**WASTE LANDS ACT AMENDMENT BILL 1866**

**House of Assembly, 23 January 1866, pages 796-806**

Second reading

**The CHIEF SECRETARY** said, as he had already addressed the House at length on the subject-matter of the Bill, it was not necessary for him to detain the House long, especially in view of the heat of the weather. The importance of this question had increased, and was still increasing, in consequence of the continuance of the drought, Many of those runs which when the Bill was first contemplated had a certain amount of stock upon them had had to be abandoned to save the remnants of the flocks and herds alive. The only course the Government could adopt to afford relief to the pastoral tenants was to give them an extension of tenure so as to make a way for them of overcoming this disastrous season, and a remission of rent during the period that they could not be expected to get value from their runs in the shape of grass. The present Bill was intended to provide for the former matter, and another measure would be introduced having reference to the remission of rent. He had before pointed out that under the extension of tenure the Government—the lessors—would not lose anything like so much in proportion as the lessees would gain, as it would induce the latter to make those improvements which it would not otherwise be worth their while to make. The resolutions passed by the House were embodied in this Bill, and the schedules attached to it had been prepared in accordance with the views expressed by the Surveyor-General, and as far as possible were in agreement with the lines marked in the map laid before the House. The lines had not been strictly followed, as it was found that in compiling the schedule it was better not to adhere strictly to the arbitrary course traced on the map. He noticed that a petition had been presented that day in reference to the schedule, and it was possible that others of a similar nature would be brought before the attention of the House; but he would say that they had been prepared to the best of the Government’s ability, advantage having been taken of the knowledge and personal experience of the Surveyor- General. The Government, however, would not throw much objection in the way of their being altered; but before agreeing to any alteration they would have to be clearly convinced that it would be of advantage to the public, while providing that justice should be done to the lessee. He was quite sure that a great change had taken place in the minds of hon. members and of the public as to the character of the drought and the fosses sustained through it. There could be no doubt that the Government in bringing forward this Bill would fail to give satisfaction to the whole of the pastoral interest, but it would be impossible with justice to the public to give them the entire amount of relief they desired. It was unquestionable that a portion of their losses had arisen from over-estimation of the value of the runs they had purchased, and in that respect they had no right to look to the Government for relief or assistance. The drought, however, was one which far exceeded in magnitude anything they before had had experience of. Indeed the northern country appeared to be subject to droughts which a year or two ago were not known of, and it was the duty of the Government to allow such concessions as would enable the lessees of that country to occupy their runs with some chance of profit, which at present was almost out of the question. He knew that hon. members drew a very great distinction between these runs which had been supposed to pay large profits in years past and other runs, and that they were not supposed to grant them consideration on account of one or two bad seasons, such as were now being experienced; but his belief was that the fortunes supposed to have been made from these runs had never been actually realized, and that it was only in good seasons that the returns were anything like so large as was generally reported. He was of opinion that the value of some of this land for pastoral purposes had been overrated. He would merely state further that the resolutions passed in the House formed the groundwork of this Bill, and he would be ready to meet objections which might be raised to it. The measure had been carefully drawn, and reflected credit upon the learned gentleman who prepared it.

The Hon. H. B. T. STRANGWAYS quite agreed that the ingenuity with which the Bill had been drawn reflected credit upon the draftsman. The Chief Secretary had deliberately promised or stated that after the first five years the rental payable under this Bill would be according to Column A, and not Column B; but this promise or statement was not carried out in the Bill—a fact which he would convince any hon. member of if he had a copy of one of the Commissions under which Mr. Goyder made his valuations at hand. believed that the variance between the statement of the Chief Secretary and the language of the Bill was due more to design than accident; for it had been a matter of boasting among certain of the squatters that after all Column B and not Column A would be inserted in the Bill. No doubt some hon. members fancied that the details of valuations published were the valuations referred to in the Bill; but such was not the case. Column A was never returned in the valuations made under the Commissions, but only Column B, and therefore Column B would be the “amount ascertained by the said Act, subject to the reductions therein for improvements.” In private conversation with hon. members, they had said that Column A was adopted as the basis under the Act, and he admitted that any one who had not seen the Commissions to which he had alluded would suppose that the statement of the Chief Secretary had been strictly adhered to; but viewed in the light of those Commissions matters bore a different aspect. That statement had gained much support for the resolutions in and out of the House, and had drawn from many squatters a confession that the Government had sold them. If the Chief Secretary could prove that he had carried out his promise let him produce one of the Commissions, and do so; but the hon. member in his statement had carefully avoided all allusion to clause 4. The last paragraph in subdivision 1 of that section would, when casually read, give the idea that Column A was to be followed, for it said that for "the remainder of the term (after the first five years) the rent shall be for the amount so ascertained as aforesaid without any reduction for improvements,” but practically the amount would have to be arrived at from the valuations made and gazetted—(No)— which were according to Column B. If he was wrong in his opinion there could be no objection to alter the phraseology, so as to prevent future litigation induced by the belief of the squatters that the Act justified them in demanding their runs at the rental fixed in Column B. Without some alteration the clause would, at all events, be as doubtful as the provisions of the Act of 1858, under which perpetual renewal was claimed by lessees, and a right of renewal by annual lessees. Of course if the Act was passed no question would arise during the first five years, but at the expiration of that term litigation would surely arise. He would further point out that this Bill was one-sided, as all legislation on the squatting question had been, and that it granted concessions to the squatters without any corresponding advantage to the public. He would ask what advantage could the country gain from the present measure? Many of the squatters stated that if the extension was granted under Column A it would be no concession to them, and that they would have to abandon their runs; but the fact was they would be the only parties who would gain by taking advantage of the provisions of the Bill. In his opinion it was not proper or right to grant extended tenure on account of this drought. The present proposed action would be construed into a precedent, and he was convinced that, instead of simplifying the relations between the squatters and the public, the Bill would tend greatly to complicate them, as the Commissioner of Crown Lands would find when he had to carry into effect all the subdivisions, amalgamations, and averages recommended. With regard to the schedule, he would say that many runs were included which ought not to be. Take, for instance. No. 594—Messrs. Hope, Moorhouse, Forster, Faulding, and Fisher—the celebrated Hummocks Run, why should it be in the schedule? The rental charged to it was quadrupled by Goyder’s valuations, and yet one of the lessees sold out after the publication of these valuations, receiving at least the full amount he paid for his share. The Chief Secretary had stated that people were altogether wrong in supposing that runs had paid, but he could not see how otherwise their owners could live in England in luxury. The squatters had, in fact, been circulating reports as to the nonpayment of their runs, and as to their having occupied the country from patriotic motives alone for months past; but no such notions were broached prior to the valuations being made public, nor did he think any complaint would have been made had their occupation continued at something like former rates. It was Goyder’s valuations and not the drought that the squatters dreaded and wished to avoid. Some of the clauses of the prsent Bill were so complicated and drawn with such ingenuity that it was impossible to understand them without reading them ten or a dozen times, and having the advantage of a knowledge of the working of the Crown Lands Department. He objected to the Bill, because it would give to some runs a lease of 28 years, and under no circumstances would he agree to its being in excess of 21 years. A sufficient proof that this term was ample was to be found in the fact that under existing regulations all the land in the colony known to be available for pastoral purposes had been applied for. A proviso had been introduced into the 4th clause in the following terms:—“Provided, nevertheless, that whenever the lessee shall not have been allowed the full value of his improvements, according to such valuation, by reduction in the rent as provided by Act No. 8 of 1864, the rent payable under the renewed lease for the additional number of years, as provided by this Act, shall be reduced so that the said lessee may be allowed the value of such improvements.” That would be for the special advantage of 74a (Phillips, Waterhouse, and Milne), better known as the Kanyaka Run, the proprietors of which would under it be entitled to receive a considerable sum from the Government for occupying their run. He had looked through the schedule and believed that no other run would benefit from the proviso, except one in the South-Eastern District, which would be entitled to a small amount under it. He was sure the House would not agree to pay lessees for continuing in occupation of their runs. He repeated that he should oppose granting the squatters concessions in the shape of extended leases. The precedent was bad, and the public would derive no corresponding advantage from such a course. The squatters wished to have it supposed that they were the only persons capable of occupying the country with advantage; but he was not prepared to take that for granted, and he knew that there were many perfectly willing to supersede them. It was the fact that very large tracts of country were held by the squatters merely for protective purposes. They did not occupy them themselves, and their sole object was to prevent others from doing so. If disposed he could mention one person who held.4,000 square miles of country in this way, and he maintained that it would not be right to allow an extension of tenure in such cases. He believed it was intended to introduce an entirely different measure to provide for the remission of rents. He had opposed the resolution on this subject, and he should oppose any such sweeping proposition as was embodied in it, but still he believed that there were cases in which it would be advisable to grant concessions of this sort. With regard to the present measure, he would further caution the House against it, because if passed it would tend to create innumerable difficulties in the Crown Lands Office. He recollected one learned gentleman in the argument on the Moonta cases spoke of the impossibility of understanding the Waste Lands Acts until a judicial construction of them had been given. That gentleman, he believed, was the present Attorney-General, who of course urged upon the Court at the same time the view he took with regard to those Acts. In waste lands matters, as in smuggling, it was considered no disgrace to cheat the Government; so that the man who got the largest quantity of land without paying for it was considered by many as an honest, and by others as an exceedingly clever individual. He could say that he had frequent applications made to him by squatters when he was Commissioner of Crown Lands, and in every case he found that they construed the Act in their own favour, and not against them. He should certainly vote against the motion. He was aware that some persons were in favour of referring these matters to a Select Committee, and he should go for this proposal were he not confident that this would practically be referring Goyder’s valuations to a Committee—a course against which the majority of hon. members were pledged. He should not detain the House longer. His chief reasons for opposing the Bill were that he did not see that the public would gain any corresponding advantage from granting the lessees this extension of tenure; that he believed a concession of this kind was one which no private landlord would afford to an unfortunate tenant; and that he was fully persuaded there was no need to offer very strong inducements to the present holders of pastoral property to continue in occupation, as there were plenty of persons willing to take their places. He should support no measure which tended to keep up the squatting monopoly of the public lands. At present there were, he believed, not more than 180 pastoral tenants, and they sought to retain possession of the waste lands for an indefinite period. Against that monopoly the Parliament should be on its guard, and should do all it could to break it up. He opposed the Bill; but whether he should support a motion to refer the subject to a Select Committee would depend upon the form the motion might take.

Mr. PEACOCK had not spoken before on the question, though he had recorded his vote in favour of the resolution brought forward by the Government. He was not satisfied with the Bill, and would oppose the second reading, not for the reasons assigned by the hon. gentleman who had just sat down, but that Clause 4 was so vague and unsatisfactory that he felt bound to oppose the Bill. He believed no Judge, let alone members of the House, could make sense of it. He was in doubt as to whether the 2nd section in the 4th clause referred to Column A or Column B, and on that ground he would oppose the measure. The Chief Secretary had promised that relief should be granted in Column A, and not in Column B. He had also looked over the map, and he was convinced that no surveyor could determine the exact point of the rainfall. It was not determined by latitude or longitude, but by the presence of hills, trees, and such like in a district. No mere artificial line could be drawn which would accurately define the point where the drought ceased and the rain began. He thought it would be much better to refer the whole question to a Select Committee, who could take evidence as to the various runs and as to the kind of relief to be granted. The House ought not to be influenced in a measure of that kind by petitions such as had been referred to. He did not generally oppose the Government, but had given them a conscientious support. But the Bill then before them would satisfy neither the squatters nor the public. He would move that the Bill be referred to a Select Committee of the House to report before proceeding further.

The Hon. A. BLYTH called attention to the 279th Standing Order, and asked whether it would be competent to move the amendment.

The SPEAKER said there was a distinction in this matter between public and private Bills. The amendment to refer a public Bill to a Select Committee could not be put until after the second reading.

Mr. PEACOCK would ask if he was prohibited from moving the amendment.

The SPEAKER referred to the 280th Standing Order, which said—“After the second reading, unless it be moved ‘ That the Bill be referred to a Select Committee,’” &c., which would seem to imply that such an amendment could only be put after the second reading.

The Hon. H. B. T. STRANGWAYS asked if an amendment to the effect that it was not desirable to proceed with the Bill until a Select Committee had reported on it might not be put.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said that would be an indirect way of doing what their Standing Orders said they could not do directly.

The SPEAKER referred to the proceedings in the House of Commons on the Conspiracy to Murder Bill, and stated that amendments in the nature of resolutions could be moved on the second reading.

Mr. ANDREWS referred to the 278th Standing Order, showing that the House might leave out “now,’''and he thought they might insert words to this effect— “until after the report of a Select Committee.”

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said the Government would oppose referring the Bill to a Select Committee, however it was done. (Hear.) The Hon.Mr. Strangways had said the fourth section of the Bill was ambiguous, but he hoped to show the House before he sat down that the clause could not have been more clearly expressed. As to what had been said by Mr. Peacock he would simply say that it was too much to expect that any Bill could satisfy all parties. But that was no reason for their not supporting a measure which sought to do substantial justice. (Hear.) The question was not whether it would satisfy all persons, but did it do justice to both parties—the public on the one hand and the squatters on the other. He thought the statement that it satisfied neither might be regarded as an argument in its favour, as indicating that it meted out justice to each. He rose early in the debate in order that he might show the House that the wording of the 4th clause had not the effect which the Hon. Mr. Strangways said it had. The country had admitted almost to a man that some concessions must be made to the squatters. The resolutions which the House had already passed had affirmed that; and, in view of that affirmation, he thought many of the hon. gentleman’s arguments were not entitled to much weight. It was said that the squatters were grasping and avaricious; but he was not there to discuss that matter, which might be true or false. The House had said concessions were necessary, and he was there to explain the concessions which the Government were willing to grant. If the House thought the Bill was too liberal they could amend it in Committee. They could deal with it as they thought fit, and therefore some of the remarks of the Hon. Mr. Strangways ought to have no weight. It was in the power of the House to say who should obtain the advantages of the Bill. It was not prepared for the benefit of one person, or half-a-dozen persons, and the House could strike outruns and cut out provisos as they thought proper. The Bill made a difference between the squatters who had suffered most and those who had suffered least. Those gentlemen who had been referred to as having made large fortunes by pastoral pursuits were not included in the Bill (Hear)—as would be seen by the schedule. There might be one or two names there of persons in this class, but these could be struck out if the House thought it necessary. But he said he did not believe that the names of such persons would be found in the schedule— persons who had had the advantage of the Crown lands for long periods. But if there were any they could be excluded. He asked the House not to do injustice to those who really deserved consideration because the names of one or two persons were found in the schedule who had no right to consideration. The Government were anxious to give relief to those outsiders who had worked hard and suffered much. (Hear.) They were the persons whom the Bill contemplated. It had been said that the Surveyor-General could not determine the rainfall. That he denied. The line was not an arbitrary one. It was not a certain line of latitude or longitude arbitrarily chosen, but a line which was placed on the map as the result of personal observation and enquiry. Mr. Goyder went, out specially to determine it and lay it down on the map. He had every reason to believe that it was accurately laid down on the map. The distinction between the drought and rainfall was clear and palpable. He might show by quotations from the works of travelers how clearly the line of rainfall could be determined; but he did not wish to tire the House. (Hear.) Frome said how singular it was that on the Porcupine Ranges the country looked as if rain had never fallen since the deluge, while at Mount Bryan, only a few miles south, he got bogged. Sturt and Gregory, and all other explorers, had pointed out the distinction between the rainfall and the drought. Now if the House wished the outside country to be settled, they must deal liberally with the lessees. The speech of the Hon. Mr. Strangways was creditable to him, and was an improvement on some speeches which he had delivered in that House. He might say, indeed, that he had set himself an example. He had shown moderation and good taste. But he was persuaded that no member of the House would ever think of going to the hon. gentlemen for information on the question before them. He thought 28 years’ leases were not too long to grant to some of the far-off squatters. The Government and the country might even gain by a larger extension still. It had been said by a portion of the Press that working men and working farmers ought to go out and take up country for pastoral purposes. But it was utterly impossible that men without capital could do anything in the outside country. Wells had to be sunk 200 or 300 feet deep, and unless capital was found nothing could be done. They ought to encourage men of capital to support those who take up the runs, and that would be good for the country; but they could not do so unless the House was liberal. At the present time he knew there were persons waiting to see the fate of the Bill before they decided to take up land. With respect to the 4th clause in the Bill he would say that the Government had broken no promise made to the House. They had, in drawing the Bill, anxiously aimed at keeping faith with the House, it should be remembered that the Columns A and B were not known in their legislation. (Hear.) The wording of clause 4 was necessary because of the wording of the Act of 1864 and he was sure if hon. members would only carefully look at the clause and attentively study it they would see that all the Chief Secretary had promised had been provided for. In framing the clause he had in his mind the Act of 1834, and he could not mention either Column A or Column B, which were not mentioned in that Act. But the clause explained itself. It had been said that the clause would not be easily understood ; but he would say there was always a difficulty in construing any Act. That was no reason, however, why they should nor, seek to remove evils by their legislation. The difficulties would have to be dealt with in the best way they could. Though such difficulties existed they should not prevent the Legislature doing the best they could for the country. The Hon. Mr. Strangways had had some experience in drawing Bills, and he was familiar with the work in the Crown Lands Office. Let him, then, assist the Government with his talents and experience in perfecting as far as possible the measure before the House. (Hear, hear.) He hoped the hon. member Mr. Andrews would do the same. He would gladly accept the assistance of either or both. When the runs were valued under the Act the allowance for improvements was distinctly recognised, and he thought the Hon. Mr. Strangways had been somewhat hypercritical in the remarks he had made. The House should carefully look at the wording of the 4th clause, and they would see that no other construction could fairly be put upon it than one which was in harmony with the promise of the Chief Secretary. The proviso in the fourth clause had not been prepared to relieve such cases as those of Messrs. Phillips, Waterhouse, & Milne. When he first drew the Bill that proviso was not in it. (Hear, hear.) And that arose from the fact that he was not so well acquainted with the Crown Lands Office as gentlemen who had held the office of Commissioner. He had communicated with the Surveyor-General by permission of the Commissioner of Crown Lands; and Mr. Goyder pointed out what an injustice the Bill would do to two or three runs, the names of which he (the Attorney-General) did not know. He might have referred to Kanyaka; he supposed he did, for the name had been brought before the House till he was tired of it. (Oh.) He had enough to do in preparing the Bill without going into particular cases. The Surveyor-General suggested to him that some lessees would not be fairly dealt with unless improvements were granted by the Bill. The House, he was sure, would see with him that this was only fair. (Hear.) The Cabinet had not seen that in the first Bill prepared, he (the Attorney-General) inserted it on his own responsibility, on the representations of Mr. Goyder, and then when the matter was brought before his colleagues they saw that absolute justice demanded the insertion of the section. He asserted that this was a very different thing from paying Messrs. Phillips, Waterhouse, & Milne. The statement that it was paying them was entirely unwarranted. Their case was contemplated neither by the Government nor by himself. He would not say that the Hon. Mr. Strangways was intentionally misleading the House, but he had mislead them. The reasons he had preferred against the Bill ought to have no weight with the House. If they had any force he could alter the objectionable clauses in Committee. He took no credit for drawing the Bill, as he had only done his duty to the best of his ability. The squatters had no legal right to concessions; but many of them had suffered severely, and they deserved some consideration at the hands of the House, not only for their own sakes, but for the good of the country. Justice demanded that something should be done.

The Hon. T. REYNOLDS had no desire to take up the time of the House unnecessarily, but he could not agree to the second reading of the Bill. He regretted that the Speaker had ruled against referring it to a Select Committee. He thought the case might be met by some such resolution as this:—“That it is not expedient to pass any measure for granting an extension of tenure to the pastoral lessees until a Select Committee of this House shall have been appointed to enquire and report on the subject.” He would ask if he could move such a resolution.

The SPEAKER said the amendment was somewhat analogous to that proposed by Mr. Peacock, though he thought according to the following passage in “May,” page 459, it was allowable:—“It is also competent to a member who desires to place on record any special reasons for not agreeing to the second reading or other subsequent stage of a Bill to move as an amendment to the question a resolution declaratory of some principle adverse to or differing from the principles, policy, or provisions of the Bill, or expressing opinions as to any circumstances connected with its introduction, or prosecution, or otherwise opposed to its progress, or seeking further information in relation to the Bill by Committees, Commissions, or the production of papers.”

The Hon. T. REYNOLDS would then move the amendment. He asked the Commissioner of Crown Lands the other day whether the schedule of the Bill would be in accordance with the schedule and map formerly laid on the table; and he was informed that they were the same with some variations. (A laugh.) He had run through the Class A, and he found that the schedule varied considerably with the schedule formerly produced with the resolutions. He marked eight changes. (Hear.) As far as he had gone in Class B he had discovered six alterations. (Hear.) Perhaps the Government could explain this, for it wanted explanation. The Chief Secretary had spoken of petitions from squatters to be transferred from one class to another, and no doubt these petitions would come in. The Attorney-General said the Bill would not satisfy the House or the lessees. (Attorney-General—“No, no.”) He had said this was the beauty of the measure. (No.) He did not pledge himself to the words, but he knew he gave the substance of what the hon. gentleman had said. He was not accustomed to quote poetry in speeches—(Hear)—but he knew he was correct when he said the Attorney-General had informed the House that the Bill would satisfy neither party—the public nor the squatters. (No.) Then to whom did the hon. gentleman refer? The words were spoken deliberately. (The Attorney- General— “ No.”) Then they ought to have been. A gentleman in his position ought to consider his words. Why did he not consult his chief on his left hand? The Chief Secretary said many lessees sought to be transferred to other classes, and many more would, and therefore he thought the measure would not satisfy either the House or the squatters. He objected to arbitrary lines of demarcation. He would not trust even Mr. Goyder to fix such a line. He had confidence in that gentleman as a man, but he would not invest him with such large powers. (Hear.) Indeed, no one man could settle this question. Those on one side of the line would want to get to the other side. He would prefer fixing a broad line and giving relief to all beyond it on certain conditions. He would give extensions of seven or 10 years after valuation. Many leases were falling in every year, and he would prefer that they should be valued within the next 32 months. He would give seven years’ extension to leases beyond a certain line, and some beyond, 14 years. With regard to leases of various dates he would take them at a mean. The Chief Secretary had misunderstood his suggestion made the other day. He objected to arbitrary limits fixed by one man. He objected to one valuator. (Hear.) He would prefer some other method which would give justice to the public and to the lessees. The lessee ought to recommend a valuator to act for him and the Government one to act for the country, and they might call in a third in case of dispute. (Hear.) But he protested against one man to value the runs or to define the rainfall. (The Attorney-General—“No."’) The Attorney-General, who said no, had forgotten the facts. Mr. Goyder had defined the line of rainfall in a fortnight. No one man could perform such a duty as this. The House had passed certain resolutions accompanied with maps and schedules. The matter had now been altered, and the Surveyor-General would probably alter again, if he had the power or the opportunity of doing so. He did not think the Government believed the Bill would satisfy the public or the lessees. The Attorney-General said the 1st section of the 4th clause was exceedingly clear. He had looked at it, and he must say he did not think it referred to Column A; but if it was the intention of the Government that it should refer to Column A, it could be so altered in Committee as to leave it without doubt. He was pleased to hear the Attorney-General say he was tired of hearing of Kanyaka. There would have been no necessity for a Commission to enquire into the Northern runs had it not been for Kanyaka. Kanyaka always came up, and was always a difficulty, and he was not surprised the Attorney- General was tired of the name. No doubt Kanyaka had suffered deeply; but it would receive redress like the other runs. He thought the Government had admitted their Bill was unsatisfactory. The Government might have given concessions and relief without a Commission of Enquiry; but he believed that some persons outside got the ear of a gentleman in that House and talked him over to do what was quite unnecessary. He would move the amendment in the hope that the subject would be remitted to a Select Committee.

Mr. GLYDE seconded.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL, in explanation, said he had never asserted that the Bill would not satisfy the squatters. He had never said that these persons sought to be removed from one class to another.

The Hon. T. REYNOLDS—The Chief Secretary said so.

Mr. PEACOCK asked if the amendment was not virtually the same as that which he wished to propose.

The SPEAKER said virtually they were the same, but there was a difference; Mr. Peacock wanted to refer the Bill, on the motion for its second reading, to a Select Committee, whereas Mr. Reynolds’s amendment only proposed to delay the second reading till the principles on which a Bill should be framed were considered by a Committee; and it did not follow, even if the amendment were carried, that the Committee would be appointed.

Mr. GLYDE was surprised that the Commissioner of Crown Lands was so wanting in self-respect as to allow another Minister to take charge of the Bill which belonged to his department. The Attorney-General had made a clever but not a clear speech. When it was said that none of the prosperous squatters’ names were on the schedule, he had looked the names up, and he found amongst them men who were regarded as the representatives of the wealth of the colony. He would give a few of them for the information of the Attorney- General. He found the names McCulloch—(Hear and laughter)-who had made every sixpence he possessed by squatting. Price Maurice, Grant, Williams, Tinline & Fisher, and a great many more, whose names were always understood to represent a large amount of capital, all made out of the Crown lands, and made fairly. To say none of those gentlemen were to be regarded in the concessions which were now proposed to be made was nonsense. He was amazed that such gentlemen should come hat in hand to the House. (Treasurer—“Hear.’') The Treasurer was one of them himself. (Laughter.) He would not object to subscribe to a private subscription for the Treasurer if he required it, but he did object to such as he asking money from the Government. The Attorney-General took credit to himself for the provision in the Bill in favour of the lessees of the Kanyaka Station. Indeed, he had asked the Commissioner of Crown Lands to allow him to use the Surveyor- General for this purpose. It would seem that the intention was to return to the lessees of Kanyaka a lot of money. Mr. Goyder had valued the run at £375 under Column A, and at *£25* under Column B, and he was not sure if the Bill passed that they would not have to return these gentlemen some thousands of pounds. It was a nice legal point. He was afraid the Attorney-General did not exactly know what he was talking about with respect to the legal aspect of the clause. He (Mr. Glyde) was not a lawyer, but the House would have to look at the effect of the clause as the Judges would look at it. They would interpret the Bill by itself, without looking behind it to Column A, which had not been gazetted. He had no confidence in the Chief Secretary, as he well knew. He had on a former occasion screwed him down to an admission, which he had asked the reporters to carefully note. He was afraid he would find some loophole for substituting Column B for Column A. If that were done it would be a grievous wrong. (Treasurer—“ Hear.”) The Treasurer had said he intended to put in B he would have believed him. The clause must be altered, or it would leave the very loophole to the Chief Secretary which he feared. The Hon. Mr. Reynolds had said a great deal about Mr. Goyder being sole Valuator, and he (Mr. Glyde) was surprised to see how the feeling had toned down with respect to that matter. It was strange that, notwithstanding all the squatters had said against one Valuator, the squatting Government should now put so much faith in him. (No.) Why, they were a squatting Government. The squatters could turn them out any day. (Hear.) They were anxious to get the Column A. (Mr. Williams— “No.”) Was the hon. member not going to vote for the second reading? The squatters were too wise to vote for a Select Committee. They knew that some inconvenient questions might be asked; and he would not be surprised if some extraordinary revelations were made—with reference to Kanyaka, for example. The interests of the squatters were not identical with the interests of the public. The House sat as a Jury there, and they ought to have all the evidence they could get. Although he professed to understand the question, he confessed he would be voting in the dark if he voted for the second reading. He could not see where it might lead them. He would therefore vote for the amendment.

Mr. N. BLYTH would support the Bill. The Attorney-General had left but little to say. After the able and logical explanation which that hon. and learned gentleman had given of the meaning of the 4th clause, he thought none but those who would not understand it would go on asserting that it was a violation of the Chief Secretary’s promise. It only needed to be carefully read. He believed the Bill would honestly carry out the declared intentions of the Government and of the House. Mr. Glyde seemed, in the way he talked, to forget that the Bill had to pass through Committee, when he would have an opportunity of removing every doubt which might exist. He agreed with the Attorney-General that Columns A and B had no existence in law. They were familiar with the letters in the House, though persons outside were not. He did not think the wishes of the House could have been expressed more clearly than was done by the Bill, and especially the 4th clause. The first section clearly had reference to Column A, and the second to Column B. Both were clearly expressed. But if any doubt existed there was nothing to prevent the House in Committee putting the meaning beyond all doubt or question. The Act of 1854 provided that the value of improvements should be returned by the reduction of the rent for five years. This was conceded by the Act, and he held that simple justice required that this principle should be carried out to such persons as the lessees of the Kanyaka Run, where the outlay had been so large compared with the size and capabilities of the run. There was no question about the remission of rents before the House, for were they called upon to discuss the question whether the lessees were rich or poor, or where they had made their money. If they had been successful in pastoral pursuits they had benefited the country. They had served others in serving themselves. To make up for great losses, and to keep the squatters on their runs, 28 years was not too long a tenure. The Government or the House did not want more than the actual value of the runs. The clause to which so much exception had been taken did, he thought, embody the resolution passed by the House. It held out advantages to those who had not yet been pastoral lessees, and gave to them all the advantages which were conferred on the old lessees. He would heartily support the second reading.

Mr. ANDREWS had listened with a great deal of attention to the last speaker, and complimented him upon the excellent support he had given the Government. The Ministry when they went into office took as their platform the general good of the community, of course, and the settlement of the pastoral question in particular. He, however, had heard no title of proof that this Bill would settle the question. The great difficulty in connection with it had arisen from the unfair attempt to make the squatters by the Act of 1858 pay more to the revenue than they ought to have paid. The difficulty still existed, and he should not be induced by a consideration of the heat of the weather to allow this Bill to pass into law without consideration. The question was too important to allow this Bill to be assented to without reflection as the panacea of all squatting ills, when afterwards it would be found to be the basis of endless litigation. It was exceedingly important that the measure should not be doubtful in any of its particulars. The Attorney-General had made a clever speech, but he had not met the argument of the Hon. Mr. Strangways with regard to Columns A and B, which argument he believed to be correct in its conclusions. The hon. member had been complimented on the excellent manner in which the Bill had been drafted, and the Hon. Attorney-General had laid down as a rule in drafting that it was wrong to use different language in the same Bill to convey the same ideas; but was it a sign of good drafting to describe the same action in two entirely different ways? He did not point to this as a grievous blunder, but to show that the Bill was not without errors: and he was of opinion that the 4th clause would lead to as much difficulty as the renewal clause in the Act of 1858. However hot the weather might be, he would rather let the matter be referred to a Select Committee than pass a measure which would lead the country to suppose that the question was settled when it was not. Having pointed out an inconsistency in the argument of the hon. member Mr. N. Blyth with regard to clause 6, and endeavored to show that that clause, taken in connection with section 3, involved an absurdity, the hon. member alluded to the danger of allowing a measure, the meaning of some of the clauses of which was very misty, to pass without consideration. The Attorney-General had stated that he was sick of Kanyaka, and in saying so he had shown his ingratitude, for it was to Kanyaka that he owed his present position. That had turned out the previous Ministry, for no sooner had certain of its proprietors arrived from England than rumblings and mutterings were heard. A Commission was sent out at Kanyaka’s instigation, but before it returned the government in office when it started, and who had stated their desire to do justice to the squatters had been turned out. It was believed that their successors had a cut-and-dried policy which was to cure all these difficulties; but if this Bill was the production of their prolonged labour, truly it was nothing but the *ridiculus mus* they heard in the Latin Grammar. One reason why this matter should be referred to a Select Committee was that there the real grievances of the squatters could be stated; and if the report did not accord with the evidence the House might, upon the evidence, take such action as they deemed best. It was impossible that 400 or 500 different leasees could all be represented in the House, for one or two members interested in the subject could scarcely be said to be a sufficient protection to so important an interest. An important matter of this nature ought not to be settled by a Bill hastily rushed through the House. The hon. member for East Torrens had put it that hon. members could make enquiries for themselves; but that was not the way to go to work. If there were real cases of hardship—and he believed there were—a Committee ought to investigate them. If evidence was refused on particular matters, then, as in the case of the Northern Commission, no report should be returned on such matters. He had seen something in the papers about the session being closed in a week or two, but if so it would be closed before this squatting question had been settled. They had had quite enough patchwork legislation on this subject since 1858, and the result of it had only been to make the rent in the garment bigger and bigger. Wow a comprehensive measure should be introduced, which would be so framed as to protect the profits of the squatters without involving his being pointed at and made the subject of popular odium; but instead of this the course which was proposed might well be indicated by the letters upon the map. The Government were treating as an A B C D question a subject which was far too important to be dealt with in any such manner.

Mr. MILNE moved that the debate be adjourned till next day.

Carried.

Resumed debate.

Mr. CARR was disposed to regard the BilI suspiciously, or at least cautiously. They were requested to legislate for the especial benefit of one particular class, and to give favours and immunities to the class which had until very lately been the most prosperous section of the community. No persons,~ no class of men—had realized wealth so certainly as the pastoral lessees. Where copper had given its thousands sheep had produced their ten thousands; and for one grower of wheat who had returned to England a rich man 50 growers of wool had arrived at that happy consummation. And as further proof of this prosperity he might adduce the fact that these leaseholders were also the largest landowners in the colony. They had been allowed to occupy the land at a merely nominal rent of 10s. per square mile; whilst the only class of men who could or would compete with them in the purchase of this land—the farmers—had been compelled to give for the same at least £640 per square mile, and often much more, before they could possess or occupy a single acre. And thus by the large profits accruing on this preliminary occupancy at nominal rents the pastoral lessees had been enabled to a great extent to outbid and outbuy all competitors. Another proof of that prosperity was that so certain had the speculation in these leaseholds been considered—so sure the return from sheep—that the Banks had given the squatter almost unlimited accommodation—(No, no)—and thus he could obtain an advance of thousands, whilst a farmer’s bill at three months for £50 would be refused, simply, and for no other reason, than because it was a farmer’s bill. (No, no.) Not that he blamed the Banks for this; they had a right to manage their own business, and certainly should understand it better than he could; but all this showed that the Bank Managers in the colony— perhaps the very best judges to be found as to the prosperity or stability of different occupations—had believed and acted on the belief that growing wool was a pursuit with certain and considerable profit in it, and growing wheat was a very uncertain and precarious speculation. And in this judgment they had been sustained by facts, for only some five years ago farmers on the plains were nearly starved out, and at the present time the farmers on the hills, far more in number than the distressed squatters, were in an equally bad case, although they being a poor people, and much despised, and not like the pastoral lessees, wealthy and influential, there was no legislation either present or prospective for their especial benefit. He also remembered that the part of the community so benefitted had always been very able and exceedingly willing to take care of their own interests. The Assessment Act of 1858 was intended to tax the squatters; but there their legislators “ went for wool and came home shorn,” for the five years’ renewal clause, with its consequences past disputes and present lawsuits had been a greater loss and injury to the colony than the assessments paid had been an advantage. Had it not been for that wretched Assessment Act their arrangements for a renewal of pastoral leases would now have been on a sure basis, the present complications and lawsuits would have been avoided, and each lease when its term expired would have been sold by auction. And now in this Bill they were desired to legislate afresh. The pastoral lessees, as represented by the Ministry, desired this for their special profit, and while they themselves were in open and avowed opposition, resisting former legislation in the Courts of Law. Certainly they were resisting the real action of the late government and the ostensible action of the present Government in those Courts as to the annual leases, fighting with one hand and begging with the other, (Hear.) But before the House passed this Act of fresh concessions they ought to see the pretty little bill of law costs they would have to pay as a consequence of former legislative action in the management of pastoral leases, and as the fruit of the present pending actions at law growing from it. (Hear.) But the Bill would neither settle these lawsuits nor prevent others, nor in any way terminate the present differences, even if they passed it. On the contrary, instead of ending strife, it would only trash occasion it. Its provisions were so partial— so calculated to give to the occupants of pastoral lands great advantages, in which the rest of the community were allowed no share—that there was not even a semblance of equal justice in the measure. He would ask whether the Bill could in way set, or help to set this question at rest - -would it even prevent future Parliaments from examining the circumstances under which it was introduced in the first session of Parliament deeply pledged to their constituents to pursue a different course? For certainly many hon. members—he thought a majority of the House—were pledged by their oft- repeated statements at the late elections to open the pastoral lands as speedily as possible to competition by auction for the whole of the colony. And how those members could, after their oft- repeated statements, which certainly must be regarded as promised and pledged by their constituents, close and continue the runs to their present occupiers for another series of years without submitting them to auction, he could not understand. The thing—even if it were just, which it was not— was so contrary to all that passed between them and their constituents about a year ago that he could hardly believe it possible those hon. members would vote for the second reading of the Bill. He acknowledged there were weighty reasons —not for the passing of this Bill, but that relief should be in a less objectionable form, and therefore he was in favour of a remission of rents rather than an extension of tenure without the appeal to auction. The House, he believed, judged correctly the other day in not adopting the resolution to give it both ways, and in saying if the pastoral lessee had his relief in time he had no claim for it in cash also; but he submitted that a remission of rent was a present relief, and that it would be next to impossible to enforce payment of those rents in many cases. He therefore was disposed to give the remission of rent as proposed, and reconsider the question of extended tenure, so as to preserve the principle of sale by auction—subjecting all new leases of Crown lauds to that test—reserving to the resent tenant, in case of such sale, an interest in is improvements. If this was done he would certainly be prepared to vote for the remission of rent; but he must vote for the Select Committee, as likely to give more perfect information on this question. He took this course because it was most desirable that not only should the cases requiring relief be fully known, but because the remedy should be in proportion to the evil. To remedy a temporary evil they ought not to upset all their present arrangements. If there was proved, acknowledged, urgent distress amongst the farmers it might be a reason why Government should give the sufferers fresh seed, as in New South Wales lately; but it would never be considered a reason why fresh lands should be given to the farmers, and the system of sales by auction abandoned. So with the leases—at present at their termination they will be sold by auction. So far this was as it should be: but the Ministerial project as before them in this Bill tampered with and destroyed the sale by auction, and to remedy a temporary distress would inflict a permanent evil. He would say let the House give all the relief it could to the real sufferers, short of giving up the auction sale; but this he would not willingly surrender. Nor did the real sufferer in the Far North dread this test. He knew it would not harm him; but pretenders opposed it, knowing that whatever concession of valuation of improvements might be given them, still they would be subjected to the thing which they hated—fair competition—and dreading no valuation, either by one Goyder or three Goyders, so much as their own valuation, given with a little assistance and improvement from their neighbours in the auction-room. He would oppose the second reading.

The Hon. A. BLYTH was like Mr. Peacock—he had not yet spoken on the question before them. He felt the difficulty of his position, as he differed —he might say, conscientiously—from many of those hon. members whom he was accustomed to vote with, and whom he respected. (Hear.) He thought there was a considerable amount of ignorance in some hon. members as to the question now before them. Mr. Carr had shown that he did not entirely understand the question. There was no motion to refer the Bill to a Select Committee before the House. (Hear.) The Hon. Mr. Strangways, for one, was opposed to such a Committee. He thought it possible that the squatters would be glad to refer the matter to a Select Committee, where they could bring forward their grievances. The fact was the consideration of the Bill was made a party question. (Hear, hear.) The amendment did not pledge the Hon. Mr. Reynolds to go to a Select Committee. It was moved only to prevent the second reading of the Bill. But who knew what might follow if the amendment was carried? He had agreed to the resolutions; and, as the Bill would fairly carry out the resolutions which the House had accepted, he would vote for it. The Bill carried out all the promises which the Government had made, and he was surprised that any hon. member, with the smallest pretensions to logical accuracy, could deny that the Bill provided for the extension of leases under Column A, and not under B. He thought the discussion yesterday had swept away the sophisms which had been brought forward as arguments. The Government had framed the Bill so as to make it both legal and intelligible. It was not for the benefit of the pastoral classes alone, but for the benefit of the whole community. The distress occasioned by the drought was not only felt by the squatters or the merchants, but by the tradesmen in Rundle and Hindley streets. (Hear.) He would not regard the squatters alone, but he would look at the interests of the general community. It was remarkable that none in the House—and, as far as he knew, only one man out of the House—were opposed to some concessions being granted. (Hear.) Mr. Glyde had said he was prepared to make some concessions. Mr. Carr said the same, and so did the Hon. Mr. Strangways. All these gentlemen admitted it was for the interests of the whole community that such concessions should be made as would induce the squatters to continue in the occupation of their runs, not only for their own sake, but for the sake of the colony. (Hear.) The late Ministry, of which he was a member, were quite prepared to go even beyond the present, if that were possible. Mr. Andrews had said that he had no reason to like the squatters, for they had helped to turn him out of office. (Mr. Andrews No, no.”) Then he said he had no reason to like Kanyaka. (Mr. Andrews— “No.”) Well, then, he would put it another way. The hon. and learned gentleman said, “Kanyaka had arrived from England, and Kanyaka had turned him out. (Hear and laughter.) He had no more reason to like the squatters than the hon. member had. They had done themselves much harm. They had neither the wisdom of the serpent nor the harmlessness of the dove. (Loud laughter.) They had turned out a Government which they ought to have kept in, and they had dissolved the Parliament when there was no necessity for it. They had been ill-advised, and had acted selfishly and foolishly. But that was no reason why justice should not be done to them at the present time. (Hear.) It was, he believed, impossible to exaggerate the amount of distress and suffering caused by the drought, and certainly the Bill did not go too far in the way of relief. He must refer to another common mistake which was often made, and which Mr. Carr had fallen into—the mistake of supposing that the Banks were always ready to give unlimited accommodation to the squatters, while they refused to assist the farmers. He could say, as a Bank Director, that this was a mistake. It was a sort of business which Banks disliked. (Oh.) They preferred turning their money over oftener. He had often heard statements of this kind about the Banks. The farmers were not a small and despised class as they had been represented. At the present time, he dared say, the Banks would look with suspicion on a squatter’s account. (Oh.) He would again remind the House that the widespread distress had got down to the retail tradesmen. Men who formerly turned over their thousands were not now turning over tens. This was no exaggeration. He knew it of his own knowledge. (Hear.) He wished to affirm the great principles of the Bill by his vote for its second reading. He was not pledged to its details. He held himself at perfect liberty to strike out any line, or even the whole schedule if necessary. (Hear.) He hoped the House would not be led by any able and insidious amendments which might be brought forward. Mr. Carr had spoken as if every member in the House had been pledged by his constituency to take a certain course in that question. He for one was not pledged. He had a considerate and kind constituency who had exacted no pledge from him. It was said that some hon. members were actually pledged in writing. He held that it was not creditable either to exact or to give pledges. (Hear.) He believed it was fair and just and right to ask the squatters to contribute more to the revenue than they had done previous to the Act of 1858. If they had been wise they would have accepted the offer of a former Government to pay 2d. a head for every sheep proved to be on the run. But they opposed that. The squatters prepared the clause in the Bill of 1858, their solicitor revised it, and their representative took charge of it in that House. (Hear.)

They were to blame for the appointment of one Valuator. They asked for Mr. Goyder, and they got him. He did not approve of only one Valuator, it would have been better to have three. The Bill, he thought, would enable the members for East Torrens to vote for it. The electors there had. held a meeting—they generally did hold meetings when exciting questions were before the country— (a laugh)—and they passed a resolution that every case should be dealt with on its own merits. Well, the Bill would provide for that. The House might take up any tine and alter it. Those hon. gentlemen could not object to it then, for it would enable them to carry out the wishes of their constituents. (Oh.) Much had been said of Kanyaka. Kanyaka was a small run held along with a number of others. It was a small run, on which large improvements had been made. It was not fair to say that the rental would be £375 under Column A and £25 under Column B. The fact was, if Mr. Goyder’s principle had been carried out, no rent could have been demanded. But the Government determined that at least 10s. a mile should be paid in every instance, and the leaseholders did not, like others, receive back the amount of their improvements. A similar case was that of Mr. Jones in the South-East. The improvements on his run were so large that they could not be returned in five years. He was glad the Bill provided for such cases. He thought they who voted for the resolutions were bound to vote for the Bill. His support to the measure was cordial and hearty, and if the amendment was carried, he should certainly take the feeling of the House on it.

Mr. BRIGHT had listened with interest to the debate. The question was an important one, and he would adopt the same course he had taken on a former occasion; he would get all the information possible before voting for remedial measures. He had formerly said that the Government were ill-advised in opposing the appointment of the Northern Commission. Let them look at their report and at Mr. Goyder's report, and then say whether they were in possession of sufficient information to come to a conclusion on the important measure. Both the House and the squatters had a right to have the whole case before them, for they were not then in a position to deal with the question. He asked if one Goyder or 10 Goyders could in 14 days point out and define on the map the four different classes of country. The thing was morally impossible. The Chief Secretary had told them that the lines first agreed to had been altered. To his mind all that had come from Mr. Goyder's visit could have been done in the Survevor’s office. He believed the House wanted to deal justly with the squatters. (Hear.) But further information was necessary. He thought, too, the Government had prepared the Bill according to the best of their ability. But it was not comprehensive enough to take in the largest sufferers. What information had they on that point? The Government themselves were not satisfied with the Bill, or the Attorney-General would not have told them that they might alter it as they saw fit in Committee. Where was the responsibility of the Government? They ought to have stood by their own measure. The Attorney- General said they might strike runs out of one class and put them into another. (Hear.) How, then, could justice be done by the lines and the maps? The course suggested was making the House, instead of the Ministry, the Executive. They wanted information as to the losses in A, B, C, and D. The Hon. A. Blyth had said that the Bill agreed with the resolutions. But the Government said the House were not bound by the resolutions. He did not see how the House could go into the whole question unless they had power to call for witnesses. The whole thing would become an endless job unless they had power to consider the squatters. (Laughter.) The Attorney-General said they might take the runs *seriatim:* but what did they know, or could they know, of every case. He would refer to the petitions from squatters which he had presented to the House yesterday to show how difficult it would be for the House to deal with the question. Unless they had a Select Committee they must legislate in the dark.. Every one admitted that grievances ought to be redressed, but the Bill did not satisfythe squatters. By the present Bill, it was said the extension was to be according to Column A; but was that right in all instances..He contended they wanted fuller information, in justice to the squatter and the country, and they ought to and he was surprised that any hon. member, with the smallest pretensions to logical accuracy, could deny that the Bill provided for the extension of leases under Column A, and not under B. He thought the discussion yesterday had swept away the sophisms which bad been brought forward as arguments. The Government had framed the Bill so as to make it both legal and intelligible. It was not for the benefit of the pastoral classes alone, but for the benefit of the whole community. The distress occasioned by the drought was not only felt by the squatters or the merchants, but by the tradesmen in Rundle and Hindley streets. (Hear.) He would not regard the squatters alone, but he would look at the interests of the general community. 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The squatters prepared the clause in the Bill of 1858, their solicitor revised it, and their representative took charge of it in that House. (Hear.)

They were to blame for the appointment of one Valuator. They asked for Mr. Goyder, and they got him. He did not approve of only one Valuator. It would have been better to have three. The Bill, he thought, would enable the members for East Torrens to vote for it. The electors there had held a meeting—they generally did hold meetings when exciting questions were before the country— (a laugh)—and they passed a resolution that every case should be dealt with on its own merits. Well, the Bill would provide for that. The House might take up any line and alter it. Those hon. gentlemen could not object to it then, for it would enable them to carry out the wishes of their constituents. (Oh.) Much had been said of Kanyaka. Kanyaka was a small run held along with a number of others. It was a small run, on which large improvements had been made. It was not fair to say that the rental would be £375 under Column A and £25 under Column B. The fact was, if Mr. Goyder’s principle had been carried out, no rent could have been demanded. But the Government determined that at least 10s. a mile should be paid in every instance, and the leaseholders did not, like others, receive back the amount of their improvements. A similar case was that of Mr. Jones in the South-East. The improvements on his run were so large that they could not be returned in five years. He was glad the Bill provided for such cases. He thought they who voted for the resolutions were bound to vote for the Bill. His support to the measure was cordial and hearty, and if the amendment was carried, he should certainly take the feeling of the House on it.

Mr. BRIGHT had listened with interest to the debate. The question was an important one, and he would adopt the same course he had taken on a former occasion; he would get all the information possible before voting for remedial measures. He had formerly said that the Government were ill-advised in opposing the appointment of the Northern Commission. Let them look at their report and at Mr. Goyder's report, and then say whether they were in possession of sufficient information to come to a conclusion on the important measure. Both the House and the squatters had a right to have the whole case before them, for they were not then in a position to deal with the question. He asked if one Goyder or 10 Goyders could in 14 days point out and define on the map the four different classes of country. The thing was morally impossible. The Chief Secretary had told them that the lines first agreed to had been altered. To his mind all that had come from Mr. Goyder's visit could have been done in the Surveyor’s office. He believed the House wanted to deal justly with the squatters. (Hear.) But further information was necessary. He thought, too, the Government had prepared the Bill according to the best of their ability. But it was not comprehensive enough to take in the largest sufferers. What information had they on that point? The Government themselves were not satisfied with the Bill, or the Attorney-General would nor. have told them that they might alter i*i* as they saw fit in Committee. Where was the responsibility of the Government? They ought to have stood by their own measure. The Attorney- General said they might strike runs out of one class and put them into another. (Hear.) How, then, could justice be done by the lines and the maps? The course suggested was making the House, instead of the Ministry, the Executive. They wanted information as to the losses in A, B, C, and D. The Hon. A. Blyth had said that the Bill agreed with the resolutions. But the Government said the House were not bound by the resolutions. He did not see how the House could go into the whole question unless they had power to call for witnesses. The whole thing would become an endless job unless they had power to consider the squatters. (Laughter.) The Attorney-General said they might take the runs *seriatim:* but what did they know, or could they know, of every case. He would refer to the petitions from squatters which he had presented to the House yesterday to show how difficult it would be for the House to deal with the question. Unless they had a Select Committee they must legislate in the dark. Every one admitted that grievances ought to be redressed, but the Bill did not satisfy the squatters. By the present Bill, it was said the extension was to be according to Column A; but was that right in all instances?. He contended they wanted fuller information, in justice to the squatter and the country, and they ought to have it before passing the Bill. He hoped they would not be hasty, but discuss the whole question calmly and dispassionately. He very much regretted being obliged to oppose the Government. (Ironical cheers and laughter.) It was more satisfactory for a young member to support the Government; but he would do his duty. He was not afraid of the weather, nor of a long sitting. He would do what he believed to be right. (Hear.)

Mr. GOODE thought, on reading the Bill carefully, there was some ambiguity in the first section of the 4th clause. There was nothing in the Bill to show whether Column A or B was meant; and lie could not see how the words could bind the Government to levy the rents under A or B. It was said that the clause was so plain that no one could misunderstand it—that it was clear that Column A would be enforced. In answer to that he could only say that two out of the three legal gentlemen in the House took a different view of the clause. If this difference took place in the House, contrary views as to the meaning of the clause might be taken by the Judges. Now, it was exceedingly undesirable that any ambiguity in the clause should be allowed to remain. As an example to them, he would refer to the Act of 1858, the ambiguity of which had led to great inconvenience. Some said the lessees had a right to a perpetual renewal, and some denied it. This showed the evil of ambiguous legislation. They ought to be careful of the wording of their Acts, or difficulties would be continually arising. He would sooner have half a dozen Committees than have their legislation ambiguous. He might also refer to the annual leases as having caused difficulty. The Government sold them, took the money, and kept it. (Laughter and “Shame.”) Now, it was better to take time to consider the question than to fall into such mistakes. Their Acts would be interpreted according to what they contained, and not by what the Chief Secretary understood. (Hear.) It had been argued that they who had voted for the resolutions ought to vote for the Bill. He did not vote for some of the resolutions, therefore he felt at liberty to vote as he thought right. If tramways were made northward this would enhance the value of the Northern runs. (Hear.) Now he was unwilling to give all the advantage to lessees. He thought the country ought to share in it. He said, therefore, that 21 years' leases were quite long enough. They ought not to alienate the Crown lands for a longer period. Mr. N. Blyth, his colleague, although one of the most intelligent members in the House, did not, he thought, clearly understand the scope of the Bill. (A laugh.) He said future leases would be granted for the longer term. That would have been an advantage to some squatters in the East and West. But he thought his colleague had misread the Bill. Those persons would think they were going to get 28 years’ leases; while, as far as he could understand, they would only get 14 years’ leases. (The Attorney-General— No.”) Then he did not understand the Bill. (Hear, hear.) They were working in the dark . One of their newspapers, the *Register,* had mistaken the Bill, and had spoken of 17 years instead of 14. The Surveyor- General had left out the Far East and the Far West. Mr. Goyder might have laid down the line correctly, and might be able to say that 14 years should be granted on one side and 28 on the other; but he could not see it. North of Adelaide there were five distinctions of country, and further away only two. He did not think this was correct. The squatters there mustered strongest, and that accounted for so many gradations. Some of the squatters in the western districts expected a 28 years’ lease; but the promise would be like the apples of Sodom. They ought to have the remission of rent as an alternative, or the extension of tenure in one Bill. This would have been much better. (No.) They had listened to some interesting speeches. Some who knew something of banking, and some .who knew nothing, enlightened them. But a great deal had been said that was totally irrelevant to the question. They had nothing to do with the way the Banks manage their affairs. That might be safely left to themselves. The Hon. A. Blyth had referred to a meeting at East Torrens—the most enlightened constituency in the colony. (Oh and laughter) But the House was not bound by the opinions expressed at the meeting at the Town Hall, Norwood, which had passed a resolution that-each case should be dealt with on its own merits.

Their speaking out on this question might suggest the comparison to the three tailors of Tooley- street. (A laugh.) He did not think the House could go through the schedule and discuss every case on its merits. It would be an individual thing tp do so. He could not do it. Let every one entitled to concessions have them, even though he might be possessed of millions, (Hear.) He was not sure that the Act of 1864 would not have to be repealed if the second section of the 4th clause was carried out.

Mr. WILLIAMS would vote for the second reading. The amendment gave no chance to the squatters at all. When the Bill was read a second time he might not object to refer it to a Select Committee. The greatest and fullest enquiry was necessary that Parliament ought at last to understand something *of* the squatting question. He had formerly been severely rated for saying that a large portion of the colony was unfit for agriculture, but now people were beginning to learn that there was a limit to the agricultural land. There was much poorer land than was found in the inner districts of New South Wales. They had greater difficulty in obtaining and storing water, and often when they had made reservoirs no rain came to fill them. That question was getting understood now by the House. The Press had done something to enlighten the public. The referring of the Bill to a Select Committee was not the question before the House. The matter had been taken up on party grounds, and it seemed to be not a question of relieving the squatters, but to see how long they would hold out in the hope that rain might come. Last session he had said he was not confident that rain would come during the year, and it did not come; and he said now he was not certain that it would come this year. In other colonies droughts had continued for three years, and it might be so here. If there was no rain at Kanyaka before April the sheep must die. Even now they could not get out of the way, but fell down and never rose again. They had not seen the last of the evil, and it was a serious question whether the squatters could hold out much longer. He thought Mr. Goyder had drawn the line bounding the arable land very correctly, and he spoke of his own knowledge. They had heard much of Columns A and B. Why not go into Committee and make the matter sure? The only defect in the Bill was that it made no provision for Boards of Valuation, which ought to have been introduced. It was neither in the resolutions nor in the Bill. With regard to lengthened tenure, he would say that if the House discriminated sufficiently between agricultural or semi-agricultural land, and that land in which crops could only be grown about twice in 10 years, they could not be too liberal on this point. Of course he did not ask for a fabulously or absurdly extended term, but a reasonable addition to the period of the leases would be highly beneficial to the country. Improvements could only be effected in many places with great difficulty; and in the outer districts the profits accruing to the lessee during the first 13 years, unless under very exceptional circumstances with regard to the supply of water, would be a mere nothing. His returns would all be laid out in searching for water, and when the expense of fencing was added, it was impossible that he could have any surplus when the term of his tenancy was so short. And in fencing it was to be remembered that it was useless to enclose more than a few square miles in one paddock. The area included should not be more than sufficient to allow the sheep to feed over and then to return to water. In order, therefore, to manage the sheep properly many paddocks would have to be enclosed and wells sunk in each of them. If such a course could be followed the squatter would be in a better position to meet seasons of drought, for his flocks would not tread down such an immense amount of grass as they did in the absence of all fences, and consequently the supply would last longer, the stock would maintain i:s condition, the wool be higher priced, and the expenses of management be reduced. One of the main policies of the House should be to turn the country in this way to the best account. Under the existing system everything was greatly complicated, and it was difficult to know what was best to do. One matter which appeared to be greatly overlooked was that Mr. Goyder completed most of the Northern valuations in a month or two. This was rather speedy work, but the country nevertheless threw up their hats, as it were, and said, “He is a wonderful man, and can make no mistakes,” When, however, he was sent out to fix the line of the rainfall—a task which could be performed by any one with the greatest ease, for on one side there was a perfect desert, whereas two or three miles off there were well-grassed hills—it was said that it was impossible for him to do it. He believed that the line fixed by Mr. Goyder was approximately correct. They were told a great deal about squatters having made a great deal from their runs, but in the majority of cases their profits consisted in the increase of their flocks. And when those flocks died, what was the result? Why, that they were entirely impoverished. Besides this, it was a fact that many of them had before gone far into their bankers’ and merchants’ books; so that besides losing the sole representative of their wealth they found themselves in debt. Some of the squatters, had they realized years ago, would have been rich; but the source of their wealth being gone, what was their position? They were worse off than if they had nothing. A great deal had been said about Kanyaka; but that run ought to be viewed as a whole, and as containing 360 square miles, and not simply in connection with the small block of land upon which the main improvements stood, so that it might be only justice to the proprietors to refund their money in consideration of improvements. They had been told by the Hon. Mr. Strangways that only about 183 persons were interested in squatting, so that it did not matter much what policy was adopted; but they had been informed that day that 500 lessees had been enriched by squatting. He did not know where to look for the 500; and indeed he had found upon making a calculation that two-thirds of those who had retired and gone home with considerable means were quite unconnected with squatting pursuits. They had heard about the squatters being large landholders; but this very fact would tell greatly against them in case of any commercial crises, for many of them had borrowed largely to complete their purchases. Looking at the next step that the squatters would have to take towards restocking their runs, he would remark that they were not in so good a position as was supposed, for they had been in the habit of sending their surplus stock to the back districts of the other colonies, which also had been suffering from drought. In order to regain possession of such stock they would have to pay dearly. Indeed he should not wonder if ewes shortly were not obtainable under 25s. per head: and how could the squatters give that price, besides paying high rents and clearing off their back rents, with any chance of profit? He feared that the pastoral tenants would not be rid of all their difficulties if the rain came; and he trusted that the House would, as far as possible, refrain from viewing this as a party question. s

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Mr. TOWNSEND moved the adjournment of the debate until next day.

Carried.