

disastrous, and perhaps it would be well to make this inspection as soon as Mr. C. E. Dempster's flock is properly quarantined. With these general instructions I leave you to act as you may think advisable. Mr. Craig, the Chief Inspector, will be here next week, when all necessary arrangements as to dipping can be made." I do not pretend to be an expert in the matter of infected sheep, but I have no doubt that in Mr. New we have a gentleman who thoroughly understands the subject, and he will, I feel sure, take the necessary steps to prevent the spread of the disease. The Chief Inspector will be in Perth next week, and, under his directions, it is to be hoped that the scab will be soon eradicated, and that we shall not hear anything more of it in the southern portion of the colony. I might also add that in consequence of the reports that have come to me in regard to the dip at the Irwin, I have telegraphed to Mr. Craig, the Chief Inspector, telling him to make strict inquiry as to the manner in which the sheep have been dipped there. This dip was established for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of the Scab Act, which makes it compulsory that sheep travelling from the North to the South should be dipped. It is reported that the solution has not been kept up to the proper heat, and that the dipping has been done carelessly. I have no doubt that Mr. Craig will make a thorough inquiry, and if it seemed to him that any of the servants have been guilty of negligence he has authority to dismiss them and appoint others more trustworthy in their place. I can assure hon. members that this outbreak has caused considerable annoyance to the Government, who are sorry to think that the scab should have broken out in a district which has been clear for such a number of years, and that annoyance will be intensified if it should appear that the outbreak has been caused through laxity or negligence in the dipping at the Irwin.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

THE PRESIDENT (Hon. Sir G. Shenton) announced the receipt of a Message from the Governor notifying that he had assented, in Her Majesty's name, to the following Bills:—

1. *An Act to apply out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund the sum of One*

hundred thousand pounds to the Service of the year ending 30th June, 1894."

2. *"An Act to provide for the raising of a sum not exceeding Five hundred thousand pounds by the issue of Treasury Bills, and for other purposes."*

DESTRUCTIVE BIRDS AND ANIMALS BILL.

This Bill was read a third time and passed, and was ordered to be transmitted to the Legislative Assembly.

ADJOURNMENT.

The Council, at 2:50 o'clock p.m., adjourned until Tuesday, 8th August, at 2:30 o'clock p.m.

Legislative Assembly, Wednesday, 2nd August, 1893.

Excess Bill: third reading—Petition of Mr. Majir Logue—Interruption of Member while Speaking—Return showing Sandalwood Licenses issued in York and Toodyay Districts—Homesteads Bill: second reading—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the chair at 4:30 p.m.

PRAYERS.

EXCESS BILL, 1892.

THIRD READING.

Bill read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

PETITION OF MR. MAJIR LOGUE.

MR. SIMPSON moved "That the petition of Mr. Majir Logue, praying that measures should be taken to cause the Commissioner of Crown Lands to appoint a day for arbitration, in connection with the purchase of a block of land within Lease No. $\frac{6}{352}$ by the Midland Railway

Company, be granted." He said: This is a matter which has been referred to me personally, by a man well known in this House and throughout the colony. It points out certain disabilities, or grievances, and they seem to be honest grievances, which he has suffered in connection with the Lands Department and the Midland Railway Company. He is a settler along the Company's track, and he informs me that he has been put to grave inconvenience and positive loss by the inattention, as he says, of the Commissioner in not fixing a day for the arbitration with regard to his claims for the portion of land which the Railway Company had given him notice of their intention to take. The petition, which is printed, and has been placed before hon. members, fully explains this, and I cannot imagine there being any objection to what the petition requests. He states his case very plainly, giving exact details and particulars; and he simply asks that a day shall be fixed for the arbitration. Whether his grievances are exactly as he describes them, I will not at present take the responsibility of saying; but I have presented the petition, and I now seek the assistance of this House, in order that Mr. Logue, as an old colonist who settled in the Midland Railway district, may have justice and equity dealt out to him in applying to this House as a last resort. I commend the petition to the consideration of the House, and ask it to be good enough to grant the prayer.

MR. LOTON: In seconding this petition, I am not altogether in accord with it, for there is one word in it which ought not to have appeared there, as it reflects to a rather grave extent upon the gentleman administering the Crown lands, and I regret that the hon. member who presented the petition did not see the desirability of having it amended, or refrained from presenting it. Therefore, to that extent I am not in accord with the petition. With regard to the petition itself, it does seem to me strange that such a length of time should have elapsed before action is taken in the direction indicated. In looking at the particular clause in the Land Regulations, it seems to me there is no distinct time stated within which the Commissioner of Crown Lands shall fix a date for arbitration; but still, the ordinary procedure having been taken, it

seems an unreasonably long time to allow four or five months to elapse before appointing a day for the arbitration. It is possible that a satisfactory explanation may be given. We know that the affairs of this railway company have been hung up for some considerable time; therefore I shall be glad to hear, in the first instance, what the hon. gentleman administering the department has to say.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): This seems to me a most unusual course for anyone having a grievance to pursue, to come to this House before he has tried any other means of settling the difficulty. One would imagine that if it is a difference of opinion on any legal question, he would try the legal tribunals of the country before appealing to this House. As a matter of fact, the Crown Lands Department in this, as in all other things, has taken a great deal of trouble in this matter. It has followed the procedure adopted in dealing with claims made by the lessees of Crown lands along the Great Southern Railway; but although we took the same procedure in those cases, as provided in the Land Regulations, in not one single instance did the parties come to a dispute, during my connection with the department. I believe there was one case somewhat similarly situated to this one; but although the Great Southern Railway Company made no objection to the procedure, and arranged amicably with those who made the claims, that Company has, in a recent instance, altogether contested the applicability of the Land Regulations to the lands acquired under the Company's special agreement with the Government, contending that they are under a special agreement, and that the clauses of the Land Regulations having reference to disputes arising between persons who buy the Company's lands and the original Crown lessees do not apply to them. The same objection has been raised by the Midland Railway Company, who say they are quite willing to pay the fair value of improvements made by the Crown lessees, on lands within the Company's concession, and when such lands are required by the Company, but that the procedure as to arbitration and so on, laid down in the Land Regulations, does not apply to lands acquired by them under special agreement with the Government. The result has been that we have referred

the whole matter to the Attorney General, and he has given an opinion that the clauses of the Land Regulations do not apply. He says that clause 108 of the Regulations of 1887 do not apply, and that the method of arbitration to be adopted may be settled between the parties. I will read to the House a letter received by my friend the Commissioner, from the Company's attorney in Perth, in reply to a copy of this petition which had been forwarded to the Company's attorney:—

St. George's Terrace, Perth, W.A.,

July 25th, 1893.

SIR,—I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of a copy of the petition of Mr. M. Logue, dated the 12th July instant.

2. From the statement in page 3 thereof, it would appear that the Midland Railway Company were purchasers, under the Land Regulations, of the area of land within which the pastoral holding is situated; but this is not so, the area in question being part of the subsidy lands selected by the Company.

3. The obligation to compensate lessees for improvements is regulated by the contract with the Government for the construction of the railway, dated February 27th, 1886, and the special Act confirming the same; and the Land Regulations in no way apply thereto. By paragraph 1 of the Land Regulations, it is provided that nothing therein contained shall affect, or be construed to affect, any contract made before the time at which those Regulations were to take effect (2nd March, 1887), and, if that were not so, it would be impossible to hold that the Company, in respect of the subsidy lands, are purchasers within the meaning of the Regulations.

4. Mr. Charles Crossland has been appointed by the Company their arbitrator in all these cases, and, pursuant to section 56 of the contract, by which section provision is made for arbitration, I submitted to Mr. Logue, on the 4th July instant, the draft of a submission to arbitration for his approval, the receipt of which he has not acknowledged. Any delay will be of Mr. Logue's own causing, for immediately the submission is signed, it will be for the arbitrators to fix the time and place to proceed with the reference. The Commissioner of Crown Lands has no power to fix the date, or otherwise to take part in the arbitration, which, as I have said, is a proceeding under the contract and special Act, unaffected by the Land Regulations.

5. I am proceeding with these cases, so that it shall not be suggested that the Company are seeking to evade or delay the fulfilment of any obligation; but it never can have been the intention of the framers of the contract that immediate compensation should be payable to lessees for improvements, when there is no present intention of disturbing them, and when, in all probability, their occupation may continue unchanged for years. On what conceivable reasoning can it be suggested that a

lessee is entitled to compensation for improvements because there is a change in his landlord, which is all that is likely to happen for a considerable time to come?

6. In paragraph 5 Mr. Logue complains of delay in two former cases. As a matter of fact, he has only been the claimant in one other case, and doubts were entertained of the advisability of the selection, which ended in it being abandoned. While the question of giving up the selection was under consideration, it would have been absurd to have gone to arbitration on a question of lessee's improvements; and as there was no present intention to interfere with the lessee's occupation, his statement that he was put to loss and inconvenience is groundless.

I have, &c.,

W. F. SAYER,

Attorney for the

Midland Railway Company.

The Hon. W. E. Marmion,

Commissioner of Crown Lands, Perth.

I should like to add that I think Mr. Logue is really coming to this House without having any real grievance. He has never been disturbed in any way in his continued occupation of the land; but I may say, on the other side, that he has not paid rent for the land during some time, and that, for the purpose of avoiding the expense of going to law, and to make himself appear to have a grievance, he gets a petition presented to this House, and tries to use the machinery of Parliament to interfere in his favour, when he has not suffered any loss whatever. He has had the land for his stock to run over, the same as before. It seems to me that every person who may have a grievance or any cause of complaint, in order to save himself the expense of testing the question before the ordinary tribunals, if this petition is granted, will come to this House with a petition and ask us to adjudicate upon it, whether he has a legal case or not. I submit that the persons who petition this House should show, at any rate, that they have suffered some loss and inconvenience. It may be inconvenient for Mr. Logue to know that he will have to surrender this land in due time; but as to his not being paid for improvements, there is no likelihood of that whatever, for if the Company take the land they are bound to pay for the improvements, and the Government will take every means in their power to enforce the provisions of the contract. I do not think the House will in any way approve of the prayer of this petition.

Mr. Logue has not suffered loss by any act of the Government; he has not been disturbed in his occupation; he has the advantage, if anything; he has not taken any of the legal steps which he might take in order to get what he requires; and, besides all that, the Company have never refused, for the attorney's letter shows they are willing to go to arbitration, and have submitted an agreement for that purpose, but Mr. Logue has treated it with contempt by not answering the letter.

MR. SIMPSON: That was on the 4th of July, since the petition came down.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): Your petition is dated the 19th July.

MR. SIMPSON: It was drawn up before that. In presenting this petition, I had no idea of inflicting on the Lands Department or on the Government anything unpleasant. It does seem to me peculiar, in connection with this petition, that this House and the Government are to take their law on this question from the Midland Railway Company's attorney. In the letter which has been read to us, Mr. Sayer says that on the 14th of July he submitted an agreement for arbitration; but it was known that this petition was in Perth before that date. With regard to Clause 5, to which Mr. Sayer so particularly alludes in saying Mr. Logue has suffered no loss, I may say he went to the expense of sending his arbitrator to a place appointed, and the arbitrator appeared there on a date fixed, but there was no one representing the Company to meet him. An award was made by the single arbitrator, because no arbitrator for the Company appeared; but upon that award the Company declined to take the land, and Mr. Logue will have to pay all the expense of his arbitrator going there.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): He did not pay any rent, I believe.

MR. SIMPSON: We have no information on the subject, definitely.

MR. A. FORREST: I am sure he has not paid.

MR. SIMPSON: However, under the circumstances, and by leave of the House, I beg to withdraw the motion and the petition.

MR. A. FORREST: This petitioner is one of the hon. member's constituents; but before a question of this sort should

come before this House there are other means to be taken for testing it. I may say that the leasehold of Mr. Logue was selected by the Midland Railway Company, and a letter was sent to him asking the amount of compensation he required for improvements. The reply showed that the amount was so large that nearly the whole block could have been purchased for it. The Company then had a second survey made of the land, and it was carefully gone through, showing that the land was not worth the value of the improvements. Then the Company, rather than fight an action at law about the price, determined to waive their right of purchase and to forfeit the land. From the time the Company selected this land, Mr. Logue has refused point blank to pay the Government any rent at all.

MR. LORON: Then why not forfeit his lease?

MR. A. FORREST: No; the Government could not declare it forfeited because the land belonged to the Midland Railway Company. In paragraph 5 of the petition, this "gallant" Majir makes a statement alleging collusion between the Company and the Commissioner of Crown Lands. I think that is a statement which this House should not allow to be made in any petition presented to it, because the member presenting it has to assure the House that the petition is couched in respectful language, which this petition is not. The hon. member, who represents an important constituency, should have taken the precaution to satisfy himself that the petition was in due form, and to obtain the necessary information before presenting a petition of this sort from a gentleman of an excitable nature, and who has lived in this part of the colony a long time, and has not moved in any way towards its progress, except to scab the whole colony.

MR. CLARKSON: There is one very objectionable word in this petition which the House should not allow to pass. In the near future, as we are likely to have very many cases of a similar nature arising from the large area of land which has been selected by the Midland Railway Company on which improvements have been made by the lessees, it would be well if the Government would put forth clearly how the arbitrations are to be conducted. I confess myself that I have

been quite in a haze on the subject, and I was under the impression that the arbitration must take place as provided in the Land Regulations, though it now appears that the Regulations do not apply to the lands held by these companies. The Government should place the matter clearly before the public, because in the near future there will be hundreds of cases of a similar nature.

Motion and petition, by leave, withdrawn.

INTERRUPTION OF MEMBER WHILE SPEAKING.

MR. LEFROY, in accordance with notice, moved, "That in the opinion of this House Standing Orders Nos. 160 and 161 should be strictly observed in the conduct of its business, and that no member should be interrupted in debate, except in accordance with the provisions of the Standing Orders of the House." He said: I move this motion with a certain amount of reluctance, but I do so because it is the duty of some hon. member to take notice of what occurred in this House during a debate, a week ago; and, feeling it a duty, I cannot stay from proceeding with the motion. Standing Order 160 states distinctly that a motion "That the House do now divide," moved and seconded, shall take precedence of all other business, and shall be immediately put from the chair without any discussion taking place; provided that no such motion can be made so as to interrupt a member while speaking." No. 161 says: "If the motion 'That the House do now divide' be carried, the House shall vote on the question before it without further debate or amendment; but if the motion to divide be lost, the discussion on the original question shall be resumed where it was interrupted." This did not take place on the occasion to which I refer.

MR. CANNING (Chairman of Committees): I submit that the hon. member is out of order in referring to proceedings in committee, until the report of the committee is before the House. I would also point out that, according to our own Standing Order 142, "If any objection is taken to a ruling or decision of the Chairman of Committees, such objection must be taken at once; and, having been stated in writing, the Chairman shall leave the chair and the House resume, and the

matter be laid before the Speaker; and, having been disposed of, the proceedings in committee be resumed where they were interrupted." Again, it is laid down in "May," at page 371: "If none of the interruptions and delays to which committees are liable should occur, the Chairman is directed to report the resolutions or other proceedings to the House. Sometimes he is instructed to move for leave to bring in Bills, or to inform the House of matters connected with the inquiries or deliberations of the committee; and, until such report has been made, no reference may be made to it, nor to the proceedings of the committee." Further, at page 475: "The House is not supposed to be informed of any of the proceedings of the committee until the Bill has been reported." Then again, at page 367, May says: "In the same manner, on the 6th May, 1853, a question of order having arisen on a member's claim to speak, the Chairman reported progress, and the Speaker settled the point of order. But, unless the committee require directions from the House, the regularity of its proceedings cannot afterwards be questioned." I submit, therefore, that the hon. member is out of order in referring now to the proceedings of a committee of which the report is not before the House; and also in now raising any question on a point of order.

THE SPEAKER: I do not think the resolution which the hon. member moved can be guided by our own Rule 142. If I were appealed to now by the hon. member to give a decision, I could not do it, because the rule says the Speaker shall give a decision at once, in case of a point of order of that kind arising. But I do not think that our Standing Order precludes the hon. member from moving a substantive motion; and I do not think that the references which the hon. the Chairman of Committees has made to "May" have any bearing on this question at all. Therefore I think the hon. member for the Moore is in order in bringing forward a substantive motion of the character which he has done.

MR. LEFROY: I shall confine myself as nearly as possible to the substantive motion standing in my name. If it is the desire of the hon. the Chairman of Committees that I should not refer to

what took place the other evening, I shall certainly not do so.

MR. CANNING: I have not the slightest objection, and I shall have an opportunity of reply.

MR. LEFROY: No. 151 of the Standing Orders lays down that the several rules for maintaining order in debate shall be observed in every committee of the whole House, the same as in the House. We have it in our power to make our own rules, and if at any time we consider it well to rescind a rule, we have the power to do so. Of course if it is the desire of the House that we should not have a rule of this sort, I will bow to that decision; but I feel certain that in any assembly of Englishmen such a desire would not be entertained. We must all feel that there must be perfect freedom of debate, and conforming at the same time in all things with the rules and regulations of Parliament; and that, if a member be interrupted while speaking, it must not be in an uncalled for or wanton manner, although it may be done through inadvertence. By this I do not mean that there should be unrestrained license of speech, for this House should at all times control the actions and the words of its members, as it has the power to do; and if there were anything done by any member of this House derogatory to the position that he holds in the House, or by using abusive or offensive language towards individuals or towards the House, I should be one of the first to come forward and resent it. It is the privileges and the rights of Parliament that, perhaps, I may be pardoned for coming forward to protect. Freedom of speech is the birth-right of every Parliamentary institution of our country. That freedom of speech must be protected, and so long as it conforms with the rules of debate, I do not think we can allow that freedom to be taken from us. What position do we come to if we have not freedom of debate. It has been fought for in years gone by; and, having been obtained, it cannot be lightly thrown away. I think that those haloes which are supposed to surround the heads of some hon. members in this House would depart and be no longer seen, if our rules were not observed and freedom of speech were not allowed here, Parliamentary debate would simply de-

generate into a state of savagery if we did not conform to reasonable rules. There is no necessity for me to labour this question, for I am sure the motion will commend itself to the good sense of hon. members; and I would not have considered it my duty to have moved this motion, had we not been told from the Chair, while in committee, that a general call to divide is equivalent to a motion for a division. The orders and rules of this House were not made for the advantage of one party, or for the advantage of any party, but for general purposes, and to preserve general freedom of discussion; and my desire on this occasion is, as far as in my humble power lies, to preserve the dignity of this House, over which you, sir, so ably preside, with a jealous and a scrupulous care.

Question put and passed.

RETURN SHOWING SANDALWOOD LICENSES ISSUED IN YORK AND TOODYAY DISTRICTS.

MR. THROSSELL, in accordance with notice, moved, "That there be laid on the table of the House a return of all licenses issued for the cutting of sandalwood in the York and Toodyay Districts for the year ending 30th June last; such return to show the licenses for each district separately, by whom held, and when terminating." He said: I will not take up time by going into the whole question of sandalwood cutting, but will remind hon. members that in the last session a motion was made for prohibiting the cutting of sandalwood during a period, but the motion was negatived. I bring forward this motion for the production of a return showing the licenses issued, owing to the pressure of my constituents, many of whom feel aggrieved that this question has been treated in an unhappy way; for we find that during the recess a large area of country has been closed against the cutting of sandalwood, an area 350 miles in one direction by 225 miles in another—equal to 78,000 square miles—and that one officer has been appointed, at a salary of £20 per month, to protect such a large area against the cutting of sandalwood. My constituents have a right to feel aggrieved at this action of the Government; and I believe it will be shown that the great majority of the requests for this action to

be taken have come from the York district. The impression is abroad that a large number of licenses are in existence for the storing of sandalwood in the bush. In asking for this return I am only doing the right thing by my constituents. I feel that this question is not to be settled from the standpoint of the hon. member for Northam, or Toodyay, or the hon. member for York; but it is a national question, to be settled on national lines. This question will probably have to come before the House again, in another form; and I trust that the Government will accept the motion, and present the return asked for. I believe it will be seen, then, that my people are in this position, that while they do not cut sandalwood contrary to the prohibition which has been issued, other persons do cut it, and that there are large stores of sandalwood in the bush, along the way to York, and that therefore it suits certain districts to have the area closed. Why it should be closed for two years only I cannot understand, because we are told that there is five years' supply lying along the various lines. What then is the use of closing this area for two years only? There is no question that the Government have erred in the matter, by appointing only one man to conserve sandalwood in this large area of country, instead of closing the whole area against the cutting of immature wood. If the Government had taken a broad view of the question, and closed the whole colony for a time, it would have taken the sting away; and the people of Northam and Toodyay would not have felt it, as they do now.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I have taken the opportunity of obtaining the return asked for by the hon. member, and I propose now to lay it on the table. In looking through it, I find a circumstance which really seems to point to the fact that no great harm has been caused by the action of the Government. I do not understand this motion as one in any way affecting the action of the Government in this matter, as it merely asks for a return. I find that the proclamation was made on the 23rd of May in this year, and at that time the only license in existence in the Newcastle district was one, in Northam there was none, in York there was none,

and in Victoria Plains there was none. I will now lay the return on the table.

Question put and passed.

HOMESTEADS BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest), in moving the second reading, said: I rise with much pleasure to submit to the consideration of hon. members this measure, which is called the Homesteads Bill. Hon. members of course recollect that last session the Government brought forward a Bill having somewhat the same object as the present Bill; but, after the second reading was carried, there was so much opposition to the Bill in its shape as then before the House, and so much opposition from members who had given to the Government a generous support since they have been in office, that the Government determined to withdraw the measure, in order that they might more carefully consider the objections which had been raised. The results of the deliberations of the Government are before you in the present Bill. Hon. members will notice that it is altered, in some important respects, from the Bill of last year; that it has been added to considerably in the direction of providing for homestead leases, and also in some important respects in part three; and I hope that the Bill as now submitted will find favour, and be approved of by members of the House. I think it cannot be doubted that there is a considerable feeling throughout the colony that a measure of this kind is much needed, in order to encourage the occupation and settlement of the vast areas of land in this colony. I think I may also venture to say that there was a feeling of disappointment throughout the colony that the Bill of last session was not allowed to go into committee, and that the Government did not try to carry the measure in the way that it might have been carried, probably with some amendments, by members of this House. However, that is past history, and I do not intend to refer much more to the Bill as it came before the House last session. The only object the Government have in view, and I am sure they are in accord with the wishes of hon. members in this respect, is to try and en-

courage people to settle upon the lands of the colony and to improve them. The policy of the present Government, during the two and a half years they have been in office, may be briefly stated to be the providing of cheap and rapid means of communication throughout the temperate portions of the colony, by means of railways, and to improve the harbours, jetties, and wharves of the colony, and thereby afford facilities of transit by sea. We have tried also, as far as the revenue at our disposal will go, to improve the roads of the colony; and we have also done our best to develop the mineral resources. And now we desire—as we have desired all along, but have not been able to carry out that desire until now—to give inducements for the occupation and settlement of the lands. For doing all these things, the Government, as you are all aware, have been authorised by Parliament to borrow about a million and a half of money; and, as I have pointed out on previous occasions, when all this money is borrowed—and I am glad to say a considerable portion has yet to be spent—the interest and sinking fund on account of all the loans of the colony will amount to something like £150,000 a year. When the present Government took office, towards the end of 1890, the revenue of the colony was £414,313 for that year; and at the end of 1892, after we had been in office two years, the revenue had increased to £543,888; and for the last six months ending June 30th, which period you are all aware has not been as good as we anticipated, the revenue has still kept up in a wonderful manner, and we have received for the six months £298,104. Of course we must all admit that the expenditure of loan moneys, during the last year and a half, at any rate, must have had an effect in increasing the revenue; and the desire of the Government is to foster and encourage the occupation and improvement of the lands of the colony during the time that we are spending the loan moneys, so that when the expenditure is over we will have resources of our own to depend upon. I am sure that if we follow out this principle, by trying to improve the lands of the colony at the same time that we are spending our loan moneys, we will be acting wisely; and in asking hon. members to accept the prin-

ciple of this Bill—for that is all I ask you to do at the present time—I am not asking this House to assent to any new principle which has not been tried in other parts of the world. As I have said before, the principle of free grants of land to persons who will occupy and improve them is the great principle which has effected the occupation and improvement of the lands of the United States of America, and the great principle upon which settlement has been carried on in the Dominion of Canada; so that, although it has not been to any great extent tried in Australia—it does, find a place in the land laws of New Zealand, though in a different way from that which we propose here—still we are probably situated differently from any other country in Australasia, having an immense territory and a very small population. I propose now to deal with the Bill itself, by giving hon. members my views in regard to its various clauses, and afterwards to deal generally with the whole question. The Bill consists of three parts. The first part provides for homestead farms, the second part deals with homestead leases, and the third part contains general provisions applicable to both the other parts, and also some independent provisions not in any way connected with the first two parts. In the first place, I may remark that the homestead farms are to be obtained only in lands set apart by order of the Governor-in-Council; and the lands so set apart must be either in the South-Western Division of the colony, or in the Eucla Division, or in the Eastern Division, if within 40 miles of a railway. Of course hon. members will easily see the reason for the restriction in regard to the distance of 40 miles from a railway; for we have given to lessees in those districts a security of tenure, as far as practicable, and the Government do not desire to interfere with the tenure further than is absolutely necessary; therefore, as the lands which will be set apart for homestead farms and homestead leases will be within 40 miles of a railway, we believe it would be unwise to allow the lands which might be so set apart to be extended indefinitely. The Government are of opinion that for all the purposes of this Bill at the present time 40 miles from a railway in those districts is far enough, and they

think it will tend to give a feeling of greater security to pastoral tenants if they know, through this Bill, whether they are outside or inside the limits of the operation of this Bill. Part I. is almost identical with the provisions of the Homesteads Bill of last session, except that the financial clauses are omitted, and the application of this Bill is extended to lands in the Eastern and Eucla Divisions, if within 40 miles of a railway. Some hon. members may wonder how it comes about that the Government, after bringing forward the financial clauses of last year, should omit them from the present Bill. The reason is, not that I have changed my opinion in any way whatever as to the wisdom of the course we proposed last session, but that I and my colleagues felt that, in a matter of this sort dealing with the lands of the colony, there is so much room for difference of opinion, that we are bound to give due weight to the opinions of others, who have had equal experience, or perhaps greater experience, than ourselves. Therefore, although I have not personally changed my opinion, I am quite willing and most anxious to present this Bill to hon. members, and ask their assent to it, without the financial clauses, which I laid so much stress upon last session, because I believe this Bill as it stands will be a beginning; and, if it works satisfactorily without the financial clauses, of course I would be the last one to suggest that they should be added to it. If, as time goes on, we find this Bill works well, there will be no necessity to alter it, but if other measures are found necessary we will be able to deal with them as necessity arises. The present Bill provides for giving 160 acres of land free to any person who is not the owner of land already, whether he is in the colony at the present time or whether he comes hereafter; and we propose to give this quantity of land to any man of the age of 18 years, who will occupy and live upon it and improve it, on the terms proposed in the Bill. There are certain small fees to be paid, and the reason for requiring these is that they have a place in similar legislation in Canada; and I think even a small fee, a very small one, such as is provided in this Bill, will have this effect, that persons will not pay the fee to take up land unless they have a serious intention of

making use of it, whereas if every person could have a block of land without any expense whatever, you would find a great number taking up blocks, and, perhaps, not doing anything with them afterwards. When a person has to pay even a small fee, such as £1, I feel sure that only those having a serious intention will apply for the land. The conditions imposed by the Bill are these: The applicant for a homestead farm has to begin to live on the land within six months, and to reside on it during six months in each year, making it his habitual place of residence for the first five years of his tenure. The reason I have altered the Bill of last year to a six months' residence is that it has been pointed out that many poor men are compelled for some portion of the year probably to leave home and do work for others, as a means of earning money; and all we desire is that there shall be *bonâ fides*, and if a man makes his homestead his home and resides upon it six months in the year, there is no reason why he should not be allowed to go away the remaining portion of the year to earn money, in order that he may return to his habitual place of residence and improve his land. Besides living on the land for six months in each year during the first five years, he must within the first two years spend at least £30 in improving it. He may do this either by erecting a habitable house, or by expending £30 in clearing, or in clearing and cropping, or in lieu of these he may properly prepare and plant two acres of orchard or vineyard. He also has to fence and clear one-fourth of the land within the first five years, and in seven years he has to fence in the whole of the land; and when he completes these conditions he obtains the Crown grant. There is a provision, further on, by which, after residing on the land twelve months, if he has performed the improvements required, he may, by paying 5s. an acre for the land, obtain the Crown grant. This provision finds a place in the Canadian law, and it seems to be a useful one, by giving an opportunity to a man who has made the improvements required, and desires it, to obtain the Crown grant more quickly than under ordinary circumstances. I do not expect that this particular provision will be much availed of by those who take up land under this

Bill. A further important provision is section 10, which prevents the assignment, or transfer, or mortgage of the land until the Crown grant issues. Any attempt to assign, transfer, or mortgage the land, before the conditions have been completed, is to be null and void under this provision. This clause also finds a place in the Canadian law. There is another provision by which the Governor-in-Council may declare village sites, in which the homestead farmers may each obtain an allotment; and, provided there are a sufficient number of persons desirous of residing in a village, and if it is within three miles of the farms, the occupiers may reside on village lots instead of on their farms, and the residence that is required upon the homestead farm, in a previous section, may be performed on the village lot. Provision is also made by which each occupier may acquire the fee simple of the village lot on easy terms. The last section of Part I. limits the giving of free grants to a period of five years from the proclamation of the Act, and gives power to suspend its action at the end of that period. Hon. members will notice also that the applications for free homestead farms may be suspended at any time, and that in any case this portion of the Bill is to have an operation for only five years. This provision is intended to meet the views that were expressed by some hon. members who had doubts as to the utility of the measure last session; and the Government think that, at any rate, Parliament should have an opportunity, at the end of five years, of expressing an opinion on its operation, so that the Bill may be renewed if it works well, and if, on the other hand, the situation of the colony should alter very much within five years so as to make this Bill undesirable, there is power in section 17 to suspend the operation of the free grants at any time. The second portion of the Bill refers to the homestead leases. This is a very important matter, and one to which I have given a great deal of thought and consideration for a long number of years. On looking back I find that on the 21st of July, 1885, I reported to the Government of the day in favour of a scheme of land settlement, and that report was laid before Parliament, and is amongst the records. It will be seen that the report

I made on that occasion is in very many respects identical with the measure now before this House. In looking up the old records lately, I was surprised to see how little my ideas have changed during all these years, and when I spoke last session I had not remembered the proposals I made in 1885; but I find that my mind had been running in the same groove, and that even so many years ago I felt that some measure was necessary in order to give inducements to people for occupying and improving the second-rate and inferior lands of the colony. It is no use my saying otherwise, for of course I am well aware, that although we have a considerable amount of good land in this colony, we have a very large area of what may be termed second and third-class land; and we wish to see these lands utilised. The only use we have turned them to in the past is to lease them to pastoral tenants, with a very insecure tenure—the only tenure we could give them at the time—and with the security we have given, it has been almost impossible for the tenants to improve these leased areas; so that the result has been, even within a short distance of Perth, that these lands have remained in almost the same state as when our ancestors first came to this colony. An important provision in Part II. is that its operation is not to extend over the whole colony, nor over the whole of the South-Western Division, but its operation is limited to those portions that are set apart for homestead leases by the Governor-in-Council. It is restricted to the South-Western Division, and also to the Eastern and Eucla Divisions, as in the case of the homestead farms; and, in these divisions, not further away than 40 miles from a railway. This restriction of the operation of this part of the Bill to lands that are set apart by the Governor, of course gives a considerable amount of security to the pastoral tenants of the Crown who are already occupying the lands; because, if the lands are very much improved, or if they are improved at all, before the Minister would set apart these lands for homestead leases, he would take care to arrange with the lessee as to the nature of the improvements on the land, and also as to recompensing the lessee for those improvements. Under the present law, all pastoral lessees of the Crown are

protected in their improvements, and any person who purchases the land has to pay the cost of the improvements; and this Bill provides that the same procedure shall be followed where lands taken for the purposes of this Bill have improvements on them, as in the case of lands taken under the Land Regulations in regard to agricultural areas. Clause 63 of the Regulations provides that before any land is taken for an agricultural area, the lessee shall be compensated, and the same provision will apply in this case; so that in regard to the position of the present lessees, while this part of the Bill takes a considerable portion of the lands now rented by the lessees, in the event of those lands being improved the lessees will have to be compensated in the same way as if the lands were taken for agricultural areas. An important principle is introduced in clause 19 of the Bill; that is, that the lands are to be classified into second and third class lands; and in second-class land it is proposed that the area of a homestead lease shall range from 1,000 to 3,000 acres, and in third-class land from 1,000 to 5,000 acres. The rental that is proposed for third-class land is 2d. an acre per annum, and for second-class land 3d. an acre. I am aware there is a difference of opinion as to the size of these homestead leaseholds, but, after giving the matter most careful consideration, the Government have determined to place these areas before hon. members for their consideration. In my opinion, 3,000 acres of second-class land is not such a small piece as some persons would lead one to suppose. This area is two miles square, or nearly nine miles round it by the shortest distance; and I think that is a considerable area. An area of 5,000 acres is about eleven miles round it. In proposing these areas as sufficient, the Government do not desire to encourage the formation of large estates.

MR. LEFROY: How many sheep will they carry to the acre?

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): The hon. member will know better than I do. We do not wish to encourage the formation of large estates in this country, but we wish to encourage people to live on their own land—not that persons should hold large estates and have them occupied by servants. What we wish is that

every man in this country shall, as far as possible, live on and cultivate and improve his own land. We want the farmers in this country to be—what has been written about by poets and thinkers in England in the old times—

A bold peasantry, their country's pride,
These homestead lands we propose to offer on a tenure of 30 years, the rent to be 2d. and 3d. an acre; so that second-class land would yield, during thirty years, a total rental of 7s. 6d. an acre, and for third-class land the total rental would be 5s. an acre. For anyone who is desirous of acquiring an estate of from 1,000 to 5,000 acres, I do not think it can be said that 5s. to 7s. 6d. an acre, spread over 30 years, is a large amount to pay. The conditions under which these leasehold homesteads are to be occupied, and to be obtained in fee simple eventually, are that the applicant, by himself or his agent, shall occupy the land within six months after the lease is granted to him, and he shall continue to reside on it, by himself or his agent, for five years. He is to fence in the whole area in the first three years; and after the first five years, during which he will be residing on and fencing the land, he is to go on for the remaining 25 years of the term expending in each year in improvements an amount equal to the rent which he is to pay; that is to say, if he pays 2d. an acre per annum, he will have to spend 2d. an acre in improving the land, or if he pays 3d. an acre he will have to spend 3d. an acre in improvements; or it is provided that he may do the improvements for several years ahead, instead of spending a sum each year, and will be credited with the expenditure so made in advance.

MR. MONGER: Who is to value the improvements?

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): The inspector will value the improvements. There is an important clause by which the pastoral lessee of the Crown, if he should be occupying any lands set apart for homestead leases, shall have the first opportunity of taking up a portion of his run as a homestead lease. If it is second-class land he can take up to 3,000 acres, and if third-class land up to 5,000 acres, before anyone else shall have an opportunity of doing so. The object is to act fairly towards those lessees who are already in occupation, and to give

them the opportunity of selecting on their present areas, before any one else. I think that clause will commend itself to hon. members. After five years' residence, and provided the improvements are all made, the Crown grant in fee simple may be obtained by paying the balance of the rent which would be payable during the remaining 25 years; that is if, after having paid 3d. an acre for five years, he pays up to the total of 7s. 6d. an acre for the whole period, or after paying 2d. an acre for five years, he pays up to 5s. an acre, the Crown grant may be issued to him at that time. It will be noticed that no transfer of these homestead leases is to be allowed until after five years have elapsed. The same principle runs through these homestead leases as runs through the homestead farms; for, first of all, the applicant will have to reside on the land by himself or his agent in the case of a lease, and must perform certain improvements, and he will be eligible to obtain a Crown grant after performing the improvements and paying up the balance of the rent. Although no transfer is allowed, still there is a provision inserted by which the lessee may be allowed to borrow on security of the lease, so long as the loan is not advanced with a view to the lender occupying the land himself. Part 3 of the Bill deals with several important matters, some of these provisions applying to the other two portions of the Bill, and others being independent of them. It will be noticed that we substitute double improvements for double rent, in reference to land taken up under Clause 49 of the Land Regulations; and we dispense with residence altogether, under Clause 46 of the Land Regulations, by Clause 33 of the Bill, provided double improvements are performed. There is an important provision in Clause 40 of the Bill, by which the Governor-in-Council is empowered to impose conditions of improvement on town and suburban lands sold. It is said, and I believe with much truth, that town lands are usually bought by speculators, at the sales of Government lands, and that they buy them not with the intention of using or improving them, but to sell again at a profit; so that by this clause in the Bill it will be competent for the Governor to impose conditions of improvements on town and suburban lands sold,

in the same way as they are imposed on country lands at the present time. This portion of the Bill also provides that the fact of a person holding a homestead farm, or a homestead lease, shall not interfere in any way with his right to take up land under the ordinary Land Regulations. I have gone through the various clauses of the Bill in as much detail as I think is necessary at the present moment. When we get into committee upon it, I shall be able to explain every detail, if required. I would like to point out that this Bill is in complete harmony with the present Land Regulations. Under them, the lands which we will term first-class are leased at present at 6d. an acre per annum, for 20 years, making a total payment of 10s. an acre, with conditions of residence and improvements; and the maximum area allowed is 1,000 acres. Under this Bill we have two other classes of land in addition to the homestead farms, namely, second and third-class lands to be occupied as homestead leaseholds, and to be paid for at 3d. and 2d. an acre for 30 years; the maximum areas to be 3,000 acres of the second-class, and 5,000 acres of the third-class; so that when this Bill becomes law, which I hope it will during the present session, it will be in complete harmony with the present Land Laws and the present Land Regulations; that is, as the land gets worse in quality, the rent is reduced and the area is increased; and there will also be found running throughout our Land Regulations the principle that there shall be residence on the land, and improvements, before the Crown grant can issue. In addition to these three methods of obtaining land, there will also be the plan of giving free homestead farms, which may be obtained by anyone who has not land already, and they will be open alike to the people who are already here and those who come hereafter. I will venture to say that if this Bill becomes law, there is no country in Australia, and I question whether there is any country in the world, that will have a more simple or better system of disposing of its Crown lands; and I see no reason, as far as I am able to judge, why this principle, which we have already adopted, and which we are only extending in this Bill, should not be the law of the land for many years to come. I should

like now to deal with some of the reasons which have actuated the Government in pressing on this matter, and though I do not intend to quote many figures to-night, I will have to state a few for the information of hon. members. I am glad to be able to say that the operation of the Land Regulations of 1887 has been a great success, for notwithstanding all the circumstances, which are so adverse to land settlement in this colony—the discovery of gold over many parts of the colony inducing people, and properly so, to go away from the cultivation of the land, and our public works absorbing such a large amount of labour—yet the operation of the Land Regulations of 1887 has been eminently satisfactory. In 1889 we received £4,320 from conditional purchases of land under these Regulations, and the area then under lease was 162,980; in 1890 the revenue from this source had increased to £5,152, and the area under lease had increased to 178,938 acres; in 1891 the revenue had reached £7,457, and the area was 241,763 acres; in 1892, the last year, we received £9,804, and the area leased to conditional purchasers had further increased to 346,661 acres. I may add that in 1892 there was approved an area of 122,937 acres, and out of this quantity 35,492 acres were taken up in the declared Agricultural Areas. Now these, as I have said, are very satisfactory results, viewed merely from the point of view of the amount of land revenue received and the number of acres held upon leases from the Crown, under the conditional purchase clauses of the Regulations; but when we come to the area under crop, I regret to say it is not so satisfactory, and the reason is that a great deal of the land taken up under the conditional purchase clauses has not been used for agricultural purposes, but has been fenced into paddocks and used for running stock, and therefore from statistics it appears that although the area taken up has been large and the rental quite satisfactory, still the area under crop does not increase in the same proportion. The area under crop in 1889 was 73,408 acres, and in 1892 it had increased only to 79,603 acres. The only facts I can adduce to-night are those in the published returns, and if they are incorrect for any reasons, I cannot speculate in what respect they are incorrect.

However, there is a great deal of fallowed land, which has doubled in the same period, the acres under fallow in 1889 being 44,425, as compared with 81,862 acres in 1892. I have also looked to see how the production of wheat has increased during these years. Wheat is a staple product, and is a guide to us in showing how production is going on. In 1889 the area under wheat was 35,060 acres, whereas in 1892 the area was only 35,517 acres. During these four years there would appear, from public statistics, to have been hardly any increase, though I am glad to say we are improving, because after 1889 the average under wheat fell off so much that in 1891 it was only 26,866, and in 1892 it rose again to 35,517, this being a large and satisfactory increase. Looking at these figures, the Government have come to the conclusion that something must be done to increase and encourage the occupation and cultivation of the land, and I should like hon. members to allow me to point out that something must be done. Let us look at our imports. Since the Government took office at the end of 1890, two and a half years have elapsed, and during that period we have imported produce that we could grow in the colony to the value of £488,869. These figures will startle everyone who hears them. In 1891 we imported products, that could be grown in this country, to the value of £144,870; in 1890 the value was £235,821, and for the six months of 1893 now past the value was £108,178, making a total value of £488,869 for the period. I will enumerate a few of the items: We imported, during the two and a half years, flour to the value of £91,634; hay and chaff, £30,395; potatoes, £17,285; butter, £68,627; bacon and hams, £20,684; oats, £66,500; bran and pollard, £29,048; wheat, £26,350; jams, &c., £26,009. And, besides these, we have imported an immense item which is not classed as produce—that is to say, we have imported horses to the value of £101,390. These are the facts. An important matter connected with this Bill is the question of revenue, and I believe that the result of the action of this Bill will be in the direction of largely increasing the revenue, and if the Bill does not directly increase it there will be a large increase indirectly, for I anticipate that those

persons who take up homestead farms will, no doubt, require to take up other lands, and, if they do so, they will have to pay for them; so that in this way they will be customers to our Lands Department. Of course the rental from the homestead leases will be much larger than is at present received. For the third-class land it will be £8 per 1,000 acres, and for the second-class about £12 per 1,000 acres, instead of £1 per 1,000 acres as at present; and, although that amount may seem large, we must remember that the persons who will pay for homestead leases will be acquiring a freehold, and not, as at present, merely paying rental. I will now deal with a few of the objections which may be raised against this Bill. It has been said, and I think it was said to some extent last session, that the tendency of this Bill, in offering free grants of land, will be to lessen the value of freehold land already held by private individuals and companies. That would mean really that the cultivation and improvement of the Crown lands now lying waste or little used will lessen the value of other lands that are being used or occupied. In fact, it would mean that to leave the land in its natural state as bush, with the scrub on it, is really increasing the value of the land that has been cultivated and improved. Of course I consider, as I said last year, this is such a ridiculous argument that it does not deserve further notice. Another important objection, and one which has been raised also in another place, is that this principle of free grants for homesteads will be unfair to the land-grant railway companies, who have come here and invested money under agreements with the Government, have built railways, and have acquired lands in fee simple by way of payment. Well, I say again, as I did last session, that no representations have been made to me, since the measure was laid before Parliament, by or on behalf of any land-grant railway company, as to any injury anticipated from this Bill; so that whatever opinions of this measure those companies may have formed—and I believe that persons connected with them have given expression to strong opinions—such opinions have not been represented officially to the Government. I may say at once that if I thought this Bill would

largely interfere with or injure those companies which have embarked their capital in this colony, I would very seriously reconsider the matter; because I have thought, hitherto, that I was one of the best friends which those land-grant railway companies have in this colony; and I have always recognised, and do now, the great work which they have undertaken, and which in one case has been completed; and I wish them every success in their operations. But it is impossible that we who have the management of this colony's affairs should retard progress, and leave our lands unoccupied, to please the land-grant companies, or that we should in any way refrain from dealing with our lands in the way we think best for the general interests of the country, because those companies do not happen to be dealing with their lands in the same way. We have never interfered with the operations of those companies in dealing with their lands as they thought best for their own interests, and they have no right to dictate to us as to how we shall deal with our property. The only reason they could have for complaining of our actions would be if we infringed the contract we have made with them; and of course the present Government and this House have no intention of doing that. On the contrary, we should put the most generous and liberal construction upon that contract. I consider that the result of this Bill will be to cause the occupation of considerable areas of Crown lands along our railways, and probably along the land-grant railways also; and that this occupation will produce traffic for the Government railways and for those of the companies. I have suggested that those companies should themselves offer inducements for persons to come here and settle on lands along their railways, and that this should be done by free grants or in any other way that would attract settlers upon their lands, because until their lands are settled it will be impossible to work those railways profitably. It has been objected also that the homestead leases are not large enough. The hon. member for the Moore (Mr. Lefroy) asked how many sheep to the acre these lands would carry. I say that would greatly depend on the amount of improvement that was done to the leasehold area; for we all

know that even very poor land, if improved and worked, will carry more stock to the acre than very good land in a state of nature. I do not think the way to improve the lands carrying stock will be to give large areas to occupiers, because unless they have considerable capital for stocking and improving large areas, they will not be able to improve them to the extent of doing what is reasonably necessary. The Government have already gone a long way in the direction of making these areas large. Five thousand acres, which is the maximum area for a leasehold of third-class land, is a considerable piece of country, being 11 miles round, and a second-class area of 3,000 acres is over eight miles round. That is a sufficient area for any scheme of settlement. I do not want to raise up a number large squatters; we have got them already; and it would be most unfair to take these lands away from those already occupying them for pastoral purposes, and give them to other persons for carrying on the same kind of occupation. What we want is to induce people to occupy these lands in smaller areas, and to more largely improve those areas. It has been said in this House, and I am not sure it is not correct, that it is almost the curse of this colony that many persons have got more land than they can occupy, and at the same time improve. It seems that the more land some people have the more they want, and there is no limit to the hunger for land in some people's minds. If our only desire were to increase the rental, our best course would be to say to the present occupiers: "We will give the land to you, and we will not disturb you if you pay an increased rent." But the object of the Government, in proposing these homestead leases, is to get the land occupied in smaller areas, and to have those areas more largely improved. Honourable members will have noticed that both the homestead farm and the homestead lease end with a freehold. This is not a lease for a number of years, and then the land to revert back to the Crown; therefore, this important difference should be borne in mind, in looking at the question. There are persons who object altogether to the alienation of land; who urge that it should be only leased. I believe there are many persons in some parts of the world holding this

opinion, though I do not know whether they flourish in this colony to a great extent; but, at any rate, I am certainly not in accord with that opinion. I believe that to take away the right to obtain freehold land in this country, or in any country, so long as the right is safeguarded by the condition of improvement, would suck out the life-blood of the people, and would take away the chief object that persons coming here from the old country or from the other colonies have, namely, a desire to acquire a freehold on which to make their homes. What does a man come away from the old country for? Not only to better his position in a new land, but to obtain for himself a freehold on which he can found a home. I am altogether opposed to the idea of not giving the freehold; and if the period of 30 years during which a leaseholder must occupy and improve the land before acquiring the Crown grant is a long one, there is the option of shortening it so that the freehold may be acquired any time after five years, on certain conditions. I think that is one of the best provisions in connection with the homestead lease, so that in the end the occupier may obtain a freehold for himself. It has been said by a great authority, "Give a man the secure possession of a bleak rock, and he will turn it into a garden: give him a nine years' lease of a garden and he will convert it into a desert." I have not a great deal more to say. The object of the Government is to make the land laws simple: that is a very important point in land legislation. I cannot say that the land laws of other colonies in Australia are simple: for I have had a great deal to do with land laws and regulations during many years, and must say that the land laws of Australasia are most confusing. Some colonies are continually altering their systems of land settlement, and so frequent are these alterations that it is difficult at any time to ascertain exactly what their land laws are. The land laws of this colony, even when the present Bill has passed, will be most simple, so that any one of ordinary intelligence may at once understand them. Simplicity is what I have always striven for, and I altogether dislike laws and regulations which ordinary men cannot understand. These laws are made for the people who are occupy-

ing the land, so that they may understand readily the terms on which they hold the lands and on which they may acquire the freehold. The desire we all have, and I am sure the desire which the Government have, is to provide easy means of communication throughout all parts of the colony, for all who engage in cultivating the lands. But what would be the use of our making railways to run through portions of our territory, unless we took care that the lands along those railways were also made to yield their produce, and thereby create traffic for the railways? What will be the use of these railways, unless we create traffic for them? A railway running through a country will not make the land more productive unless the land is occupied and improved. It is my wish, and I am sure we all wish, that the people who occupy these lands should own them, and that they should not be mere tenants. I want to see men occupying and cultivating their own homesteads in this country, and I believe this Bill will promote that desirable result very largely. Anyone who travels through the Eastern districts of the colony must notice the large number of people who occupy small areas as peasant proprietors; and yet those people have laboured under great disadvantages, because all the best of the land in those districts—the beautiful valley of the Avon, the best land in Western Australia—had been taken up by large proprietors, and the smaller occupiers had only the chance of taking up bits of good land about the corners of large blocks. But, even under these hard conditions, how many hundreds of peasant proprietors do you find settled in those districts, doing fairly well, and bringing up families respectably. What will it be when we get increased facilities of transit, in all directions, radiating from Perth, and when the provisions of this Bill come into force and are freely availed of? I am aware that some persons laugh at the idea of our having a race of peasant proprietors. They seem to have received the suggestion as a good joke, when I spoke about a bold peasantry. But the expression is a good one, and I am a great believer in a peasant proprietary—I mean people living on small areas of land and possessing them as their freeholds. And, in holding that opinion, I am in very

good company—in the company of great writers and thinkers, who believe, as I do, in this matter.

MR. RICHARDSON: They call them “cockies” here.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): What did the late John Stuart Mill say? After reviewing the system of peasant proprietors in Switzerland, Norway, Germany, Belgium, and France, he concluded by saying: “No other existing state of agricultural economy has so beneficial an effect on the industry, the intelligence, the frugality, and the prudence of the population.” These are strong words, coming from a great authority, whose opinions we all respect; and I think we cannot go far wrong if we try to rear up in this country a number of small proprietors, living on and owning their cultivated lands. I do not wish, to-night, to unduly press this measure on any hon. member, but I wish to commend it to the most careful consideration of each member. One great result, and I am sure it must follow, will be that the occupation of the lands of this colony will be brought prominently before every one in it, and before the great number who are coming here. If this Bill passes, the occupation of the land will be brought under the serious attention of every man in the colony, and of every man who comes to it. The knowledge that a free grant of 160 acres of land for a homestead is to be obtained on conditions of occupation and improvement will be in every man’s thoughts; he will know the land is waiting for him as soon as he is ready to take it up, and live on it, in any of the temperate parts of the colony; and, I ask, will not that be an inducement, an attraction, to a man who desires the opportunity of making a home of his own on the easiest terms? What is the state of things now? Though the same man arrives in the colony now, desiring to improve his condition, he may have a view to some occupation, but he will rarely, if ever, think of taking up land for cultivation under present conditions, because he knows firstly that he will have to pay for the land. But when, on the other hand, he knows he can obtain and own a homestead block without any money payment, this fact will be the best advertisement we have ever made for drawing attention to our unoccupied

lands. It is difficult for me to understand why there should be an objection at all to the free-grant system in this colony. We have got plenty of land. We do not look for our main revenue from the conditional purchases of land, for I have shown, to-night, that even in the last year, which was a good one for this purpose, the total receipts from conditional purchases of land was only £9,804; therefore, the occupation and permanent improvement of the land are what we most desire. Why should there be any objection to giving such a small area as 160 acres to any man who will go on the land and improve it? This immense territory that has been entrusted to us, unless we take some very active steps to promote its occupation, will remain for years almost in the same state in which the first settlers found it. I have always felt, and I hope I shall continue to feel, great sympathy with those who occupy and cultivate the lands of the colony; for they are engaged in the great work of subduing the wilderness and making them produce food for the people—making two blades of grass, or two ears of corn to grow where none grew before; and these cultivators deserve every consideration and support from the members of this House. During the many years many of us have occupied places in the Legislature, we have passed valuable Bills in the direction of assisting the industries of the colony; but, taking it altogether, I think the farming industry has not received from the Legislature that amount of consideration which it deserves. The farming class are really the backbone of the country. They have to lead an isolated life, in many cases; a life of considerable toil and hardship; and their rewards are not great. At the same time, I think theirs is a truly independent position in the community, and probably more independent than that of any other class. I again commend this Bill to the most careful consideration of hon. members. I have myself thought of it, not only lately, but for years, and have come to the conclusion that this Bill for giving free grants of land embodies the best principle that we can adopt in present circumstances for promoting the occupation and improvement of the land. In travelling through America and Canada,

I found it was almost a religion that every man who wanted to take up his quarter-section should be able to do so; and that was the system of land tenure which has done so much to populate those enormous territories. And, considering all the circumstances of our sparse population, and our desire to settle people permanently on the land, and considering also that there are so many outlets for the energies of our people at present, with the inducements which take them away from the clearing and cultivating of the soil, I think we cannot do better than provide in this Bill such inducements as will put prominently before every one in the colony, and every one coming here, the fact that if they choose to occupy and improve a homestead block of 160 acres, he may have them without any payment, except certain small fees. This subject of land settlement is a troublesome and difficult one, but is one of the utmost importance to this colony. I thank hon. members for the manner in which they have listened to me, and in conclusion I commend the Bill to their most careful consideration. I move the second reading of the Bill.

MR. DEHAMEL: History repeats itself. Most of us remember the fable of the mountain in labour which brought forth a very little mouse. *Parturiunt montes, nascetur ridiculus mus.* The Government have laboured, and the Premier has laboured, and together have brought forth a very little mouse. True, this measure has a very imposing title—imposing in a double sense—because this title would lead people to believe that the Government were in earnest in their attempt to induce the settlement of our lands; but whilst the title would lead them to believe this, the provisions of this Bill are so small that the people's credulity is being imposed upon. I say it would be far better if the Government called this Bill exactly what it is, simply a Bill for the amendment of the Land Regulations of this colony, rather than give it the high-sounding title it has, when it will not effect the object for which it has been introduced. What, I would ask hon. members, is the real effect of this Bill? There are but two points of any moment in it. The first is a good one: it allows a house in future to count as an improvement, thus abolishing that senseless provision in our

present Regulations, that though a stable, a hen-house, or a buggy-shed shall count as an improvement, yet the dwelling-house of the settler shall not be allowed so to count. That change is a step in the right direction. But what is the second effect of this Bill? It is simply to let off the settler from payment of the small sum of £4 a year. Can any good result at all arise from this? I will not answer the question in my own words, but will answer it by quoting the words of the Premier himself, as given in the third volume of *Hansard*, the sixth sitting, page 78, as follows:—"I admit that was "my first idea, simply to give free grants "of land, but when I came to consider "the low price of our land and the easy "terms of purchase, I found that the "free gift of land by itself was not, "after all, any great attraction, and not "likely to induce people to come here "and settle on the land, and improve "it to any great extent; for, after all, it "only amounted to a very small sum, "merely the interest on 10s. at 5 per cent., "or 6d. an acre for twenty years. This, "on 160 acres, would only amount to £4 "a year—not a very large concession, after "all; and I thought, when it came to be "announced, with a great flourish of "trumpets, that we were going to give "away free grants of land, and people "came to consider what the gift was "really worth at the present price of land "and the present terms of purchase, it "struck me that it was not a great deal "to make any great fuss about." In those words of the Premier I thoroughly agree; and I say that this principle in the present Bill is condemned, in the words of the Premier himself, as utterly useless and unable to effect the object he has in view. What we really want to do is to give assistance to the settler when he first comes here and makes his selection. I am quite in accord with the Premier that we do want what he terms a bold peasantry. It would be a good thing for the colony to have it. But when the bold peasant lands here and is first starting on the land, it is then that the necessity for assistance arises, and then it is that something more than a present of £4 a year is necessary to induce him to tackle the clearing of the land. For such a thing as this we find there is absolutely no provision whatever in this

Bill; and yet this principle was admitted and was urged most strongly by the Premier, when he first addressed us on the Homesteads Bill.

THE PREMIER (HON. SIR J. FORREST): And you voted against it.

MR. DEHAMEL: Then the only fault was that he went the wrong way to effect the object. The great objection that was entertained by members of this House, in opposition to the Bill then introduced, was the idea of giving this aid in money grants to the settler, instead of by aiding him in some other way to effect the clearing of a portion of his land at the start. The Premier himself must feel that such is the case, because when we refer to his statement with regard to that, we find him saying:—"Now my opinion "is, and I say it deliberately and after "considering the matter very carefully "for a considerable time, that the free "grant of land without the promised loan "is likely to prove of very little value to "us. If this House in its wisdom strips "this Bill of the loan part of it, you will "do your very best to take away the most "important part of it, and you will do "your very best to make it a failure. I "am thoroughly convinced, after giving "the matter a considerable amount of "attention and careful thought, that this "loan part of the Bill is the very vitals "of the whole scheme, because, unless "you are able to promise these people "not only a free grant of land, but also "some pecuniary assistance to enable "them to further improve the land, they "will not be able to perform the conditions imposed by this Bill within the "prescribed time." Those words are very strong and very forcible. If the Premier had full faith in the words he then uttered, he tacitly admits, by the non-adoption of the similar principle—I do not say by giving loans in actual money, but the principle of helping the settler to clear a portion of his land at the start, so as to give him heart to tackle the clearance of the remainder—the Premier admits tacitly that this Bill is little less than a farce. It will, however, be for the country to decide whether a measure like this will give satisfaction or not. For myself, I mean simply to say that it is not my intention to waste either the time of the House or the time of the country by further discussing a measure which I

consider will be absolutely useless for attaining the object that we have in view.

MR. RICHARDSON: I feel that I am in a somewhat happier position than when the Premier introduced, last session, what he called his Homesteads Bill. I am happy to be able to say that I cannot find so much in this Bill to object to as in the one he introduced last session. It must appear to any hon. member that this is not the same measure, though bearing the same title, and having certain homestead clauses in it. Unhappily, I felt myself unable to give my support to the Bill of last session. Our objections in opposing that Bill were, we thought, conscientious ones. We thought that a land settlement measure in this colony was one of the most important of all measures that could be introduced, and that to make it effective it should be based on sound commercial principles. Well, we are happy to find—I am—that there are cut out of this measure many of the objectionable features of the Bill of last session, for which reason I am happy to be able to support the second reading of it, and I hope this House will give the Bill sufficient support so as to get it into committee. At that stage there may be some little difference of opinion on various clauses. I confess that in perusing certain important clauses of the Bill I felt something akin to disappointment, for I thought I had reason, from remarks I had heard and from floating straws on the current, to anticipate a measure of a somewhat larger scope—in fact, a very much bolder measure indeed. I maintain there is nothing bold in this measure. As far as the policy of it goes, I think it is a little bit half-hearted—not much of anything. I allude more particularly to the homestead leases, and I maintain these are the most important feature of the whole Bill. The homestead leases and free grants will, I hope, be a success. But people will require boldness and heart to tackle these blocks of land with a view to making a good living out of them. I maintain that the provisions which the colony may look to for increasing the settlement of the land are contained in what are called the homestead leases, which provide for purchase on deferred payment. In looking through the Bill, my objection to the homestead

leases is to the size of the areas, for I maintain they are altogether too small for the circumstances of the colony and the nature of the land to be dealt with. It must be remembered that what are called first-class lands are entirely cut out of this Bill; and I presume the surveyors will go through the country and classify the land, so that all land considered suitable for agriculture will be cut out from the operation of the homestead leases, leaving to the selectors only second and third-class lands. I maintain that such lands require a considerable area for enabling a man to make a living. The Premier dilated on the number of miles round a holding, but one cannot help thinking it is a good way round this country altogether, and there are not many people in it nor a great quantity of stock on the land. That is not the point at all, but what stock to the acre will such land carry, as was asked by the hon. member for York. Perhaps that hon. member might have been too practical, like the Australian tourist who was being shown round beautiful scenery and picturesque spots in Italy, and who astonished the guide by asking how many sheep the land would carry to the acre. The Premier rather gave himself away in his answer, by saying he did not know. I think we ought to know a good deal about what this land will carry, for if the settlers who are going to occupy them can have no idea of the number of stock the land will carry, those settlers will be rather in the wet. I maintain that after you have cut out all the agricultural land in these blocks of three to five thousand acres, the blocks will not carry more than a thousand sheep to the block, on the average. We must remember there will be very little agricultural land left in these holdings, and what is the settler to depend upon? He will have to depend upon live stock; and, if he will accept good advice, he will begin with sheep. Now what can he make out of a thousand sheep? After all, he cannot expect to get more than £150 worth of wool per annum, and if he gets another £150 from general receipts, he will have a gross income of £300 a year to pay his working expenses, besides having perhaps to pay interest on capital borrowed. Now, as to his expenses: to fence in eleven

miles of a run with sheep-proof and dog-proof fencing, at £45 a mile, will cost about £500; say also £500 to buy his thousand sheep, and £500 to pay in the first five years for his annual rent; then for a lot of other expenses and working we may put down a £1,000, making his total outlay for the first five years about £2,500. Now are you likely to attract men possessing anything like £2,500, and induce them to go into the back blocks and take up 3,000 to 5,000 acres of country, with a prospect of getting a gross income of £300 a year? The thing is utterly absurd. When you reduce these areas to what we find in the Bill, these homestead leases are shorn of the only attraction they would have for that class of settler, having a capital of one to three or five thousand pounds. We had hoped that the liberality of this measure would be such as to induce men with some capital to come here and take up land under this Bill. What have the leaseholders been doing with this land for the last fifty years, over the immense area of the South-Western Division, consisting of many millions of acres? In 1880 there were 650,000 sheep, and 47,000 head of cattle, besides horses. In 1892 we find there were 559,000 sheep, 38,000 head of cattle, and 26,000 horses—actually less stock in the district than there were 12 years ago! We must conclude either that the land in that immense area is too poor for settlement—almost unfit for occupation—or else our Land Regulations are totally unsuitable. We must either look the matter in the face, in this way, and frame the Regulations so as to make them more liberal to the settlers, or else we must throw up the sponge and say the land is unfit for occupation. I maintain the land is not unfit to deal with, and I have had much experience in dealing with this class of country. I maintain that the greater part of it can be made to carry stock well, if the Government deal with the land in a right manner. You cannot do that by spending a few pounds on a thousand acres. A man taking up this land must have capital, and must lay it out for a few years, and then he can do well with the land, and improve his estate. Here are little more than half a million of sheep spread over this vast area of country, during the last fifty years; and if we could only, by

liberal Land Regulations, induce about one million acres of land to be taken up by settlers, we would find that every one of the homestead leasehold blocks would carry 1,000 sheep, on the average, and we would thus add another half million of sheep to the colony, and actually double our wool exports from this district by occupying only about two million acres of land. If we could induce two or three hundred settlers to occupy two million acres of land in the South-Western Division, that would be the greatest test of the success of this measure. But if we interpret the Premier's remarks, he appears very much afraid of large areas of land being held by individuals; and he pointed out the curse, as he called it, of so few settlers holding large areas of country and doing little with it. But the very conditions of this Bill compel certain improvements to be made, and a considerable amount of capital to be laid out. It will be impossible for settlers to take up large areas of land, under this Bill, and hold it in idleness. The land will be subject to forfeiture, and that condition will compel the leaseholder to do a great deal with the land; and if he has got the means, and the will, and the boldness to tackle a considerable area of this land, for goodness' sake why not let him? Why compel a man to dawdle away his life on a small area, which can carry only a thousand sheep? If you would offer three or five thousand acres of the Avon Valley country, you could induce settlers to take up that land in such small areas; but there is no such thing as an Avon Valley in this case, for we are dealing with only second and third-class land, and all such land as is contained in the Avon Valley will not be included in these classes. I maintain that one of our chief disappointments in this Bill is the size of the areas; and I do hope we shall be able to improve the measure in committee in that respect. We shall deal with the Bill only with a desire to make it a good measure, and not with any factious wish to gain a victory over anything or anybody, but in the hope that when this Bill leaves our hands it will be such a measure as will induce a large addition to the settlement and progress of this colony. I have found fault with the maximum area, and I now find fault with the

minimum area, for I maintain there is as great a principle involved in the minimum as in the maximum area. We have a peculiar country to deal with, and I maintain that if you are offering grants of land on liberal terms, such as 2d. and 3d. an acre per annum, in small areas, you admit a very dangerous principle indeed if you allow people to take too small a block, because some men will find a little patch of five hundred or a thousand acres of fairly good land on the banks of some creek, surrounded by eight or ten thousand acres of very indifferent country. I appeal to the Premier's knowledge whether this is not a feature of the colony that prevails very largely indeed—these patches of good soil amongst large areas of poor land. Thus we induce, by very liberal terms, people to come and spot out these little patches, and in doing so a selector might spoil ten thousand acres; whereas if he were confined to five thousand acres and no less, he would be content to take the five thousand and fence in that area, and improve it, and spend money on it. But if you allow him to go and pick the eyes out, by spotting a thousand acres, then nobody else will touch the balance, and the State will, in a few years, have immense areas of refuse land left useless. That is a blot in the Bill which I hope may be amended. Further, there is a rather questionable principle in this, to descend in the class and increase the maximum, leaving the minimum the same. I maintain it is a very improper and undesirable arrangement. There is another feature in the Bill which I should like to have seen different, though it may not be very important. The measure requires the settler to fence in his whole area within three years, and then to commence his improvements, and to pay a rental of 2d. to 3d. an acre, according to his class, and to spend an equal amount in improvements. I think it would be better, and more favourable to the settler, if the State were to say, "During your first three years you will have to lay out considerable capital, and do all your ringing and fencing and some of your division fencing, and erect your homestead, and commence your general improvements; therefore, while this heavy drain is going on, the State will not insist on a very high rental during this

period, and for the first ten years we will make the rental very low, so that when you have got the bulk of your improvements done, the State may have its turn, and you must pay a higher rental for another ten years, say 3d. an acre per annum, and for a further 10 years, 4d." If we treated him in this way the settler would be in a far better position to bear the increased rental, and would be very thankful to the Government for standing off during the first five or ten years. But now we find the same rental insisted on for the whole term of the lease. There is another item which I consider a serious omission. The Bill would allow the settler to drone along the whole 30 years in carrying out the required improvements, whereas the improvements are only such as any *bonâ fide* settler would have to do on the land for making it of use during the first 10 years. If he did not do them within that time, he would not be a good settler. But the Bill allows him 30 years to drone on, and does not offer any inducement for him to complete them sooner; besides which, the State must, during the whole 30 years of the lease, keep an oversight of the settler's operations, and also keep a hold on him, and the Inspector must see that he pays his rental regularly, instead of the Inspector passing the improvements, say, at the end of the first 10 years. There is a sort of corollary to that oversight, because one clause says that if the settler shall have executed all the improvements required during a short term, he may then, by paying the difference between the annual rental he has paid, and a total of 7s. 6d. an acre, get the Crown grant. I should think he ought, indeed, if he does that; but what inducement is there to hurry up with his improvements? Instead of allowing him a discount for cash, he has to pay a premium; for at the end of 30 years he would have paid more than 10s. an acre, by reckoning the compound interest on the money. I maintain that is a very serious blot in the Bill; for if a settler paid for his Crown grant within the first five years, he ought to pay only 5s. an acre, because if the Government funded that money and allowed the interest to accumulate, they would at the end of 30 years get their 7s. 6d. an acre out of it. The price will be very much too

high, if the settler pays the whole amount before his time. I do not mention these things captiously, but only with an honest desire to improve the measure and make it a great success. I am sanguinely hopeful of this measure, that it will result in a great addition to our settlement, and to the amount of live stock and cultivation. I maintain also that in the Eastern and Yilgarn districts there will be a large extent of land fit for settlement and cultivation, under this Bill; and though the climate is uncertain and a good season cannot be relied on every year, yet I expect to see thousands of acres in that district under cultivation. I maintain that the climate up there is as good as any in South Australia, if not better, and the settler will get his land up there on cheap terms. My hope is absolutely the converse of the Premier's, for he "fears" there will be a great many of these large holders, while I "hope" we shall have a large number of them, and that there will be ten millions of acres operated upon, under this Bill, and then we shall have a truly bold peasantry. I will allude to one more omission. I regret there is not a fourth class of land provided for in the Bill. In a private conversation with the Premier, he led me to suppose he had some idea of putting a fourth class in the Bill, to be held in larger areas and on much cheaper conditions than the third or second class. We have a very large area of fourth-class land in this country, and what are we going to do with it? I maintain that even the fourth-class land would be fit to deal with, under liberal regulations, when we know that in Victoria the lands are classified for assessment under the property tax, in four classes, the third class to be land capable of carrying three sheep to the acre, the second class four sheep, and the fourth class one sheep to the acre. If, in a colony like that, it was found necessary, in the adjustment of taxation, to have a fourth class of land, surely we should introduce a fourth class here. There is one thing that may have operated to prevent the fourth class being dealt with in this Bill, and that is a desire not to interfere largely with the present leaseholders, who hold their land under a certain security of tenure, which can be interfered with only under the present Land Regulations, and when we liberalise these

regulations, we intrude on the present leaseholders by allowing other persons to go upon the same land on easier terms. I would have been inclined to deal with the present lessees in a different manner. I would have given them protection of an entirely different nature, by granting them such inducements and privileges under the Bill that they would prefer to abandon their position as lessees and become proprietors of the soil. You might have allowed lessees some exceptional privileges under the Bill; you might have allowed them to take twice the area of any other settler under the Bill, subject to the same improvement conditions; or you might have put them in a class lower than such land actually belonged to, for offering the advantage of price, and if any such lessee declined to operate under that class and would not convert himself into a proprietor, he would be one of those unprogressive types of men whom the State should not encourage or foster anywhere. The State would have given to him every facility and encouragement, and there it should stop. Some fear has been expressed as to proprietors getting hold of considerable areas, although they are to be subject to these conditions of improvement. The Premier seemed to think such an idea might be unpopular in the country; but what are the facts? We have got millions of acres of land that have been letting at a rental of £1 per 1,000 acres, and some of which may have been in the same hands for a great many years; and during some fifty years we have been content to remain under such a condition as that, and allowing leaseholders to do very little with their immense areas—not even fencing, in some cases. We are timid at the idea of a large class of freehold settlers holding one-fourth, one-fifth, or, perhaps, even one-tenth of the areas that are now occupied under lease; we are frightened at the operation of such a measure, and yet have been content to remain under the other condition all these long years. The number of sheep and other live stock carried on these immense areas has, during the last twelve years, absolutely decreased; and so little use has been made of the land that there is no absolute increase of the stock over these immense areas; and yet we are forbidden to legislate in such a way as would

give this land to hundreds of proprietors where there are now only ten, and where there would be expended hundreds of thousands of pounds in improvements. That, I say, is not a bold policy; and whether a bold peasantry will result from such a timid policy, I cannot say. I sympathise with the Premier, whom I heartily commend, and I sincerely congratulate him that he has introduced a measure based on these good, sound principles, while being afraid, I regret to say, to go half far enough; but when he finds this House sufficiently able to give him encouragement and stimulate him to go further, and when he finds the country also is willing, I hope he will be no longer afraid to encourage a large number of these bold peasantry with their few thousand acres of land and their live stock and improvements. If we are half-hearted about it, if we spoil the ship for a ha'porth of tar, if we are afraid of such a result as that, the whole thing will result in worse than nothing.

MR. LOTON: On a previous occasion, when a similar Bill was placed before this Assembly, I felt it my duty to strenuously oppose the principle. It then contained one principle, at all events, to which I most strongly objected, but on the present occasion that objectionable feature has been eliminated from this measure—I mean the financial aid to settlers that was proposed on that occasion. I shall confine the few remarks I have to make to the main principles of this Bill. I had hoped to hear that the Premier and his colleagues had had time to consider a measure of this nature, and that they would have felt it their duty, as I suppose it would have been also their pleasure, to propose such provisions as would lead to the closer settlement and the development of the land. I had hoped that when they again introduced a measure of this kind, it would be a more liberal measure than the one now before the House. The first principle is mainly the same as was introduced last year, for the granting of small freeholds of 160 acres as homestead farms, and my opinion of it is that the item of gift is so small that it is not worth very serious consideration; but if the fact of giving 160 acres of land will be any inducement whatever to *bonâ fide* settlers, I am quite prepared to give away the land to that extent. But the mere

fact of giving away this area of land, and this area alone, I am afraid, will not lead to the results which the Premier and his colleagues expect. I say the area is not sufficient; but, while this quantity is given, I should like to see a certain additional area reserved to the selector around his holding, and that he should be allowed to rent it on very easy terms, so that when he has improved the 160 acres given to him he may have the facility and opportunity of getting a sufficient area to settle upon, for enabling him to maintain and bring up a family, which, in many portions of this colony, it would be worse than useless for him to attempt to do on 160 acres. With regard to the districts away from the coast, from Northampton to Albany, a distance of 60 to 80 miles inland, the area of 160 acres is not sufficient for a man to do any good with; and I would point out that, although the selector would be enabled to take up other land, under the Regulations, yet if the settler is to work his land economically and profitably he must have all his land in one area, and should not have to travel one, two, or three miles away from his homestead block for farming purposes. I notice that the land is to be given away in alternate blocks, and possibly it is intended, by this arrangement, that the occupier may lease the adjoining small portion; but he may find this additional 160 acres not sufficient. I would reserve at least a mile square, giving 160 acres free to the selector, and allow him to occupy the remainder for pasture at a small rental. He would then be paying as much as the present lessee pays, and also turning the land to a more profitable account; and it would be an inducement, an incentive, for him to find that when he had done what he could with 160 acres, he would not have to travel far for increasing his holding, but the additional land would be at his door, and he could improve it also. I shall support the second reading of this Bill, with a view to amending and liberalising it in committee. I have a few remarks to make on the portion which deals with the homestead leases. In connection with this matter, we have to bear in mind that it is proposed to classify the land into second and third class, for these homestead leases. I assume, therefore, that what we call first-class lands in the South-

Western Division—the temperate division of the colony—lands suitable for agriculture and for pastoral purposes, will not be opened to selection under homestead leases, but that such lands will be set aside for other purposes. I rather differ from the hon. member for the DeGrey in wanting to add another class of land, because at present I think we can very well deal with the land under two classes, after having otherwise dealt with the first-class land. I say the maximum areas under these two classes are altogether too small to induce men to take them up, under these conditions of improvement. The conditions are to fence and to expend a certain amount of money in improvements. As to the second-class land, what amount of stock would it carry in its present state, or how many acres must be reckoned to carry a sheep? I do not think we could reasonably estimate the second class land as capable of carrying more than one sheep to ten acres, in its unoccupied state, and therefore 100 sheep to 1,000 acres. Yet it is proposed to limit the selections in this class to 3,000 acres each; therefore the utmost which a man could expect to carry would be about 300 sheep, with the land in its present condition. He might get some small portion of his land fit for cultivation, and in fact, unless he could do so, it would not be worth the settler's while to take up the land at all. I submit that the area is too small, and I would increase it at all events to 10,000 acres as the maximum area for the second class, and I would increase the maximum in the third class to 20,000 acres. The charges also are altogether too high. I bear in mind that the rental is to go towards the purchase, and that the price to be paid for second-class land is 7s. 6d. per acre, and for the third-class 5s. an acre. We have to bear in mind that 3d. per acre yearly for second-class land would be a very high rental, amounting to a total of £12 13s. 4d. per annum for 1,000 acres; yet, although at the present time the leaseholders of the best land are paying only £1 per 1,000 acres, it is now proposed to charge £12 13s. 4d. per 1,000 acres for second-class land, as a yearly rental, which is to go towards the purchase. If you will allow me to go into a brief calculation, I will show at once that the purchaser or lessee,

under these conditions of improvement, will be paying £12 13s. 4d. per 1,000 acres as a yearly rental; and if you capitalise the difference between the present rental of £1 per 1,000 acres and the rental proposed in this Bill, you will still have £11 13s. 4d. left, and at 5 per cent. that will give 11s. 6d. as rental, or, at 7½ per cent., will represent about 18s. Thus it will be seen that the interest on the amount of rental he would be paying would come to nearly the amount of rental that is being paid at the present time for the same area, and yet at the end of his term he will still have to pay the full amount. Is it reasonable, is it feasible, to expect men to pay the enormous rent of £12 13s. 4d. per 1,000 acres, and having to fence the land, after which it will carry only this very limited number of stock? Is it reasonable to expect that any selector will take up this land, having perhaps to borrow a lot of money in the first instance? Though he can provide the capital on his own account, is he likely to sink this amount of money and interest for all these years and get such a return for it? Not at all. These conditions are too hard altogether, for, in addition to extending the areas in both the classes, I would reduce the amount of rent per annum. I would also reduce the total value to 2s. 6d. per acre for third-class land, and to 5s. for second-class land, and I would charge only a nominal rent for a certain number of years while the improvements are being done, and a larger rent for a certain number of years afterwards. By these means we might possibly induce people to take up land of these second and third-class qualities, with the view of making them their own within the next quarter of a century. I feel certain, after much consideration, that under these conditions now before the committee, it will be most absurd to expect men who know what they are about to take up any land under these homestead leases. I do trust that the Premier and his colleagues, when they look further into this matter, will see the absolute necessity of liberalising the land laws to encourage settlement and development. With these remarks, I shall vote for the second reading, with the hope of liberalising and amending the Bill in committee in the direction I have indicated.

MR. THROSSELL: I rise to congratulate the Government on having again brought forward a Homesteads Bill, but I confess to a sense of disappointment in reading it, for to my mind it is not as liberal a measure as we had reason to expect, and even from the want of enthusiasm shown by the Premier himself, I believe this Bill is not after his own heart. As far as the homestead clauses are concerned, these seem to be the same as those of last year, but shorn of the financial assistance that the former Bill proposed. Still, I cannot agree with the hon. member for Albany in saying this is a useless measure; for how can it be said that a measure is utterly useless, when we have here for the first time gifts of land offered to every comer? I believe it is all-important that at this time we should have a wise scheme of land settlement. The land settlement is the question of the day, along with the development of our mineral resources, in order that when we have attracted population we may be able to induce their permanent settlement in the country. I am at one with the Government in proposing gifts of land to any man wishing to settle on our soil; and for the first time in Western Australia we have a measure which proposes three classes of settlement—free homestead farms, homestead leases, and last, though not least, provisions for settling the artisan and the labourer on village allotments. While I go with the Government in supporting this measure, there are some clauses which require considerable alteration. As to giving the newcomer 160 acres, I take it that he would be confined to that holding, of necessity, and that if he wished to increase it he would have to take up other land further afield; but when a man is once settled in his home, on too small a block, and finds his family growing, and discovers too late that there is no other available land near him, he will find the restrictions of this Bill are very inconvenient. But that is a defect which can be amended in committee, by providing that while a man shall have 160 acres free, he shall also have a pre-emptive right to take up 320 acres beside it, on the ordinary conditions of purchase, so that each homestead settler may be assured of obtaining, if he desires, 480 acres all in one block. I believe this suggested amendment will commend itself to hon. members

who have had experience of a class of settlers whose happy lot in life it has been to take up a small area and gradually enlarge it, as their means increased and their families grew up. Then, again, a man residing on his homestead is allowed so many years in which to complete his improvements, and he need not complete them sooner; but in the case of the progressive man who does the same work in twelve months, I find the clause provides that in order to acquire the Crown grant he will have to pay 5s. an acre cash down. Now I say that is a fine on the progressive man. Coming to the homestead leasing provisions, which are proposed for the first time in this country, I agree that while the Government have intended to be very liberal, this will, after all, be very dear land; for when we compare the conditions on which poison land has been and may be obtained, the conditions for obtaining these 5,000 acre sections bear no comparison. I would have liked the Bill to deal thoroughly with this poison land, for when our land becomes of increasing value, there will be a sort of premium offered for a few men with capital to pick out the eyes of our country, under the easier provisions of the poison land leases, for generally the poison land is admirably suited for agriculture. A little poison, however, goes a long way. I have in my mind's eye blocks of country within seven miles of the Eastern Railway—splendid land with streams running all the year, and suitable for vine culture. I find that this beautiful land, with abundant rainfall and close to our capital city, has been withdrawn, under the Poison Act. I would like to see a clause proposed for dealing with this poison land. I am entirely at one with the hon. member for the DeGrey in saying that the expense for a 5,000 acre section is too great to make the gift a liberal one. Clause 40 provides, for the first time in this country, an easy means of settling the artisan and the labourer on the land. I have brought before the House, on more than one occasion, the desirability of doing this; but we are making a provision in this clause, for the first time, by which the Commissioner or the Governor-in-Council shall have power to set out and declare town and village allotments in any part of the colony, for occupation by artisans and labourers, upon con-

ditions of improvement. After the gold-fields have ceased to draw men away so largely in that direction, we shall have large numbers returning to the towns and loitering about the streets, and perhaps living in wretched tenements, because of there being no inducement for these men to settle on the land as cultivators. Clause 40 in the Bill provides for these men, for nothing presents so great a charm to a labouring man as the prospect of obtaining a block of land, however small, which is to be all his own. If the Premier will be wise in the matter, he will eventually have reason to congratulate himself on having dealt liberally towards the labourer and the artisan; and when we reach this part of the Bill in committee, I will ask hon. members, representing both town and country, to consider that, while making provision for the men who can take larger areas, the artisan and the labourer are, as a class, of as great value to the country as the large farmers. So long as we import almost every necessity of life, although we have a good rainfall over a large portion of the colony and the average yield of corn here is equal if not superior to the average in the best portions of Australia, we shall continue to have the finger of scorn pointed at us as a non-producing people. I intend to support the second reading of this Bill, confessing, as I do, to a disappointment that it is not more liberal in some of its provisions. Still, I believe that if our Premier had had his own way, he would have again tacked on to it a sum of £40,000 for making advances to new settlers, as he did in the last Homesteads Bill which he introduced.

On the motion of MR. A. FORREST, the debate was adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 10·2 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 3rd August, 1893.

Motion for Adjournment: Approach of Rabbits from South Australia.—The Hampton Lands Provisional Agreement.—West Australian Land Company's Railway Rates.—Constitution Act Amendment Bill: in committee.—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the chair at 4·30 p.m.

PRAYERS.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT: APPROACH OF RABBITS FROM SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

MR. HASSELL: I rise to move the adjournment of the House, for the purpose of calling attention to a matter of great urgency to this colony, namely, the reported approach of rabbits from South Australia towards the border at Eucla. I wish to read, for the information of the House, a letter from a settler, who is a trustworthy and reliable man, as follows:—

Eucla, July 4, 1893.

To A. Y. Hassell, Esq., M.L.A., Albany.

Dear Sir,—I wish to draw your attention to the rabbit question, which the Government should attend to without delay. It will be a very serious matter for the whole colony if rabbits once establish themselves in the Eastern Division of this colony. It will cost Government thousands of pounds per annum to keep them down, and to get rid of them altogether is found impossible in the other colonies. I am informed the manager of the Nullabor Station has been fumigating rabbit burrows, some months ago—this is the nearest station to our East boundary—and I hear from men who saw them that rabbits were plentiful 100 miles north-east of the Bight, twelve months ago, and as they are supposed to travel 100 miles a year across new country, there can be little doubt they will be over our boundary line in a year or two, at most. A good rabbit-proof fence is all that can stop them. The first 50 miles of fence, starting from Wilson's Bluff, six miles east of Eucla, and running north along the boundary line, would be easily and cheaply erected; after that, for 50 miles it would be more expensive, until the timber and sandhills were reached, on the north side of the Nullabor Plain. I am sure you will put this matter strongly before the House, for if something is not done to stop them you may have the rabbits undermining the houses in the town of Albany, in a few years, as they are now doing in Streaky Bay. I may also add that the reports of owners of runs on the outskirts of the rabbit country are not always to be depended on, because if rabbits are known to be on a