**WASTE LANDS BILL 1872**

**House of Assembly, 25 April 1872, pages 657-75**

Second reading.

**The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS (Hon. T. Reynolds**) said it was understood on Tuesday last that he should move the second reading of the Bill to regulate the alienation and sale of the waste lands of the Crown to-day, and as this was a very important matter—next to Supply —the Government thought that it should be dealt with as quickly as possible. He was not going to travel over the question of the land laws in force in the colonies, nor was he going back to the laws that had been in operation since the foundation of the colony, but would endeavour to confine his remarks within certain limits. It was known that the question of amending the land laws of the province arose in 1867 and 1868, when the farmers— the real farmers-men who wanted to settle on the land and cultivate it, and make homesteads—were precluded from doing so by the opposition they met with in the auction-room. Hence the question was pressed upon the Government in 1867, and particularly in 1868. He happened at that time to be a member of the Government, and a series of resolutions which they proposed were not acceptable to the House. The question caused the sacrifice of one Ministry after another, and the

Ministry of which he was a member took office again for a short period, and submitted a series of resolutions, one of which was to make an experiment with what were called "agricultural areas.” However, the proposition of that Government was not considered very satisfactory Mr. Strangways then proposed a scheme, which was thought more acceptable to the House and the country, and through him a measure was introduced dealing more liberally with the waste lands of the Crown. That was passed in 1868. It was proposed in that Bill to deal with the lands by allowing selectors to pay 20 per cent, down as a deposit, and that was to be considered as four years’ interest upon the purchase-money. However, that was found not to be very acceptable to the country, the farmers, and the House, and an amendment was made whereby there was an extension of the 20 per cent, to five years’ purchase-money, and a further credit of three years. However, another Bill was introduced providing that, instead of paying 20 per cent., the selector should pay only 10 per cent, deposit, at the end of three years another 10 percent., and extending the time to eight years, as the other Bill proposed. Then a further amendment was proposed in 1871, in a Bill introduced by the Government of that day, that made the law apparently still more liberal. It was provided that at the time of selection a deposit of 10 per cent, should be paid: at the end of three years another 10 per cent.; at the end of five years another 10 per cent.; at the end of seven years another 10 per cent.; and at the end of nine years the remainder—60 per cent. By this the selector paid 40 per cent, in nine years. In giving those facilities they were bound to consider those who had taken up land under the former Bills, and the Government proposed that those who had made selections under previous Bills should be at liberty to take the advantages given under this one. Although this Bill passed that branch of the Legislature, he much questioned whether it would have passed the other branch. After that the House was dissolved, and during the recess another Bill was prepared, and he must say very carefully prepared, by the Attorney- General of that day—the hon. member for the Burra (Mr. Mann). He might say that that Bill formed the basis of the one now before the House. Although it was framed by a former Attorney-General, upon the face of it he was not to be held responsible for the principles of this Bill. In that Bill many of the difficulties that had arisen under Strangways’ Act of 1868-9 were remedied. The expense and difficulty of the tribunal were also met in that Bill, as well as any other questions that had arisen in the working of Strangways’ Act. There was no doubt that if they could do it it would be better to have made this Act retrospective, provided they could secure the advantages under Mr. Strangways’ Act: but the Government hesitated to do so as regarded those persons who took up land under the regulations under Strangways’ Act. He might say with regard to this measure that few Bills had had more care bestowed upon them. It had been to some extent revised by several Governments, and had received the finishing touches by the present Ministry; and although it might not be perfect, he trusted that when the Bill got into Committee the House would point out any particular clause that struck them as imperfect, so that the Government might consider the suggestions, and make the Bill as perfect as possible. The principal features of this Bill—as distinct from that passed in 1871, and on which he believed the principal discussion would take place—were the terms of payment and substituted residence. To these points reference had been made elsewhere, and to them he should more particularly draw the attention of the House. The course Mr. Mann had pursued in tabling the amendments he intended to move was a very honest and fair course. He might mention that about 1,651 agreements were extant, having been entered under what was called Strangways’ Act and the amendments of it; that the land occupied was 4,86,782 acres, involving purchase-money to the extent of £630,908; and the interest upon the agreements amounted to £126,384. If the selectors took advantage of the second payment of interest, instead of paying the principal at the end of the third year, that would bring in another £94,000 —making an amount of £220,384 which would be lost as a matter of interest alone if the interest were given up. In discussing this matter, though the Government were disposed to be liberal, yet with the fact staring them in the face that they would have to give up nearly a quarter of a million, because, if they followed the principle adopted by the House in the Act of 1871, which admitted certain previous holders of land to the privileges of that Bill, they would have to do so—(No)—he was not prepared to forego the question of interest. One hon. member had said “No;” but he repeated that if the House followed the rule laid down by the amendment of the Land Act of 1871 they would have to place existing selectors on a fair footing with those to be created under this Bill. Would it not be better to give the persons who took up the land under deferred payments the land at a low rate of interest that they might spend their principle in the improvement of the land and the formation of homesteads, instead of inflicting an interest so large as to prevent them doing this? In Victoria, where the payments were made periodically, and counted as purchase-money, it was found by many of the selectors necessary to apply to the Government for power to borrow on the land to enable them to keep up the current payments. (Hear, hear.) He imagined this would be the chief point of discussion when the Bill went into Committee, for he did not anticipate there would be any objection offered to the Second reading. The House would give the Government credit for this, that with a desire to be liberal they had carefully considered whether they could give up so large a sum as that involved by allowing existing selectors to come under the provisions of the Bill. If the House decided in the negative, then, in view of the legislation last session, it would be making fish of one and flesh of another. Then the next point that would probably excite discussion was the principle of substituted residence. (Hear.) Now he was of opinion that we had got as a colony pretty neatly to the end of the tether with regard to men desiring and being able to take up land for the purpose of personal occupation. The population was small, and its engagements such that not many men could now be spared from their industrial pursuits to go on the land. But there might be those who would assist to place men on to cultivate large blocks of land, which experience had proved could be more profitably cultivated than small ones—(Hear, hear) —as many of the largest farmers the colony possessed had assured him, and who after long practical experience had assured him that anything they realized over 25s. to 30s. per acre would pay them. He said there were cases of this kind where farmers desired to increase their holdings, and thus profitably employ their sons and relatives. It was for cases of that kind they had to provide in land legislation, and at the same time to guard against throwing the land into the hands of certain monopolists. Under the substituted residence provision it was intended to allow selectors to put certain persons upon the land, but they must also make certain annual returns to Government. In such a case the selector would not be allowed to purchase for six years, whilst a resident selector who had fulfilled the required conditions would be permitted to complete his purchase in three years. They could imagine the possibility of servants acting as dummies very patiently for three years, but he believed their patience would tire out ere six years had expired; and that would act as a guard against the monopoly he had mentioned. There was another provision in the Bill, which would have the effect of doing away with what were called agricultural areas. A great deal had been said about the boundaries of agricultural areas being unsatisfactorily arranged; that the lines of definition had been so drawn as to leave the best of the land outside. (Hear, hear.) Now, the Government wanted to obviate this by making the proposed Act apply to all the land within the boundary known as Goyder’s Rainfall, as limited by certain hundreds and counties. All the land south of that line would be looked upon as coming within the operation of this Act. No land could be selected here and there—the eyes of the country picked out—because it could not be selected before it was surveyed and gazetted, and a person wishing to annoy a neighbour or a pastoral lessee would not be permitted to do so. The object of the Bill was to survey the best part of the land for agricultural purposes, and when surveyed then to open it for selection for twelve months. Here might arise a point of issue with hon. members. The Bill of 1871 provided that the land should be open for selection six months ere it was submitted to public auction. Some hon. members were in favour of a term of two years. The Government proposed to strike the happy medium, and fix it at 12 months —a term which he believed would prove to be acceptable to the House. The Government did not in the present measure alter the extent of a single holding, as formerly fixed at 640 acres, but had made provision that in the event of the selected block being in excess of that quantity, say 700 acres, the selector should be permitted to pay cash for the excess quantity. Then there was a difference proposal in this Bill over previous legislation in reference to the cultivation and improvement clauses. A person taking up land under this Bill, besides residing upon the property nine out of the 12 months, must cultivate one-fifth of the land he has taken up annually. But in the event of drawbacks or difficulties in the currency of the first year absolutely preventing him from doing so, he might satisfy the requirements of the Act by having two-fifths under cultivation by the end of the second year. The conditions of improvement were to be to the value of 6s. within the first two years instead of 2s. 6d. in the first twelve months, in this way making provision for the difficulties attending a man’s first settlement of the land. By the end of the third year, the value of the improvements must reach 7s. 6d., and by the end of the fourth year 10s. The terms of the agreement between the Government and the selector were made by this Act increasingly stringent, and careful consideration had been bestowed upon this matter; but if hon, members could suggest any improvement upon its present shape, the Government would not fail to give it their earnest attention. When a selector took up land he would have to pay 10 per cent, on the purchase-money. That would be interest for the first three years. At the end of that term he would have to pay another 10 per cent., which would carry him over the next three years; and if at the end of the six years he was not prepared to complete the purchase, then he might have a further term of credit of four years at 4 per cent.— provisions which the Government regarded as exceedingly liberal. One clause of the Bill proposed that land offered at auction, and which had passed the hammer five years, should be submitted to public auction at the upset price of 12s. 6d. per acre. And here he would mention that in quoting the quantity of land likely to come under the operation of this clause he had on a previous day, in answer to the hon. member for Barossa, given incorrect figures. He found that there were not more than 100,000 acres which would be affected by this clause up to the present time, so that, after all, there was not so very large a quantity of land remaining unselected that period. But the total quantity of land which had passed the hammer up to the end of December last was rather more than half a million of acres. He thought the House would agree with the Government that it was not worth while to hoard up the land which had so long passed the hammer, and that it would be better to resubmit it, when it might fetch a higher price than the upset of 12s. 6d. now fixed. He had purposely avoided reference to the scrub and inferior lands of the colony, though the question was one of land policy, because the Government were prepared to deal with such lands by a distinct measure, and he did not wish to anticipate discussion on the subject. There was, however, another point which would excite discussion, and to which he would allude—it was the clause which gave to any Company or party of 10 persons the privilege of obtaining a special survey in any district to an extent of say 10,000 acres on paying a certain deposit. The Government were induced to introduce that provision in consequence of certain applications which the Government had received, and of which the hon. member for Victoria (Mr. Derrington) was cognizant, from persons who were desirous of farming under the co-operative principle. It was deemed desirable to give to such organized parties facilities for settlement, but they would not receive exceptional privileges. He thought he had taken up most of the points likely to be raised in discussion, excepting matters of mere detail; and he repeated that if hon. members sought to amend the measure in a manner not affecting the principle, the Government would be glad to receive their suggestions. But he would ask the House to pass the Bill in such a way as to ensure its reception and acceptance in the other House-a consideration which had influenced the Government in framing the measure.

Mr, WEST suggested the leasing of lands which had passed the hammer rather than absolute alienation. He denied the real right of the State to alienate land, and he believed the financial posi­tion of the colony would have been better at the present moment if from the very outset leases in perpetuity had been granted rather than absolute sales made; and the interest the Government. would receive from this system, if now adopted in regard to the lands proposed to be legislated upon, would be higher than would be derived in the way of stile at the proposed price of 12s. 6d. per acre.

Mr. GLYDE moved the adjournment of the debate until Tuesday.

Mr. SOLOMON seconded.

The motion was lost.

Mr. PEARCE said the speech of the Hon. the Commissioner of Crown Lands was but a repetition of remarks that had been made in that House so often that hon. members were tired of them. The hon. member for Yatala, it was well known, wished to delay legislation—hence his motion. He did not intend to discuss the merits of this question on the occasion of the second reading, but would deal with the Bill in Committee, when, on those few points in which ii did not meet his views, he would attempt amendment.

Mr. MANN intended to go for the second reading of the Bill, but should try when it was in Committee to modify every one of the leading provisions which had been touched upon by the Hon. the Commissioner of Crown Lands; and if he failed to modify those provisions, then he should seek to throw out the Bill. The great point made by the hon. gentleman was that it would not do to forego interest to new selectors, as it would be unfair to present selectors, and that they ought to participate in any concessions now made. He himself had formerly advocated that view, but he did not entertain that opinion now. He did not see the former selectors were entitled to a return of interest, since they had had the pick of the country; but if it was fair to return it to them, it would also only be fair to return to purchasers the cash which they had paid in the auction-room. The hon. gentleman, whilst saying this would be a fair principle as regarded selectors, had made no provision in the Bill for doing so. He (Mr. Mann) should seek to strike out the provision for payment of interest. What the country demanded was the passing of a Land Bill as liberal as that of Victoria, where no interest was paid on selections, and this principle he advocated now and ever since he had had a seat in Parliament. He had no wish to embarrass the Government, but he undoubtedly intended to adhere to a principle which he had ever most consistently advocated. He would far sooner have Strangways’ Act honestly administered, and with auctions for cash abolished, than this Bill, and unless it was greatly modified he should feel bound to oppose it, for as a final settlement of the question the measure was perfectly preposterous, and they had better wait longer than accept it. Then there was the disputed question of substituted and personal residence. The provisions, as described by the Hon. the Commissioner, were just those which he had contended for from the very first. But what did this Bill propose to do? He did not think the Attorney-General could have perused the fifth schedule, for it proposed to assign perjury upon a man who failed to fulfil his intentions. He should go against the principle of substituted residence in its full effect as proposed by the Bill, as he held it was sufficient to meet the case if a farmer were permitted to extend his holding. It would be a dangerous principle to permit of residence by a servant, and if the Government really went in for the clear principle of substituted residence let them say so. The Commissioner of Crown Lands had alluded to the time during which land should be withheld from cash sales. He (Mr. Mann) asserted that there was a strong feeling in favour of a term of two years, during which the land should be open to the bona fide selector; and on this point the Land Bill of last session prescribing six months, he ventured to say, did not represent feeling of the majority of the members of the House. He would vote against the Bill sooner than reduce the term below two years. The ten-men clause made its appearance in a worse aspect than last session. There might be something in the argument about the introduction of farmers into the colony but he believed the proposed provision would be subject to great abuse, and would open the way to oppression and extortion by those engaged in agricultural pursuits.

If good land was discovered it was the duty of the Land Office to survey it as rapidly as the public want was shown, and the reasons given by the Com­missioner of Crown Lands for this part of the scheme were not sufficient to secure support to it. There were a good many matters of detail to which he could draw attention, but those to which he had referred were the principal points on which he was at issue with the Government. He again repeated that unless he could secure the considerable modification of the Bill in Committee he should vote against its passing.

Mr. HUGHES, though not pledging himself to every detail of the Bill, had no hesitation in voting for its second reading, and he was prepared to accept it as an improvement on those heretofore brought before the House. He must refer to the proposal for perpetual leases instead of permitting the investor to acquire the freehold. He considered that with the natural desire every man had to become a freeholder one of the attractions of the colony would be destroyed if colonists were not allowed to acquire the title to the property he occupied. The main object of Strangways’ Act was to get persons to settle on the land, and this was sought to be attained by the area system. There the two systems of cash and credit went hand in hand, and it enabled farmers to obtain land without competition with capitalists. But there was this condition—no person could make a credit selection without binding himself to reside upon it for nine out of the 12 months. The first important change contained in the present Bill was that which did away with the area system altogether by declaring the whole of the country one large area. The great question for them to consider was how to get the country settled by men of moderate means, He was in doubt whether they had not gone a step too far in stopping all sales to capitalists. He feared this had had the effect of driving out of the colony men of a class that could ill be spared—men who had money, and who, as he knew for a fact, were now spending that money in the purchase of land in Victoria because they could not purchase land here. This, he considered, would be found to be very injurious to the interests of the colony, and it was important in connection with this point to remember that one of the regulations of this Bill permitted persons who purchased on credit to cultivate by their servants. The only query was whether the arrangement went far enough, and whether they ought not to be placed in the same position as regarded powers to purchase with ordinary selectors. That was a point he (Mr. Hughes) would desire altered. As regarded the time during which the land was to lie open for selection, he might say that there was good reason at the time why the term should be fixed at two years in the fact that it was the picked land that was offered; but now the whole country would be opened there was no longer a necessity for a long term, as the demand for land must, in the nature of things, now be quickly supplied. Then came the question, were they to refuse the moneys of those who were ready to purchase the lands and make them their freeholds—turn away the money offered to them. They had heard yesterday of the disastrous condition of the country ---

The SPEAKER—The hon. member must not refer to a previous debate.

Mr. HUGHES resumed—If the condition of affairs was so very bad, they should look to this matter. They must meet the requirements of persons who desired to take up the land and cultivate it, and more especially secure the settlement of those farmers who were in some measure capitalists. They had met the old cry of “unlock the land to the farmers;’’ now they had to unlock the land to the small capitalists. He did not see any proposal in the measure for a means for fixing the upset price of land when first thrown open for selection, and perhaps the Government would tell them how it was to be arranged for. Whilst he promised his general support of the Bill, he asked the House to consider the necessity of the moment—the offering facilities for settlement to the moderate capitalist.

Mr. BUNDEY was pleased to hear the sentiments uttered by the hon. member for Mount Barker (Mr. West) in reference to the leasing rather than the alienation of land—an idea that he (Mr. Bundey) had held ever since he was a boy—and he was also glad to hear hon. members assent to the proposition. It was an opinion that was gaining ground, and was adopted and advocated by Mill, the political economist. If the hon. member Mr. West introduced that principle by any measure he was prepared to give it his hearty support. The hon. member for the Port (Mr. Hughes) had said that the inducement to persons to come and settle in this colony was because they could become freeholders. The point might perhaps not be understood by laymen, but it was nevertheless true that in law the best freeholder amongst us was nothing more than a tenant of the land. There was no such thing as absolute ownership of land, and this was proved by the fact that if a person died without heirs the land he occupied would revert to the possession of the Crown. In contradistinction to the view advanced by Mr. Hughes, he held that if a man could come to this colony with a knowledge that he would be able to obtain at a low rate a lease of land for 999 years, which could be handed down to his descendants, he would have that which would satisfy him, and which would be as valuable to him as the fee-simple. Mr. Mill went to a much further extent than he (Mr. Bundey) could go, though he was a believer in some of his ideas. Mr. Mill would even require that the owners of land in the old country should give it up, so as to place the fee-simple in the hands of the Crown. Hon. members would remember that history informed them that when estates were handed over in the first instance, say by William the Conqueror, it was under conditions of service, and now that such service—say the raising of troops, &c.—was no longer demanded, it was the opinion of many persons in the old country that these lands should no longer be locked up, but that every man should have a standing spot. Now if the lease system had been adopted in this country it would have been very advantageous in a revenue point of view; we should now enjoy a revenue not surpassed in amount by any of the colonies. It perhaps might not be possible to adopt this plan for this part of the colony, but he thought the idea might be tried in the Northern Territory. It would, he believed, be the best land system ever introduced. The hon. member Mr. Mann had spoken strongly, and he could testify to that gentleman’s consistency on the point—on the subject of substituted residence, and had said that it should not be allowed to any but such

persons as were at present in the occupation of land. He (Mr. Bundey) believed a greater mistake than that was never made. So far as the interests of the State and of the general public were concerned, he believed that the principle of substituted residence was correct; but to say that only those who were already in possession of land should obtain more land on such terms seemed to him unfair and absurd. That was the proposition laid down by the Blyth Administration, and he would state a case which would prove how badly the provision which he referred to would work. He had a desire at some time or other to get out of the practice of his profession, which he did not consider a very congenial calling, and hoped that in a few years he might be able to purchase some land in South Australia on which to make his home. Supposing he wished to become a South Australian resident, and yet wished to go to the old country to see his friends, if he went to the Land Office to apply for land under the system suggested by Mr. Mann he would not be able to obtain any in South Australia, and he would therefore be forced to go to some other land where land laws were more liberal. That any person who had spent years of his life in the colony who went to take up land, and was refused it simply because he had not other land at the time of making the application, was grossly unjust. That would be legislation for a class with a vengeance. He did not believe in what the hon. member had said, that unless personal residence was insisted upon an injury would be done to the interests of the country. As to substituted residence, he believed that the principal question to be considered was the cultivation of the land—that was to say, that the land should be made to produce what it could, and that the crop reaped should be exported and the value of it spent in the colony. He did not believe in closing persons out from participation in the land simply because they cultivated by servants, and were not in the position of small peasant proprietors; but he thought that a condition should be imposed on the tenant that he should at some future time—which might be to some extent limited—reside upon the land. This not being done would not have the effect altogether of taking the money out of the colony; but it would be spent in the city where the owners lived, and at a loss to the district in which the land was situated. In fact the absentee proprietor principle would thus be introduced. In the absence of his being able to carry his pet scheme for the leasing of the land, he considered the next best thing was to extend as long as possible the credit system, so as to get the land occupied, and at the same time cultivated. And so far the Bill would receive his hearty support. He would not now proceed to discuss the question of price, as that, he felt sure, had already been agreed upon by the House. It would be, he was sure hon. members would see, unwise to reduce the amount of upset price below that at which sales could be made for cash. That would be equal, for example, to reducing the value of the sovereign to 16s., and he felt sure that would not be done, as it would not be fair to persons who had vested interests in the colony. He considered that the section allowing 10 men the right to call for a special survey and select a certain amount of land would require much more consideration. The hon. member for the Burra had pointed out that grave difficulties might arise, and a great deal of injustice be done in that way, as by a combination 10 men might go into the middle of a squatter’s run, and by selecting his best land cause him to pay them avery high amount in order to stand away and give up their title to settle. It was all very well to legislate for the agriculturist, but they also had the interest of the pastoral tenant, who had contributed largely during the past year to the prosperity of the colony, to be properly attended to, and no doubt the one interest must give way to the other when the time came; but in the meantime it should be seen that the House did not by careless legislation provide a means by which the squatters’ interests might be improperly interfered with by another class. He did not think that for the sake of getting afew companies of farmers from England to settle on the land that the Legislature should go out of its way to pass a provision that might be attended with much more harm than good, as the English farmer' would have just the same opportunity for settlement, as the inhabitants of this country. In refence to this question he should take more time for consideration and hearing the views expressed by other hon. members upon it. As to the length of time the land should be reserved before sale, he thought the Government in fixing upon twelve months, as between six months and two years, had struck upon a happy medium. He thought twelve months quite long enough for the land to be allowed to lie, as, if persons did not select in that time, it was presumable they never would select. He would not now go into the particulars of the Bill, and it was useless to deal in generalities. One or two principles he intended to support, and one or two it was his intention to oppose. He was sure that in passing the measure the Government would have the assistance of the House.

Mr. BRIGHT did not intend to keep the House long, but must say that he intended to vote for the second reading of the Bill. He also thought it right to point out to the Government a few particulars in the Bill to which he was opposed. The Government had brought forward a measure which was intended to be as liberal as possible. And he also trusted that what would be done would be as final as possible, so that legislation in the same direction might not be required for at least a few years to come. He thought that for the good of the colony the land question should be settled during the present session of Parliament, as he felt, and had always felt, that it was absolutely necessary to consider the making of the Bill as liberal as the Land Bills of other colonies, so as to induce population to our shores, and not merely settle some of the population of other parts of the colony upon its waste lands. No change in the waste lands law would be beneficial if it only had the latter effect, and he had also to say that so long as the upset price of the land was not fixed here, it would be very injurious to the interests of the colony so far as attracting population from adistance was concerned. While the Government of the day had it in their power to fix any price as the upset price of lands in certain areas, the Parliament of Victoria had fixed the upset price at £1 per acre, and people in the old country, seeing the certainty of the price in the other colony, were attracted there. It was found in the colony by persons who were conversant with the subject hard to state what was the upset price of land in certain areas; and if that was so, how much more difficult was it for a person in England quite unacquainted with our laws to discover what was the fact. He had never advocated the rise of the upset price above 20s. per acre except more than one person applied for the land in question; but the amount should be fixed, and the want was a fatal mistake in the Bill. It was also a point in which the Victorian system was an improvement on ours that only 2s. per annum of the £1 per acre had to be paid. (The Commissioner of Crown Lands—’‘And improvements.”) People here had also to pay, for the value of the improvements were on a par with the people of Victoria in that respect. There was another point that had not been touched upon, but which had occupied much attention in former debates upon Land Bills—the provision of drawing lots lor land in case of more than one person wishing to select the same block. He was quite opposed to such a provision, as he knew that a system of dummyism had been favoured and called into existence by it, and men who had desired to take up land for bona fide agricultural purposes had been put to many hardships and inconveniencies from having only one chance in perhaps ten of getting the lands they desired for occupation. And at the present time it was not a very difficult matter to see by the face of the country the contrasts presented by the appearance of the blocks taken up by dummies and those in the hands of bona fide cultivators of the soil. And while he did not wish to see the upset price of land above 20s. per acre he thought a fair way in cases of more persons than one applying for land would be to put it up to auction. The country would then be benefited; but he hoped that it would not be so managed that South Australia should fix a higher upset price upon herland than was fixed in the other colonies. It was well known that the country at present suffered from want of population, and it raising the upset price on land to a higher figure was not a way to increase the population and prosperity of the country. It had, however, again been pointed out that the legislation intended would be adverse to the capitalist. Mr. Bundey had touched upon the question in saying that it was difficult for persons with capital to come to the colony and purchase land in order to become cultivators of it in consequence of the auction system being stopped. As to getting possession of the freehold, that was of course right, as that was the only way in which the fee-simple could be obtained. But then he did not think the system was so much to blame as the persons who now complained. There had been no difficulty for years and years in the colony in the way of persons investing their money in the purchase of land, but they had not made the investment with the intention of cultivation. The principal object of those who had hitherto invested capital in land was to make money out of those who had been hardly earning their bread, by purchasing when they had advantages of capital which others could not, and in few cases had they bought with a view to improving the soil. Those who now belonged to the capitalist class that found fault with the present state of things were middlemen—between the State and the agriculturist—and they had made their fortunes by high rents received from men who had had to work very hard indeed in order to pay them. There were some other matters in which he should seek to have alterations made in the measure, and must say that he was opposed to the clause in which ten men were to be allowed to call for a special survey. He had been favourable to 10 men being allowed to select 640 acres each, but could not go so far as this provision. There was also a clause in the Bill setting forth that land might after the expiration of a certain time fixed from its being opened for selection be sold by auction. Now he wished to point out that that time could not be fixed by the Bill, as it would entirely depend upon the amount of land that was open for selection and the quantity that was required. If a large amount of land had been opened up, then perhaps 12 months would be too short a period; but if. on the other hand, the amount of laud was small and the demand great, 12 months would be found to be a period inconveniently long. He had no particular objection to support the 12 months if it was to remain; and his reason for supporting the proposition for six months on a former occasion was because he saw that if the   
Government was found to be wrongfully throwing open the waste lands of the Crown, Parliament could meet before any sales could take place, or before any great evil could be done. He saw that a provision was inserted in the Bill that he viewed with a certain amount of anxiety. It was stated in the 39th clause, and was in reference to sale at reduced price after five years open for selection as follows: —"Provided that any country lands which have been heretofore offered, or shall after the passing of this Act be offered for sale by auction and not sold, and which shall have remained or shall remain unsold for a period of five years from the date or respective dates on which the same was so offered for sale, may be again offered for sale by auction for cash at an upset price of not less than 12s. 6d. per acre.” He objected entirely to such a provision. (Hear, hear.) It would be within the memory of some hon. members, or if not, it was in that of gentlemen outside the House, that a quantity of land some years ago had been allowed to remain for five years unselected after it had passed the hammer, and an application had been made by some capitalists of the city to have it put up for sale at an upset price of less than 2s. per acre. They had not succeeded, and some time afterward it was found that all the land was taken up at the full upset price of 20s. Now he must say that although the price of land was so low at times as it was, it was at others high in comparison, and to reduce the upset price in this case from 20s. to 12s. 6d. per acre would be very unfair to those persons who had invested in land at a high price. He had made a suggestion which he hoped would be adopted by the Government, that after land had lain for five years after passing the hammer without being taken up it should be dealt with under the provisions of the Scrub Lands Act, which allowed it to be selected in large blocks, as he thought that if that was done a large quantity of it would be taken up, and 20s. per acre paid for it. If the suggestion was carried out he believed that a very large amount of poor land now lying idle, and not bringing in a shilling of revenue, would be taken up, and at the same time they would not be interfering with the upset price of good land. He would also endeavour to insert an amendment on the provision in the Bill that seemed to be intended to limit all sales of land at auction which had lain, after passing the hammer, to cash business. With reference to the desire which had been spoken of on the part of some holders of land to take up more and cultivate it, he wondered that the desire had been so lately evinced. The men spoken of were large landholders, having for the most part become owners of large freehold estates, and he considered that now as they had stated their wish they should be closely watched, as he thought they only wanted to become possessors of an extra mile of ground, and did not act from any desire to cultivate land at the present time. When the Bill was in Committee he would endeavour to have such alterations made as would in his opinion result in a measure being framed best suited for the wants of the country.

Mr. RAMSAY would vote for the Bill being read a second time, and even if he did not succeed in all he desired while it was in Committee, he should vote for the third reading also, as he thought that the question was one which should be settled during the present session. provision he would refer to that he should endeavour to strike out of the Bill—the latter portion of the 8th clause, wherein ten men were granted the privilege of calling for a special survey. But if the measure should be allowed to pass through Committee with that condition included in it, he would then vote for it rather than that the present Act should remain the law. It was his opinion that the Bill now before the House was a better measure than any that the country had yet had, and consequently he would use his best endeavours to assist the Government in passing it with one or two amendments which he would attempt to make. He was glad to find that the Government proposed to deal with inferior and scrub lands in a separate measure, as he thought it would have been very unwise to have attempted to deal with those particular lands in the same measure and have them subject to the same regulations as agricultural lands. He did not approve of the proposed Scrub Lands Bill clause for clause, but he agreed with its principle, and considered that the introduction of the two measures instead of one would be the means of avoiding many difficulties. He thought that the House should be very thankful to his hon. colleague the member for Mount Barker (Mr. West) and Mr. Bundey for introducing something new into the debate. There was doubtless very little to say that was new about this subject, but the proposition to lease land in perpetuity instead of selling the fee-simple was new. He did not, however, approve of the principle, and should be ready to oppose it. It might look very well in theory, but he thought it would not work at all well in practice. Mr. Bundey had said that after all the people who held the fee-simple could hardly be said positively to be the owners of the land; but if they were not, they lived under a comfortable delusion that they were, and that was the same thing. He had also said that if you gave men a lease of land for 999 years it would have quite as good an effect in bringing people here to become cultivators of the soil as if you gave them the land in fee-simple. He did not hold that view at all; but, on the contrary, thought if a man had a lease of 999 years he would give nearly all he possessed to have the term increased to 1,000 years. So great was the desire of men to own a piece of land that nothing less than letting them have the fee-simple would give satisfaction. He did not think that that view would find a general acceptance in the House, though it had been propounded by so great a writer as Mr. Joha Stuart Mill. It was, like many other propositions of the kind propounded by writers of Mr. Mill’s standard, much better in theory than practice, as they who propounded them were so much in the study and so little in the world that they had a very small insight into human nature and its necessities. What Mr. Bright had said in reference to our land laws not being so liberal as those of Victoria was very like a cry of “stinking fish.” He considered that there were advantages here for taking up land not to be found in the colony of Victoria. Much of the land in this country could be cultivated at a much cheaper rate than that in Victoria; and its produce could be brought to market much more cheaply here than in that colony. There was a large quantity of land in Victoria which before it could be taken up for the, cultivation of cereals required a considerable expenditure of money upon it in drainage, whereas in this colony lands which were taken up for such a purpose did not require the same expenditure. He did not think it became members of that House to raise such a cry as that, as the opinion given by the hon. member Mr. Bright, coming from such a quarter, might have the effect of sending people away to Victoria, especially as the hon. member knew nothing at all about the question. The proposition for submitting land to sale after having for a certain time passed the hammer at a reduced upset price of 12s. 6d. per acre was one which required much consideration; but whether the Bill passed the Committee with that proposition included in it or not, - he should be prepared to support the measure in consequence of his desire to see legislation on the question completed.

Mr. SMITH, said that as the provisions the measure would be considered at length in Committee there was no reason why members should make lengthy speeches on the second reading. He intended to support the Bill, and should do so most cheerfully, as he thought with certain modifications it would meet the wishes and wants of the public generally. The question of clearing and grubbing lands was one which he thought should be taken into consideration in the framing of the Bill. He thought the sale of land by auction at a reduced upset price after it had lain unselected for five years was a provision that would meet the wants of the country. If the land was not taken up after five years it was evidently not worth £1 per acre, and for his own part he would like to know what it could be considered worth. Had the system of granting leases in perpetuity been adopted from the foundation of the colony the principle might have been a correct one, but as it had not been introduced yet he thought it was not possible to adopt it now. There were many points of the Bill on which he had certain observations to make, but he would defer them till the House went into Committee.

The Hon. J. HART should vote for the second reading of the Bill, and endeavour as far as he was able to assist the Government in carrying it— (Hear, hear)-as he considered that it suited the purposes both of the agricultural and other portions of the population. He was opposed to reducing the upset price of land below £1 per acre, and he held the opinion in common with others who had been long resident in the colony, for he had seen that land not worth more than a few shillings in the early days had, in consequence of public improvements, been made to realize more than £1 per acre. He was therefore opposed to reducing the price after the expiry of five years. He thought the question of the amount of land to be surveyed and opened for selection was rather pertinent to the question before the House, because every year there would be a larger amount of land surveyed than was likely to be taken up for agricultural settlement. Therefore a much larger amount would be in the market than could be dealt with under the provisions of the Bill, and if this large accumulation of land was pushed into the market at the end of five years at a reduction in the upset price of 20s., it would be a great mistake indeed. What was the object of making this Bill as liberal as it was? It was because it was best for the interests of the colony that its best lands should be cultivated, and there was no advantage in bringing poorer lands into cultivation at a lower rate. He trusted that the House would not agree to that principle of the Bill. He was surprised at the hon. member for Stanley’s argument that persons who had not gone into agricultural pursuits before should not be allowed to do it now, as it might be as well said that a great many men of various callings in this place who up to the present time had not been able to go on the land, but now wished to do so, should not be allowed the privilege. With the exception of one or two points, which he would endeavour to rectify in Committee, he would support the Bill generally.

Mr. KRICHAUFF said that it had been stated by one hon. member that the Bill with certain modifications would meet his views. He might say the same thing. If that was not the case the labour of the last two sessions would have been lost. Some of the provisions he disapproved of, but he would vote for the second reading, and endeavour to introduce amendments in Committee. He differed from the Hon. Captain Hart as to the cause of the increased price of certain lands, as he did not consider that it was the improvements effected in their vicinity which had enhanced their value, but the settlement of population in their immediate neighbourhood, and for this reason he would oppose any Bill which would not permit a farmer in any district obtaining a single section adjoining his own land. Many farmers had applied to him who wished to take upland adjoining their own, but were prevented from doing so by the present law. He thought hon. members would see that an amendment in this direction required to be made. Before the adjournment he was so much impressed upon this subject that he had given notice of motion to bring about the amendment which he desired. He thought that the numerous sections of land which lay idle in the settled districts ought to be disposed of on terms which the House should agree to. The hon. member Mr. Bright had mentioned that he would like to see the land that had been for some years offered for sale, and not taken up. disposed of under the Scrub Lands Act. When that Bill came before the House he had prepared an amendment to that effect, which, however, was not able to be taken notice of. He hoped., however, the Government would consider that suggestion. The Commissioner of Crown Lands was right in bringing in a Bill to deal with the inferior and scrub lands, and another to deal with the agricultural lands. The difficulty in this case would be to draw the line as to where inferior lands commenced and where good lands ended. He hoped that the provisions in the 6th schedule for the Government allowing for clearing and grubbing would be retained in the Bill. One other matter he had to allude to which he supposed was merely an oversight on the part of the draftsman of the Bill. In clause 37 it was not stated whether the land was to be sold on credit. He did not think that the principle of cash should be exclusively adopted at the auction sales. One thing was certain, whatever form the Bill took it would require to be so framed as to pass the Upper House, as he knew that many persons who wished to settle would proceed to take up their residence in other colonies if the land legislation of the colony was again postponed. He therefore hoped that the House would not make the same mistake which had been made in other sessions, and haggle over small matters, for in any shape it must be an improvement upon the present laws. He would support generally the second reading of the Bill

Mr. ROGERS intended supporting the second reading. He thought it very praiseworthy of the Government to grapple with this important question at the earliest moment, and he hoped it would soon be settled. He was sure they did not require any greater evidence of how very tired hon. mem­bers were of discussions on land reform than to look at the empty benches. He believed the country was also tired of it, and most anxious to see the land settled on some permanent and sound footing. There were several matters in the Bill which he should like to see altered in Committee. The hon. member Mr. Mann opposed substituted residence very much, but he considered that one of the best parts of the Bill. If they did not allow it the farmers, for whom they wished to legislate, would not be able to take advantage of it, for there were many who wished to plant their sons out on fresh land, and not give up their own homes. Then, too, there were many men in business and professions who would like to have a freehold property, but who would not like to leave their businesses at present. Cultivation would be the guarantee that the land would be properly used. He did not see why only the inferior lands should be offered at auction whilst the free selector had the pick of the best on credit. He certainly thought that the best land should be for the agriculturist, but when they had given him the choice for six or twelve months, he thought persons who wished to invest ready money in the purchase of land should not be liable to competition in the auction-room, seeing they had to take second-class land. That should be thrown open at £1 an acre for cash, without competition of credit purchasers. He agreed with Mr. Hart as regarded the survey of good lands for agricultural purposes, but quite disagreed with him as to the price of inferior lands not being altered. Land which had passed the hammer was not worth £1 an acre, and it was unreasonable to expect it. There was no occasion for the survey of inferior land. The settlers took it up, and got their four or five bushels an acre off it, and so their occupancy not only improved them, but the country generally, for agriculturists at a distance hearing of the light yield would not be likely to become settlers amongst them. He believed nothing had done more harm to the colony than the survey of these inferior lands, which could be turned to account by another class who would have done well for South Australia. He believed the declaring of the whole colony one agricultural area would curtail the survey expenses very consider­ably. He was pleased to find that the Government intended to deal with the scrub lands in another measure, for the districts with which he was more particularly acquainted—Mount Barker and Encounter Bay—contained thousands of acres of scrub land which hitherto there had been no inducement given to people to take up. They knew from sad experience that people with capital had not come to settle amongst them, but he thought they should legislate so as to hold out inducements to persons who wished to purchase land for cash to settle in the colony. By holding the land too long back from cash purchasers they should prevent this, and they should therefore guard against doing so. He wished to allude to the many townships which had been surveyed under Strangways’ Act. They had enough, if they were all built upon, to take all the population of Great Britain. They were a preposterous waste of money, and also a waste of soil, for they were generally upon nice little choice spots, on which farmers could do very well. With these remarks he would content himself with saying that he was prepared to assist the Government to the utmost to pass the Bill into law.

Mr. WARD, who was received with cheers, said but that he believed he should not be doing his duty if he gave a silent vote upon this question he should not have spoken. The simple fact that there were only fifteen or sixteen members present showed that there was not such a lively interest taken in the question of land reform as was manifested two years ago. He distinctly guarded himself from saying that the same interest was not taken in the country, for he thought it was simply a case of hope deferred making the heart sick, (Mr. Townsend — “Where’s that from?” and laughter.) He thought the hon. Member’s experience ought to teach him the truth of that remark. (Laughter). He did not know whether, as it was said, crabs progressed backwards, but if so the conduct of the Government reminded him of that, for the Bill introduced by them appeared to him to be quite retrogressive, and he was sure scarcely any, or at any rate many parts of it, did not meet the requirements of the country. (Hear, hear, and Oh.) Two years ago no Government would have ventured to have placed such a Bill on the files; or, if they had, they would have received a very decided expression of opinion from all sides of the House. It seemed to him that the Bill was an illustration, particularly of the incompetency of the person who drafted it, and he disputed the fact that it could have possibly been drafted by the late Atiorney-General (Mr, Mann) from the fact that that hon. gentleman told them he intended to vote against its third reading unless the Bill was very materially altered. On the face of the Bill appeared “Prepared by Mr. Attorney-General Mann; revised by the Attorney-General,” so he presumed the present Attorney-General would take the responsibility of it. He took the Bill therefore as an illustration of the incompetency of the Attorney-General, the insincerity of the Commissioner of Crown Lands, and, to use the mildest term, of the indifference of the Ministry as a whole to the land reform which South Australia was so much in need of. (The Treasurer —“Hear, hear;” and laughter.) If he had not expected a good deal from the Treasurer he should not have been so much disappointed at the little they had got. The Commissioner of Crown Lands, in introducing the Bill, told them he took it for granted the second reading would be carried without any difference of opinion. (The Commissioner of Crown Lands—“No.”) Hedistinctly used the words that it was not necessary for him to take up the time of the Committee in dilating at any length upon it. Whenever a second reading was moved he looked upon it in this way— “Is the alteration which it is proposed to effect better than the law which exists ?” and if he thought not he considered it his duty to vote against it, and he unhesitatingly said that the present law was infinitely better for the material interests of South Australia than the law the Government sought to give effect to. (No.) No doubt some hon. member like the hon, member for Encounter Bay (Mr. Rogers), who thought capital should be encouraged, would prefer it. That hon. member said at first they tried liberal land legislation with a view to attract population, which they had failed in doing; but he said, assuming something which never existed, that a liberal land law ever passed in South Australia, he said there never was a law so little calculated to attract population as this Bill. Extremes met, and if Mr. Glyde looked at this Bill as he did he should be very glad to support him in opposing it; for he would say there was no member of the House he would more gladly see in a position to govern South Australia than that hon. gentleman, if—and it was just that one if which had always prevented him giving him his support. As against Mr. Glyde the present Ministry had sought to adopt a middle course, and would not satisfy anybody. Take the question of time for which land was to be reserved from cash sales after being open for selection. The Ministry tried to make it one year. Even on the point which was adopted by a majority of two last session, there was a proviso that it should be six months from the time of the land being put at the higher price before it came down to £1 an acre; but the ministry now made it a year from the time it was first offered for selection, and if the land was put up at £3 per acre, the same as the areas of Tatiara and Pentonvale, and reduced at the same rate, it would be six months before it came down to £1 an acre. The selector in each case would have to wait the same time, and the cash buyer would be able to come in as soon. (Dissent.) There was one area declared at 30s. per acre; the price had been about a month coming down to 25s, and it would be another month before it came down to £1*,* so the Commissioner of Crown Lands would find that if it took two months reducing the price from 30s. to £1, if land was put up at £3 per acre nearly six months would elapse before it came down to £1. Then it had always been provided hitherto that when land which remained unselected was afterwards advertised for sale for cash, that sale was subject to the credit purchaser, even up to the day of the auction; but the Government had swept away that proviso, and when selections were not taken up within a certain time the cash purchaser came in alone. (Hear, hear.) That was a very material mistake from his point of view. Then a number of them had always contended that the deposit should be taken as part payment of the principle, and not of interest; but the Government desired to reverse that altogether. The Commissioner of Crown Lands said they had just about got to the end of their tether in their capacity to select land and reside upon it, but he could not possibly believe if that was the case that the effect of the Bill would be to increase their population; and if it was not going to have that effect they had better not pass it at all. If people came here to settle they would be prepared to reside upon the land they took up. Victoria had always kept that in view, and if they did not they should play into the hands of those who would monopolize the land for undesirable purposes. He took it that the scheme which his hon. colleague put before the colony at the late election was the most liberal and reasonable that had ever been propounded in South Australia, and that four-fifths of the population would unite in supporting it; but he supposed they had lost all chance of carrying out such a policy as that, and he did not want to see any alteration of the present law, unless they gave people an inducement to come here who at present had none. He must say that the Government looked at this question very differently to another proposition which placed a very different value upon a portion of the lands of the colony. They countenanced a scheme which if it had any practicable effect at all, would be to reduce the value of certain public lands in South Australia to a shilling an acre —(The Treasurer—“No)—but sought to maintain a higher value to the agriculturist. He thought he had been somewhat misunderstood by some hon. members when it had been supposed that he wished in any way to destroy a material interest of the country by reducing the actual value of land. The view he had always held was that if they could, by offering more liberal terms than their neighbours, bring population to their shores they should increase the actual value of even the land which was purchased at the present time. But now, whilst they were doing absolutely nothing to gain population, they were perpetuating a system as bad as any in the world, by disposing of their land by a system of lottery. The inconsistency of the Government would be seen in the simple fact that whilst they proposed to fix a higher price than £1 per acre for the land, they did not admit the limited auction, but settled simul­taneous applications by lot. In the Scrub Lands Bill, which dealt with an inferior description of land, they allowed the limited auction system. If they allowed it in one Bill, why not in the other? Something had been said by Mr. Bundey and one or two others who had followed him about the desirability of not selling any more land in the colony. Though there might have been something in that idea originally, he thought a freehold system was much better than a leasehold system. A perpetual leasehold might amount to the same thing: but still he thought if their neighbours gave freeholds, and they gave a perpetual leasehold, the former would be preferred. Inasmuch as he believed the present law, if honestly administered, was better than the Bill now introduced, he should feel it his duty to oppose the second reading, and, if he could find any member to go with him, should divide the House on the question. Possibly from a variety of causes the second reading would be allowed to pass, and then they should be perpetually fighting in Committee over amendments; and he very much doubted whether the result would repay the labour they should have to bestow in the Bill. If it was not amended to his satisfaction he should be prepared to take the same course as he did last session, and vote against the third reading rather than allow it to pass. He knew a good deal was said about the undesirability of continuing the area system, and he was quite content to give the Government the credit of wishing to abolish it. But he would point out that though they sought to do this in one direction they perpetuated it in another, by seeking to distinguish between lands which were good and lands which were bad. They could not adopt anything like free selection, because they reserved the right to deal with the land either under one Bill or another. He felt his position to be a very unsatisfactory one. He came into the House more than two years ago, having been returned for the purpose, and had laboured as hard as a man could labour to endeavour to accomplish a liberal reform of Strangways’ Act; but now he found that there was not the slightest chance of getting it. They had to determine now whether they would return to that Act as it was or make an illiberal amendment, and he considered it his duty rather to stand by the law than go for the amendment, which would be an illusion as regarded the interests which he wished to promote.

The TREASURER (Hon. J.H. Barrow) regretted that the hon. member (Mr. Ward) should have laboured so hard as he had for two years with such small results. But he thought he had himself to blame; for whatever a man’s ability, or whatever a man’s sincerity might be, or how perseveringly he might devote himself to some object, if he was so egotistical as to think that no one but he could be right and every one else was wrong, the same lamentation would always be heard, “I have spent two years,” or whatever the time might be, “in this object, and I have spent the time in vain.” (Hear, hear.) He hoped he would not be offended at his saying that, for he was characterizing the members of the Ministry in his usual style, showing sometimes that he had no respect for them, sometimes for their political principles, and sometimes for their intellectual powers. He had always something bad to say, and nothing good. (Hon. A. Blyth—“.No.”) Perhaps there was an exception once. (Laughter.) He had drawn a series of pictures, and in these days when pictorial representations were rife it was dangerous thus pictorially to describe people. He had given each member of the Ministry a diploma, if he might so speak. On that of the Attorney-General was inscribed the word “incompetency“. The medal for the Commissioner of Crown Lands would be inscribed “insincerity.” There would be a medal for his poor self also, and on that would be the word “indifference.” (Laughter.) This was a happy alliteration. They were all polysyllables, and commenced with the letter “ i.” But he would make a new medal and present it to the hon. member for Gumeracha, and inscribe upon it “impudence.” (Loud laughter.) He hoped the hon. member would forgive him, as he was not making an original attack, but was speaking in defence of himself and colleagues. He said the Government had taken a middle course, and would please no one. He would have them, he supposed, take an extreme course; and what would be the result? Another lamentation of failure, The hon. member must know that it was vain for any man of politics to take an extreme and violent course, and say, “I will have every iota I want or nothing at all.” No man did ever legislate practically upon that principle. The principle he (Mr. Barrow) went on was to get all he could, to make the best terms he could, and if he could not get exactly his own way, and if he could not get what he considered the standard of perfection, get as much as he could—(Hear, hear)—but any man who aimed at more than that was unphilosophical, utopian, and unpractical. Mr. Ward said if this Bill would not increase the population they had better abandon it. Supposing it would not increase the population, if it bettered those who were here, would he say it was worthless? He would like to see both objects accomplished; but supposing the Bill did not succeed in bringing more population, and it did succeed in improving the circumstances of those who now inhabited the country, would it not be of some value? (Mr. Krichauff—“Keep our own.”) Yes; let them keep people here if they did not attract others. They had not only to consider bringing more here, but how to avoid driving the resident population out of the country. (Hear, hear.) He should like to increase the population by giving inducements to other people to come here; but supposing the measure did not have that effect, if it increased the happiness of those here it was wrong to say they had better abandon the Bill than pass it. The hon. member Mr. Ward said the Government were pursuing a crab-like policy. He was afraid his idea of politics was like the description given of a crab—that a crab was a fish, red in colour, and that it went backwards; to which the reply was that a crab was not a fish, that it was not red, and that it did not go backwards. (Laughter.) He had mistaken the policy of the Government, and the natural history of the crab. (Laughter.) The Government had to express their thanks to the House for the very fair way in which the second reading had been entertained. He desired to have full and free discussion on the question. Nor did they suppose that such a Bill, affecting conflicting interests, would pass through Committee without serious amendment. The experience of past years had been a great guide to them in reference to this matter, and if it had taught them anything it was this, that there was not likely to be a Parliament returned that would give a unanimous vote upon a Land Bill. Mr. Bright had made one remark in which he thoroughly coincided in saying it was time a Bill was passed, and if not to last many years to settle the question for some period. He agreed not simply because the land question should be settled, but because it blocked the road to other questions. (Hear, hear.) It had been a stumbling block to legislative work for years, and would be till it was settled. He hoped the Land Bill would be passed, not only because he considered it an important matter in itself, but because they would clear away a mountainous obstacle, and be able with more calmness and deliberation to address themselves to other important political subjects. Some remarks had been made about the Bill being to a great extent a copy of one passed by the Assembly. It was so, and ought to be so, and it would have been a strange thing if the Government, finding that a Bill had been passed by that House, and only did not become law owing to the dissolution, had made extensive alterations. The fact that a Bill something like that was passed was a justification for their not seeking to introduce any essential changes. What right had they, unless they discovered that the country had reversed the decision of the last Parliament—and they had not discovered that—to make violent changes in a measure that had been passed by that House, and only failed to become law through the accident of a dissolution? He would remind hon. members that there was another Bill in connection with this to deal with the inferior lands - the two bore a mutual relation to each other. Although the Government did not wish the two Bills to be discussed together in all their details, they decided that they should be on members’ files together, so that in discussing one Bill they would be able to compare it with the other, and see how the two would work together side by side. Mr. Ward said that while he gave the Ministry credit for attempting to abolish the area system, they were establishing it in another way; but they would not do so. The present law declared what good land should be sold, whereas the Scrub Lands Bill proposed by the Government simply declared what inferior land should be sold. There was a great difference between them. One defined and limited the good land, and the other defined and limited the bad and inferior land. The object of the Government was to encourage agricultural settlement, and although they differed from one another—he did not mean the members of the Government—as to the best means of effecting that object, he believed they were one at heart with regard to it, and all wished to encourage and facilitate agricultural settlement—(cheers)-and as he believed that was the object of every member of the House, he felt they should be able in Committee to shape the different clauses so as to give effect to the common desire. It had been told them that this Bill was not as liberal as the Victorian measure. He joined issue upon that point, and said it was more liberal. According to the Victorian Act during the first year 2s. was paid, second year 2s., and third year 2s., which was taken as part of the purchase-money—(Hear, hear) —but look at the amounts. The balance amounted to 14s. and improvements to 20s., making altogether 40s. Now under their Bill for the first three years would be paid interest 2s., the purchase- money would be 20s., and improvements 10s., making in all 32s. He thought Mr. Bright would hardly disprove that what had to be paid in Victoria was 40s., and here 32s.. and therefore the terms of the present Bill were easier. If the figures were not correct, he should take it as a favour to have them corrected. And then in framing a Land Bill it was really necessary, if they had a view to practical legislation, to consider what would be the fate of the Bill in another branch of the Legislature. It would be very easy to say. What is the other branch of the Legislature to us? Let us assert our privileges and stand upon our rights, and do the correct thing; never mind what is the effect in another place. That would be well if their only object was debate, but if their object was to pass a Bill without being subservient to the other House, it would only be prudent and wise to consider what would be the fate of the Bill there. He was perfectly acquainted with every member of the Legislative Council, and was quite sure that any extreme measure such as Mr. Ward would be in favour of would be thrown out—(Hear, hear)—and that being the case, for a member to insist upon an extreme course, and revile the Government because they desired a medium course, showed that his wish was not so much to pass a law as to keep up a land agitation. (Mr. Ward—“No.”) He was glad to hear the hon. member say so, for however good agitation might be—and good men had said, “Agitate! agitate! agitate!” with a clear object in view—if they wanted to get a Bill passed into law without fruitless consideration and controversy, it was their duty as reasonable men and patriotic representatives to look at the probabilities of its fate in another branch of the Legislature. Whilst the object of the Government was to encourage agricultural settlement it was their duty to protect the revenue. They could not afford to ignore the financial aspect of this question. If they could afford it, he would not object to give away the lands, or part with them for a nominal price; and he would go with those who said it was better to have a numerous, industrious, and wealth-producing population, by giving the land away, than to sell it at a high price; but the government of the country must be carried on, and how were they to do it if they sacrificed altogether their land revenue ? The more areas that were thrown open and the more facilities that were given to enlarge holdings the more and heavier would be the demands made upon them for roads, bridges, and other public works; and those who settled upon the land would not be silenced when they made application for internal communication by their being told, “You got your land very cheap, and you must do without roads and bridges.” They were entitled therefore to look at the proceeds of land sales as a fund whereby they should have year after year to construct these roads and bridges, without which the cultivation of the land would be an unprofitable pursuit. That would be a second reason why the Government intended to have the instalments paid as interest instead of purchase- money. Interest would be paid at a low rate, and if they gave facilities to farmers to get land, and to get it wherever they wanted it, not to go to a distant part of the colony, they would not object to these terms with deferred payments when they knew that the proceeds would go to the construction of works in the vicinity of their own sections. He would now say a word as to substituted residence. He had always held to it, and it was not a new idea to him since he had taken a seat in the Ministry. He had always respected the arguments on the other side, however, because they were directed to the accomplishment of an object which was quite as dear to him as to those who used those arguments. Those who insisted upon stringent terms of residence did so to prevent dummyism. He was equally anxious to do so, but believed it could be as effectually done in another way without compulsory personal residence. He imagined they could accomplish the end, and obviate the grievance and hardships that compulsory personal residence entailed. Some people argued as if the idea of land reform was to create a new class of farmers. That was not so; but the object was to give enlarged facilities for farming to those now engaged in that occupation, as well as to those commencing agriculture; and there were very many farmers with small farms who would like to take up new holdings without leaving their present homes. In 1871 there were 690 holdings of from 30 to 50 acres, and 2,256 holdings of from 50 to 100 acres—thus from 30 to 100 acres there were 2,946 holdings. Going to larger farms he found that there were 3,022 of from 100 to 200 acres, making from 30 to 200 acres 5,968 holdings. Taking another step, and then he did not come into what he called large farms, there were 2,166 holdings of from 200 to 350 acres, so putting all together there were from 30 to 350 acres, 8,134 holdings. This represented an immense number of small farmers who had farms, homesteads, and holdings, and might have little vineyards gardens, and who did not want to break up their present homes, but would like to have a little more land without abandoning their present residences. With regard to the lands which had passed the hammer, the Hon. Mr. Hart, who gave the Government a very genial support upon the general principles of the Bill, had mistaken the idea of the Government in the remarks he made. He said he should decidedly oppose reducing the upset price of land that had passed the hammer for five years to 12s. 6d. per acre, because the object was to encourage agriculture, and the proper method would be, not to induce people to farm upon poor lands, but upon the better lands. Undoubtedly, but they did not profess to put these up as agricultural or farming lands. They might be very good for grazing, and might be very useful if joined to good land. There might be stony land, sandy ridges, and rocky ground that would not be turned to agricultural purposes, and that were not worth £1 per acre, but they might be taken up and put to other purposes. Mr. Hart mistook the policy of the Government in thinking that they tried to induce people to settle for agricultural purposes on inferior land, which would only result in their disappointment. They had inferior lands which the Government thought it desirable to deal with. If they were in the vicinity of towns or high roads, and might be valuable for building sites, it was a different thing; and they were not referring to those lands, but to those that would not be worth £1 an acre if they waited 25 years or a century. Besides, they would be put up to auction, and if a mistake was made the auction would find it out. Then the Government did not take any power to deal with them without the consent of Parliament, but schedules would be laid upon the table, and during the recess the Government would be able to do nothing. So he did not see that there was any danger, and if five years was considered too short a time the House might fix eight years or any other period. The object of the Government was to pass a liberal Land Bill, as liberal as they could make it with any hope of carrying it, to facilitate agricultural settlement as much as was in their power, but not to ignore the financial aspect, or they could not open up the country. They wished to encourage it by a practical Bill, not by a utopian or visionary measure that would never become law. They wished to settle the land with bona fide farmers and protect the revenue, so that they might have the improvements, without which the land was of little value. The Government would be thankful for any amendments in Committee, for they did not wish to say, “This is our Bill, and we have passed it,” but “ This is the conclusion of a series of efforts made by different Ministries and different Parliaments; this is an Act that has been passed by the joint cooperation of members of both branches of the Legislature, and we will not take any credit for having introduced it.”

Mr. SOLOMON moved that the debate be adjourned, and be an Order of the Day for the following Tuesday.

The motion was declared carried.