction of railways and other development works which will add to the value of the remaining lands. That is the policy in respect of this matter on which we went to the country. It is the policy on which we were returned, and on which we secured a cordial supporter in the hon. member who was then contesting the constituency of Clermont, and who now represents that constituency, but who now takes up a position diametrically opposed to the position which he took up as a candidate seeking the suffrages of his constituents. [Mr. LESINA: I read a resolution condemning it.] I have read the hon. member's speech. The hon. member must not take refuge behind a resolution of some little committee in his own electorate. [Mr. LESINA: It is not a little committee.] Well, a big committee. [Mr. WOODS: It elects two of the principal members of this Chamber.

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(Laughter.) It elects the two members for Charters Towers. The Premier did not see what I meant.] In this Bill there is a provision under which, if it becomes law, it will be possible to refer to the Land Court—a perfectly independent judicial tribunal—the question of determining whether in future 10s. an acre should or should not be the minimum price at which we can sell Crown lands; and if the Land Court determine that 10s. or a lower sum should be the minimum—if they should determine that that is the current market value of the land to be offered for sale by auction—then that would be made the upset price. But it must be remembered that we are asking Parliament to give us power to sell land by auction in larger areas than hitherto, subject always to the condition that the amount to be realised by such sales is to be devoted to the purpose of constructing railways and other development works which have hitherto been paid for out of loan funds. The hon. member for Clermont knows as well as any hon. member in the House that we can no longer go on borrowing money on anything like the scale of past years, and that if we are to continue to construct railways, as I hope we shall continue to construct railways and other development works, we must look in another direction for the money with which to carry out those works, and the land alone supplies us with the means of getting the money that is absolutely necessary for that purpose. I would not hesitate to sell land in the hon. member's district, and to build a railway with the proceeds in the adjoining district, and I would think it a perfectly sound policy to do that. I would not hesitate to sell land on the Darling Downs, and with the proceeds to build a railway in the hon. member's district. I sincerely hope that the hon. member will not take the narrow parochial view that the money realised by the sale of land in a particular district must necessarily be spent in that district. [Mr. P. J. LEAHY: You know that you cannot sell land in the Darling Downs district.] The hon. member for Warrego knows some things, but there are also many things that he does not know. It is quite evident that he does not know that there is a considerable area of unalienated Crown lands in the Darling Downs district, otherwise he would not make that statement. There are large areas of unalienated lands in the Darling Downs district, and if I could sell that land at its true value I would not hesitate to do so, and with the proceeds build a railway in the electorate of the hon. member for Clermont, or the electorate of the hon. member for Warrego, if I thought it was sound policy to apply the proceeds in that way. That is broadly what the Government are proposing to do. We are looking to our lands to supply the money which we have hitherto got by borrowing for the purpose of building railways. [Mr. J. LEAHY: You are getting £100,000 from the sale of land this year for revenue purposes.] We may get £100,000 by selling land this year, and we may possibly find it necessary to apply that to revenue purposes. But if we do find it necessary it will be because the Government who so recently left office left us a heritage of debt which must be paid, which must be liquidated. It is better to liquidate that debt by selling land which belongs to us than to borrow money and pay the debt out of loan fund. That is the explanation of the clause in this Bill to which so much exception has been taken. [Mr. J. LEAHY: A bad explanation, and a false one.]

The SPEAKER: Order!

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: An incorrect one, you mean.

Mr. J. LEAHY: It is the same thing.

The PREMIER: No, it is not the same thing. The one is a parliamentary expression, and the other is not; but I should look for the latter from the source from which it emanated. I am not surprised at it. I have dealt with the hon. member's attitude four months ago and his attitude to-night on this question of selling land by auction, and I have offered what I consider an explanation and justification of the policy of the Government on this subject. I rose for that purpose, and for no other. But before I sit down, let me say that I believe the Land Bill introduced to the House to-day by my colleague is the most liberal measure, so far as it goes, that has been presented to this Assembly during the past twenty years, and that if passed broadly as introduced it will do more than any recent legislation to promote settlement in this State, and to promote close settlement, which hon. members on both sides profess to favour, and I believe do favour, though they differ essentially as to the means by which settlement shall be promoted. The object of this Bill is to promote settlement and to provide necessary revenue. Some hon. member observed to-night that the object of land legislation should be to promote settlement, and not to produce revenue. I can hardly agree with that. I think there ought to be a dual object in view—the promotion of settlement and the production of revenue. They might go on side by side. If you promote settlement you will in the ultimate produce revenue. We want to promote settlement and concurrently produce revenue, and I believe that both results would follow from the passage of this Bill. What do we find? We find that with regard to this Bill, as in regard to all the Land Bills submitted to this Chamber, there is a very wide divergence of views as to the proper means to be pursued for the achievement of certain ends. I am afraid it has been made quite clear to-night that so divergent are the views held by members on both sides that there [10.30 p.m.] is very little possibility of this Bill becoming law this session.

But let there be no mistake. The Bill embodies the views of the Government, and even if we are not successful in securing its passage this session, we will not hesitate for a moment to place it again before the House at the earliest possible moment. The pastoralists, through their representative, the member for Brisbane North, Mr. Cameron, have made light of the concessions that have been offered. On the other hand, a member on this side, representing a pastoral constituency, takes particular exception to the Bill because it makes too many concessions to the pastoralists. The hon. member for Bulloo, while damning the measure with faint praise, and criticising all the thirty-nine clauses, reserved his particular praise for the clause dealing with the sale of Crown lands. Of course, that is the chiefest charm of the measure to the hon. member. If the hon. member had left the whole Bill untouched, we would have had no doubt about his views on that subject. We would have had equally little doubt that the leader of the Labour party, Mr. Kerr, would have as strongly denounced that particular clause. Now, in legislating on so large and important a subject as the lands of the State, we must recognise that it is a matter upon which we cannot have all our own way, and it is only by compromise that we can get a Land Bill to embody the general views of hon. members on

both sides. In order to get some of the things we desire we must concede some of the things we do not think altogether desirable. If the House would approach the consideration of the measure in that spirit, I believe the result would be that we would have a Bill that would, as I have said, do more for close settlement than any Bill passed by Parliament during the last twenty years. It is for that reason that I had no hesitation in giving my assent to the introduction of the Bill, because I believed it would promote the best interests of the State. I would not have taken part in the discussion, because I was anxious to see the measure read a second time and given a reasonable opportunity of finding a place on the statute-book, but I could not pass over the thundering denunciation by the hon. member for Clermont of a Government whom he was returned to support on a platform which embodies the principle which he has denounced to-night, to the glee of the hon. member for Bulloo and one or two other occupants of the front Opposition bench. He appears to approve very much more of the hon. member for Clermont's denunciations and diversions now that he is on this side of the Chamber. The hon. member for Bulloo applauded the hon. member for Clermont for his denunciation of the measure. [Mr. J. LEAHY: What are you abusing me for?] I do not want the hon. member for Bulloo's "Don't-put-him-under-the-pump" support. I quite understand the nature of the hon. member's support. [Mr. J. LEAHY: I will not vote against it.] I do not care whether the hon. gentleman votes for or against it. The House will decide quite apart from the hon. member for Bulloo's views on the subject. I am very much afraid, having regard to the diversity of opinions expressed by hon. members, and the warmth with which they have expressed them, that there is very little hope of the Bill becoming law this session. That, however, is no fault of the Government. We have submitted it to the House at the earliest possible moment, having regard to the more urgent necessity of financial legislation, and if we do not secure the passage of the measure this session, it must stand over until next year. I am quite sure that, taking the Bill by and large, hon. members will, when they come to review the matter in a calm spirit, agree that it contains many useful provisions which should find a place on the statute-book, and that if they do not find a place on the statute-book it will be very much to the detriment of that close settlement which we all profess to desire. [Government members: Hear, hear.]

Mr. WOODS (*Woothakata*): I do not altogether agree with the arguments which have fallen from the Premier. The remarks of the hon. gentleman would lead one to suppose that members on this side had no right to have opinions of their own. He made the statement, and a similar statement was made by the Secretary for Lands, that the member for Clermont was returned as a follower of the present Government. [The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: As a supporter; so he was.] I am prepared to admit that, but I want to point out that no man sitting on this side was returned to violate the principles of the Labour platform. I was returned on the Morgan ticket, but I was returned as a straight-out Labour man, pledged to support the Labour platform. [Hon. R. PHILP: Pledged to support syndicate railways.] Nothing of the kind, and the hon. gentleman knows it. [Mr. FORSYTH: Did you read the Premier's manifesto?] I was never asked a question about it, but I was asked distinctly

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if I would adhere to the Labour platform, and I said "Yes," and here I am to-day, but I am sorry to say that certain members on this side have not adhered to the Labour platform. [Hon. R. PHILP: Did you not say that you would support the Georgetown railway?] I did not, and I challenge the hon. gentleman to prove it. I said I would support the Georgetown railway provided it did not interfere with my political principles. I am proud to say that there is at least one man on this side who adheres to those principles, and that is the member for Clermont. An assertion has been made that there is collusion between the member for Woothakata and the member for Clermont. If there is collusion, it will be for the purpose of carrying out and sticking to the principles they have pledged themselves to. [Hon. R. PHILP: So long as it does not interfere with your own electorate.] At the last general election the question was put to me whether I would support the Etheridge railway, and my reply can be found in the library; I was prepared to support that railway provided it did not interfere with the political principles of my party. I signed the Labour platform, and I am proud of it, and I want to know what my colleagues have done during the last few weeks in this Chamber. [The PREMIER: What has the hon. member for Townsville done?] I am quite prepared to believe that the leader of the Opposition went there for the purpose of defeating my colleague. [Hon. R. PHILP: I did not mention your name at all.] [Mr. LESINA: He said he wanted to get someone returned to the House in favour of the sale of Crown lands.]

The SPEAKER: Order, order!

Mr. WOODS: I am not quite sure that the member for Cairns is in favour of the sale of Crown lands—I do not think he is—and I am sure he is not in favour of syndicate railways. The present member for Cairns is just as much in favour of the Etheridge railway as I am myself, but on the same conditions. But the present Government have not shown the same consideration for the Northern districts as they have shown to Mr. Munro over a 6-mile railway in the Toowoomba district.

The SPEAKER: Order, order!

Mr. WOODS: As the member for Woothakata, and a member of the Labour party, I entirely object to the statements of the Premier and the Minister for Lands, although there is no man in the Chamber I have more respect for than the Minister for Lands. [Mr. J. LEAHY: I thought you would be the last man to admit that.] The hon. gentleman who is now leading the Opposition accused me during the time I was in the railway service of always being an agitator.

The SPEAKER: Order! I must ask the hon. member to confine his remarks to the question before the House.

Mr. WOODS: I am dealing with the question raised by the leader of the Government and the interjections made by the Minister for Lands. I question the system under which he administers the department over which he has control, and so long as I am a member of this party I want the Chamber to distinctly understand that neither the hon. member for Bulloo nor any other hon. member, nor the Government, have any possible chance of hoodwinking the member for Woothakata. (Laughter.) [Mr. J. LEAHY: Did the hon. member for Bulloo ever do it?] Hon. gentlemen know perfectly well that, so far as I am concerned, I am always speaking what I feel

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and voting as I speak, and the hon. member for Bulloo knows it to his cost. (Laughter.) I want to congratulate the hon. gentleman, as I did once before in this Chamber in 1902, before the dissolution took place—

The SPEAKER: Order! I must ask the hon. member not to indulge in these personalities, but to confine his remarks to the provisions of the Bill.

Mr. WOODS: I will just refer to my speech in 1902, if I am not out of order. A special request was made in 1902, but previous to that request the hon. gentleman made a speech in this Chamber in reply to a new member of this Chamber—

The SPEAKER: I must again ask the hon. member to confine himself to the provisions of the Bill.

Mr. WOODS: I won't refer to the matter further. I see that it is irritating the hon. member for Bulloo. (Laughter.) Coming back to the sale of Crown lands, the hon. gentleman says that the sale of these particular lands took place before the last election. Whether the sale of lands took place before the following election or not, the fact remains that the lands were sold, and it was in direct opposition to the platform of the party of which I am a member. The question at issue is this: The present Government appear to have a policy of selling Crown lands. I do not blame the Government at all, because revenue is required for building railways in certain districts, but what I do object to is that behind the Government are sitting thirty-five men who are pledged to vote against the wholesale selling of Crown lands. [Mr. J. LEAHY: No; two of them are members of the Government.] There is not the slightest doubt that charges and statements of this kind come with very great relish to gentlemen sitting on the front Opposition benches, but they are absolutely responsible for the present Government being forced to sell the Crown lands of the State to pay for their maladministration. That is the point. That does not justify me, as a member of the Labour party and subject to a pledge, violating that pledge by backing up the Government and justifying them in following up the deeds the late Government are responsible for. There are any amount of other means whereby the Government can retrieve the responsible errors of their predecessors without selling Crown lands. There are no Crown lands in my district that they can sell. The only thing they can do there is to sell the *bona fide* rights of the poor miners. [Hon. R. PHILP: Sell the member.] If they had to sell the member for Woothakata they would get a good deal more for him than the member for Townsville. (Laughter.) The hon. member for Townsville was not game enough to reduce or dismiss me out of the railway service, because he knew I had too much influence in the railway service.

The SPEAKER: Order, order!

Mr. WOODS: I apologise for replying to the interjection of the hon. member for Townsville. There is nothing to prevent the Government getting financial relief. If they would introduce a Bill providing for a land tax, then they would have the whole thirty-five men on this side with them.

Mr. GRAYSON (*Cunningham*): I beg to move the adjournment of the debate.

Question put and passed; and the resumption of the debate was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

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