

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL. Friday, 19th July, 1901. First Readings - Young Persons Protection Bill -

(vanide Process Extension Bill-Public Health Bill-Chinese Immigrants Bill. The Hon. the SPEAKER took the chair at half-past two o'clock. PRAYERS. FIRST READINGS. Referendum Bill, Police Offences Bill.

YOUNG PERSONS PROTECTION BILL. IN COMMITTEE. Clause 3. - " (1.) This Act shall have operation only within such districts (being in every case counties, cities, or boroughs) as the Go-

vernor, by Order in Council gazetted, declares to be subject to this Act. "(2.) Such order in Council may be made

from time to time, and may relate to one or more districts, as the Governor in Council thinks fit. "(3.) Any

such Order in Council may, in until a fresh Order in Council under the last preceding subsection hereof is gazetted, this Act shall cease to have operation within the districts specified in the revoking Order in

Council." The Hon. Mr. McLEAN moved, That this clause be struck out. The Committee divided. AYES, 9.

Feldwick Pinkerton Kelly, W. Jennings Shrimski McLean Johnston Ormond Walker, L. NOES, 17.

Swanson Arkwright Kerr Barnicoat Pitt Tomoana Bolt Scotland Twomey Harris Smith, A. L. Walker, W. C.

Smith, W. C. Jenkinson Williams. Jones Stevens Majority against, 8. Clause retained. Clause 5 .- " Where

any Protection Officer finds any young person of either sex habitually loitering in the streets or

out-of-the-way places at untimely hours (meaning thereby between nine o'clock at night and five o'clock in the morning), and has reason to believe that such young person is there without proper control, or for

immoral purposes, the following provisions shall apply :- " (1.) The Protection Officer may forthwith

question the young person as to his name, abode, parents or guardians, and his reason for being abroad.

" (2.) If the answers are satisfactory, the Protection Officer may, in his discretion, either warn the young person to go home or take him to the door of his abode and there leave him, or take him inside and hand

him over to the person in charge thereof, reporting verbally to such person what has occurred. "(3.) If the

answers are not satisfactory, or if the young person has been previously dealt with under the last

preceding subsection, the Protection Officer shall forthwith take such young person to a shelter.

<page:492>

"(4.) If both the Protection Officer and the person in charge of the shelter concur as to the expediency of the course, the young person may either be detained there until he can be brought before a Magistrate, as hereinafter provided, or may be dealt with under subsection two hereof : and, if they do not concur, then he shall be dealt with under that subsection. " (5.) If such young person is again found by a Protection Officer to be loitering as aforesaid, the Protection Officer shall forthwith take him to a shelter, where he shall be detained as aforesaid until he can be brought before a Magistrate." The Hon. Mr. PINKERTON moved, That subsection (2) be struck out. The Committee divided on the question, " That the subsection be retained." AYES, 15. Arkwright Jones Swanson Kelly, W. Barnicoat Tomoana Bolt Pitt Twomey Scotland Walker, L. Harris Smith, W. C. Walker, W. C. Jenkinson NOES, 8. Feldwick Kerr Smith, A. L. Jennings Pinkerton Stevens. Johnston Shrimski Majority for, 7. Subsection retained. Clause 11 .- " Any member of the Police Force may at any time, under warrant signed by a Magistrate, enter and search any house, shop, building, or other premises occupied or frequented by prostitutes or gamblers, or which he has cause to suspect to be frequented for gambling or other illegal or improper purposes by boys apparently under the age of seventeen years ; and every such boy there found shall be forthwith taken to the nearest police-station, and there detained in custody until he can be brought before the Magistrate by the police on the charge of being not under proper control, whereupon the provisions of sections seven and eight hereof shall, mutatis mutandis, apply." The Hon. Mr. FELDWICK moved to insert the words " if not admitted to bail," after the word " custody." Progress reported. CYANIDE PROCESS EXTENSION BILL. The Hon. Mr. W. C. WALKER. -- This Bill is introduced in order that the colony may get the full benefit of the Act passed in 1897. The Council will remember that in 1897 we passed an Act enabling the Government to pay a certain sum for the patent rights connected with the cyanide gold-extraction process. At that time the companies were being charged a certain percentage for the use of the patent. The Government bought the patent rights for \$10,000, and they charged a royalty to the users of 23 per cent. only. Only about half of that money has been paid to the Government in the shape of percentages, and this Bill extends the operation of the Act until the Government has recouped the amount they paid for the patent. I beg to move the second reading of the Bill. The Hon. Mr. STEVENS .- It is highly probable that this Bill may be necessary, but, so far as I have been able to discover, its provisions are really entirely covered by the existing Act. The Bill proposes not an extension in reality : it simply says, - " It is hereby declared that the term during which the patent rights acquired under the principal Act were protected under . The Patents, Designs, and Trade-marks Act, 1889,' shall (not withstanding anything in that Act) be extended until such time as it is notified in the Gazette under section eighteen of the principal Act that the total of the moneys received under the principal Act and paid into the Consolidated Fund is equal to the total of the moneys paid out of the Consolidated Fund under the same Act : and the provisions of the principal Act shall be construed accordingly." The 18th section of the Act says exactly the same thing. It says, -- " As soon as the total of the moneys received under this Act and paid into the Consolidated Fund is equal in amount to the total of the moneys paid under this Act out of the Consolidated Fund, the Colonial Treasurer shall certify the fact to the Governor, who shall notify the same in the Gazette." And then the whole operation of the Act would practically come to an end. That is really what it appears to me this Bill says ; so that there must be some very abstruse legal point to make this Bill necessary which I think has not been disclosed to my honourable friend. The Hon. Mr. W. C. WALKER .- I am not at the present moment able to state any more than that my colleague the Minister of Mines is of opinion that this Bill requires to be passed in order to protect the colony. I suggest that the Bill be referred to the Mines Committee. and if the Council will pass the second reading the Mines Committee will be able to go into it and report to the Council. Bill read the second time. PUBLIC HEALTH BILL. The Hon. Mr. W. C. WALKER .- Sir. this is a short Bill of two clauses. The first clause is to enable the Governor, by Order in

Council from time to time to prohibit the importation into New Zealand of any material hable to convey infectious diseases. It is quite clear to most of us nowadays that all sorts of sultane. and germs and other things are transmitted bv post for scientific and other purposes, and it is right that we should have power to regulate their importation. The next clause is to ena de the Public Health Act of last year to extend to the Chatham Islands, which, by reason of their not being included in any county, and not bemig under the control of any local body, do not at pre- sent come under the operation of the Act. Some such provision as this is necessary to enable the people there to get the benefit of modern ideas

<page:493>

in regard to sanitation. I beg to move the second reading of the Bill. The Hon. Mr. JENNINGS .-- I regret, Sir, that a suggestion I made when the Public Health Bill was before the Council last year, and which suggestion met with general accept- ance at the hands of members, was not adopted in the regulations issued under the hand of the Governor in Council. My suggestion was that clean white paper should be used as wrappers by those who sell goods to the public. At present butchers and others frequently wrap up meat and other articles in dirty newspaper and dirty wrappers. There is no necessity at all for that, as clean white paper can be obtained at almost as reasonable a rate as old newspapers, which, in my opinion, contain a large amount of impurity, owing to the ink with which they are printed. I trust that the honourable gentleman may impress upon the Government the advisability of a regulation being brought into force. The Hon. Mr. JENKINSON .- I would like to point out to the Minister that a drafts- man's error has crept into clause 2. It says that the Governor may prohibit the importation of any material into New Zealand, and also that he may stipulate any conditions under which it may come in. There seems to me to be a contradiction there. Bill read the second time. CHINESE IMMIGRANTS BILL. The Hon. Mr. W. C. WALKER .- This Bill has been found necessary by reason of the fact that ships may come to our shores with Chinese crews, and under the present law it is not very clear as to the responsibility upon the master in the event of any of the crew deserting and leaving the ship and going ashore. Therefore it is advisable that the law should be made per- fectly clear, and it will be seen by the Bill that the master is to muster his crew in the presence of an officer of the Customs when he arrives in port, and before any of the crew land in New Zealand, and " give to such officer a list signed by the master containing the names and number of such members of the crew as are Chinese : and immediately prior to the departure of the same ship, and before receiving her clearance, the master shall again in the presence of an officer of Customs muster the crew, and satisfy such officer that all the Chinese comprised in the said list are then on board and will leave New Zealand with the ship, or, if not then on board, have not landed in New Zealand." If there is any difference in the crew -- if any of them have left the ship and have got ashore-then the penalty is to be enforced against the master, and the penalty is to be increased from £20 to \$50. At the same time, by clause 5 it shall be lawful for any Chinese member of a crew as aforesaid from time to time to go ashore in the performance of his duties. I beg to move the second reading of the Bill. The Hon. Mr. STEVENS .- At first sight it might appear that there is nothing of any con- siderable importance in this Bill beyond the provisions that at present exist in regard to Chinese immigrants. If the Chinese Immi- grants Act of 1881 is a sound measure, and it is generally accepted and believed to be such, there is no question that the mustering of a Chinese crew by the master of a ship is cer- tainly necessary to give full effect to the Act ; but at the same time, Sir, I wish to point out before I conclude that there is a very important difference between the action of this Bill and the 1881 law in one particular. The Act 'of 1881 distinctly contemplated that there should be a Chinese crew or a partial Chinese crew. The principle of the Act was that if Chinese were introduced, not being members of the crew, a sort of import duty should be paid upon them, as is well known to honourable members. By the second paragraph of the 5th clause of the Act of 1881 it was provided that the sum of £10 was not to be payable by or in respect of any Chinese who is one of the crew of any vessel unless he lands with the intention of remaining in the colony. If he

landed in an improper manner contrary to the Act he would be liable to penalties. I see no objection to the provision that on the departure of the ship the Chinese crew shall be mustered in order that the Customs shall be satisfied that none of them have been permitted to evade the Act with the view of remaining in the colony. But this Bill says something more than that. It says by the 5th clause that. " Subject to the provisions of this Act, it shall be lawful for any Chinese member of the crew as aforesaid from time to time to go ashore in the performance of his duties in connection with the ship." I But he can go ashore for no other purpose. apprehend that under the 1881 Act a Chinese member of a crew was absolutely free if he got leave from his commanding officer to go ashore like any one else, but, by implication, this clause will prevent any Chinese sailor going ashore unless he goes under orders to do something in connection with his ship. I scarcely think that is a right thing. It seems to me that an innocent individual who has no intention of evading the Act of 1881, or to do any thing that is improper in any respect, is absolutely prevented from going ashore unless he goes on duty. I almost regard it as a slip in the drafting of the Bill. It must be a kind of accident in the preparing of the Bill, for it seems scarcely possible that any one can approve of so arbitrary a provision as is contained in this clause. I am almost inclined to hope that I have been mistaken in my interpretation of the clause. As one who was in the House of Representatives in 1881, when the original Act was passed, and having heard it referred to and discussed on many subsequent occasions, I am perfectly certain that such a provision as this was never the intention of the Legislature, neither then nor, I think, since. I mention this circumstance to bring it before the notice of the Hon. the Minister as an interference with the proper and reasonable rights of a harmless individual who comes to these shores in the discharge of his duty. The Hon. Mr. W. C. WALKER .- I read

<page:494>

clause 5 as being rather in the direction of mitigation than severity ; at any rate, if it is severity it is no new severity ; because if the honourable member will look at the Act, which he says is justice tempered with mercy-in the passing of which he told us he took an active part in 1881 - he will find that section 8 of that Act imposes very much the same restriction which this Bill proposes. The present Bill simply carries out the old restriction, and I think the provision is introduced here simply to show that in spite of the foregoing clauses it is not intended to prevent Chinamen going ashore in the execution of their duty. The Hon. Mr. STEVENS .- Which section are you referring to ? The Hon. Mr. W. C. WALKER .- A section in the Act of 1888. The Hon. Mr. STEVENS .- I referred to the Act of 1881. The Hon. Mr. W. C. WALKER .- In that case I apologize to the honourable member. rather think he was representing the Government in this Chamber in 1888, so that if he was not a member of the other House he was probably taking an active part in passing the measure in this Chamber as a member of the (Government in that year. The Hon. Mr. STEVENS .- That is true ; but there were many things with which I did not altogether agree that I had to assist in passing. Bill read the second time. The Council adjourned at twenty-five minutes to five o'clock p.m. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. Friday, 19th July, 1901. Libel Law-Land for Settlements Bill-Referendum Bill. Police Offences Bill -Native Affairs Committee Petitions -- Land for Settlements Bill. Mr. SPEAKER took the chair at half-past ten o'clock. PRAYERS. LIBEL LAW. Mr. R. THOMPSON (Marsden) asked permission to put a question without notice. Mr. SPEAKER .- The new order for regulating the course of business was distinctly to go only to the orders of the day. Had the honourable gentleman made the Government aware of the question, and was it one of urgency ? He did not like surprise questions. Had the Government been informed of this ? Mr. R. THOMPSON .-- Yes, the Government was aware that he was going to ask it as a matter of urgency. He would ask the Premier, If his attention had been called to a recent decision of the Appeal Court, in the King versus Mabin, which raised the question of whether a person could in New Zealand be indicted for ordinary defamatory libel. If so, did the Premier propose to introduce any legislation dealing with such offences ? It was a matter of a very urgent nature, and he would confine his statement to reading the remarks of the Judge in

reference to the case. Mr. Justice Williams said :- "The result was eminently unsatisfactory. The difficulty of proving actual knowledge of the falsity of the libel was obvious. A man who was not worth suing civilly would be at liberty to publish the vilest calumnies against men or women, and would go entirely unscathed unless it could be proved that he actually knew that his statements were false. Such a state of things," added his Honour, "does not, I believe, exist in any civilised country. Nor, looking only at the interest of the public peace, is it desirable that it should continue to exist." Mr. Justice Edwards regretted that the offence mentioned in section 5 of Lord Campbell's Act could be committed in this colony with impunity." He had nothing further to add, but merely wished to ask if the Government's attention had been called to this recent decision. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL (Riccarton) asked if this was not anticipating the questions on the Order Paper for Tuesday next. Mr. SPEAKER said that questions which had been given notice of should not be anticipated; but as the Premier had already risen to reply he could now proceed with answering the question. Mr. SEDDON (Premier) said the honourable member for Marsden had risen upon this subject on the previous day, but had been requested to take his seat until the other business had been gone on with. The matter had been mentioned by the honourable member for Marsden to the Government before the notices of motion referred to had been given, so that it had not been brought forward with any desire to anticipate the honourable member for Riccarton. The reply which would have been given on the previous day was to the effect that the Government looked upon the matter as being most serious, and considered there was necessity for immediate action in the way of passing legislation to meet such cases. A book or a letter containing gross libels might be published, and, in fact, one had been published already in respect to members of the House and to the proceedings of Parliament. A malicious and untrue statement had appeared in a book to the effect that the members had blackened eye and bleeding noses; this had already appeared, and it might go further. He thought it was about time something was done, and that statements of the kind ought to be treated as criminal libels, neither more or less. Subsequently, Mr. G. W. RUSSELL (Riccarton) asked leave to withdraw his question, of which he had given notice, with reference to the Livel Bill. There had evidently been an arrangement between the honourable member for Marsden and the Government that that honourable gentleman should anticipate him by putting a question without notice on this matter. Mr. SEDDON (Premier) hoped honourably

<page:495>

members would not make statements of that kind. He had just given the House the assurance that yesterday, before lunch-time, the Government was consulted on this question. The honourable member stated that he would, as soon as the House met, ask the question without notice. Mr. R. THOMPSON (Marsden) might add to what the Premier had just stated, that before the House met yesterday he called the attention of Ministers to this matter, and asked them if they would be prepared to answer if he put a question without notice. When the time came Mr. Speaker ruled that, as on Thursday the House proceeded to the orders of the day, he would not be in order in putting his question on that day. At that time he did not know of the intention of the honourable member for Riccarton to give notice of his question. LAND FOR SETTLEMENTS BILL. This Bill was read a first time. Mr. SEDDON (Premier) .- I would ask that the second reading be taken at half-past two o'clock to-day. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL .- Has the Bill been circulated? Mr. SEDDON .- Yes. An Hon. MEMBER .- We have not got it yet. Mr. SEDDON .- You will have it shortly. The Bill only contains some technical amendments, which I stated to the House yesterday. The House divided on the question, "That the Bill be set down for its second reading at half-past two o'clock to-day." AYES, 36. O'Meara Arnold Hanan Buddo Houston Palmer Parata Carneross Laurensen Carroll McGowan Seddon Colvin McGuire Stevens Mackenzie, T. Duncan Steward McKenzie, R. Flatman Thompson, R. Fowlds Ward McLachlan Meredith Gilfedder Willis. Graham Tellers. Mills Guinness Lawry Morrison Hall Napier Symes. Hall-Jones NOES, 15. Lethbridge Atkinson Tanner Bollard Thomson, J. W. Monk Collins Rhodes Teilers. Hardy Russell, G. W. Massey Russell, W. R. Pirani.

Herries Hutcheson Majority for, 21. Motion agreed to. Captain RUSSELL (Hawke's Bay) asked that the Speaker would order that the Bill should be circulated, so that they might have time to read it before they had to discuss it. Mr. SEDDON (Premier) said, Yesterday he had introduced the Bill without a Governor's message. It was then discovered that there was an appropriation in the Bill, and that a message should have been brought down with it. He could not circulate the Bill because of that, and the delay was on that account. He could, the previous night, have moved that the House go into Committee and take the first reading, and it would have been on the Order Paper for to-day; but it was a stretch, he thought, of the rules, and he did not wish to do that. At half-past two o'clock the Bill would be brought on, and in the meantime it would be circulated. He would be the last to attempt to force a Bill, and, had he introduced the Bill with a Governor's message, it would have been the first order of the day for to-day. Captain RUSSELL (Hawke's Bay) said, Of course, he would not be so rash as to impute any blame to the Premier under any consideration whatsoever. But he wished to point out that the House would not rise till lunch-time, and members would have little or no opportunity of reading the Bill. He thought, therefore, the sooner the Bill was circulated the better. Mr. SPEAKER said he would instruct the officers of the House to have the Bill circulated as soon as possible. Mr. McGUIRE (Hawera) desired to make a personal explanation. On account of being paired with the honourable member for New Plymouth, and finding himself in the Chamber, he voted as he believed Mr. Smith would have voted had he been here. REFERENDUM BILL. On the question, That the amendments made in Committee on this Bill be agreed to, Mr. PIRANI (Palmerston) said, -I move, That this Bill be recommitted for the purpose of considering a new clause to the effect that the poll in regard to the question submitted to the referendum of the people be conducted through the post-office, instead of by the expensive machinery provided in the Bill, which one Government supporter said the other night would mean an expenditure of about \$20,000. Honourable members know just as well as I do that there is not the slightest hope of any question being submitted to the referendum under this Bill except at a general election if the cost is so large as that, and I have no doubt- Mr. SEDDON .- I rise to ask a question as to a point of order. The question is whether, when a clause is rejected in Committee, the Bill can be recommitted for the purpose of considering the same clause. Mr. SPEAKER .- Yes, the amendment is in order. Mr. PIRANI. - I took very great care to ascertain that it was in order before I took this step, and I am very glad to be in a position to educate the Premier on one point for once. Mr. SEDDON. --- After you have been educated first by Mr. Speaker. Mr. PIRANI. - I have not spoken to Mr. Speaker on the subject. You will find the same rule laid down in almost every session of Parliament, and I am surprised that the Premier is not aware of what goes on in this House. It

<page:496>

is a proper rule, because, as in this case, a question may be decided in a thin Committee, when members are not aware of a motion being sprung upon them, and therefore it is proper that the views of the House should be taken on the question. It is at the Premier's suggestion I make this motion to-day, because in Committee the Premier suggested that, as the Committee had not an opportunity of considering this matter at a moment's notice, it would be much better for the sake of the motion and for the sake of members of the House that they should have another and better opportunity of considering it. Now, I am accepting the Premier's recommendation, and adopting a different course to what he thought I would adopt, and therefore you see he takes objection to it. I am very sorry, because I am always only too pleased to help the Premier ; but in this case I intend to pursue my own course and have a vote in open House. The objection to taking the vote by post has been made, that in very many places there is no such thing as a post-office : but the clause I intend to propose allows the Government by regulations to make such provision for the taking of the polls as may be most convenient, providing, of course, that the post-office is used as a vehicle in every possible way. Now, I maintain that by taking a vote in this

way by post you will get a very much larger percentage of the electors to record their votes, if you give them, say, a week in which to post their votes at the nearest post-office to which they live. Then, the people would take the trouble to record their votes on almost every question submitted to them. Does the House mean to say for one moment that the majority of the electors are going to lose a day's work—are going to spend a whole day in going to the polling-booth for the purpose of recording their votes on a mere abstract question? Why, how many employers would give their employés permission to leave their work for a day to record their votes on a question like this? Mr. R. MCKENZIE. - Make it a half-holiday. Mr. PIRANI. - If there was some sensible suggestion in the Bill for taking the poll I would not have raised the question at all; but the member for Motueka, I am sure, will agree with me that it is ridiculous to say we are going to set apart a special day in the year and have all the machinery of the polling-booth for the sake of an abstract question such as will be submitted by this Bill. I think, at any rate, a trial should be given by the colony to the referendum; but to have that trial properly made, the machinery should be made as simple and as effective as possible. Now, under our laws relating to general elections employés have a holiday in which to record their votes; but under this referendum employers are the only people who will be able to record their votes on a question of this sort under the machinery of the Bill; and I say that the working-men of the colony are just as intelligent in deciding many matters of this sort as a good many of the employers. I do not see why the referendum should be confined to one class of the population when we want to take, if possible, the voice of the people as a whole on any question submitted to them. I know that, so far as the ballot taken in Switzerland is concerned, the great fault of it is that you do not get a vote of anything like a majority of the people. Now, if some simpler system were adopted which could easily be devised if the Government took the trouble to make regulations to suit the special circumstances of the case - you would be able to get a ballot cheaply, and get an effective ballot, and I feel certain that the secrecy of the ballot could be easily maintained if proper precautions were taken. In fact, there are polling-booths at the present time, where only ten or a dozen votes are recorded, where the ballot is not secret at all: but, on a question like this, if polling-booths were set up we know what the result would be. Take the Patea election, which is just now being decided: there are fifty polling-booths in the electorate, and in a number of them there will be only something like four or six votes cast. Where does the secrecy of the ballot come in in these cases? Why, the way every man votes is known just as well in these small polling-booths as if there was open voting, and it is ridiculous to say that under a system by which a post-office could be used, and by which the votes could be so enclosed that the subject-matter would not be known by anybody outside those who have to count the votes, you would not get a much better poll, a more secret poll; and you would find that a majority of people would take the trouble to post a letter when they would not take the trouble to go through a crowd on a special day and record their votes in the same way as at a general election. I feel very strongly on this subject, because I ardently desire to see the referendum given a fair trial. But I am certain under the clumsy system under the Bill there is no such prospect of its getting a fair trial, except on the general election day, when it is liable to confuse the issues just as much as the licensing poll does at the present time. I am sorry the Government have not seen fit to adopt this suggestion. At any rate, I am determined that there shall be an open vote on the question, and that we shall be able to see who it is who desires to see the referendum carried into effect properly, sensibly, and sanely, and who is simply desirous that it should be a farce on the statute-book. second Mr. MONK (Waitemata). - I rise the amendment, and I shall heartily support it. I consider there requires a very great alteration to be introduced into our system of voting. In a new country like this, where there are very large electorates, where the population is sparse and scattered, there are bad roads, and in the winter, for instance, you will not, in any election in the country districts, get a full and explicit expression of public opinion; you cannot possibly do it. Not only is this feature a defect in our present system, but there is also a great waste of time and absence of facility.

It should above all things be the desire of any Adminis-

<page:497>

tration that, in any measure submitted to the people, you should have the most complete expression of the public will, and there should be allowed no removable obstruction to such a revision being placed before the country. It is not possible to have any effective referendum, in New Zealand particularly, for the reasons I have mentioned, excepting by the issue of electoral rights. You could have your ballot in the same method as now for those who desire to exercise it ; but those who feel perfectly independent, under certain regulations, let the Government impose whatever regulations they can devise for the purpose of securing absolute secrecy and prevention of fraud-let them impose whatever conditions for this purpose can be contrived-but let those who desire to take out electoral rights have the opportunity of doing so. I can assure the Premier that in this-like many other things I have mentioned -I am instigated by an honest desire that the welfare of the people should be secured, and for that reason I feel conscious that sooner or later this principle will be adopted by the people. Let me assure the right honourable gentleman that he could make no movement to secure greater popularity and a consciousness on the part of the public that he is earnestly desirous of establishing the best welfare of the commonwealth than by granting such a boon to the people as the issue of electoral rights. There is not a woman-and the more educated the woman the more likely she will be to take advantage of it-who would not appreciate it ; and the best of our citizens are likely to embrace the opportunity of taking out electoral rights, and those living in the country, scattered far away, but with a consciousness of how important is the exercise of the public will through the franchise for the welfare of the community - those who feel that every individual in our commonwealth is potentially responsible for the legislation that takes place- those, Sir, are the persons who will more than any other do their utmost to supply themselves with the convenience of using an electoral right, and then no ordinary conditions of distance, or weather, or roads can prevent them from, through the post-offices of the country, recording their opinions upon any measure that is submitted for the people's will. Under a democracy like ours, if we wish to have good administration it must be by inculcating in the public mind the feeling that it is only in the culture and fitness of the units composing the commonwealth that the best results can be secured, and the Government will best respond to such a desire on the part of a cultured people by determining that there shall be every possible facility for every elector, even in the remotest out posts of settlement, to record their votes and opinions on public matters. I shall heartily support the motion which has been moved by the member for Palmerston, though I feel at the same time assured that the Premier himself is well aware that it does not fully provide all that is necessary to achieve the purpose I have suggested, and which will yet be the law of the land. Mr. SEDDON (Premier) .- I do not think the member for Palmerston seriously means this amendment at all, and I regret very much that our Standing Orders permit that every amendment which has been moved in Committee on the Bill can be moved in the House on the consideration of the amendment and also again on the third reading. It is high time the Standing Orders were amended. In this respect some alteration is required or you will never get your legislation through at all. But I rose more particularly to show how unscrupulous, if I might use the term, the member for Palmerston is in the assertions he makes. He said he was moving the recommittal of the Bill at my suggestion. He made a statement there, Sir, which is absolutely not in accordance with the facts, because the records are against him, and it is only when you have the records that you can catch the honourable gentleman. To show how far the honourable gentleman has forgotten himself, I find from the records of the House that on the 12th July the Referendum Bill was before the Committee, and on that evening Mr. Pirani moved an amendment. I then moved to report progress, so as to give members time to consider that amendment. Then, on the 16th July this Bill came before the Committee There had been time to consider again. the honourable gentleman's amendment between the 12th and 16th July. This is the amendment : " To insert the words

in lieu thereof, ' to be passed in accordance with regulations made by Order in Council.'-Mr. Pirani." Sir, the member for Palmerston was not present, and because he could not leave his home and come down here on the 16th July the House is now asked to reconsider this matter. If that is to be the manner in which we are to conduct our business, when we have any matter at all in which the honourable member is interested it would be well to meet the honourable member's modest request and adjourn the consideration of it until he arrives. I must note carefully for the future whether the honourable member is in his place. At all events, Sir, time was given for consideration. When the motion was moved there was a larger House than there is now, and a division was not called for. The matter was allowed to go on the voices. The member for Waitemata was in his place at the time. He spoke on the question, and yet today he seconds an amendment to send it back to the Committee, when he would not take the trouble to call for a division. Mr. MONK .- I had nothing to do with the motion, and could not compel it. Mr. SEDDON .- You were a supporter of it, and you support it now. You spoke in Committee it favour of it. You spoke, we thought, seriously, and you were in earnest, and when a member speaks seriously and will not take the trouble to record his own vote, or the vote of any one else, we may take it he has been convinced by others that his arguments were fallacious. I take it the honourable member was so convinced. Then, Sir, I say that to attempt to alter the ballot in the Referendum Bill]

<page:498>

is altogether uncalled-for. If there is to be an alteration in our electoral system, and if we are to adopt voting by post, or if we are to give electoral rights, let us go straightforwardly and boldly for an alteration of the electoral laws. Sir, I will not be a party to tinkering with the electoral laws in any measure that is before the House, whether it is the Referendum Bill or any other measure. If such an alteration is carried I may say that is the last you will hear of the Referendum Bill. I look on the ballot system as being superior to any referendum, or to any law on the statute-book of the colony. Hon. MEMBERS .- Oh ! Mr. SEDDON .- Honourable members do not seem to like it. We know they have been at this for years. They want to do away with the ballot. They want to get electoral rights, and to get an opportunity to use undue influence. Take a case in point : There were ten thousand people in Christchurch yesterday who did not exercise their right to vote. They did not care a fig about the result. Well, some one else might have exercised those votes. Sir, there are some people who have " fads," as the member for Waitemata and the member for Palmerston. You would find them going round to every person who is entitled to send a vote by post, and there would be a nice little arrangement. They would go from house to house fixing up these papers, and getting the mistresses to influence the girls and the masters to influence the men. We all know the little arrangement. They do it now. They have done it before and they would do it again if they got the chance. Sir, I say that the ballot means freedom, and to tamper with it would be unwise in the extreme. We know what it has cost to obtain, and, that being so, are we to give it away lightly ? If we did so it would be a grievous mistake. To say that one cannot tamper, and that there cannot be personification, is all "buncombe." I have known it done, and done to a considerable extent, in Australia. In Victoria they used to have that system, and I have known electoral rights brought from Castlemaine to another electorate ; and I have known electoral rights sent up from Williamstown to another electorate in the country. I have known cases on the West Coast, Sir, in the early days, where miners' rights were used as voters' rights. Mr. MONK .- Was that the time they put George in ? Mr. SEDDON .- No, that was not the time when we put George in. We can always say that any member who comes to this House on our side comes in honestly, but, Sir, the minority representatives you have on the Opposition side of the House come in by trickery and deceit. We have that exemplified every election. The Prohibitionists invariably put up a candidate and they say, "There are two things to be gained - it is heads we gain, tails you lose. There are the two objects to be gained. If we do not get in a Prohibitionist you will stop the Government candidate from being elected." And they are doing that persistently throughout the country. An Hon. MEMBER .- It

is incorrect. Mr. SEDDON .- It is not incorrect. I have known too many cases. They do not care a fig for the general politics of the country or for the Government : they only desire to further prohibition. That is all they care about. I have it from the leaders that they are in- different to the general politics of the country or to the Government of the country, but that they want to secure temperance reform : and that they seek before everything else. But. Sir. 1 the good sense of the majority of the temper- ance people is against throwing over every progressive measure and wrecking the Liberal party simply for the purpose of furthering prohibition. An Hon. MEMBER .- What is the question before the House ? Mr. SEDDON .- The question is whether you are to tamper with the ballot system. That is the question, and I have been constrained to make these remarks because I see there is great danger of tampering with the ballot sistem which now obtains, and I shall tight to the bitter end-I shall fight to the death against the electoral-right system of voting. i shall vote against having voting-papers sent to people's homes. And, Sir, the poor, unfortunate, ever- suffering woman is drawn into this again. Says the member for Waitemata, " She cannot come : a wet day will keep her." Why, Sir. oid as he is, he knows nothing about women. A rainy day keep a woman at home when she is going to help a man she believes in nothing of the sort! If she wishes to support a candi- date she will go through fire and water: and it is because the women of the country are with the Government that we prosper and keep in power. It is the careless, indifferent women in respect to political matters who want to remain in their luxurious dra . ing-rooms and have post-cards sent to them. The country farmer's wife-the women of the country- brave all the dangers of the road or rain to record their votes, and take a delight in doing it. I know a farmer's wife who came down the West Coast, and she had to cross the river four times, swimming it three times, so that she might vote for me. The idea of talking about this postal-note system of voting being want d by the women. I say they have never asked for it. I challenge the honourable member to show a single petition or communication to members of Parliament indicating that to be the case. It is all in the honourable member's brain. Mr. MONK. -- Oh. no. Mr. SEDDON .- Well, where is it. I ask ? If there was a general feeling amongst the elector or amongst the women electors of our cal ny we should have it manifested either by petition or voiced at some public meeting, or weald be, at any rate, through the Press. Now, we have no petitions, we have no resolutions fr in public meetings, we hear nothing of it in the Press, and the only one who presses it is the honourable member for Waitemata. We mu: allow the honourable member to refer to the past-it is always pleasing to me to be re- minded of the " wretched past," and whenever

<page:499>

the honourable member is on his legs I cannot but admit he will not progress. Now, Sir, every word he has said was an argument against the Bill. It was an argument against our present voting system. It is sometimes well for us to refer to the past, because we have pleasant memories, and it is amusing to hear the honourable member at this stage of his ex- istence and with his parliamentary experi- ence asking the House to do away with the ballot system and establish the retrograde principle of the electoral right. Sir, as mem- Fers know, I am very much in favour of having the machinery provided for referring important questions to the people, and my conversion has not been, as stated, simply because I perceived there was a majority in favour of it. I make it my practice in life not to do anything until I know there is a fair chance of success, and I know it takes time to educate the public mind. To make proposals in advance and then to have them defeated means that you go back. The proper course to take is to see that the public mind is educated. When the time is ripe, and success is fairly assured, then is the time to strike. Well, Sir, that is the reason of so many progressive measures being now on the statute-book, and they have been put there during the last ten years. They were talked about and written about twenty and thirty years before, but they did not get on the statute-book until within the last ten years. And why ? Firstly, because the public mind has been educated ; secondly, be- cause the time previously was not opportune ; and. thirdly, because the people were not there to carry them out, or give effect to thom. Now, I say

there are in this House, I should reckon, 75 per cent. of members in favour of the referendum. I will also say that there are 75 per cent. of the members who are not in favour of interfering with the ballot system or introducing the novelty and the luxury of allowing people to stay at home and vote. There are fully 75 per cent. of the members in favour of the referendum and there are 90 per cent. of the members opposed to the issue of electoral rights. More than that, the people are opposed to the electoral rights, because if you take those who voted for electoral rights at the time the Electoral Bill was before this House you will find that nearly all of them were rejected at the last general election. It is a notable fact that the large number of those who voted for electoral rights when that proposal was before Parliament are now missing from this Chamber. I say that the Opposition were in favour of electoral rights the last time it came before this House. And where are the Opposition now? In the words of the old Scotch song, "Oh where, tell me where, are the Opposition gone !" An Hon. MEMBER .- They are coming to life, and will soon be here. Mr. SEDDON .-- And so will Christmas. We only get it once a year, and they are coming back, perhaps, some time within the next twenty years. However, Sir, I think we are going a little astray from the subject. I want to bring the House back to this fact : that no advantage was taken of the member for Palmerston. When I moved to report progress, so as to give time for members to consider the amendment, he treated the House with discourtesy by not being here to give reasons for supporting it, and because he could not be here, and was not here on the night when we were to have considered it, he moved this amendment. I suppose all he wanted to do was to put his opinions on record in Hansard, and, if so, we must not treat this seriously. But I hope those who want this on the statute-book will vote against the amendment and let us get the Bill away to another place. I shall oppose the amendment. Mr. PIRANI (Palmerston) .- As a matter of personal explanation, I wish to say the Premier stated just now that " because Mr. Pirani could not leave home and come down here last Tuesday " he had not an opportunity of dealing with this amendment. The Premier is interested in my movements I know, but in this case his information is faulty, as I was not at home on Tuesday at all. I was in Wanganui on Monday last at the Education Board meeting attending to public business, and it was no fault of mine that I was not present in the House on Tuesday. Mr. SEDDON. You should have sent a telegram. Mr. PIRANI. I must apologize for not doing that, and the next time I shall do it. I know how much the Premier likes to study my convenience. The Premier also said he had caught me in a trap in my statement that I had brought this matter up for reconsideration at the suggestion of the Premier. The Premier in his speech just now admitted that on Friday last he moved the adjournment of this very question to give the House an opportunity of reconsidering it. Mr. SEDDON .-- Of considering it. Mr. PIRANI .- " Of considering it." Well, the opportunity the Premier chose to give was not the opportunity that suited me. This is the opportunity that suits me, and I have chosen it. Mr. MASSEY (Franklin) .--- Sir, there is one point on which I agree with the Right Hon. the Premier. He stated that an amendment of the Standing Orders was necessary. An amendment of the Standing Orders is necessary, but not in the direction indicated by the right honourable gentleman. I think we require an amendment which will protect the rights of the minority in this House, and which will prevent the Premier from manipulating the Order Paper according to his own sweet will. The Premier has had to submit to your ruling. Sir, that the member for Palmerston was within his rights in moving such an amendment as this, and there is nothing more to be said on that point. I support the amendment which has been moved. I supported the amendment in Committee, and I saw now what I stated then, that I think that during the year in which a general election is held the questions which

<page:500>

are submitted to the people by way of referendum should be submitted to them in the same way and on the same day as that on which the general election is held, but during the other two years I am strongly of opinion that the proper way of submitting these questions is

through the post-office. If people are expected to leave their work or business and women are supposed to interfere with their household duties in order probably to travel long distances to vote on such questions as may be submitted to them, I have reason to believe that many of them will not do it, and, consequently, there will not be a satisfactory expression of opinion on the part of the people. I say we shall get a more satisfactory expression of opinion by the people if the questions are submitted through the post. It will cost less money, and will certainly be more satisfactory. The Premier stated that what has been suggested would interfere with the secrecy of the ballot. Much he cares about the secrecy of the ballot. What has been happening in the Patea electorate? I happen to know that the Government organizer, Mr. Edwards, has been travelling through the Patea electorate promising roads and bridges and Government billets to all and sundry in order to get them to support the Government candidate; and yet the Premier talks about liberty of conscience, the rights of the people, and the secrecy Sir, were it not that undue influences are brought to bear in the interests of the Government by organizations formed for the purpose, I believe the Government would not be in office for a single month. That is the position at the present time. There has been wholesale bribery and corruption going on for years, and many of us have good reason to know it. Mr. McGOWAN (Minister of Mines). - A short time ago we heard it stated that there would be no Opposition, but, Sir, in this case we have the old Conservative element strongly represented by the honourable member for Franklin, Mr. Massy. I think it is like the story of a certain animal that has only been scotched, but not killed, and he is now coming out in his true colours. We have just heard a strong Opposition speech from the honourable member for Franklin. I like to hear a good speech, but I like to hear reason along with it. The honourable gentleman said that there was no doubt that influence was being used. He is a reasonable man, and let him reason out what undue influence means. Who is most likely to use undue influence? Is it not those who have wealth at their back? Is not the opposition to the Liberal party the landed aristocracy? They have influence and power and wealth, and if influence can be used it is by these people. Wherever you have wealth you have influence, and we admit at once that the wealthy people of the colony for the most part have been more inclined to the Conservative than to the Liberal side in politics. Those are the men that have wealth, and it is from them that influence most comes. However, I do not want to say anything about that more than to let the honourable member know the position he takes up on all occasions. He was born that way, and cannot get out of it. One word regarding a remark made by the honourable member for Palmerston in regard to the easy method of allowing people to vote through the post-office. It is all very well for that honourable gentleman to say so. He lives in a town and has town experience. Apart altogether from politics, the post-office is a very good thing for the dissemination of information in the towns, but it is absolutely useless with regard to the out-districts. And for this reason: There are business-men in this House, and I have no doubt they have sent out business circulars, and these circulars have come back to them by hundreds. Or take gentlemen who have been candidates for positions on public bodies. They take the names out of the directories, and the result is that these notices come back perhaps a fortnight or a month afterwards, and in few cases are they delivered. At many post-offices in the out-districts of the colony it is impossible for a letter to be delivered within a fortnight of the letter's arrival at the post-office. Is that a way of getting a correct return of the opinion of the people of the colony? It is simply nonsense. In the matter of the referendum it is only important questions that would be referred to the people, and if when these questions are referred to them the people do not take the trouble to go the short distance, or whatever distance it may be, to a polling-booth, then they have not much interest in the question that is submitted. At any rate, the polling system that we have under the present ballot is the best that we know. I have endeavoured to consider the electoral right and the polling by letter, but, as far as my experience goes, either of these systems would be worse than the present one. I do not mean to say that the present ballot system is complete. I do not mean to say that we could get the whole of the colony to

vote. Take the number of electors in Christchurch at the -- recent election and see the number of votes polled. There is an instance. I say that no system you can institute will bring the whole of the people to the poll. Under the ballot system I saw that if the people are interested they will come, and if they are not interested they will not come, and you will have on that occasion a short vote. Mr. T. MACKENZIE (Waihomo). - We do sometimes have from the Ministerial bench 's an indication of progressive measures. Th measure is as progressive a one as we have considered this session, and, whether the Minister of Justice realises it or not, the electoral right will become established in this and other conu. 1 tries within a very short period. If the electoral right were wrong, why, then, did the honourable gentleman support the policy of extending to seamen the electoral right ? Why did he extend the granting of the electoral right to e. m- mercial travellers ? If it is wrong, and if those votes were improperly used, then I could mr .. derstand the honourable gentleman saving th :

<page:501>

of the ballot. It has nothing whatever to do with the secrecy of the ballot, and if the honourable gentleman had given that consideration to the subject which it deserves I am sure he would not have spoken as he has done; and even if it might, in his opinion, interfere with the secrecy of the ballot, it shows a want of originality on his part in meeting an emergency. This question merely wants approaching in an intelligent and careful manner and you will find that difficulties will be overcome. Why, it is one of the most antiquated arrangements possible that people should be dragged out of their homes in all sorts of weather and have to travel long distances in order to record a vote, and I venture to think that, without interfering with the secrecy of the ballot, we will find that the electoral right will be established before long. Then, regarding the alleged interference with the purity of elections. I will say this: When you have hired men like Edwards travelling round the country and interfering with the electors, promising them votes and promising them conveniences, that should be stopped, although I think that Edwards's presence at an election usually secures the election of an Opposition candidate. I would ask for no better assistance in my district than a hired agitator who has no interest in the district impertinently interfering I venture to say if with electors' privileges. the present Government candidate is defeated at the Patea election it will be owing to the fact of this man being sent there to interfere with the electors. An Hon. MEMBER .- Who has gone up there ? Mr. T. MACKENZIE .- Mr. Edwards, and he has been prowling round the district during the whole of the election. An Hon. MEMBER .- What about the Premier ? Mr. T. MACKENZIE .- I can understand the Premier-he has a right to go to any part of the colony and address the electors; but it is a very different thing to having a man paid to go and interfere with the people in a district. Why. this man went to the Waihemo district and told Sir John Mckenzie that he could assist him to secure his seat, and Sir John Mckenzie told him that if he did not make himself scarce from the Waihemo election he would use some Highland methods to assist him. I venture to think that I got many votes as a result of this agent's presence in that district. These men have the power to spend money. These people treat the electors to grog. Hon. MEMBERS. - Oh, oh ! Mr. T. MACKENZIE .- I will give you an instance of it. When I was in Wedderburn my friend who was driving me said, "Now, there is a man connected with the unemployed who says he knew you at Clutha, and hopes you have not departed from your former temperance ideas. If you give him a bottle of whisky he says he could secure you the votes of a good many of these men." I told my friend Bob, who was with me, that I thought I was going to win the election, and I certainly was not going to run any risks by supplying grog, apart altogether from my objection to it on principle, and that I doubted such a means would secure votes worth having. A few days afterwards a man called McLaughlan, another man employed to canvass-and, I believe, a temporary clerk in the service of the Government-and one of the agents of Edwards, went to Wedderburn and gave drinks wholesale. And, Sir, the law cannot reach him ; he could do it as much as he liked, because he is neither a committee-man nor vet a candidate; but it is well enough known the

influence he exercises. Members will see that the candidate is handicapped,,and the committee is handicapped ; and yet this man can come in and spend money and treat people, and thereby think he is securing a certain number of their votes. But I say this practice should be stopped, and if the Bill which the Government passed last session to stop canvassing has any effect at all, then these agents should be kept out of a district also. Now, what the Premier said regarding women is generally true-that if they have made up their mind to vote for a man they will go through very great difficulties to do so ; but I think they ought to have some means of recording their votes without being compelled to put up with all these inconveniences. And there are many reasons why it is frequently impossible for them to be present to vote personally. I have all along supported the system of electoral rights, and I intend to support it still. I regret even to think that the honourable member for Christchurch City (Mr. Ell) should have agreed with the Premier in the remarks that the Premier made when he said that the temperance party have no object in view other than promoting temperance legislation. I think that the temperance people have other objects as well in securing the election of certain candidates at the poll. At least that is my experience ; and I must say I was a little disappointed when the honourable member, who is an ardent temperance supporter, agreed with the Premier in these remarks. Mr. BOLLARD (Eden) .- It is my intention to vote for the amendment, because I believe it will be a step in the direction of obtaining electoral rights. I have no objection to the ballot, providing that men of integrity were appointed as Registrars and as Returning Officers to carry it out. I will give the House some experiences in my own district. The Premier was good enough to refer to me the other day as only representing three people I presume he referred to the fact that my majority was four. But, Sir, there was a straight-out fight in my district between two candidates, and I claim to represent, at all events, a majority of the people in that district. There was no triangular fight ; it was a straight-out fight between two candidates. Therefore I think it was unfair of the Premier to refer to me as only representing three people. Now, in addition to that I have the honour to represent four members of this House: I think I am unique in that respect. But, Sir, the last census shows that I represent more people in my district than any other

<page:502>

electorate in the colony. Now, Sir, what happened in my district with regard to the ballot ? My election was fought out at the as a large Registrar's office, inasmuch persons were struck off the number of roll previous to the election. I had good reason to believe that the greater number of them were my supporters, although, of course, a few Government supporters were struck off also in order to show that it was not one-sided." But the fact remains that a large number of persons who during the three years had never changed their residence and were qualified to be on the roll were struck off without getting any notice to that effect. Now, these persons in due course sent in claims to the Registrar to vote, and they fully expected they would be placed upon the supplementary roll. The election took place on Wednesday, and we never saw the supplementary roll till the Monday previous to the election. Mr. SPEAKER .-- This seems quite foreign to the subject of the Bill. Mr. BOLLARD. I am speaking about the ballot as compared with electoral rights; I hope I am in order in showing the irregularities of the ballot. Mr. SPEAKER .- The honourable gentleman must discuss either the Bill or the amendment ; his remarks seem to refer to something affecting his own election. Mr. BOLLARD .- Shall I be in order in showing how the ballot was worked in my district ? Mr. SPEAKER. - The honourable gentleman's remarks must bear on the subject before the House. Mr. BOLLARD). - I was endeavouring to show the working of the ballot as compared with that of electoral rights or voting by post. I was saying, in connection with voting by ballot in my district, that the elections were held on the 6th December, and within three months a roll was prepared for the next election-a new roll. Would honourable members believe that seven hundred persons who voted at the previous election were struck off by the Registrar ? Can honourable members conceive that seven hundred people could be disfranchised in so short a time? These are the reasons

why I am prepared to vote for the amendment, because it is an attempt in the direction of having electoral rights; and although I believe the ballot if fairly carried out by men of integrity is a very good system, it is an unfortunate fact that men of integrity whom the people can trust to place them honestly on the roll are not always in evidence. For the reasons I have just stated I shall vote for the amendment. Mr. A. L. D. FRASER (Napier) .-- I do not care to allow this amendment to pass without saving a very few words, because I might be accused of inconsistency, owing to my remarks on a similar subject last year. On that occasion I advocated limited electoral rights. My views are recorded in Hansard, I believe, but I would briefly refer to them again. I approved of electoral rights when they were given to sea-men, and again when they were given to commercial travellers, because formerly they had been disfranchised ; and no man or woman - at liberty-in the colony should be disfranchised. Now, what is the present position ? Why should you, Sir, or I be disfranchised because owing to some private business we, at the time of a general election, are compelled to be in some other part of the colony ? If a member of our family is dangerously ill in another part of the colony, why should we not be able to record a vote in the electorate in which we reside? That is where I say we should have limited electoral rights. But I cannot go so far as the honourable member for Palmerston suggests ; I think very grave dangers are to be contemplated and reviewed before we take a step that, to my mind, would be an innovation, on which the people of the colony want to be educated before such power is placed in their hands. We have heard a great deal about Mr. Edwards -. The honourable member for Waihemo has on several occasions abused and maligned that gentleman. He is blaming Mr. Edwards for going to electorates and using his influence in elections. I should like to ask Mr. Mackenzie who helped to put him in. Mr. Edwards, in his own argument, because he says that he has simply damaged the cause he has advocated ; and yet Mr. Mackenzie on the floor of this House over and over again maligns Mr. Edwards. I say that the honourable gentleman ought to go down on his knees every night and thank God that he was sent there. I say, with a full sense of recognizing the responsibility of what I am saying - I say it without qualification and reservation - - that the Government have no more to do with Mr. Edwards than Mr. Mackenzie has. I repeat that the Government have nothing whatever to do with Mr. Edwards. I have been informed by Ministers, and I also judge so by the paper circulated by Mr. Edwards. An Hon. MEMBER. The Premier appointed him. He admitted so in the House. Mr. A. L. D. FRASER. --- Of course, I cannot contradict the honourable gentleman. I must accept his word ; but this is the first occasion I have been aware of the Premier misleading me. But what I was about to say was that Mr. Edwards sent me papers asking me to form an association in my electorate to help to return me and to collect subscriptions to pay the expenses. That proves my statement that he is not a Government officer. If he were a Government officer, as has been suggested by the honourable gentleman, or a Ministerial nominee, the money would have been taken, probably from the colonial coffers, for his work. With reference to what the member for Franklin said-that Mr. Edwards has been promising billets and paying for liquid refreshment all over the country for every one who goes near his hotel --. Mr. Edwards must have had the means to do it, and the inference suggested was that that money had come from the Government. I say that that money has not come from the Government. It is collected, probably, and I regret to say it, from a few childish, indiscreet people on the Liberal side, who will put their hands in their pockets for any loud-mouthed

<page:503>

advocate who goes to them. They have more money than sense. This Mr. Edwards sent to our district some of his papers, but they were all placed in that receptacle where I think documents of that kind should be deposited-that is, the waste-paper basket. They were not even acknowledged by myself; and if every member of this House who received papers from the professional agitator treated such documents in the same way they would be getting their just due. I say this is a most improper proceeding. It is the apotheosis of colossal impertinence for Mr. Edwards, a man who is unknown in the district, or for any

other man, to go to my electorate, or to any other member's electorate, and try to influence an election, and, if it can- not be stopped in any other way, we should bring down legislation to stop it. Mr. HUTCHESON (Wellington City). - Who is maligning Mr. Edwards now ? Mr. A. L. D. FRASER .- The honourable member for Wellington City generally is a logical man, but sometimes he is reading and only hears half of what another honourable member is saying. I say that Mr. Mackenzie was wrong in maligning Mr. Edwards, because by his own argument Mr. Edwards helped to put the honourable gentleman into Parliament. Well, we will leave Mr. Edwards, who person- ally I do not wish to criticize, but I do wish to condemn the principle of professional canvass- ing. There was only one other matter that the honourable member for Franklin referred to, and that was with regard to the money which is being scattered about. Now, if that is so. I hope the honourable gentleman will agree with me that we had better let that matter drop. Let it .die with the Opposition, and with the " Na- tional Ass." That, however, is all past, and it does not do to disinter those reminiscences which are so obnoxious, because, if we are going to refer to them, the honourable gentle- man knows as well as I do that the National Association and those connected with it acted criminally. They paid their candidates so much to stand for electorates, and found That was the sole funds for their expenses. policy of the National Association. What did they pay the gentleman who opposed Mr. Car- roll? Who found the money to pay 12.0. his expenses, and so much to put into his pocket after the election was over? The National Association. Mr. MASSEY. ... How do you know ? Mr. A. L. D. FRASER .- I know it because it is public property, and you dare not deny it. Mr. MASSEY .- I say it is absolutely incor- rect. Mr. A. L. D. FRASER .- Well, the honour- able gentleman does not know anything about it, and yet he says it is not correct. I speak now not in anger, but in sorrow, and I hope to-day this idiosyncrasy of an effete body will be dropped for ever. Probably these things have been done on our side. At any rate, there is no doubt they have been done on the other side. I hope that now we shall start a new era, wherein the conduct of all candidates and their supporters before and after an election shall be the personification of all that is fair and honourable. Mr. LAURENSEN (Lyttelton) .- Sir, I am really in doubt as to the question before the House. We have just listened to a disquisition on the merits and demerits of Mr. Edwards, and also to a speech on the method of conduct- ing elections-subjects that have no bearing at all on the question we are supposed to have under consideration. I understand the motion moved by the member for Palmerston is that we should allow voting by post under the re- ferendum. I believe the honourable gentleman has moved. this motion honestly believing it will enable us to get a better expression of opinion from the people than is given at the time of the election, and therefore I give him every credit for having moved it. At the same time I regret to say I cannot support him. I believe that when we take a referendum it would be only on some burning question, and on such an occasion it is essential that the secrecy of the ballot should be observed. The day may come when we wish to take a re- ferendum as to whether we should adjust the taxation and put it on some particular item, as we might do by relieving it, say, from the Customs and putting it on the land. Now, it is quite conceivable that if a referendum were taken on a question such as that a number of men employed by a station-holder might hold the opinion that there should be additional taxation on the land ; vet if the voting-papers were sent to them they might think there was a danger of their having to ex- hibit them to their employers. I believe we should do all we can in connection with the referendum to see that the utmost secrecy is observed with the ballot. A statement has been made that the cost of taking a vote under any Referendum Act would be \$20,000. This would mean that a referendum would cost 1s. for every man and woman on the roll. I do not believe the cost would be more than a fourth of that, and if it costs even half the sum stated-\$10,000-it might be worth the money to get a definite expression of opinion from the people on some important subject. Altogether, I regret to say I cannot vote for the motion that has been proposed by the honour- able member for Palmerston, although I admit there are arguments in favour of it. However, I am afraid it will infringe on a thing we should at all times hold most

sacred -- the secrecy of the ballot. Mr. ELL (Christchurch City). - Mr. Speaker, I cannot support this proposition. as I stated on the last occasion on which it was before the Chamber. I now rise for another purpose. It has been stated that unless we have these facilities granted to the electors we will not have a good vote, and the member for Palmerston referred to that had taken place in Switzerland ; but the system is also in operation in America. In the State of Michigan, where the population is over 2,000,000, the persons of voting-age are 617,445-and we would be quite right in assuming that all of these are not on the roll-the

<page:504>

number voting on a proposition relating to a | but gave effect to last year. That was worked law numbered over 500,000. An Hon. MEMBER. Not by ballot. Mr. ELL. Yes, by ballot. I will give another instance. In the State of Minnesota, where they have 376,000 people of voting-age, 266,000 voted on a proposition by ballot, showing that a very good percentage of the voters voted on the proposals submitted. I think those facts should dispose of that particular point. With regard to what the honourable member for Waitemata said about giving the electors some direct voice in making laws so as to help to strengthen public opinion, and that the people were generally right, I ask, Where was the honourable gentleman the other night as regards the initiative? The honourable member for Waihemo is regarded as one of the jokers of the House, and has probably brought more honourable members to their feet than any one else by what is termed "pulling their legs." He seems to enjoy himself, and has a very hearty laugh when that is the result of his interjection. The Premier said the temperance party only put up candidates with the object of getting their own particular "fad " in and to have a thrust at the Government. I denied that was so. Mr. SEDDON .- I am glad to hear it. Mr. ELL .- Let me say this to the honourable gentleman : I am an old campaigner now, and had been one for a good many years before I came to this House, and I tell him that his own particular organization in Christchurch exists for about two months before the election day, and dies immediately after it, and I can tell him that if he wants to find out the hardest workers on behalf of the reforms he has placed on the statute-book, and for which he claims credit, he will find them in the workers in the temperance party. What about the Old-age Pensions ? Who worked for that ? Where were the workers for that ? Were they to be found amongst his political party organization ? Not a bit of it. The association that did most towards bringing that into prominence was the Progressive Liberal Association, which is regarded as a temperance organization. tell the honourable gentleman what they did. I believe I had the honour of receiving the first letter from the Premier in February 1894, in which he expressed his sympathy with the proposal for a pension for the aged people of the colony, and said that the question had his entire sympathy. I had that letter embodied in a circular, and sent it to the labour and political organizations all over the colony so as to get it as widespread as possible. Then, we had a number of gentlemen at work drawing up a scheme of old-age pensions, and we sent that round to every newspaper in New Zealand, and nearly every newspaper wrote articles on it, and every member of the House at the time also had a copy of it. That was done by the Progressive Liberal Association. Then, with regard to the franchise, that question was also taken up by the same association ; and the same was the case with regard to the Customs taxation, which the Premier objected to in 1899, through the medium of the same organization. I say that, with regard to all Liberal measures, he has been more helped and strengthened by the temperance party that he disparages on the floor of this House than from any other source. Mr. SEDDON. - I do not disparage them. I think they are making a mistake in the course they pursue. I say they prefer to sacrifice everything else for temperance. Mr. ELL .- I, Sir, give notice to move the recommitment of clause 14, for reasons which I will give shortly. Mr. FLATMAN (Geraldine) .- Sir, whether it is right or not that the Electoral Act should be amended in regard to electoral rights I am not going to give an opinion. But if we attempt to interfere with electoral rights at all we should amend the Electoral Act, and not insert a clause in this Bill to accomplish that object. But where there is a lack of

sound argument to put forward in support of a motion abuse is generally resorted to by Opposition members. I was astonished to hear the honourable member for Eden-I am sorry that he is not now in his place-abusing a certain Registrar of Electors by saying that a large number of electors were struck off the roll that should not have been struck off. Which suggested, of course, that that Registrar, whoever he was, was not doing his duty; and, Sir, I think this is not the place to come to and make such a charge. He might have made it in some other form, and I think it is altogether out of place to malign people in this manner. It is frequently done in this House. When there is no other argument to use members begin to abuse some person or other who holds a responsible position, and assert that he has gone beyond or has neglected his duty. All I wish to say is that if we alter the electoral law at all it should be done by an amendment of the Electoral Act. There is one other thing I would like to say, and that is the honourable gentleman who spoke last, the honourable member for Christchurch City (Mr. Ell), claimed that the organization of which he is one of the leading lights has promoted most of the Liberal measures which have been introduced in the House during the last few years. Now, I will tell that honourable gentleman this : that if the old-age pensions had been enacted in accordance with the proposals of the organization of which he poses as a leader it would have been by this time as dead as Julius Caesar, and the honourable gentleman knows it. It is simply ridiculous for him to claim the parentage of the Old-age Pensions, or of any other Act. It may have been suggested, but the hard-grafting was done by the party who has supported a Liberal Government during the last eight or nine years. I cannot support the motion of the honourable member for Palmerston, on the ground that I think this is the wrong Bill in which to insert the clause that he moved. Mr. MILLAR (Dunedin City). - Whilst I am in sympathy to a large extent with the proposal of the honourable member, I cannot fail to recognise that the question he raised has

<page:505>

developed into something different altogether. This question of sending the electoral right through the Post Office has now become the question of voting by electoral rights, and that involves something very much larger indeed. My idea was that the Post Office should be used wholly and solely for it, and that the Postmasters should be the Registrars for the time being, and that a person should be able to go to the post-office and obtain his voting-paper, instead of having the expensive machinery of the Act set up for that purpose. Now, if you take the post-offices as a whole, they are conveniently situated for the people throughout the length and breadth of the colony. My honourable friend the member for Napier said he believed in a modified form of the electoral right, and he quoted the case of the seamen and commercial travellers. But what was the reason for which these classes of men were given the electoral right ? It was because, through the exigences of their calling, they were unable to make certain of being present on the day of election in the district for which they were enrolled. And I would have no objection to extend that privilege to any other person in a similar position. But to issue electoral rights to every one would destroy the secrecy of the ballot. In country houses the master has pretty well as much influence over the servants as in the towns. Were electoral rights held there, and power given that at any time they might exercise these electoral rights, we know how the votes would go. There would be a personal influence brought into the matter which does not exist at the present time. And did we not in the last session of Parliament pass an Act endeavouring to knock out this very personal element by prohibiting canvassing ? Now we are going to re-enact, by virtue of this proposal of the honourable gentleman's, what last session we said should be put a stop to. An Hon. MEMBER .- Mr. Edwards is canvassing. Mr. MILLAR .- I do not know anything about that, and I am not going to argue in connection with Mr. Edwards. Then, in connection with another portion of this Bill, although I am going to support the third reading, I cannot say that I like it as it stands. There are a great many things in it which could have been made simpler. and if a simpler form of voting had been provided it would have been quite as effective, and more effective, than the one we have at present before us. I certainly believe this-and perhaps I am speaking against myself

in giving expression to what I think-but I believe this is going to throw greater power in the hands of the centres of population than exists at the present time, because there is no doubt that in connection with great questions such as these we can get the people in the towns to vote by their being so close together ; but I question very much whether the same thing can be done in the country districts. The honourable member for Christchurch City (Mr. Ell) quoted the number of persons who voted in a certain State of America | of control will go to their masters or mistresses on some occasion ; but the honourable gentle- | and say, " How are we to fill in this form ?" man could not say to what extent that State was intersected by railways. There is no doubt there are means of locomotion which would enable people to get to the polls there that do not exist in this colony. Why, in this colony you will find, in connection with the general election, if you take the whole of the numbers right through, 20 per cent. of the total number on the roll do not exercise their votes. That is about the average throughout the colony. Therefore if that is the case on the one day in the year when you can get people out to record their votes, what probability is there of their rolling up to record their votes upon a question that some of them know absolutely nothing about, except by, perhaps, reading an article in the newspaper. It seems to me that the opinion in the country is going to be governed by the newspapers, because newspaper articles would largely influence people who have to record their votes, and, to my mind, that is not a proper thing at all. So far as the centres of population are concerned, we can take a platform ; we can get through every part of our district and create a healthy public opinion from our own point of view as against the newspapers. But from what I have learnt of the size of the districts of country members it will be absolutely impossible to do the same thing. I have been told by one member that it takes a couple of months to ride over his electorate, so that when I come to look at the Bill as a whole I have grave doubts as to whether it is going to be of great advantage. And, furthermore, I am also of opinion -and I am not afraid of expressing it-that this Bill will prove one of the biggest checks to progressive legislation we have had in this House. I feel confident that if this principle had been in operation it would have taken us years to pass some of the legislation we have been able to place on our statute-book in one session of Parliament. Taken as a whole there is no doubt that the principle of referendum is a right one, and one is placed in a somewhat invidious position in going against it. But taken as it stands at the present time I do not think it will carry out what so many of those who believe in the referendum expect from it. Mr. CARNCROSS (Taieri). - Sir, this question of electoral rights has been before the Assembly on a good many different occasions, and hitherto whenever it has been introduced we have found the Liberal party voting in a solid phalanx against it, and I hope they will continue to vote in that direction at the present time. It is, Sir, one of the most dangerous and specious proposals that has ever been brought before us, and it will tend more than anything else to split up the ranks of the Liberal party. Under the present system of ballot if a person chooses he may be as silent as he likes regarding his vote, as, of course, none can know who he votes for ; but if you are going to have a system of voting under electoral rights these voting-papers will be sent into the houses, and the people who are subject to a certain amount

<page:506>

And there is not much doubt left as to how the forms will be filled up. The thing is not worth a moment's consideration. I hope the Liberal party will vote in a body against the proposal and oppose anything in the shape of electoral rights being introduced, which will only prove to be the thin edge of a wedge that would split up the Liberal party. Mr. HOGG (Masterton). - I think I can speak from experience on this matter, as I have lived for a considerable number of years in colonies where electoral rights have been for a long time in existence, and I am not aware that they have a better system of enrolling electors, preventing personation, and obtaining a very full vote of the people than we have in New Zealand. In regard to progressive legislation, we are a long way in advance of colonies where they have the electoral right -- such as Victoria, New South Wales, and some of the other colonies. Can it be alleged that our system is

defective, or that those colonies are more favoured than we are in regard to efficiency of representation and the manner in which the franchise is exercised ? I think it would be very impolitic to alter the system we now have here, and I sympathize with the remarks of the last speaker. Sir, I consider it the duty of the Liberal party to maintain and carefully guard the franchise as it exists, and prevent the introduction of anything that would be likely to interfere with the free exercise by the people of their convictions and opinions. I am satisfied that the proposal made will fail to effect the object sought. If honourable members wish to have a thoroughly good vote in connection with huge questions that, no doubt, will be relegated to the people under this Bill. there is a very simple addition to the Act that would effect that object - that is, to make voting not a privilege but an imperative duty on the part of the people who are enfranchised. I do not see why people who enjoy the franchise should not, instead of being brought to the poll in vehicles. and waited on at their doors, and dragged : present time - that is, whether they vote for reluctantly to exercise their votes, be made to realise that it is their duty to record their votes. If they do not record their votes, and unless they can show good reason for failing to do so, they should be held responsible for their want of interest or negligence. An Hon. MEMBER. . Would you punish them ? Mr. HOGG .-- We punish people for far less offences than that. If they do not send their children to school they are liable to be brought before the Magistrate and fined, and if they do not exercise a privilege which they ought to value very highly, I do not see why they should not be made amenable for that. It is a serious neglect of the duties of good citizenship. But with reference to this proposal to send votes through the Post Office, I do not think it will in any way prove an improvement on the existing system of voting, and, consequently, I am not prepared to support it. Mr. HALL (Waipawa) .-- I do not agree with the last speaker that a person should be punished for refusing to exercise his vote. There may be many circumstances that prevent & person from so doing. Nor do I think we have any right to find fault if any person remains neutral on any question submitted to referendum, and for the reason that the person might not be able to judge the merits of the question. But what I rose to say is this: I object strongly to any. thing like electoral rights being introduced, and for this reason : that when a person gets behind the screen in a polling-booth he exercises his vote just in the direction he wants to. We should not open a way for interference with a person voting in the direction he wishes to vote. As has been said, there might be influence brought to bear upon servants and others to vote in a certain direction-in the way the master or mistress or other people wished them to vote; and also it might happen that certain voting-papers might not reach the Returning Officer-they might be intercepted on the way by those interested in keeping votes from reaching the Returning Officer. Therefore I am not in favour of the amendment of the member for Palmerston. Mr. LANG (Waikato). - The Government Whip, the member for the Taieri, in his speech a few minutes ago, said that the Liberal party had always opposed the granting of electoral rights, and it struck me at the time that it was hardly to be wondered at. What would be the effect if co-operative labourers were accorded the privilege of electoral rights? We know a great many cases where co-operative labourers are sent to certain districts before a general election just in time to be placed on the roll. and it is well known how those co-operative men are expected to vote. And not only that. speaking of the secrecy of the ballot, it would be far more secret if these electors were allowed to use electoral rights. because they come. i then, if they liked, vote in the district. they came from and where their interest. were, and the direction in which they vie. could not be so easily detected as it is at the. or against a particular candidate. With reference to the position that the Liberal party has taken up as to electoral rights. I may remind the House that not many sessions ago there was a motion moved by Sir Royatt Stout to give co-operative labourers the privilege of exercising the electoral right. and the Premier, Mr. Seddon, then said that if that amendment was inserted in the Bill he would throw up the Bill. That shows the position that the Liberal party has maintained in respect to giving people electoral rights. I maintain that if it is right to grant electoral rights to shearers, commercial travellers, and others, then co-operative labourers ought to be

accorded the same privilege. The member for Christchurch City, Mr. Ell, mentioned that the Opposition did not support his amendment in connection with the initiative : and I may state that I know the reason why a great many of the members on this side did not vote for this proposal was because it provided for 5 per cent. of the electors, and a large number of members thought that proposal

<page:507>

seem to be placed in a false position. As the percentage was too small, and therefore could not see their way to support it. If the proposed percentage had been larger I think it would have received a great deal of support. With reference to Mr. Edwards, whose name has been brought forward, it has been stated that he has nothing to do with the Government. I may point out that Mr. Edwards was formerly a school-teacher at Huntly, and he sent in his resignation to the Board of Education at Auckland, stating that his reason for resigning was that he had been appointed Liberal organizer by the Premier. Mr. Seddon. The House divided on the question. 12.30. " That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question." AYES, 44. Allen. E. G. Palmer Hall-Jones Parata Arnold Hanan Seddon Barclay Hardy Buddo Stevens Hogg Steward Carneross Houston Symes Carroll Laurenson Tanner Collins Lawry Thompson, R. Colvin McGowan Duncan McKenzie, R. Thomson, J. W. Ell Ward McLachlan Flatman Willis Meredith Withford. Fowlds Millar Giffedder Mills Tellers. Napier Fraser, A. L. D. Graham Hall. O'Meara Guinness NOES, 13. Russell, W. R. Lethbridge Atkinson Massey Bollard Hoke Mackenzie, T. Tellers. Monk Lang Herries Pirani. Hutcheson Rhodes PAIR. For. Against. McGuire. Smith, E. M. Majority for, 31. Amendment negatived, and motion agreed to. On the question, That the Bill be read a third time, Mr. ELL (Christchurch City). - When the Bill was in Committee the honourable member for Hawke's Bay moved to strike out " ten thousand " and put in "ten per centum." The Premier, who was in charge of the Bill, stated - in the hearing, I think, of all honourable members -- that 5 per cent. would be sufficient. sion, and every opportunity was given to members - I lost my opportunity of voting against the member for Hawke's Bay's amendment, thinking that the Premier would challenge his proposal, which he did not. I propose now, therefore he was not willing at the present time to forego, to move, That clause 14 be recommitted for the purpose of striking out the words "ten per centum " and inserting in lieu thereof " five per centum." I do not intend to take up the time of the House, but simply move that amendment. Mr. T. MACKENZIE (Waihemo) .- I second the amendment. The honourable gentleman the Native Affairs Committee during the last having lost one opportunity I should not like session and not finally dealt with be again him to lose another. Mr. SEDDON (Premier) .- I, unfortunately, referred to the Native Affairs Committee. brought down the Bill I put in it the provision that ten thousand persons could petition for the referendum to be taken at any time within the three years-that was 23 per cent. of the electors on the roll. The member for Hawke's Bay proposed 10 per cent. I then said I thought 5 per cent. was sufficient, and suggested making it forty thousand persons who could petition for the referendum, and the matter stood at that. There was not a single voice, not even the honourable gentleman's, against the proposal of the honourable member for Hawke's Bay ; consequently, as I am always in dread of defeat I did not like to challenge the House, and really it means the difference as to whether the referendum shall stand for three years or whether forty thousand people may demand another referendum. The honourable gentleman's proposal is that twenty thousand people may demand a referendum. That is the whole question at issue now. Amendment negatived, and Bill read a third time. Mr. MCLACHLAN (Ashburton) said during his temporary absence from the Chamber the member for Waihemo had stated that a man named McLachlan had gone round his electorate giving whisky to the unemployed and canvassing for votes. As he (Mr. McLachlan) was the only man in the House of that name he wished to say that, as far as he was concerned, the statement was absolutely without foundation. Mr. SPEAKER said that the member for Waihemo did not refer to a member of the House, but to a person of the same name. POLICE OFFENCES BILL. The amendments made in this Bill were agreed to. On the motion, That it be read a third time, Mr. GUINNESS

(Grey) asked if the Minister of Justice would postpone the third reading until the honourable member for Wellington Suburbs, who had a new clause to propose, could be present. That honourable gentleman had been unavoidably detained by urgent business, and could not be in the House for a few minutes. Mr. McGOWAN (Minister of Justice) said the Bill was very fully discussed on a former occasion to bring forward amendments. He accepted a number of these amendments, which he thought were an improvement on the Bill as originally introduced. That being the position, the opportunity of passing the Bill. Bill read a third time. NATIVE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE PETITIONS. Mr. CARROLL (Native Minister) 2.30. moved, That all petitions referred to

<page:508>

Captain RUSSELL (Hawke's Bay) did not wish to oppose the motion, but would point out that the course now suggested by the honourable member was a growing practice in the House. He would like to invite the attention of the House to the question of whether the petitions referred to all Committees and which were not dealt with in any one year should not be again remitted to the Committees for consideration. He did not think it was right that without notice they should consider a motion like the one proposed by the honourable gentleman. Mr. HERRIES (Bay of Plenty) said that leaving petitions over to be dealt with in the following session was an old practice of the Native Affairs Committee. He thought it would be wise to have that Committee divided like the A to L and the M to Z Public Petitions Committee. The fact was, the Native Affairs Committee could never get through their work in the session, and he would suggest to those in charge of the business of the House that the question should be considered whether the Native Affairs Committee should not be divided like the Public Petitions Committee. Motion agreed to. LAND FOR SETTLEMENTS BILL. On the motion for the second reading of this Bill, Captain RUSSELL (Hawke's Bay) said, - Sir, I rise to a point of order. The Land for Settlements Bill was placed in my possession at twelve minutes to one p.m. to-day : it had not been circulated before that. The Bill was read a first time to-day, and it is absolutely impossible that honourable members could have had time between twelve minutes to one p.m. and the reassembling of the House at half-past two p.m. to read the Bill, to understand it, and to compare it with the principal Act. Standing Order No. 330 says, " A Bill having been read a first time is ordered to be read a second time on a future day." As this Bill has been read only this morning, certainly all precedent is against reading the Bill a second time within two hours of its being laid before members, unless there is great urgency. I therefore raise the point of order as to whether, under Standing Order No. 330, it is not irregular in this case that the Bill should be brought down for discussion on the day it is first read. There was a thin House this morning, and there was not an opportunity of suspending the Standing Orders, as there was not a sufficient number of members in the House to enable that to be done. I think, under the circumstances. it would be wrong to bring on a Bill that members have not had the opportunity of reading, far less considering. Mr. SPEAKER .- Standing Order No. 330 is generally acted on : still, if a measure is of an urgent nature it may be set aside and procedure taken under Standing Order No. 361. I presume this Bill is urgent, or it would not have been brought on for its second reading to-day. Mr. ATKINSON .- Is this an urgent measure ? Mr. SEDDON (Premier) .- Yes, it is. Every notice that has been served and every notice we serve now is liable to be evaded by the transfer of the property. That is going on at the present time, and it is a question whether the law is to be a dead-letter in respect to acquiring land for workmen's homes, or whether we are to stop it. If I had not been so considerate last night for the forms of the House this Bill would have been introduced yesterday: it would have gone through Committee of the Whole, and the second reading would have been set down for to-day. An Hon. MEMBER .- You brought it up after twelve o'clock last night. Mr. SEDDON .- Well, there is no doubt the clock had gone beyond the stroke, but the production of the Bill was actually commenced before twelve o'clock. The message was received before twelve o'clock, and consequently had a right to be dealt with, and it was not new business to remit it to the Committee. we are

here now, and I do not think there is anything in the Bill that will cause members to say they cannot understand it in five minutes, let alone two hours and a half. Not only that, but over sixty votes were recorded this morning that the Bill should proceed at half-past two- a fact of which the leader of the Opposition seems oblivious. Sir, I do not wish to strain the Standing Orders at all, but the fact is that there is no Bill on the Order Paper and the measure we have brought forward this session is of a more urgent character than this Bill. We have notices out, and we have other notices to go out, which will be imperilled if we do not pass this Bill. That is the position. I may say the committal stage will not take place to-day. Captain RUSSELL .- If it is urgent take it to-day. Mr. SEDDON. - Well, if you wish it. Captain RUSSELL. - I shall not oppose it if you say it is urgent. Mr. SEDDON. . I do not want to irritate the honourable member. Of course, the honourable member only speaks for himself. I shall do nothing further, because it is not an extension of the Land for Settlements Act. It is merely a question of perfecting the existing legislation. Under clause 2 provision is made affecting section 54 of the principal Act. At the present time leases are granted under the Land for Settlements Act. If members will look at section 54 of the Act, it says, - " In every case where buildings are situated on the land at the time when it is to be disposed of by way of lease, then, notwithstanding anything contained to the contrary in this Act, the following special provisions shall apply." Well, this Bill extends it to apply to leases. We are making it retroactive, and it is in the interests of the lessees. The Minister, of course, has to be a consenting party to it. There can be no exception taken to it, and I am advised by my officers this is necessary, otherwise the loss is placed at a disadvantage. Section 3 has to do with the extension of the Minister's powers. At the present time, suppose we find it is necessary to cut a drain to put the land in good condition

<page:509>

for settlement, we can only cut it upon our own land, and there is no power, as there would be between adjoining landowners, for the Minister to arrange with the adjoining landowner to jointly construct the drain for their mutual advantage. Neither is there power to join with local authorities, or to give them assistance, if they want to erect a bridge, or to make a road to join with a road which the department thinks of advantage to the land purchased. Therefore I think there would be no objection whatever to that proposal. It must be borne in mind that the cost is charged upon the land, and it is defrayed by the persons who become the tenants of the Crown. Power is also given here to join in protecting lands as against river encroachments. I think it will be admitted on all sides that, if land has been bought which is liable to be injured by floods, the local bodies, or the adjoining landowners, ought to be able to combine for the mutual protection of the property. Mr. PIRANI .- Does that deal with the Aorangi Estate ? Mr. SEDDON .- I do not know whether you could do it with land already purchased. At all events I am advised that it is a necessary power, and should be given by the Legislature, as it does not obtain at the present time. I therefore come to the conclusion that in respect to clause 3 members will agree that that should be part of the Bill. Then, clause 4 is to make a charge against the lands of the expenses incident to the administration of the principal Act, including expenses incurred by the Minister of Lands in advertising them for disposal. I may say there are at the present time large expenses incurred which by statute are not chargeable to the land, but which are paid out of consolidated revenue. These large expenses are solely in connection with the advertising and disposal of the lands purchased. I think we ought to have strict accounts kept, and that all actual expenses incurred in respect of land should be charged against it ; otherwise the time will come when the returns sent in will not fairly give the amount of actual expense incurred in respect to the purchase of the land and its disposal. Then, as to clause 5, it will be within the recollection of members that sometimes owners are absent from the colony. There was a case in respect of the owners of the Hatuma Estate, and considerable time had to elapse before we could take any action. In fact, it had to go Home, and then there was great difficulty. Points were raised as to whether the notice was legal or otherwise. And, of course, anything that can be raised of actual offer in cash. We meet

that by saying that kind naturally causes loss of time and un- that an offer made in writing by the Minister is necessary expense. The provision made here is, an offer in writing of the amount stated. I think, what is required. Then, as regards the notice of claim, the time is limited to twenty- " offer in writing " for " money " ? one days. Subsection (2) says,- " Within twenty-one days after receiving the Of course, it must be in writing to be an offer. It could not be in any other way. The original notice of the appointment of the claimant's Assessor the Minister shall also file in the office Act reads as follows : - of the said Court a notice stating the name and Judge of the Supreme Court, accompanied by address of the person he appoints to act as his Assessor, and shall serve a copy of such notice an offer of the amount of compensation in the on the claimant." matter, and upon such proof as shall be satis- And subsection (3) is as follows : -- " If the claimant makes default in making or serving his claim, or if the claimant or the Minister makes default in appointing an Assessor, or in doing any other act, matter, or thing by the principal Act or by this Act re- quired or directed to be done, then, on summary application in that behalf by the party not in default, the Chief Justice may, on such terms as to costs and otherwise as he thinks fit, ap- point an Assessor, or give such directions and make such orders as in his opinion are necessary or expedient to enable the claim to be heard and determined by the Compensation Court, and, if the default consists of not making or serving the claim, to enable the order referred to in subsection one of section twenty-two of the principal Act to be made and acted upon in the absence of the claim as fully and effectually as if the claim were properly before the Court." We have been threatened that the other side will not appoint an Assessor, and that an Assessor not having been appointed we could not proceed-that the award must be made by two Assessors and a Judge, and that, therefore, if they fail to appoint an Assessor the case could not proceed. That has been contended. Well, we have no right to be placed in that position. I think there should be a fixed time, and I think twenty-one days is not too little, and if within that time either the Minister or the other side does not nominate an Assessor, then it is right to give the power to a Judge of the Supreme Court to appoint one for either of the parties making default in the nomination of an As- sessor. An Hon. MEMBER. - Twenty-one days is too short. Mr. SEDDON .- It may be contended that twenty-one days is too short a period, but when we get into Committee it will be found that I do not want to do anything that is arbi- trary or unreasonable. Then. as to subsec- tion (4), it has been contended that when compensation is offered by the Minister he must make the offer in actual sovereigns. Well, I think that is splitting hairs. This sub- section is :- " In applying the provisions of section forty of 'The Public Works Act, 1894,' it shall not be necessary for the Minister to offer the amount of compensation in the matter." The clause provides that it will be sufficient that a letter should be sent intimating that the Government would pay so much compensation. It has been contended that we must make the Mr. ATKINSON .- Where do you substitute Mr. SEDDON .- Well, in the original Act. "Upon the application of the Minister to the

<page:510>

factory to such Judge that any person who has any right or title to prefer a claim for compen- sation is absent from the colony, or is not known. or has no known agent in the colony, such Judge shall direct such claim to be heard by a Compensation Court under this Act, and shall appoint an assessor to act in such Court on behalf of such person." I think, myself, that the application must of course be in writing, accompanied by an offer of the amount of compensation. An HON. MEMBER .- In writing? Mr. SEDDON .-- I do not think that is a point we have to deal with. I think, looking at it carefully, it means that it shall not be necessary in making the application that the Minister shall give notice of the compensation he is prepared to pay. I think, myself, that that is really what section 40 is, in addition to what I have stated, intended to effect. If it is to go to arbitration, as the law stands now, one side is to be forced to disclose its hand, while the other side is open to take what advantage they can from that, and the result is generally that they put a larger amount down as the price than the Government are prepared to give, and leave the

Court practically to decide between these two amounts. But if it is taken compulsorily it comes to the Court without being loaded in the way I have pointed out. I believe that is what is covered by this. At all events. I leave that to the Attorney - General of the House. Then, clause 6 is as follows : -- " In order to prevent any evasion or avoidance of the provisions of the principal Act as to the right of the owner to select and retain any limited part of any estate intended to be acquired under that section, it is hereby declared that the area of the whole estate shall be computed as at the commencement of the negotiations for the purchase under the said Act, and no subsequent disposition of the estate, or any part thereof, shall operate to defeat the power of the Governor to acquire the land under that Act." I do not wish to name the parties, but there are cases which have come under my notice in which with the view apparently of asking for time some very nice letters have come to hand, saying the matter requires careful consideration, that they want to communicate with some one, and asking that it may be allowed to stand over for a time, and that the offer made will receive careful consideration, and so forth. And then, Sir, after giving that latitude, and after treating them with every courtesy, the next letter comes, saying, " I am not now the owner of the land for which the offer has been made, and what is left does not exceed the amount I am allowed to retain by the law." Then we consult the records, and find that a transfer has been made to the wife in some cases, and in other cases to the children. At all events, I think, once the notice has been served of the intention of the Government it should remain in that position. If you do not do that, then this may happen : Say there is an estate of 4,000 acres, 1,000 acres of which is to be retained, the person to whom the offer was made may at the very last stage of the negotiations transfer to four sons, and then --- Mr. MCLACHLAN .- And why not ? Captain RUSSELL .- Hear, hear. Mr. SEDDON .- Why did he not do it before the Government notified him of their intention ? Mr. MONK .- He may have intended to do it before he died, by will. Mr. SEDDON .- Instead of doing it when he died we have estates virtually controlled by the dead man's hands-estates which the testator says shall not be cut up, and that even the sons and the grandchildren shall not have any say whatever in. However, that is by the way. The fact is, at all events, that by not doing that you may have this situation : that there is a certain amount of land that can be and has been transferred which renders the whole of the remaining estate unsuitable for close settlement ; and that you would require to stop. In the case of a large estate the transference of a certain section may practically block the whole of the other portion. Then, of course, it is a question whether that state of things shall continue. I can name several places where the land has been in other ways dealt with. The owner asks for an offer, and sometimes you offer the price of the Land Purchase Board, or a few shillings less, than you are actually prepared to give. The offer of the Government is then taken to a private individual and used as a means of selling the land : " Well, the Government have offered me so-much."-although the Government may not have offered so-much,-" you give me less. more and you can have it." I have had cases before me in which it has appeared that the purchasing party then goes to the Government and says, " You can have this, but I shall want a nice little sum in advance of what I gave." I am simply going by the book ; I have cases to support every statement I make. Then, if that is the case, I say it is better that the State should allow the original offer to remain, and let the Court-the proper tribunal -decide as to what is the value of the estate. A party may say this : "Well. it will cost you, if you go on with the clauses under the compulsory clauses of the Act, €1.000 or £1,500 in law expenses. You give that to me and we will be satisfied." Now, the original owner would be wise in some cases if he did the same. There is very little difference from the amount the Government offered, but the other party gives something more and takes the cheque. I do not think that is a proper state of things. I think the Land Purchase Officers -- and they are very careful ; if they err at all. they err on the side of care-having once decided that the land is suitable and is wanted for close settlement, the position of that land should remain unchanged until the matter is finally settled. I do not want to do any injustice, and it may be contended that the officers can err on the side of care. I probably ought to have said that the

offers in some cases are too liberal, because when the estate has been submitted to public com-
<page:511>

petition I have known an estate to bring duplication of applications. Why, I could show considerably more than was offered ; and, that being the case, I think I am justified in saying that, if anything, the department has offered less in some cases than the real value of the land. In regard to clause 7, I have in my mind's eye an estate which was offered to the Government. or at least an offer was made by the Government to purchase. I may say that the amount the Government offered would not have cleared the mortgage. The mortgagees thereafter foreclosed, and they sold this same estate by public auction. I may mention that behind the offer that was made by the Govern- ment was the report of the Land Purchase Commissioners that on certain conditions an advance might be made, but there was a draw- back which they thought had not been con- sidered. But, as I said, the mortgagees fore- closed, and submitted the land, through the Registrar of the Supreme Court, to public auction. Well, that land was bought by several parties who joined together to purchase it. Now, on looking at my papers, and knowing what that land realised, I found that the Government would have given the price ; but we were not allowed by law to appoint some one with instructions to offer up to that amount. The result was that the estate was lost to the colony. Owners or mortgagees sometimes prefer to realise by public auction. But I say the Land Purchase Board, having come to a conclusion, and made a recommen- dation as to what is the value of the land and the maximum price that should be paid, and the Minister having agreed to that, should be in a position to secure the land at that price. And it is no violation or variation from what has been intended by the Legislature-namely, that the price only shall be paid which the Land Purchase Officers recommend, and which they consider the land is worth. It is only a machinery clause, and, safeguarded as the Act already safeguards the purchase of es- tates or land, I do not think that excep- tion can be taken to it. I know of estates which have been disposed of, where, if this machinery had existed, these estates would have been the property of the Crown, and would have avoided the necessity we had afterwards by having to take another estate in the same locality. Section 8 is a provision which we deem necessary. We have a regulation to this effect, but the regulation itself has been ques- tioned, and it has been urged by some members of Land Boards that it was alta ries. Some Land Boards I think, or a Land Board, has re- fused to recognise the regulation. Now, as I sav, it is a matter which could be better settled by legislation than to have members of a Land Board or the Board itself in conflict with the Crown, and I consider that the best way to re- move t e ambiguity will be by passing a clause in this Bill. As to the contention that married men should not have the preference, I do not think it will hold good at all, for this reason : that by giving married men preference, you will, to some extent, stop what is going on namely, this gambling in land, this dummyism, this many cases where boys - - Mr. McLACHLAN .- No boy under twenty- four years of age. Mr. SEDDON .- Well, you do not ask, of course, for birth certificates. Mr. MEREDITH .- Yes, we insist upon them being produced. Mr. SEDDON .- In some cases you cannot get them. Mr. MEREDITH .- Then we disqualify them. Mr. SEDDON. - The model Land Board of the colony is, of course, the Canterbury Land Board, and it is the Land Board which I believe refused to recognise that married men should have the preference. Well, when this Bill is passed I think you will have to do it. But the fact is, that I know cases where relatives have been raked up from all parts of the colony, and some of the applicants have been young men who had no idea of going upon the land, and who were following other pursuits. An Hon. MEMBER. Can you prove that ? Mr. SEDDON. . Prove it - of course I can, with any amount of cases. Some Land Boards are careful, but other Land Boards say, " Oh, well, it is a ballot ; let them take their chance. We are not here to mend the law; we are simply here to administer the Act as we like." They take that happy - go- lucky view of the situation. However, I say this: that a man who is married and is living in the locality should certainly be entitled to preference. I say, again, that a condition of this kind could be easily overcome, because the parties who want to go in for a section of land can be married,

and then they get the preference. It will be conducive to matrimony. I think anything that promotes that desirable object will be appreciated by at least the ladies of the colony. However. I claim, seeing that he has a responsibility, all things being equal, a married man should be given the preference over a single competitor, and I do not think any very good reason can be urged against it. In these days of dairying, in these days of close settlement-the land being required for close settlement-is an argument in favour of married couples. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL .- Why do not you buy the land ? Mr. SEDDON .- This clause is to meet cases where we have bought it, and it is in the disposal of it a question as to whether the Land Board should give preference to married couples, who, all other things being equal, are the best settlers. At present, the ballot being flooded with dummies, they do not get it, and when we see applications in for so many sections, it is quite misleading. The chances are we might divide the total number by ten, and then arrive at the real number of bond pide applications. Mr. TANNER. And this, after seven years of legislation. and after so much boasting about stopping dummyism ! Mr. SEDDON .-- I say the present system of the ballot is nothing more nor less than a system of dummyism.

<page:512>

Mr. TANNER .- Who is responsible for it ? Mr. SEDDON .- You try to alter it, and you will find where the opposition comes from. Mr. TANNER .- You have a party strong enough to alter it now if you never had before. Mr. SEDDON .- I do not know. Members will say, the moment you appoint a tribunal to select the bona fide applications, you will have favouritism-" spoils to the victors," and all that sort of thing ; that you will have members of the House on the Land Boards, and those members will favour applicants from their own districts. I have heard that said already. I have heard it argued that no member of the House should be on a Land Board, and I am not so sure myself whether there is not a good deal in that contention. At all events- Mr. MCLACHLAN .- We will oppose your Bill all the same. Mr. SEDDON .- You may or you may not ; but I can assure members of the House that if a ballot of members were taken there would be a majority against members of the House being on Land Boards. Mr. PIRANI .- A majority of those who are not on Land Boards. Mr. SEDDON .- Well, if you ask me whether they would all go on Boards, I should say Yes. At all events, the point is that, whilst I say the ballot system is defective, this proposal, to some extent, minimises its defects by saying that the application of the married man shall have the preference over that of the single man. Mr. PIRANI .- Provided he has not got a separation order. Mr. SEDDON .- We have fixed that,- we have said that his wife must be with him in the colony. and that together they should go on the land,-we do all that by regulation ; but we have got to affirm by Act that married men are to have the preference. Clause 9 is simply the usual clause which is necessary to make regulations giving effect to what is contemplated by the Act, and what is required under the existing law. There is nothing new in it. Subsection (1) is as follows :- " The Governor may from time to time make regulations prescribing the procedure and forms to be used in making and disposing of claims for compensation in respect of the compulsory taking of land, and for that purpose modifying the provisions of 'The Public Works Act, 1894,' in its application to such claims." The Public Works Act was intended for railways and public works, and not for taking land for settlement, and it requires power to make regulations dealing solely with land taken under the Land for Settlements Act ; hence the necessity for this machinery. Subsection (2) provides- " All regulations heretofore made, or pur- porting to be made, under the principal Act shall be deemed to be as valid as if they had been made under this Act." I think I have explained to the House that this is purely a Bill of a technical character ; there is no large departure in principle, and it is merely meeting matters that have arisen in the course of the administration of the Act where we have found the present law defective. I move the second reading of the Bill. Captain RUSSELL (Hawke's Bay). - It is true, as the Right Hon. the Premier says, that this is practically a technical Bill. I do not rise, then, with the intention of saying that I shall oppose the Bill going to its second reading, but I wish again to protest against the principle which is constantly growing of allowing Bills to be brought into

the House and debated before they have been read. This Bill was first put into my hands at ten minutes to one o'clock. There are exactly one hundred lines in the Bill, and I had exactly one hundred minutes in which to master it. It is quite true one can read one hundred lines in less than one hundred minutes ; but, seeing that there are various Acts that have to be studied and compared in order to understand the meaning of the Bill, I maintain the House is placed in a most disadvantageous position as compared with the Minister in charge, inasmuch as he has had the administration of the Act for some time ; he is supposed to have had the preparation of the Bill, and therefore has the whole amendments and provisions involved at his fingers' ends, while we were permitted no opportunity of knowing the provisions of the Bill until it was time to leave the Chamber to get a breath of fresh air. The Bill has been introduced by the Premier. I maintain that he ought not to have been the person to introduce it, he has had no right to administer the Act, and he is departing altogether from the intention of the Act in doing so. In the interpretation clause of the Land for Settlements Act of 1900, you will find "Minister " means "the Minister of Lands." I think at any rate the Premier. even if he administers the Bill, should at least pay his colleague, the Minister of Lands, the compliment of allowing him to appear on its surface. He ought to be allowed occasionally to sign some document-whether he reads it or not is immaterial to the Premier. The Premier will in all probability say, "This Bill is entirely right ; will the Minister of Lands be good enough ?"-no, not will he be good enough, but "put your signature to that." This may be a right manner of conducting departmental work, but it seems a process under which political patronage can be grasped. Mr. SEDDON .- How ? Captain RUSSELL. - We know the Land for Settlements Board does not decide what blocks of land are to be selected for settlement : the Right Hon. the Premier decides that question, and orders the Board to proceed to purchase the land which political necessity demands. There is, I think, sufficient evidence. and it is a notorious fact that, when the Premier was flying round the country electioneering. prior to the last election, he travelled the constituencies saying, "I will have that piece of land taken ; I will see that that block is cut up, and I will have another run over there if you support the Government candidate : but if you will not support my Government, land will

<page:513>

not be taken in this particular district." The Premier may shake his head, but. of course, we all understand he says all the time that he is exercising the most pure and very best discretion in this matter, that he serves no personal interest, but purely seeks the country's good : still we know at the same time his own success and his country's good are so inextricably woven together that you have " R.J.S." always on top and the country's good a trifle lower down. It is true, as the Premier said, that this is mostly a technical Bill, and I devoted such time as I was able during the luncheon adjournment, instead of recuperating in the open air, to look through the Bill, and I find that it is in no way conciliatory to the persons who are compelled to suffer by compulsory expropriation. Clause 2 I do not think matters either way. I admit that, having read it, and having compared it with section 54 of the original Act, I really do not see that there was any urgent necessity for the introduction of this clause. It is merely perpetuating the principle which seems to actuate the Minister on every occasion of interfering with every Act on the statute-book, and not allowing us or our business to go on under the laws when we are beginning to understand them. What happens is that when the people are beginning to understand and an Act the Minister brings down an amendment or repealing Act, and he introduces an amendment in the provision of another, until not even the most skilful lawyer in the country can know where to look for any law on any particular subject. I admit, however, that. with regard to clause 2, it really makes no difference whether it is introduced or not. Its operation is so absolutely insignificant that I scarcely think it is worth the ink and paper required to print it. But, Sir, the powers in clause 3 are a very great deal more than technical. The Premier led us to understand : hat this was a generous little clause to allow the Minister to agree with persons or with local government bodies for the benefit of the persons or the advantage of local bodies. Well. so far as I can

understand, it embodies an entirely different principle from that taken from the provisions of clause 65 of the principal Act, called "The Land for Settlements Consolidation Act, 1900," which gives practically all the powers which it is necessary for the Minister to have in cases where he has purchased a piece of land and is preparing it for settlement. I think this clause is a decided departure. Subsection (2) of clause 65 of the principal Act says, "Pending the disposal of the land by way of lease, the Minister may deal therewith and carry on operations thereon in such manner in all respects as he deems expedient"; and though it may be said that that subsection would not give him power to put a bridge across a river immediately adjacent to this land, yet we all know that if a Minister is acquiring a block of land for settlement, and he is desirous of making a bridge across a river, there is not a single man in the district who would not be only too pleased to allow him to build it, and he requires no power or assistance to recommend that such a bridge should be erected. It appears to me that the ultimate effect of this clause lies deeper than appears on the surface; but it was difficult in my hurried and cursory reading of the clause to arrive at its full significance. It would appear to me, however, that the object and intention of clause 3 is to remove the duty of protecting, roading, and of bridging streams adjacent to the land which is compulsorily taken by the Government, and which should be roaded and protected by the Land Board before being cut up for settlement, and to throw a part of that responsibility and duty upon the ratepayers of the surrounding country, and to that extent it would appear to me to be a dangerous provision, one which is not properly understood, and which on the surface is not fully apparent. This is a departure in principle about which we have the right to know in the House, and we ought to have been afforded full information on it. Again I express my regret that the Bill has been brought before us in the extremely hurried way it has been placed before us to-day. And, though I understood the Premier admitted as he spoke that there was power to make drains through lands acquired under the Land for Settlements Act, I also understood that he thought there was no power to take drains through any contiguous property. Hon. MEMBERS .- Ha, ha. Captain RUSSELL. . The noise going on around me is so great that, speaking as loud as I can, I am unable to make myself heard. To continue my remarks, I believe the Minister told us that, although he had power to dig the drains to the edge of the land acquired by the Government, he had no power to take them through neighbouring properties. I cannot, however, give an answer straight away on that point, and that is another disability that I suffer under from not having been allowed time to study the Bill. But I assume that under the Drainage Act it would be quite possible for the Government to be treated as an ordinary owner on acquiring property, or having acquired property, even under the compulsory clauses of the Act. Surely the Government will not claim that the responsibilities devolving on the owner of the property, prior to its acquisition by the Government, have lapsed altogether. I presume that the Government would be liable to exactly the same conditions, with all the privileges and all the responsibilities of the previous owner, and consequently under the Land Drainage Act they would be able to take the water through the neighbouring properties. I should have thought that that was the effect of the law, but I reiterate I have been denied the opportunity of studying the Bill. Then, again, with regard to the next section (section 4), the Premier told us, and no doubt quite correctly, that there was a difficulty in charging the expense of advertising and other expenses in connection with the acquisition of land to the Land for Settlement Account, and therein I sympathise with him. I think it is only right and proper that all the expenses in connection with the acquisition of land should be borne by the land acquired - that

<page:514>

is to say, should be borne by the tenants who come into possession of the property; but surely we must be very careful how we agree to this provision in the face of the fact that the Minister may exceed the patronage already given to him by the powers of this Act, by travelling about the country nominally with a view to looking at and selecting pieces of land for acquisition and subsequent settlement, but in reality for

electioneering purposes ; and I say therefore that we ought, if we agree to the clause, also to insist that there shall be a detailed return laid before Parliament of every expense in connection with the advertising, with the collecting of information regarding the land, and all the particulars of travelling - expenses connected with the acquisition of every particular estate. If that were not done I believe it would be possible for Ministers' travelling-expenses to be charged to the Land for Settlements Account, instead of being shown as ordinary travelling- expenses. Probably at present the travelling- expenses of Ministers. nominally in connection with the acquisition of estates - but really expenses connected with electioneering tours -- are charged to that account. Such expenses, though utterly unjustifiable, should be charged to Ministerial travelling-allowances, and not to the administration of the Land for Settlements Account. Regarding clause 5, we were again told that this is a mere technical alteration ; but it appears to me that it is an alteration of the most serious importance. The Premier told us about the late owner of the Hatuma Estate-how he was an absentee proprietor who was living in England, or on the continent of Europe, and consequently how difficult it was to serve him with a notice as required by the Act of the intention of the Government to acquire his estate. Well, Sir, I realise that it is the business of every member of Parliament, whether he approves of the principle or not of an Act, to endeavour, so long as it is on the statute-book, to see that it is put in fair and workable order, neither unjust to the individual nor cumbersome to the Government which has to administer it, and therefore I have realised fully that there was a serious disadvantage to the Government - a disadvantage which probably ought not to have been in serving a notice on the proprietor of an estate who lives permanently in Europe. As to clause 5, I would say it would appear to me the drafting of the clause is wrong, inasmuch as the principles laid down in clause 5 are directly at variance with the principles laid down in clauses 16 and 17 of " The Land for Settlements Consolidation Act. 1900," and therefore those clauses ought to be specifically repealed or amended. Sir, I would apologise to the House if I take a wrong view of the clause ; but the fact is, I was refused an opportunity to study the Bill and its effect on measures of an analogous kind already on the statute-book. At any rate, under the Bill now before us, it would appear to me that if a man chances to lie on a bed of sickness - which he may at any moment-and should be unable to attend to his business for a short time; or if he should go to | Sir, I contend that the practice of dummyism. the South Sea Islands to recruit his health- in gold-laced coat, cocked hat, and sword, and silk breeches or on a holiday trip to Australia, his property might be endangered in his absence, because he cannot comply with the provisions of this clause. Such is the fact, even if not so intended. Surely no member, however advanced his theories may be, will say that no man has a right to take a trip to Sydney or Melbourne for a month's holiday without incurring the risk of having his property taken from him before he is able to deposit at some office the statement of claim he has to make as the owner of the property. I should say "the late owner." because the Government will have served a notice on him by leaving it at his place of abode : and when once negotiations are initiated under this Bill, the ownership of the land is instantly transferred to the Government. Therefore, a longer period than twenty-one days should be allowed to elapse before any man is placed in the unfortunate position of being prevented from putting in a claim. Sir, I was much amused and much interested, and somewhat consoled by some of the statements of the Right Hon. the Premier. He told us he looked on the ballot system as a mere covering for dummyism. Well, we in the Opposition have preached that doctrine ever since first the We have system of ballot was introduced. always said it was perfectly monstrous. whilst. on the other hand, the Right Hon. the Premier has continually pleaded as an illustration of the complete success of this Land Act. that. whenever there was a section thrown off! for selection by ballot, there were five or six applicants for it ; he now admits that the great bulk of those applicants were in reality importers and dummies, and no more wished to go out the land than I wish to take a plunge in Wellington Harbour at the present moment. He said, " How else can it be done ?" and he asked how could the evil be avoided. If there was a process of selection, the Ministers,

he said. would be accused of favouritism, and the Land Boards also would be accused of partiality, and right so. But there is a plan that has always come into my mind-I know it is held to be a wrong one, but I have always believed it " to be the right one namely, that the land should go to the person who is prepared to lease it at the highest rental and under proper conditions and while a section possibly should not be put up at public auction, there ought to be a system of tender, by which the exciting influence of public auction would be avoided, while the State would reap the advantage of the highest bidder The Right Hon. the Premier said the Lands were now in many cases offering lower prices than the land was worth; and, as he saw of an estate which was refused by the Land Purchase Board, and then was subsequently sold by auction, I realised a case in point -. probably the same case occurred to us both -- where the Government said they would take a piece of land which was subsequently put up at auction and realised considerably more than the Government officers had offered for it

<page:515>

the huge number of applicants for each section, / city. It would be far better for his future and the fact that land is being sold to private buyers at higher prices than the Government will give, all goes to prove that land is being taken by the Government at less than its actual selling-value, and that dummies who are putting in claims for land are not desirous of helping some other person, but wish to derive a direct pecuniary benefit themselves ; that is to say, the person who succeeds in drawing a good section can make a profit on it of \$200, \$300, or \$400 in less than no time. An Hon. MEMBER. That has been done. Captain RUSSELL .- It is done continually. Now, why should people not be allowed to fix by tender, or any way you choose, the price they will give for the lease of the land ? I am told that the public auction might be too much for the unbalanced brains of the men who are supposed to want to go upon the land ; but I would ask why should these men be regarded as brainless? They are generally men who are well able to take care of their own interests. If a system of tender were initiated, there would be no ground for the allegation that they had given more than the land was worth. They would sit quietly in their rooms and draw up a tender in accordance with what they believed to be a fair price for the land, and if that were the principle acted upon you would not find the great number of applicants there now is for every piece of land submitted to the ballot. Clause 6 of the Bill deals with the preventing of evasion of the Act. I sympathise with the Right Hon. the Premier in wishing that there should be a provision to prevent an evasion of the Act, but at the same time, let us treat everybody fairly. This section practically says that there shall be no dealing with the land by the hitherto owner after negotiations have been commenced by the Government for the purchase of the land. Sir. I think we ought to fix the precise time at which negotiations commenced. The Act provides that the time shall be fixed by the Governor in Council. Well, the Governor in Council is a Minister, and I dislike allowing anything to be done by a Minister when it might be fixed by statute. Mr. SEDDON .- I am quite prepared to say it should be fixed as the time when the notice is sent. Captain RUSSELL. - Well, however that may be, I think there should be no room for question as to the time when the negotiations commenced. Then, I was much interested in the kind of interest the Premier takes in our married men. The married man undoubtedly has heavy responsibilities, and it may be right we should do everything to facilitate his chances of advancement. I see no reason myself why a single man should not go away into the back blocks and carve out of the wilderness a home for himself and his future wife, while everything is done to facilitate the opportunities of the married men. The single man may go out into the back blocks and put up with a little roughness. He may do without the theatres and amusements of towns, and the comforts and conveniences of life in a large success, and far better for the country if he went " up country." Mr. HOGG .- The future wife may not go out there. Captain RUSSELL .- I am quite convinced that if my honourable friend, the member for Masterton, were to go to the most remote part of New Zealand, and wanted a wife, he would get one to accompany him there. Now, Sir, what I do object to in the clause is the usual provision that is put into every Bill we have to deal

with, and that is the special reservation in favour of the Minister. The married man is to have the advantage so long as there is no friend of the Minister to put in. Under this clause there is power reserved to the Minister to favour the single man if he chooses. Such power ought not to be at the discretion of any Minister. I just want to return for a moment to the question of the evasion of the Act. The Right Hon. the Premier told us of a case which he has known, and I think illustrated his argument by a particular instance. Mr. SEDDON .- No, it was a supposititious case. Captain RUSSELL .-- Well, several years ago, when the original Land for Settlements Bill was before the House, I moved an amendment, and I shall give notice of that amendment to be dealt with when we go into Committee. It is upon the very ground of the instance that the Premier has brought under the notice of the House, and is one which I think must commend itself to honourable members. I do not think it was a supposititious case. I understood the Right Hon. the Premier to tell us of the case of a man who had not divided his land amongst his children, but who, when it was proposed to take the land under the Land for Settlements Act, immediately proceeded to subdivide the property amongst his family. Mr. SEDDON .- That is not the particular case, but is a case under the workmen's homes clause. Captain RUSSELL .- I suppose we shall be told that a man who is frugal and thrifty, who has a natural love for his children, and who desires to make provision for them, is a public sinner ; but, for my own part, I think that to provide for his children is the first duty of a man, and that the natural love of offspring is a sentiment which, common to most, does honour to any one. Sir, I moved this amendment some years ago, and I intend to move it again now. It is as follows :-- "Where an owner of land has children born in lawful wedlock, the areas limited by subsections (two) and (three) of clause twelve of the Land for Settlements Consolidation Act, 1900, shall be increased as follows, that is to say : Of first-class land, an additional area of five hundred acres for each such child ; of second-class land, an additional area of a thousand acres for each such child ; and of pastoral land, an additional area of two thousand acres for each such child." These areas and limits are the areas and limits provided for Crown lands under the Act

<page:516>

of 1892. Then, why not similar provisions for the Settlements Act, but I have distinct view, the very case of a person who is a bona fide resident upon the land, and who is anxious to leave it to his children, and I shall not hesitate to present it before the people, however true his land divided in smaller areas amongst the members of his family. I have a case in point. I do not wish to harrow the feelings of honourable members by telling of a poor widow and helpless children, for the children are nearly all grown up; but there is a case that has come under my notice of a lady whose husband did good service for New Zealand. He came to the colony with limited means, but a good education, and by dint of hard work, good judgment, some frugality and care, succeeded in acquiring a moderate tract of land. Then at the call of duty he died, and left a widow and his six children, who had been born on the property, and there grown up, were left a property of between seven thousand and eight thousand acres. I do not know the precise area. They are now being turned off that land by the Government, because it is held to be desirable in the public interests that they should be evicted, and their land divided amongst other people. Not very far from this property is the Hatuma Estate lately taken by the Minister, and on that estate we find Government subdivisions of 1,217, 1,134, 1,509, 1,158, 878, 752, and 774 acre blocks. This is facetiously termed "close settlement !" Now, the total area of these seven blocks is 7,452 acres, if anything of slightly superior quality to the land owned by the widow lady and family of whom I am speaking. If those 7,452 acres are divided into seven equal blocks it gives to each a total area of 1,064.4 acres, being an area which practically is exactly what the widow lady and six children would each retain if they were allowed to divide their own property amongst themselves, instead of the Minister dividing it

amongst strangers. Now, possibly, that property will be divided into larger areas, and those persons who have made the property, who were born and have spent all their lives on it, will be turned out so that it may be divided amongst other people who have never seen it. I ask honourable members whether they approve of the principle of such compulsory expropriation or not. If my statement is right, and I have narrated the actual facts - and if honourable members will go to the Library they can see from the report of the Hattuma Estate I have given the actual figures - a grave hardship and injustice has been perpetrated .. This is the clause I shall move, and if it is not agreed to in its entirety I think it is a principle that ought to be affirmed by the House : that people who have lived on a block of country, who have been born on that country, and who live upon it, ought not to be turned out to make room for others if they are willing to subdivide the land among themselves. shall not oppose the second reading of the Bill, but I shall try and improve it. I know it is considered extremely improper to say anything against the administration of the Land for ! they are in the House and the country to-day porarily unpopular they may be. Mr. SEDDON .- The honourable member has misrepresented the Government. Captain RUSSELL .-- I shall object to the Hon. the Premier being allowed to comment, except where he has been himself individually misrepresented. Mr. SPEAKER .-- He is entitled to correct any misrepresentation of what he has said. Mr. SEDDON .- It is a misrepresentation of the Government to say that they were turning land to the Government first. Captain RUSSELL .-- I must be allowed to explain that it is perfectly true the widow was at one time prepared to offer the land. because she then had an opportunity of re investing her money in another property : but the Government refused to take her offer at the time, and her opportunity of purchase lapsed ; and they afterwards said because she had offered it once they were going to take it when they chose. She had an opportunity of making what I know myself would have been a good investment ; but because the Government would not purchase her land, that opportunity fell through, and then the Government insisted on taking the land when it did not suit her. Mr. SEDDON .- The price the trustees offered the land at the Government were prepared to give her, and then they altered their minds and asked to withdraw it. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL (Riccanton). - The honourable member for Hawke's Bay, who has just sat down, has in the closing sentences of his speech said that he holds still the view which he always held. I think the fact that he does hold those views is very largely responsible for the position that his party now occupy. Captain RUSSELL .- I cannot change my views for that. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL .- The fact that the honourable gentleman is incapable of rising to a change of public opinion on these questions does personally to his honesty of purpose very great credit; but I think it also shows that he is not so sagacious as a leader as went men like Sir Harry Atkinson and Sir John Hall, who, in days past, realised the changes which come over public opinion, and were prepared to lead parties from time to time to accomplish what they believed the public required. With regard to the Bill now before the House, the Right Hon. the Premier he explained that it is largely a technical Bill, and I do not at all think there is any change of policy of an important character in any of the clauses of the Bill. Sir. I think ... that the policy of the Government and of the Liberal party on the land - for - settlements I question is one that is right and just and necessary in this country, and that that policy is responsible for them being in the position that

<page:517>

This land-for-settlements policy, I believe, has, in the South Island, at any rate, very largely secured their majority at the last three general elections. And, that being the case, as I have always approved and supported the land-for-settlements policy, I have now only risen for the purpose of showing that the Government are departing themselves from their own policy, and that this great proposal of the resumption of land for settlements has, since the departure of the Hon. John McKenzie - now Sir John McKenzie -- from his position as head of the Lands Department, been completely set aside by the Government that has its existence because of it. Now, how am I to prove that ? Honourable members of this House are aware, even though the public outside are not, that Ministers keep a careful record of the

speeches of members of this House, and they are all incorporated in a kind of black-book. Whenever a member speaks in the House and his speech is not acceptable to Ministers, you see this black-book appear on the Premier's desk, and a little later you will see the Premier, or perhaps some other member of his party, passing the black-book round for the purpose of some member of the Premier's party being put up to make a quotation from a speech of the member who is being castigated. The other evening an instance of this kind happened. My honourable friend the member for the Buller, who is not in his place now, had the black-book handed to him by the Premier to quote from my Riccarton speech. I hope that the black-book will appear again, because I am going to refer to the speech which I delivered at Riccarton some few months ago, and in which I dealt with this very question of the action of the Government with regard to the Land for Settlements Act. In my speech at Riccarton I made this assertion : that during the first three quarters of the financial year which has just closed the Government only spent £11,142 on land for settlements in New Zealand. Mr. SEDDON .- Oh ! Mr. G. W. RUSSELL. - Yes ; the honourable gentleman may laugh, but I think he knows that when I make a statement like that I know what I am talking about, and I will give figures that will prove I am right, and that he is wrong. I said at Riccarton that during the first nine months of the financial year just closed the colony had only spent £11,142 on land for settlements, and that the incidental expenses of these purchases came to £7,709. Now, Sir, I hold in my hand the return which the Premier laid on the table the other day. I presume that this return was laid by the Hon. the Premier on the table in reply to the speech which I delivered on the Address in Reply. The table shows this : that there was acquired during the year 1900 --- for workmen's homes, 902 acres : for ordinary settlement, 82,974 acres: cost to the colony, exclusive of cost of roading and survey, \$356,850. Those are the figures which the honourable gentleman gave. And he gave these figures in his speech a few evenings ago on the Address in Reply. The return goes on to show that the number of farms, approximately, is 177, and the number of workmen's homes 150. Now I desire, as an act of fairness to myself, to draw the Premier's attention to the way in which that return has been misrepresented. In the Hansard report of the honourable gentleman's speech on that occasion, on page 95, it is stated as follows : 777 farms were established, and 150 workmen's homes. The return which the honourable gentleman placed on the table himself shows there were 177 farms. not 777 as appears in his speech in Hansard. Now I have no doubt that that has been a typographical error. I have no doubt that the statement that appears in the Premier's address in Hansard, in reply to myself, which adds on six hundred farms to the return of the number established last year, is a mistake, and I tell the Premier I hold in my hand the return and also his speech, and I ask him to admit that the number in his speech is not 777, but 177. Mr. SEDDON. - That is a mistake of the Hansard reporter ; I said 177 farms. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL .-- I said at my meeting at Riccarton that during the first three quarters of the financial year the total amount spent on land for settlements was only £11,142, and I shall prove it. During the June quarter of 1900 the Government paid in purchase-money for land for settlement \$5,245; the incidental expenses were £3,064. During the September quarter of 1900 the Government never paid one copper in purchasing land for settlement in this colony-not a copper and the expenses came to £1,967. During the December quarter the Government paid \$5,897 in purchasing land for settlements, and the expenses came to £2,678. Now, it may be asked, how does the Premier arrive at this return which he has placed on the table, and which says \$356,850 has been spent in land for settlements last year. Well, I will tell honourable members his trick, for it is a trick. The trick is this-what the honourable gentleman did in order to get a return that should be satisfactory to himself was this : He procured a return of the purchases, not for the financial year, but for the calendar year from the 1st of January to the 31st of December of the year 1900. He had to do that, because he knew when he looked at the figures that my position was correct. I had said they had spent in three quarters. £11,142. and, in order to weaken my argument. he included the previous quarter, when he had spent £331,000 in purchasing land for settlement- he

popped in that as the fourth quarter of the year in order to get this return of \$356.850. Now, in order to show that I am correct. I shall quote from the published accounts of the colony. I hold in my hand the New Zealand Gazette for the 16th of May this year. which gives the accounts of the colony for the financial year, and I shall tell the Premier exactly what he has done with regard to land for settlements during the financial year. The total purchases for the last financial year amount to #186,621, but of that no less than £141,618 is made up of purchase-money for

<page:518>

Hatuma. Now, Hatuma has been hanging fire for the last three or four years, and 4.0. the Government have no right to take credit for the purchase of Hatuma for land for settlement during the year that has just expired. But they happen to have paid for Hatuma, and, having paid ■141,618 for Hatuma during the year, they are able to show a total amount of land purchased under the Land for Settlements Act of #186.621. But, in connection with these purchases, during the year there was paid a sum of \$5,245 in connection with the Ohakaea Estate, which had been purchased in the previous year. The result, therefore, is this : that the total purchases of the Government for land for settlement during the last year, leaving out Hatuma and Ohakaea, represent \$39,758. That, Sir, is the result of the Government policy, and that is how the Act is being administered by the Premier. The Premier is Minister of Lands, or, I should say. one part of the Minister of Lands. The Hon. the Minister of Lands is a hybrid-one part of the Minister of Lands is the Premier, and the other part is the Hon. Mr. Duncan. The Premier purchases the land and Mr. Duncan is only able to divide and settle the estates after the Premier purchases them, and I therefore say that, under the Premier's management, during the last year the total amount of land purchased for land settlement in New Zealand, excluding the Hatuma Estate and Ohakaea, amounted to only \$33,758. Mr. SEDDON .- Only \$39,758 ? Mr. G. W. RUSSELL. - I am dealing now with the financial year. Your total return, as shown on page 1113 of the New Zealand Gazette, is \$186.621 for the year. I deduct from that the Hatuma Estate, which was not a last year's purchase, although paid for this year, and that brings me down to \$45,003. I deduct \$5,245, being the balance of the purchase-money of the Ohakaea Estate, and that leaves me with a total for the purchases in New Zealand for the year of \$30,758. So far as the expenses were concerned, the costs of the department were \$0,682; of that sum only \$4008 was for expenses incidental to Hatuma. Now, Sir, the Government, in the course of the speech delivered by His Excellency, say : "The earth-hunger still continues." Is it to be wondered at that the earth-hunger still continues when for such an estate as Waikakahi there were an enormous number-not of dummy applications-but absolutely bond tide applications from young men asking for land for settlement, and wishing to make homos ? What were the purchases of the Government in Canterbury during last year ? Let me give the Premier a list of the estates purchased and paid for last year. He purchased Lyndon, which cost \$15,750 ; and the small farawahi hamlet near Christchurch -those were the sole purchases in the great Province of Canterbury for lands for settlement during the financial year just closed. The right honourable gentleman laughs; he knows when I am getting home on him. Mr. SEDDON .- You are getting home on yourself. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL. - That is all right. I am relying on Government Gazettes and figures for these returns, and I ask the honourable gentleman to stick to the Gazettes when replying. I say, Earnsclough, which cost \$3,100; Lyndon, which cost \$15,750; Maungaraki Estate, which cost \$2,797; North Bank, \$6,750; Tarawahi- that is Freeman's Estate -\$2,957: and Waipapa (J. Bell's) £8,250, are the total purchases in New Zealand for the year for which the Government paid outside of Hatuma during last financial year. There is the Gazette, and I am quoting now from a statement of the receipts and expenditure of the Land Settlement Account for the year ending 31st March, 1901, compared with the financial year ending 31st March. 1900. If the actual position is different to what I have stated, then I shall be very pleased for the honourable gentleman to show me where I am wrong. What I wish to say is this : that adding the three quarters together-that is, the June quarter, in which the

Government paid \$5,245: the September quarter, in which they never paid sixpence for land for settlements ; and the December quarter, in which they paid \$5,897-to the \$331,108 that they paid for the last quarter of the previous year, I get exactly the same figures as are in the return placed on the table of the House by the department a few days ago. Now, Sir, I think I have said quite enough to justify the position that I am taking up- namely, that so far as lands for settlement are concerned, the Government are departing from what was the intention of this Parliament when the Land for Settlements Act was brought in. Why, Sir, the Premier knows better than I do that, under the provisions of the Land for Settlements Act- Mr. MCLACHLAN .- You should not admit that. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL .- The Premier knows better than I do, notwithstanding the remark made by my friend the member for Ashburton. that under the Land for Settlements Act he is entitled to spend half a million a year in par- chasing lands for settlement. He knows that i in one year he spends less than that half-million he is entitled in the following year to add the deficit on to the total amount of the next, and he can spend up to \$759,000 in one year if he has only spent \$250,000 in the year before. Mr. PIRANI. - Where is he to raise the money ? Mr. G. W. RUSSELL. - The Right Hon. the Premier is not only Premier and, as I have said. half Minister of Lands, but he is also Colonial Treasurer, and therefore, holding the two pw- tions of partly Minister of Lands and Colomai Treasurer, he is in a position to arrange ias hnances so as to purchase the estates that are wanted. But what I do urge upon the Govern- ment, Sir. is that if they will put an e-tate as large as Waikakahi on the market every wors in the Province of Canterbury it will be simply "wolfed " up by the young men of Canterbury who want to make homes for themselves. I tell the Government that there is the vers greatest dissatisfaction throughout the whole

<page:519>

Province of Canterbury that this great lands key to the advancement and prosperity of the for settlement system has been virtually laid aside, and that the anger and dissatisfaction of the people at finding their sons leaving the lands and the Crown lands that are available Province of Canterbury where their homes are, and being compelled to go to the North Island in order to obtain homes for them- selves while the Government have this Land the North Island, year after year, leaving the for Settlements Act upon the statute-book is ground uncultivated. With such a Minister of Lands as we have, who has proclaimed his in- such that the Premier is likely to hear from these people. and hear from them in a way that tention of booming the land-settlement policy. he is not likely to be very much pleased with. My own opinion is that the land for settlements settlers to the North Island while he is in policy is the key to the whole political situation office. It grieves me very much to hear so so far as New Zealand is concerned, and if this much about the earth-hunger, and about the Government propose to continue their inaction young men from the South Island being unable of the last year or two in virtually ignoring the to get land, which we are told prevents them earth-hunger of the people, and buying a paltry from getting married and settling down. This thirty-nine thousand pounds' worth of land in state of things need not exist when we have so the colony-leaving out, as I have said, the much available land up North. We hear about Hatuma Estate-then there will be no question young men tumbling over each other at the ballot-box in their eagerness to get land; but as to what will happen ; and that is : that the people will demand that the Lands Department we do not hear of Ministers tumbling over of this colony shall be administered with greater each other in their endeavours to open up energy, and a more honest determination to the. northern lands of the colony, which settle people on the land. As I have said, I do would provide plenty of land for these young not blame the Minister of Lands, because he men. There is any amount of room in the King-country, and in the North Island can only cut up and administer the estates as Crown lands, for ten times the population they are handed over to him by the Premier, of New Zealand. Why should we devote who is the Minister for purchasing the land. blame the Premier. so much attention to buying estates, and Mr. SEDDON .- Hear, hear. disputing over the price to be paid for Mr. G. W. RUSSELL .- Yes, I do. I blame them, and the

terms, and so forth, while the Premier, and I say that if, instead of the the same money, instead of being spent in Premier devoting so much of his attention to the purchase of estates, would do so much careering through Australia and to other matters towards the breaking-up of the land in the which are not incidental to the politics or well- North Island and preparing it for settlement ? fare of this colony, he will devote himself to those Another point I should like to refer to-I think great departments of the public service which I have mentioned it before - that is, in con- are in his hands, with the view of promoting nection with the Contingent men that come the welfare of the people. there would be less back from south Africa. Supposing we were cause for dissatisfaction than there has been in to put them to work surveying a proper system the past. So far as the Bill is concerned, it of railway lines- I do not pretend to give an makes no change in the policy : it is a policy expert opinion in the presence of Sir Joseph, which I have always supported. I only ask but I say that every possible avenue of labour that the policy should be administered in the should be opened up. And I would suggest a spirit in which it was created by this Parlia- decided reform in connection with the railway- lines: I say we should depart from the old ment. Mr. WITHEFORD (Auckland City) .- I wish system that has in most countries been adopted, to draw attention to a point that is generally of surveying a single line and afterwards having overlooked in the House when dealing with the to buy up villages and valuable estates in order land for settlements question - namely, that the to duplicate the line or have deviations. In a tide of settlement has yet to roll over our new country like this we should lay out dupli- northern lands. The extent of land that is cate lines of railway ; lay out stations where available for settlement in the northern part of settlements are to be, arrange for drainage the North Island almost does away with the and water-supply, so that the new townships necessity for discussing how to deal with the may be laid out on the most scientific prin- purchase of lands for settlement in the South ciples; we should make provision for alter- Island. Every part of the colony must have its nate lines of railway, and we should enable the day ; the South Island has had its dav in people on the ground to have the use of the regard to settlement of Crown and Native lands. surveyed portions of the lines till they are All we hear of the earth-hunger in the South wanted for railroad purposes. The cost to the Island need no longer be heard if the young Government would be a mere nothing in com- men would go to the North and see the lands parison to its value. What I am trying to for set lement that are there. It is right that draw the attention of honourable members to is we should give every facility the Government the need of more speedy surveys and plans of require to enable them to purchase any new northern areas of settlement. I have no necessary lands for close settlement, whether feeling other than respect for the Minister of in the North or in the South. But I think the Lands; he has gone personally through the colony, and what is best calculated to advance the interests of the colony, is to settle the Maori in the North Island. I see no reason why this bugbear of the Maori land policy should be allowed for ever to keep back the prosperity of there should be no difficulty in attracting

<page:520>

North Island, and he has done what few other Ministers of Lands have done-he has made himself personally acquainted with the nature and the character of the northern land, and its snitability for settlement. Another point I wish to emphasize is this: If we want our young men to stop in New Zealand we should lay down an attractive policy of industrial developments and land settlement ; we should show the whole world that New Zealand is a place of unparalleled resources. Such being the case We want more young men to develop these re- When the First Contingent came sources. back from South Africa I had letters from South Africa saying what a magnificent country we had here, what a magnificent climate, what a magnificent Government, and what a magni- ficent Parliament, and what magnificent laws we made, so beneficial to the human race, and that every one wanted to come and live in New Zealand. But I would ask, what specific information is prepared, or what plans can we send of the fine land open in the interior, or what terms-what encouragement --- we give to people of our own race to come over from

South Africa, or anywhere else, to live here and take up these lands ? The suggestion was made by one of my friends-I think it was the honour- able member for Masterton -that until our young men had an opportunity of getting land we ought not to bring people here from distant places ; we should let our own young men have the first selection. That I approve of. Yet here is a year gone by, and there are no plans out of blocks open for settlement ; there is nothing I can send to South Africa saying, " Here are magnificent lands, go to work, and take it up ; we can keep you going for two or three years while you settle yourselves on the land." Instead of adopting this principle, and working upon a defined policy of settling the land while making the line, we march bodies of men out from the towns, who disappear when the work is finished, instead of remaining permanent settlers to support the line. There should be a distinct plan for land settlement and public works laid down, so that the one might be dependent upon or assist the other. I have, I think, now given the House the drift of my ideas, and I hope the Government will endeavour to promote it. No time should be lost in opening up lands for settlement -- not in talking and arguing about it year after year : that does no good. Let us support the hands of the distinguished gentleman who holds the position of Minister of Lands, and encourage him and encourage the Government : and before the session is over I hope there will be laid on the table a distinct and definite programme of land settlement, showing what land can be secured in all the different parts of the colony-not confined to either one island or the other, but showing where lands have been surveyed, townships laid down, and roads and railways fixed upon, and let us do things in a businesslike manner.

Mr. HOGG (Masterton) .-- I have always regarded the Land for Settlements Act as one of the most useful measures on the statute-book. Advantage has been freely taken of it of late years, and it has undoubtedly been the means of placing a very large portion of the population in a position of comfort and independence which, without such a measure, they could never have hoped to attain to. In the South Island it has had a very beneficial effect on the labour market by removing from centres such as Dunedin, Invercargill, and Christchurch, a proportion of the working population who were found occasionally suffering great distress owing to want of labour, into places in the country, where they have been able to make a fair and comfortable livelihood. One of the most important industries established in the colony-I refer to the dairy industry -- owes a great deal of its prosperity to this particular measure. Had it not been for the Land for Settlements Act I am satisfied that the amount of butter and cheese we are now exporting from New Zealand, and which is very largely augmenting the wealth of the country, would never have been produced. But, Sir, I am somewhat surprised at the complaints I have listened to from a member representing a portion of the Canterbury District. I believe that, if there is any place in the colony which has derived a huge advantage from the purchase of private property under this Act, it is the part of the country he represents. We in the North Island may have some reason to complain ; but I maintain that Canterbury members have very little reason to find fault with the Government because they have not been recognising the necessity of purchasing land for settlement in their district. They have had the fat, the cream, of the money expended on the purchase of land for settlement. Hence I am astonished at the member for Riccarton this afternoon pointing out, as he has done, that the Government are not making sufficient purchases. I believe that the Canterbury District has benefited to the extent of hundreds of thousands of pounds of late years, while, with regard to my own district, all that has been done with respect to acquiring land there has been to spend a few paltry thousands. I may speak of the whole of the North Island, and I believe I am correct in saying that far more money has been expended in Canterbury than in the whole of this island in the Cheviot acquiring land for settlement. Estate alone represents a higher value than all the land that has been acquired in the North Island. Here, not far from the City of Wellington, in the Wellington country district, in every direction -on the east coast and on the west coast, you will find large estates, splendid land, fit for cutting-up and subdivision, where there ought to be any number of families land that could be turned to useful and practical account, but which is held by a

few in huge areas, and remains comparatively unimproved. I do not blame the Government for not acquiring some of that land. I am aware that the Land Purchase Board have been trying to obtain suitable land for settlement in my own district and in Hawke's Bay, but what is the position? They are unable to obtain land at a reasonable price. I do not blame the owners for holding their

<page:521>

lands as long as they can. They believe they have a splendid prospect in front of them. Here, on the one hand, we have a Government expending huge sums of money every year in pursuance of a vigorous public works policy, making roads and bridges, and prosecuting the construction of certain railway lines. Private property is thereby being raised enormously in value, and the big estates, as well as the little properties, are getting the benefit. The owners of these estates naturally, seeing the additional value that from year to year is being given to their properties, are reluctant to sell. On the other hand, we have the Government, with the settlers behind them, very anxious to purchase these estates, so that they may put to practical advantage a valuable portion of the national assets with which very little is being done. We have the Government on the one hand anxious to acquire these lands, and on the other hand we find that through the public expenditure these lands are rising in value from year to year. This is the process which is now going on. Is it fair? Is it just? Can it be defended? Is it not perfectly obvious that something will have to be done to strengthen the hands of the Government in acquiring the land that should be made available under this Act? At the present time we have arrived at practically what is a deadlock. I know for a positive fact that the Land Purchase Commissioners have been endeavouring again and again to acquire land in the neighbourhood of Masterton, Greytown, and Carterton and all round Wellington. They have been trying to secure these lands for close settlement, but they have been completely baffled. Is it surprising that the Government should be reluctant to make bridges and roads in the direction of large estates that are suitable for close settlement, when they know very well that the moment they do this they will greatly increase the value of the lands they wish to acquire for settlement purposes? Therefore, I say that the Government must fearlessly face the position, and the course demanded is clear enough to me. But will they adopt it? They ought to have done so long since. Unfortunately, they do not appear to fully realise the necessity that exists for exercising a firm hand in the assertion of popular right. They do not seem to have backbone enough to turn the key which will unlock these estates. They have the key in their hands if they choose to use it. I am not blaming the Government for refusing to purchase land at an inflated value, but I consider that we must have an alteration in our system of dealing with land generally. A radical alteration will be brought about if the people do their duty, and that in a very short time. At the same time, I am pleased that amendments of the Land for Settlements Act are now proposed. It is the duty of the Government to endeavour, as imperfections in their measures become apparent, to bring forward amendments. The amendments proposed will, I believe, facilitate the acquisition of land for settlement: therefore I intend to support this measure. But, Sir, there is one amendment which I was in great hopes would have been included in this Act, but which I am sorry to see the Government has entirely overlooked. It is not sufficient for the Government to acquire land for settlement, to buy estates, and to subdivide these properties and retail them to the people. They must see that the people have reasonable opportunities after having leased the sections, for making their operations successful, and in that respect the Land for Settlements Act as it exists at the present time is not sufficient. You will remember, Sir, that last year when a Land for Settlements Consolidation Bill was before the House, provision was made in that Bill for assisting the lessees of workmen's homes, but no assistance was provided for the ordinary lessees who were taking up small farms. Now, when estates are subdivided, and opened for selection under the terms of the Act, the successful applicants must reside on their land. They have twelve months' grace, but within those twelve months they must begin to reside. If men with their families are to reside upon their sections it is necessary that they should be able to convert them into homesteads. They must

have them fenced so as to make them reproductive. It is also desirable as well as necessary that they should be able to dispense with the private landlord. The only way in which they can do that is by erecting dwellings, and to do so working-men usually require the assistance of capital. That is inevitable. The Government offers powerful inducements to men in the towns with families, who have sometimes a hard struggle to make ends meet, to go into the country and take up land adapted for dairy farms. But after the Crown tenants have done that-when they have paid down their rents and lease-fees, and are ready to go to work-in what position do they find themselves? They must complete their fencing, and then the next thing is to obtain cattle or sheep to make the land reproductive. They have then to erect dwellings for their families. Any ordinary private landlord at this juncture would endeavour to help his tenant : but what does the State do? The tenants are not allowed to mortgage or deal in any way with their property during the first twelve months. They are compelled to reside there, and they have to pay their rent punctually and make improvements : but they must not borrow. or, if they do, they can offer no security. They must not go to the Government or 4.30. to any one else to borrow a shilling. That is the position in which they are placed. Under clause 60 of the Land for Settlements Act of last year it is provided :- " Except on the recommendation of the Land Board and with the approval of the Minister, it shall not be lawful for any lessee to transfer, sublet, or in any way part with. mortgage, or charge his lease, or any portion of his interest therein, until the expiration of the fifth year of the term of the lease." So that for five years, unless the lessee can get special permission from the Land Board and the Minister of Lands, he is unable to raise

<page:522>

anything whatever on his improvements. For nothing coming in. The whole of their improvement the first year he is absolutely barred, and for five ; improvements have to be made ; sheep, cattle, and years he is prevented from raising any money unless by the special permission of the Land Board and the Minister of Lands. Now, Sir, under the original Land for Settlements Act, previous to the Consolidation Act being passed, facilities were given to settlers to raise a small amount of money on their improvements. But in the Consolidation Act of last year this was omitted; but it was provided that the lessees of workmen's homes, subject to certain regulations, might get an advance on their dwellings; fences, and other improvements up to \$50, repayable within ten years at 5 per cent. interest. The sum of \$50 seemed very small, and I asked that other tenants, mostly small dairy farmers, who are settling on those lands, should have the same opportunity of getting a little money as those who selected workmen's homes. But how was that proposition treated in this House? On the 8th October last I proposed, when the Bill was in Committee, that the provisions for borrowing on improvements relating to workmen's homes should apply to all leaseholders under the Act. A division was taken, and eighteen members supported the proposal, but twenty-five, including the Premier, the Minister of Lands, and other members of the Government and the Government party, voted against it. Since that time I have been frequently appealed to by settlers who are anxious to make improvements, to build good residences for their families, and to obtain the cattle they require. I have had to apply myself to the private money-lender on their behalf, and ask him in the absence of better security to take their good character for thrift and honesty into account and to assist them, seeing that the Government, although their landlord, was unable to help them. That, Sir, is the position in which the settlers are placed, and I think it is a great oversight that no remedy is proposed. When I appealed on behalf of the settlers to the Land Department, what reply did I receive ? Sir, I am sorry to say that some of our Government departments appear to be subject to various kinds of human ailments. As long as you do not trouble them, and allow them to go ahead in their own way, you will receive very mild and courteous replies to your communications. I am afraid the Lands Department has what we may call a liver, and now and again it becomes very bilious, especially if you attempt to stir it up. When I asked on behalf of these settlers that they should be placed in a position to

raise a little money on their improvements, the reply I got was to the effect that the benefits of the . Act were never intended for settlers who were not able to provide themselves with all the money they required. They were not sup- posed to borrow. The Act was only intended to help country settlers who had capital enough to stock their land and make im- provements. Now, Sir, during the first year these settlers experience the worst difficulties they will ever have to contend with. In that year everything is going out, and little or implements have to be bought. This is the time they urgently require all the reasonable assistance the Government is able to give them. Yet this is actually the time when they are refused the slightest assistance under the land- for - settlements system. I wish to take this the earliest opportunity I have had of bringing this matter forward, with the view of endea- vouring to convince the Government that they have made a mistake in refusing settlers the assistance they so much require ; and I hope when they consider the subject fully they will yet do something to enable those who are tak- ing up land under existing conditions to over- come their early difficulties and be allowed a reasonable opportunity of placing themselves on a prosperous footing on the sections they have selected. Mr. COLLINS (Christchurch City) .- Sir, I have no intention of going into a general dis- cussion of the land-for-settlements policy, and, in the main, I have to confess at once that I can find no fault with the Bill now before the House. Other members have fitly pointed out that it is a purely technical Bill, and, that being so, there is really little fault to find with it. My chief regret is that it does not cover more ground than it actually does. In common with other members of the House, I took some exception last year to alterations made in cur land-for-settlements policy, and, as honourable m mbers will remember, my strongest excep- tion was taken to what was generally known as the rebate of 10 per cent. to Crown tenants. [have no desire now to revive that old debate, but I would just point out that what has trans- pired since then is very largely a justification of the action that I and others took at the time. Returns have been called for so that we may learn to what extent the rebate has been granted in the different land dis- tricts. At present we have no such information before us. But I wish to draw the attention of members to this fact : that in the Otago District the rebate may be said to have been of a partial character. We have been told by one honourable member that, as far as the Auckland District is concerned, there have been no re- bates at all, and in the Canterbury District I think I can say the rebate has been general. Now, Sir, it is just as well the House should pay some attention to the fact. Surely it was never intended when the amendment was passed last year that such a state of things should be brought about that tenants in one part of the country should be so differently treated from tenants in another part of the country. I think the sooner that clause is repealed the better it will be for the land-for-settlements police. I regret also that the Minister in charge of the Bill-and, by the by, speaking of the Minister in charge of the Bill, I cannot understand w. v a Bill dealing with the land-for-settlements policy is not in the hands of the Minister of Lands. It appears to me we have a richt to look to that Minister to explain proposals dea- ling with the land-for-settlements policy. He

<page:523>

is the one to whom the House should look. He is the Minister under the principal Act who has had charge and control of all things under the Land for Settlements Act, and if I were the honourable gentleman I would resent any other Minister doing my work for me. I think he ought to feel that we have a right to look to him to deal with matters affecting the land settlements of the colony. The honourable member who has just sat down drew attention to the fact that the colony and Canterbury in- cluded had derived very great benefit from the land-for-settlements policy, and he seemed to { tage is not sublet as apartments, then it fre- cast some reflection on the honourable member i quently happens that the young people, long for Riccarton for the remarks he had made, as i before the time when they ought to be, are though that honourable gentleman had in any i sent to work to seek some employment. Every 1 sense disparaged the land-for-settlements policy. Sir, the member for Riccarton uttered no single word in disparagement of the

land-for-settle- ments policy. Every member knows he is just as strong a supporter of that policy as there is in the House. I am willing to admit, with the member for Masterton, that the whole colony has immensely benefited by the land-for-settle- ments policy of the Liberal Government, and that Canterbury therefore has participated in all the improvements and progress which has resulted from that policy. But, Sir, if I understand the member for Riccarton's speech I am right, he feels that we are not progressing at the rate we should do with this policy. I am in the House, but I wish to see it perfected and He wants to see a rate of progress that is greater ; he wants to see the land-for-settle- i tinued, and, particularly, that the Minister ment policy a real live policy ; and I go further than he went. I say the very existence of the , have drawn attention. I have repeatedly called Liberal Government depends upon its keeping this a live policy. I have said before, and I repeat, that the time has gone by when the Liberal party can continue to live on its past merits ; it must have merits present and futuro if it is to continue to deserve the gratitude of the people of the colony. Now, Sir, while I of \$90 an acre? If the department wished to willingly admit that Canterbury has derived great benefit from the land-for-settlements impossible of success, if the object was to show policy, I would just draw attention to the . fact that neither Canterbury nor any part of the colony has been sufficiently considered so far as that particular portion of the lands for settlement is concerned which is to provide per acre. In all earnestness and sincerity I homes for working-men. Sir, this is really a most important problem. It is all very well to discuss general economic questions on the floor of this House : it is all very well to discuss the deficiency in the increase of population, and that kind of thing; but I tell the House now that it is absolutely impossible to expect any condition of things other than which is facing us at the present time so long as the majority of the working- men of the colony are paying one-third of their income, and often more, for the little cottage in which they live. If the Minister of Lands will Settlements Act that is being occupied, worked, honestly set himself to work to provide blocks : of land in the vicinity of the larger towns-and of all towns-where working-men can erect for themselves, or acquire for themselves, homes on ; which is lying absolutely idle. I refer to the Crown and Native lands in what is commonly a similar basis to the rentals in the Old Coun- try, some good will be done. A working-man called the King-country. Large quantities of in the Old Country is never called on to pay ; first-class land have been lying idle for years and more than one-sixth of his income for rent, and here it is almost impossible to find a man who is not paying one-third of his income in rent. If he has a family of young children those children in many cases are cramped together, and a room or two of that small cottage must be let as apartments to help to make up the Is that a proper thing ? It leads rent. to the state of overcrowding of which many honourable members are already well aware. That ought not to be in a colony like this ; and if a room or two in a small cot- one knows the difficulty we have in finding employment for young people, and this is simply because of the intensity of the competition for employment, .which is bound to continue so long as young people have to turn out to work long before they should do so in order to help to obtain the livelihood of the family. An Hon. MEMBER. - We cannot get boys. Mr. COLLINS .- Boys cannot get situations in town, and we cannot send them all to the Taieri, though we should be glad to do so if there was work for them. I have no desire to find fault with the land-for-settlements policy ; I am as strong a supporter of it as any one in maintained. I wish to see the policy con- should be fully alive to the point to which I attention to the necessity for acquiring land for workmen's homes. We had one block of thirty acres acquired last year in the vicinity of Christ- church for this purpose, and the price it was bought for was \$90 per acre. How is it possible to make a success of small allotments for work- ing-men's homes with land purchased at the rate destroy the system, if they wished to render it that it was impossible for the Government of the country to do anything adequate in pro- viding homes for the working-people, they could not do better than to buy blocks of land at \$90 draw the Minister's attention to the desirable- ness of endeavouring to solve this problem. In solving this problem he will be solving many others which have recently been referred to in this House, and which

cannot be cleared up unless he first unravel the economic problem underlying them, so as to allow that a working-man's income shall not be to such an extent absorbed in finding a home for his family. Mr. LANG (Waikato). - I rise to protect, as I have done on former occasions, against the compulsory taking of land under the Land for carrying stock, and employing labour, when we have such a large amount of land in the colony

<page:524>

years. I look upon it as a disgrace to the Government that that land should lie idle and unoccupied for so long. I venture to say that if this land had been in the South Island it would have been settled long before this ; and I think it is a cause for complaint that the working of the land-settlement policy has been almost entirely confined to the South Island. In a case within my own knowledge in the Auckland Province one block of land was offered to the Government and refused. It was then cut up by the owner, and the people who took up the land were able afterwards to sell it again at a profit, showing that the price asked was fair and the land was suitable to be cut up. When such properties as I have mentioned are offered to the Government voluntarily there is no need to take land compulsorily from people who do not wish to sell it. Reference has been made during the debate to the ballot system. I look upon that as neither more nor less than gambling - the case to show the House that without cost being. It has been said that a poor man cannot get land under any other system ; but under this system the poor man does not necessarily get the land. It is often taken up by speculators, by himself, and he was candid enough to admit he and if a bond-fide settler wants it he has to pay a large amount by way of premium for the land. Many settlers have gone month after month - I might almost say year after year - without being able in many cases to get land, and when they do get it the probability is that they pay more for the land than they would have done if it had been put up to auction in the first place. I hope before long there will be an amendment to the Land for Settlements Act enabling those people who take up land under the lease-in- perpetuity system to acquire the freehold. Why should not the man who has settled on land have the right to acquire the freehold ? An Hon. MEMBER. - That would destroy the system. the big fish would swallow the little ones. Mr. LANG. If the honourable member is afraid of the big fish swallowing up the little ones, that is easily prevented by having a law whereby a man is unable to acquire more than a certain amount of land : but I say that encouragement ought to be given to the settler to acquire the freehold of his property. He ought to be allowed to do so by instalments, paying off bit by bit, and should receive interest, of course, upon the amount paid up, so that he would be gradually reducing his rent and acquiring the freehold. There is no blinking the fact that the lease in perpetuity is not the most popular system of settlement in the colony. If any one will take up a paper and see the land-sales, especially in Auckland, he will see that a much larger quantity of land is taken up under the system of occupation with the right of purchase than under the lease-in- perpetuity system, and that is done even though they have to pay 1 per cent. more rent than under the lease in perpetuity. The people are willing to do that in order to be able to acquire the freehold of the property. I hope, Sir, the time is not far distant when all the lease-in- perpetuity settlers will be allowed to acquire the freehold of their properties. Mr. MCLACHLAN (Ashburton). - I regret very much that the mover of this Bill, the Premier, is not present, because he is rather an important personage and factor in the whole of the legislation of this House. He made some wonderful statements this afternoon, in introducing this Bill, about what he conceived to be cases of dummyism and cases of that sort which obtained, as I understood, in connection with the various Land Boards in Canterbury : but my honourable friend Mr. Meredith and myself, from our position on the Land Board. know to the contrary. I can tell you, Sir, of a most flagrant case - one of the most flagrant cases that came before the Canterbury Land Board in the last six years -- that was connived at by the central office. The Land Board. because it was pure, defeated this attempt, and that is not a matter that there can be any dispute about. I shall briefly recite the facts of to one's-self it cannot be done. An applicant for a section to the Canterbury Land Board made

application that he desired to get this section for wanted it for his son, who was eighteen years of age. There would be a difficulty about this applicant complying with the conditions of settlement, and he said he would submit himself to all sorts of inconveniences if the Board would only accept himself or his wife as applicant for the section, and at the end of two years he would remove his boy from the school he was then attending and send him to Lincoln College in order that he might acquire a knowledge of agriculture and qualify himself as an average Crown tenant. It seemed to be quite right to the gentleman himself that he should want to acquire this section for his son. From my place in the Land Board I touched this gentleman on the shoulder and said, " If you should succeed in this little oracle of yours you would be the biggest 'dummy' in New Zealand. The Hon. John McKenzie has spent the best years of his life searching for one and has never caught one, but if he put his hand on you he would have the biggest one in New Zealand " Now, this was connived at by the central office in Wellington. The Premier said this Act had proved a failure. Then, why does he not revert to the past system of sale by public auction ? I can suggest a clause in order to better this great feature of the Bill, giving the Land Board, with the consent of the Minister, power to select the applications of married people : that a married man with a family of one would be eligible ; that a married man with a family of two would be more eligible ; and that a married man with a family of three would be still more eligible: but he might not have the physical power to hold the position. Why, there are people with large families who are unmarried. I may say it would place enormous power in the hands of the Land Board to discriminate amongst the eligible candidates for sections on estates. Now, it appeared to me absurd that any restriction should be allowed to interfere with Boards. who are selected for the purpose of dealing fairly with all persons desirous of becoming Crown

<page:525>

tenants, whether married or single, and of allowing them to participate in the estate and pay their money, unless you offer it by public auction and the highest bidder be declared the purchaser. No more reasonable conclusion than this could be come to. Now, the Cabinet have done exceedingly well in Canterbury in the purchase of land. They have acquired various estates, and in almost each instance I think in every instance -- the estates that have been acquired are well worth the money, and they have been settled, and settled with good settlers, whether single or married. There are very few of the sections contained in these estates still in the hands of the Crown. In fact, I think, though speaking without absolutely knowing the facts, they have not got one. The whole concern is taken up, and every one has been successfully settled. There is a great demand still existing for land in Canterbury. The honourable member for Riccarton said that if there was an estate equal to Waikakahi in the market there would be hundreds of applications for sections in it. Why, there is only one estate in Canterbury equal to Waikakahi. It is one of the finest estates in Canterbury that could be acquired, and probably there was every likelihood of it being acquired and settled successfully but that the Land Purchase Board is of conservative bodies the most extraordinarily conservative. Well, that Board declined one of the best estates in Canterbury ; it was offered at a price that would have allowed it to be settled by a class of tenantry who would have been entirely successful. What did the owner of the estate do? He sold it on terms for a small amount of money, annual payments, and with quit-rent or any other condition, and he has got more money, I am told, than the whole amount he asked for the entire estate, and he still has thousands and thousands of acres of land left. That shows the wisdom of the Land Purchase Board. As I said, they are of a most extraordinarily conservative character. In Asburton offers were made to them for the purchase of an estate -- the Laymore Estate of 30,000 acres of land. I believe, or something thereabouts, much of it the finest land on the Canterbury plains. Negotiations to purchase were started, but the Land Purchase Department said. " No, no: we cannot touch it." What did the owner do ? He sold some of the land at 90. 570, and \$10 an acre, and sold in that way a small fraction of the estate, and got for that land as much as he offered the whole estate for. An example again of the wisdom of the Land Purchase Department set

up by the Government, officered by the most conservative men in New Zealand, and absolutely beyond the control of the Government. Now I can come to the Bill ; but before I deal with the Bill I am going to call attention to what I believe to be the principal feature of this measure, and the reason why it was introduced. In the month of April a most extraordinary Order in Council was made. I do not know whether the Governor of his own motion made it or not-at any rate, it says in subclause 10, (a),- " When more applications than one are made for the same land, preference shall be given to the applications from married men with families, and the right to occupy the land shall, if such applications are accepted by the Land Board, be decided by ballot in accordance with the regulations under the Land Act, 1892." The Canterbury Land Board, whose wisdom is much greater than that of the heads of the departments in Wellington, having more discrimination, refused to act upon His Excellency's Order in Council, and attempted to separate those who were applicants within the meaning of the Act from those who were not : and yet this same Land Board has rejected any amount of people simply because they were married or single, because they had land in other assessments exceeding the amount that they should hold. Consequently, I say we should not pass this clause 8, that "in disposing of land by way of lease the Board shall, unless directed to the contrary by the Minister, Good gracious, who is the Minister ? Is it the Under-Secretary, or is it the Minister of Lands for the time being, who inquires into the particulars or conditions of the applicant ? Who so fit as the local body-who so fit as the members of the Board, comprising five individuals, who come from the north, east, south, and west, who know every person within the province ? Is the Minister for the time being or the Under-Secretary to run this department, and to say who shall not be eligible as a tenant ? Why, certainly not. Why, Sir, if the local Boards, who are appointed to administer such a large and important department as the disposal and administration of the waste lands of the colony, are not fit to do it, then abolish the Land Boards altogether, and administer the whole concern from Wellington. That is my opinion so far as I am concerned. The Premier, unwisely I think, gave a sort of hint that if opposition was offered to this Bill he might not re-appoint members of this House to Land Boards. Well, he may do as he likes so far as I am concerned. I snap my fingers at the Premier and at this House. As regards reappointment of members, the honourable member for Palmerston knows very well that he was a bad boy once. But I am not going to be controlled, and no influence is going to be brought to bear on me to compel me, under any circumstances, to aid that which I do not conceive to be right. Of course, I shall be returned to this House in spite of the Premier so long as I like to stand for Ashburton, and if he eliminates me from the roll of membership of the Land Board I will come up here and claim that a Bill to provide for elective Boards shall be passed, and then I will stand for Canterbury in spite of him. It is a singular thing, Sir, but it is nevertheless the truth, and I believe my learned friend the honourable member for Ashley will support me when he speaks I hope I am not going to anticipate what he intends to say --- that as against this obnoxious clause 8, providing that married people with families shall have preference, we

<page:526>

have seen come before the Canterbury Land Board-and I suppose that Board has disposed of more land under the Land for Settlements Act than any other Board probably in New Zealand- good-looking young men and women who have had marital engagements, who were wearing engagement-rings, and they have asked for Section 15 for Maria Jones and James Hayes, and they have asked that they should be bracketed together. And is not that most desirable ? Invariably they say, ' We only want one section between us,' and they are asked. " Do you not want two sections between you ; you are not married ?" But they reply, " We only want one section : and in the event of my being successful he marries me, and in the event of his being successful I marry him." These cases come before the Board time after time, and in every case this arrangement is carried out by the parties, and the marriage is consummated afterwards, and they become good settlers of the Crown. And yet this Bill says that only men who have

been married and have families shall participate in the disposal of the Crown lands. Why, Sir, I know of very many couples who have been married a long time and have only got one youngster. I know of people who have not been married at all who have a great many more youngsters than that. I say there is no reason why a young couple whose characters are good, and whose intentions are honourable, should not be allowed to participate in this disposal of the lands, which belongs to them as well as to anybody else. There is no priority of claim to the people who are married than to those who are unmarried, because all people were un-married once. The Premier said there was great urgency for this Bill, but he does not seem to be looking after it very well. He seems to have left it to the tender mercies of this House, and it seems to me he does not care whether it passes or whether it does not. I do not know of a single case in the whole Canterbury District where any occasion has ever arisen for the passing of this Bill-not one single case. Of course, the first clauses may be necessary to improve the machinery of the department, because there are sometimes defects in the law. In fact, I will tell you, Sir, of a case I know myself of a defect in the law, and I think I am within my rights in doing so. Last session, although no urgent condition was made out, the Premier told this House it was necessary in order to appease, compensate, or ameliorate, or gain public favour, or whatever it might be, to pass a Crown Tenants' Rent Rebate Bill. Well, I, with other members of this House that is, the more intelligent members of the i of himself, of people who have subdivided their House I should say resented this, and I gave reasons at that time why this Bill should not be passed, because I knew of my own know- ledge of hundreds of instances in Canterbury where the tenants of the Crown could sell out at a considerable increase. I never knew a single case scarcely where a tenant had any difficulty in getting somebody to take his section off his hands. Over and above the value of the im- provements made on the estate, in all cases they got something to the good, and sometimes a very large amount of money. Well, the Premier brought this in, and I will give him the credit for this : that he referred to a lot of cases in the back blocks, speaking, I think, of the Masterton district. Of course, we know the member for Masterton can do anything-we know the Premier can be led by the nose In the member for Masterton-and, speaking of the difficulties and necessities and vicissitudes of the back-block settlers, he said : "I will give you 10 per cent. off your rent : I will remit 10 per cent. on the amount of interest on the money that you pay under the Advances to Settlers Act. All these things are due to you." And, not to put the thing lightly, the Premier passed a general Bill, and gave this remission of the rent to other people who did not desire it at all. I went home in the middle of the night, after having exhausted myself in the House, and had a sleep, and came back in the morning, and the " Hon. Professor" Barclay met me in the lobby and told me the Premier had now given way, and that if I would go and see him he would enter into a compromise with us in regard to the 10-per- cent. rebate. What I wanted was not that the 10-per-cent. rebate should be given in all cases, but that only after due inquiry and where they were deserving cases. The Premier, when I went into the room-I may not tell you what he said, because he is awfully wroth if you dis- close what he says in private - gave me to understand he was going to compromise. He came into the House and gave such a com- promise as deceived the whole country. It did not deceive the people who got the 10 per-cent. rebate because they got it all the same, but he did deceive nearly every one else who thought that the cases for rebate were to be indi- vidual cases, and not general cases. No doubt, I believe that the Premier, having gone so far as to commit himself to this 10 per-cent. rebate of rent, will stick to it until we shove him off the Treasury benches, and put Mr. Rhodes in as Minister of Lands. However, I am going to oppose this Bili. and after having heard the remarks which have fallen from my honourable friend Mr. Meredith, and the other members of the House who are opposed to such a measure, I feel all the more able to give a pronounced opinion upon the matter. But before I sit down I have a note here which I wish to refer to. When the honourable member for Hawke's Bay was speaking, the Premier interjected about the subdivision of private estates. Captain Russel gave by way of illustration a case that he wnw estates

amongst their families. Now, there's a clause in this Bill which provides that if negotiations have been entered into no person can so subdivide his estate. I cannot, Sir, find the life of me see why the subdivision of an estate under such circumstances should be called a dishonest transaction. Suppose I was fortunate enough to possess 12,000 acres of land which I hold in enjoyment for myself, my wife, and family without any fear of any Government of

<page:527>

any person making any encroachment or inroads upon that land. Well, I am not going to be like King Lear, and give away everything to my family—to my boys, Sandy and Willie, and so on, and to my girls, lest they might throw me over in my old age, as King Lear's children did; and if I see the Government are sending out their spies and their officers to spy out the land with a view of acquiring it under the compulsory clauses of the Act, I have a perfect right to make a subdivision of my estate, even though the Government has been in negotiation for its purchase. For that reason I shall oppose this clause. I shall oppose every clause in the Bill, but more especially the 8th clause. In fact, I shall oppose the Bill from beginning to end if I can do so without any serious violation of my own convictions. Mr. TANNER (Avon).—The discussion on this Bill has been upon the whole policy of the Land for Settlements Act and the general scope of its administration, and has not been confined, as the Premier probably anticipated, to the three or four points of detail which the Bill contains and which are amendments to our legislation of last year. For myself I feel physically incapable of discussing the whole field opened up at the present time, but I do not like the opportunity to pass without saying a few words on one particular phase of the subject—that is, the question of small settlements near the towns. There are many other points which have been raised in the course of the discussion which are worthy of the gravest attention, more especially the complaint of the Premier that after all the years of legislation on this subject no less than 90 per cent. of the applicants for sections on estates that are cut up for settlement are nothing more nor less than "dummies." Sir, if ever there was a condemnation of the administration of the Lands Department uttered in this House I think it is that, and that it is about the most pitiful confession ever made. I find also that there are other matters introduced which I shall not attempt to discuss. I may say from my own knowledge there is ample need for the provision which is embodied in clause 3. It deals with a matter which has suggested itself to me more than once. When an estate is bought, roaded, and surveyed, cut up into sections, the intending applicants always understand the rent is based on the total cost. But in years afterwards other expenditure is incurred on the estate, and that is paid for out of money which must necessarily come from the Consolidated Fund in some form or another. That money must in all reason be a dead loss. There is no interest being paid on it, and it has not been calculated in the total on which the rentals have been based. I know that in a particular settlement I could name votes of money have been passed from time to time by this House and expended long after the rental has been fixed, and after it has been paid for years, for carrying out works in the nature of public improvements. In this way it appears that there is a leakage of money from the Land for Settlements Account, which it would be well for the House to take some notice of. I think it is very probable that justifies the insertion of clause 3. Some of the other clauses, I believe, are necessary in order to defeat the evasive tactics which are pursued by owners when attempts are made to enforce the compulsory clauses. But the main subject about which I rose to speak is the lethargy which seems to have overtaken the Land for Settlements Board, and the administration generally, in providing the small settlements in the neighbourhood of towns known as workmen's homes. It appears positively incredible that after seven years so little should have been done with such magnificent means placed at the disposal of the Ministry. We are told land is dear. Mr. MCLACHLAN.—The people do not apply. Mr. TANNER.—Why, years ago I pointed out in this House, in answer to the contention of the Hon. Sir John McKenzie, that land was dear near towns, that it always would be dear near towns, and that the price of land in the vicinity of large towns was and would always be an in-

creasing quantity. Nobody attempted to controvert that assertion : and if the Minister had meant business it would have been a very good reason why the policy should have been actively pushed on at the time, but the matter has been put off until now something in the nature of a paralysis has overtaken the entire department. What has been done during the past seven years by the land-for-settlements administration in the neighbourhood of Christchurch, excluding the country districts of the Province of Canterbury, for I am not speaking of the rural population, but I am simply speaking of one special department, as I may call it, of the administration of lands ? When the Land for Settlements Act was first passed in this House the opinion was expressed, especially from the Opposition benches, that it was a Canterbury Bill ; and there is no question that the people of Canterbury expected great things from it, for the necessity was greater in Canterbury than it was in any other portion , of the colony. I must say that during the first three or four years the Government really did attempt to put some vigour into the administration of the Act, and for a time the demand was fairly supplied ; but, Sir, that has not been the case during the three or four years immediately past. When, in 1896, an amending Act was passed by which it became possible to compulsorily acquire land near towns with a view of relieving those people who, through want of employment and other things, besieged the Treasury for money and work, only a very scanty application of the Act was permitted. In the vicinity of Christchurch, and within a radius of three or four miles of it, there has been purchased about seven small blocks of land, totalling not more than 200 acres, and the number of settlers, according to the Land for Settlement Report of last year the figures for the present year are not yet available --- is given at about 120. The Premier the other day boasted of the work which the Administration had carried out in providing workmen's homes ;

<page:528>

but it comes to this, Sir : that in the City of Christchurch, and its immediately contiguous boroughs, with a population of about 60,000, there has been in seven years 120 sections furnished, something less than twenty per year. The absolutely inadequate nature of this will be seen at once by honourable members: I have risen now more for the purpose of emphasizing the remarks of the honourable member for Riccarton, and of pressing upon the Government the necessity of doing something more than what has been done of late, unless they wish to invite a more critical feeling from the people of Canterbury. Mr. DUNCAN (Minister of Lands). . I do not wish to see this Bill go to a vote without saving a word or two upon it. I am surprised at the turn which the discussion has taken. It has not been on the Land for Settlements Bill. It could have been much more in place if some of the speeches had been made on the Address in reply to the Governor's Speech. As has been stated by the Premier, we have found it necessary to get these few amendments passed in order that the Act may be worked in a reasonable way. It has been found that certain provisions in last year's Act are not clear enough ; in fact, the Auditor-General would not allow any money to be expended for roads or bridges because such expenditure was not clearly specified in the Act, and there was trouble in getting the Act administered. This Bill is only to amend these defects in the Act, and it appears to me that the discussion which has taken place has been quite uncalled for. For instance, the member for Ashburton had no right to graft on the descriptions he gave of the Canterbury Land Board. What connection had that with this Bill? The Land for Settlements Act has to be administered in a reasonable way. I would call the attention of the member for Avon to this fact : that the land purchased near Christchurch for workmen's homes was too dear, and it thus lay idle for a long time. Mr. TANNER .- The sections were too small. Mr. DUNCAN. Then an effort should have been made to have them made larger. Mr. TANNER. . Application was made to the Board, but they would not alter the area. Mr. DUNCAN .- If the Board will not deal with the matter in a reasonable way, then the Board should be altered. If you push this land-for-settlement policy too vigorously, the members being all anxious to get land for homes, you will have the scheme spoiled, and it will all drop about you. You have to take great care. You do not want to have these cases constantly cropping up in

this House, and to have the tenants constantly asking for reductions. If you purchase the land at a price that the people cannot pay, then you will have these applications for reductions of rent. I say that \$35 as paid for workmen's homes at Christchurch is too much to pay for land : I would rather go further out from Christchurch, but I think I could get land near Christchurch at a lower figure than 995. This Bill is simply to meet a few defects in the law. There was a lawsuit in connection with Hatuma which lasted two years, whereas if this Bill had been law that case would not have lasted six months. Indeed, it is probable that case would not have come before the Courts at all. Then, we cannot get any land in Hawke's Bay unless we take it compulsorily. An Hon. MEMBER. You can get lots. Mr. DUNCAN .- The owners want far more than its value. Captain RUSSELL .- You want to buy it for less than its value. Mr. DUNCAN .- No : we want to acquire it at a fair value. If it takes two years to purchase an estate, such as was the case in Hawae's Bay, the Act will be a dead-letter so far as Hawke's Bay is concerned. In fact, it took nearer four years than two to acquire one estate in Hawke's Bay. Then, as to giving preference to married men. I contend that is a very reasonable and right thing to do. I say that the married man with a family is the man who settles on the land, whereas the single man generally runs about the country and tries to sell or transfer his land. A married man tries to make a home for himself and family, whereas the other man tries to make a profit out of the land. I am of opinion that the House will pass that clause. If there are sections that the married men do not apply for that is all right. the single men can get them ; but, as a rule, single men are not the best tenants. Mr. WILFORD .- What about Khandallah ? Mr. DUNCAN .- Khandallah is a place that is not the most advantageous for workmen's homes at the present. Mr. WILFORD. - Oh, yes. Mr. DUNCAN .- You might get worse, but I can get better. Mr. WILFORD. - - Where ? Mr. DUNCAN. - I could tell you 7.30. where. The Bill is a very short one. and the amendments it makes in the principal Act are very necessary. We found we could not agree, even with a County Council, to do any work jointly under the old Act, because the Auditor-General would not allow the money to be paid for roads and bridges or for work of the kind : he would not allow us to pay money for rearing the land since the passing of the consolidating Act. The Solicitor-General gave us a perfectly clear opinion that the Act provided for roading ; but the Auditor-General is master of the situation ; if he says. " No." ... can do nothing. This was very unpleasant. and we had to make a declaration and send it to the Treasury to get the payment of our account for opening the land. The expenses cannot be charged to the estate, which was very unfair; we have the right to charge the expenses connected with the whole transaction to the estate. Then, as regards section . in connection with the proceedings for taking .1. land, we found it was very easy to evade : service of notice. and the time was wasted in quibbling of lawyers. It has been stated it's member for Hawke's Bay that a man might go away for a holiday, or away for a trip to the Old Country, and thereby you confiscate the property. But a man with a property like this. although he might be away always, has an

<page:529>

agent to look after those things, and the agent would be quite alive to the interests of his employer. With regard to the service of these notices and the response to it, this clause does not bar a claim from being heard in a perfectly fair and legitimate way, even if the notice is defective, and it does not debar the Court from deciding the case. The experience we had in connection with Hatuma was very distressing, especially when you consider that we had three lawsuits over it, and on one occasion we had a weak Judge, who would not decide as between the two Assessors. He said the two Assessors were too far apart in their views for him to take upon himself the responsibility of rectifying the difference, and so he would not decide. Then, the Chief Justice was there when the matter next came up for decision, but there was one part of the estate which was not dealt with. in my opinion, in the way it should have been dealt with, and that is with regard to that portion which the owner was allowed to retain. Now, the Minister can say that the owner shall keep his steading and a portion of the land adjoining. He may select any portion up to 640 acres, but the Act does not allow him to choose, as it were, a spot which might become a

corner section, where he could eventually start a little township and sell the sections later on when the estate had been subdivided and peopled with settlers. That was not the original intention of the Act at all; it was simply to allow a man his homestead. But in the case of the Hatuma Estate the Judge allowed the owner to retain land which was away from the homestead, leaving the homestead out. That was, I think, not a fair lands of the Crown, as honourable members arrangement, nor was it an arrangement which was intended by this House when it passed the Act. Clause 6 is to prevent evasion of the Act. It has been found that in the working of the Act there has been a good deal of loss in the matter of time, and this clause will facilitate proceedings, and enable the Act to be worked to much greater advantage than in the past. As to the regulations allowing preference to married people, honourable members are aware that we have heard a good deal lately about the non-increase in the population. We have heard that no encouragement is given to people who have families to go on the land. Now, I productive. I regret to say that the settlement think that this is a legitimate regulation to pass. and, personally, I would go so far as to : of that land is not going on at that rate at provide that if there were a man with a fairly , which I should like to see it going on. It is large family he should have the preference , notorious that very little real settlement in over a man with only one child, and I be- ! lieve the House will agree to that too. I do not think I need take up the time of the House any longer, because the Bill is a fair one, and the criticism which has been directed against it has not been what may be deemed prejudicial criticism as regards the principle of the Bill. There is one matter I might allude I settlers often in a most deplorable state. I to, however, before sitting down, and that is the reference the member for Hawke's Bay made to I have come to loggerheads with every Minister the acquisition of the Forest Gate Estate. He i of Lands who has been on the Treasury said, if I remember rightly, that the lady who ! benches with reference to this very subject. owned that estate had been harshly dealt with. | I have been crying out like a pelican in the Well, if there has been any hardship it is un- ' wilderness-continually imploring the Minister known to the Government. She offered her estate to the Government in the first instance. Mr. PIRANI .- How long ago ? Mr. DUNCAN .- Not very long ago; I think about a year ago. Mr. PIRANI .- Land has gone up since last year. Mr. DUNCAN .- It may have gone up, but it has not gone up much in Hawke's Bay. I do not think that even now the land is worth more than the price paid for it, as in many cases it means that you have to pay for the land more than you can make out of it ; and when a thing is dearer than you can get an income out of it after paying working - expenses, then it is too dear, and a good deal of the land at the present time is in that state. If those people who want workmen's homes, which I know they do want, if they think it is right to go in and purchase them at any price they can get them for, they will get them too dear, and it will be better for them not to get them at all. So you have to go steady about these things, and I am quite sure there is no need to over-hurry, and by doing so kill the settlers. I am not going to detain the House at the present time, but will support the Bill as it stands. Mr. McGUIRE (Hawera). I am very pleased with the able speech I have just heard from the Minister of Lands on the Land for Settlements Bill. He has certainly shown the necessity that exists for an amendment of the law ; but I think, as I have always thought, that instead of purchasing private lands, unless in special cases, and where there is special necessity for it, our aim should be to settle the Crown lands and Native lands of the colony. The waste know, yield nothing whatever to the revenue of the colony, neither in the way of exports nor in any other way, whereas the private estates are adding to the revenue and adding to the prosperity of the colony. The waste Crown lands are simply the home of wild pigs and wild cattle, and the sooner we subdue our Crown lands and have them occupied with bona fide settlers the better for the people of New Zea- land. It is, therefore, the duty of whatever Government may be on the Treasury benches to do everything that is possible to settle the Crown lands of the colony and make them re- In connection the back blocks is going on. with that, I know there are difficulties in the matter of roads and bridges. Before the land is settled, or soon after the land is taken up, roads and bridges should be made ; and up to the present time we have

never had a comprehensive system of roading and bridging the waste lands of the Crown. We have left the

<page:530>

of Lands and the Government to open up the land with roads, and give the settlers a chance. I am pleased to think I have been successful on many occasions. I should like to see the (Government more energetic, particularly with Crown lands, Native lands, and the land of the Assets Realisation Board, because there is nothing to my mind so important as the settlement of these lands, which yield little or nothing to the revenue. I would urge upon the Government the necessity of going in for a thorough scheme of settlement ; they have the land, and with attention and perseverance they should be successful. I am bound to say that these lands should be settled first, and with the settlement of these lands the time will have arrived to purchase estates for close settlement. When the Crown lands are occupied with bona fide settlers there will not be a man in this House who will be more anxious to get our estates cut up than I will be. In the electorate I represent we have not any very large estates, I am pleased to say -we have a few of over a thousand acres -nevertheless, on a thousand acres we can settle more people than can be settled on thousands of acres in other parts of the colony. If the Government are determined to go in for a land-purchasing system, and if they really mean to put settlers on the land, there is in the Taranaki district, in my electorate, in the neighbourhood of Hawera, some of the finest land in New Zealand-ave, in the world. 150 acres of it will support a family of workers. Therefore, if the Government are going to turn their attention, as the House thinks they should do, towards a land-purchasing system, I would recommend the Minister of Lands to look round the electorate I represent. He will there find many suitable estates that could be profitably cut up, and the settlers who would take up the land would have the advantage of being close to each other on lands of excellent quality. They would be able to establish dairy factories, and to assist each other in various ways, which is a great thing in a country district. I may point out that on one large estate in Hawke's Bay the land had to be divided into sections of over 1,000 acres each. I refer to land which was purchased by the (Government ; but in Taranaki from 100 to 250 acres would be sufficient for any one family. If estates are to be purchased under the Land for Settlements Act, Taranaki will be found the best field to operate in, and thorough settlers will be given a chance such as they cannot get in any other province in New Zealand. But, although I am an advocate of the subdivision of large estates, the settlement of the Crown lands is of the first importance to the prosperity of the colony. In this connection I would urge on the Minister of Lands that when the settlers are placed on the land he should not forget the roads and bridges. I do not for a moment say that the honourable gentleman does forget, for I honestly believe that the Minister of Lands tries to do his best, but the progress he is making wants to be accelerated in the direction I have indicated. That he will rise to the occasion I have little doubt. This House is prepared to give him any money that he may require. But I desire to, at any rate, call his attention to this important matter, as I called the attention of the late Minister of Lands, the Hon. Sir John McKenzie, because I have seen more hardship and suffering for the want of roads inland from Stratford, Eltham, and Hawera, than I have seen from any other cause among the people. Sir, I wish to say that what has been called the Swiss-milk settlement is now a prosperous settlement. I understand there is a dairy factory there now. However, if the Hon. Mr. McKenzie had not paid attention to the warning I gave him to provide roads and work for the people there would have been no success in that settlement to-day. No, Sir, the settlement would have been a failure. I desire to mention that fact to the House, because I do not like to be in any way associated with a failure. Sir John did not at the time relish my criticism. He attacked me in forcible language, but carried out my suggestion at the same time, with the result that the settlement is a great success. An Hon. MEMBER. - You ought to come to this side of the House. Mr. McGUIRE. - No : I have a very comfortable seat here. I like independence best. If you carry out with dispatch the wants and

requirements of my district, and do the business of the country in a proper, careful, and business-like manner, it is a matter of indifference to me what Government is in power as long as that is done. Another thing I should like to say in reference to the lands in my district is this : we have there water-power in not one but in hundreds of places round the mountain, 50 that with its aid many of the farmers have their dairies and their houses lit up with the electric-light ; and if the Minister of Lands purchases estates in that district the men who take up the land, when subdivided, will have every convenience they could wish for, even the electric-light in their cow-sheds and their homes, which tend to make things look bright. That, I think, is a very important and cheerful factor. The water-power has many advantages ; the settlers can utilise it in many ways -for instance, cutting their chaff, firewood, timber, manufacturing the milk into butter and cheese, with the aid of a turbine-wheel : and the man who would not make a living in that district on a suitable piece of land, at a reasonable rent, could not make a living anywhere. But hard- in-hand with land-settlement must go railway reform. The railways must carry the produce of the farmers to the port of shipment at the cheapest possible rate. That is absolutely essential if our farmers are to be successful : also the freights to the markets of the world must be low. The farmers must combine in order to secure this, and it is the duty of the Government to help. And from what the Right Hon. the Premier stated the other night. I think it is his intention to do so. Then, we have Sir Joseph Ward, the great commercial man of the Musgrave, a man who takes a great interest in every-

<page:531>

thing connected with commerce. He, I think, [is not so far distant as some may think, when will be able to exploit for us new markets. and to place our products in them at the most reasonable rate. With this assistance, and the co-operation of the farmers' unions, we should be able to put our products on the markets of the world at the cheapest possible rates. This is essential, because we have no protection as farmers in this country. We have to buy in the dearest market everything we eat, drink, and wear, and to sell in the markets of the world. We get no bonuses of any kind ; and it is the duty of those who rule the destinies of the colony, therefore, to do everything they possibly can to help the farmer to get rid of his produce ; because the volume of produce, considering the number of farmers, is something marvellous. They sent Home last year some twelve million pounds' worth of produce. Therefore, I think that everything possible should be done to assist them, for even this volume of produce would be largely increased if every facility were given, as I hope it will be. Now, with reference to this Bill. I will vote for its second reading; but I hope it will be amended in Committee. Of course, it is right that all the expenses in connection with the land for settlements should be borne by the land : it is not fair to place them upon the whole colony. I consider that under clause 5 the notice is rather short ; that, however, can be rectified in Committee. I would like to see, Sir, some other form than the present system of balloting for land. I really think there should be some other form for acquiring it : if it were done by tender, for example, that would be, I believe, an improvement. I admit that this matter is surrounded with difficulties. It is our duty to devise a more satisfactory scheme. Under the present lottery system, a idle man may never be able to get a section, but there are many who succeed in getting sections who have no intention of settling on the land : should they draw a prize-namely, a good section --- they turn round and dispose of it for \$200 to \$300; and, if they draw a blank, they will have nothing to do with it. Now, that would not be the case under the tender system. Every man would tender at what he considered it to be worth, and therefore the Crown would get the value of the estate. I certainly agree with the Minister of Lands that married men with families should get the first offer. I think it is only wise and prudent that this should be so. We should encourage men to get married and settle on the land, because once married they will become, in most cases, real settlers, and I am perfectly certain when a really go-ahead man goes on the Crown land, when he has spent the best part of his life in clearing, fencing, and subdividing, if he is a married man with a wife and family he will be most desirous of making his leasehold property a freehold. I

trust the day is not far distant when we may look to the land-laws being changed, and the Crown tenants being allowed to acquire the freehold of their land. That is the natural desire of every man in the country. I am satisfied the day will come, and every man who is settled upon the land will have the right to purchase that land. I admit that the Government, where people are in want of land, have the right also to come in, and if there are any large estates, and they are necessary for the purposes of close settlement, that they should be purchased and subdivided. I will vote for the second reading of the Bill. In Committee I will endeavour to amend it in a few minor directions. Mr. MEREDITH (Ashley) .- I desire to say a few words on the second reading of the Land for Settlements Bill now before the House. In doing so, it is not necessary for me to make any declaration of faith in the matter. I have always been a loyal supporter of land for settlements. I am a loyal supporter at the present time, and I hope to continue so. I saw the evils of land aggregation in the country of my birth and early manhood, and I believe in that respect I share the views of some of the most eminent statesmen in New Zealand and the Mother-country. Great credit is due to the Hon. Sir John Mckenzie as the apostle of the land-for-settlements policy, and consequently for the popularity of the Liberal party at the present time in New Zealand. Land for settlements, together with cheap money for the people, I look upon as the two most popular planks in the Liberal platform of this colony ; and as long as they continue to be carried on in their entirety, fairly and squarely between man and man, I believe there is a future for the Liberal party. I am astonished, however, at the position taken up this afternoon by the Premier usurping the place of the Minister of Lands. I did not see the Hon. Mr. Duncan present, and I asked myself, " Has the mantle of Elijah fallen on Elisha?" What has become of the Minister of Lands, that practical man who, though not gifted with the eloquence so characteristic of the Premier, still when he speaks, speaks with weight, and commands the attention of the House, and utters sentiments that find an echo in every intelligent mind? I consider this hybrid state of things, this dual administration of the Lands Department, is calculated to bring about chaos and disaster. I do not want to detract from the Premier one iota ; but I am of opinion that, while the Premier is a capable man in many respects, he knows little or nothing about the land question : and when he arrogated to himself the functions of Minister of Lands he was taking up a position he cannot maintain. As a supporter of the Government I feel it my duty to be an impartial critic and a candid friend ; and I believe the true friends of the Liberal Government and the country are the men who have sufficient independence to stand up on the floor of the House and give their opinions and convictions apart from party considerations. I want to ask the Hon. the Premier not to touch the land policy of this colony, but to leave the portfolio of Minister of Lands entirely to the Hon. Mr. Duncan, and I, for one, would be most happy to help Mr. Duncan in any shape or form. What knowledge I pos.

<page:532>

sess of land administration will be always forthcoming to assist the Minister if he desires such assistance. Sir, I could not help noticing the laboured way in which the Premier spoke this afternoon, and more particularly the lengthy extracts he read. It is a most unusual practice for the Premier of the colony, because ordinarily he can speak until further orders. Contrast the speech of the Right Hon. the Premier on the second reading of this Bill -the hesitancy with which he spoke, the laboured manner of his delivery, the copious extracts he read, showing his complete ignorance of the subject-with the ease and grace of the speech of my honourable friend the Minister of Lands, Mr. Duncan. During the speech of the Premier one or two members of the House ejaculated now and again and interrupted the honourable gentleman, when he made use of sentiments which conveyed a sort of covert threat to those members of the House who have to administer the land-laws of the colony as members of the various Land Boards. Sir. I became a member of the Canterbury Land Board at the distinct request of the Hon. Sir John Mckenzie. It has been no benefit to me to be a member of that Board. It would have been better for me, so far as my own interests and the welfare of my own family are concerned, if I had had nothing to do with

the Canterbury Land Board. I have to go thirty miles to a meeting of the Land Board. Frequently I have to remain over-night in Christchurch, and perhaps the following day I have to go a distance of 100 miles to Timaru, or perhaps to Waimate, a distance of 135 miles, or even to Fairlie, a distance of 160 miles, on Land Board business, and we, the members of the Canterbury Land Board, get the magnificent sum of 10s. a day to cover all expenses, while my honourable friend the Premier, who occupies a seat on the Assets Realisation Board, for sitting a couple of hours in Wellington at a meeting receives at the rate of \$250 a year for perhaps ten meetings during the year. Now, Sir, the Right Hon. the Premier has deprecated in strong terms the conduct of members who are serving on the different Boards. Every member of the House possesses the confidence of the electors in his district, and, therefore, he is entitled to the greatest respect. say, if members of the House are not competent to become members of Land Boards on account of their position as representatives of the people, they certainly are unfitted to act on the Assets Board, on Federation Commissions, School Teachers' Salaries Commissions. Mid-land Railway Commissions, and Tariff Commissions, and, as a matter of sequence, why should members of this House be qualified to become Ministers of the Crown, and why should a Minister of the Crown become Premier of the colony. The Premier receives \$1,800 a year, and \$250 from the Assets Board, making \$2,050, plus a large sum for perquisites. Why not advertise the position and run the business of the colony on commercial lines ? The member for Avon complained of the administration of the Canterbury Land Board with reference to sites for workmen's homes. I have been eleven years a member of the Canterbury Land Board. and that honourable gentleman has been for the same length of time a member of this House ; he has shown himself to be the very incarnation of philanthropy-yes, to such an extent that he has never once come before the Land Board to make inquiries as to how the Board was administering the land affairs of the district. The honourable member for Riccarton says that members of the House had no right to be there; but he knows perfectly well that the meetings of the Land Board are open to the public, and proceedings are subject to public criticism. Any member of the House has a perfect right to be present at the deliberations of the Board. An Hon. MEMBER. To take part in the proceedings ? Mr. MEREDITH .- No ; but he is at liberty after the meeting is over to make suggestions to the Commissioner, or to come before the Board by appointment, when I am sure he would receive most courteous treatment from the Board. Now, what is the position ? The Commissioner of Crown Lands is a Government servant, the District Surveyor is a Government servant, and lands bought by the Land for Settlements Board are laid off by the District Surveyor. A map is prepared and sent Wellington to be lithographed, a guide-book is prepared in Wellington, and so the whole thing is cut and dried in Wellington, and the Land Board have no voice whatever in making regulations, or even in recommending in what size blocks the land should be cut up. The whole thing is done in Wellington. Of course, it is competent for Land Boards to make suggestions, but the Minister need not accept these suggestions. With reference to the acquisition of land for workmen's homes in the neighbourhood of Christchurch : A block of land in the neighbourhood of Christchurch, known as the Tarawahi Hamlet, has lately been acquired. The land is situated about two miles from the heart of the city. It has been subdivided into thirty-six sections. It has been stated by the honourable member for Avon that those sections are quarter-acre sections. That is not correct. I will give an analysis of the size of the sections : There were twelve quarter-acre sections, thirteen half-acres, and eleven one-and-a-half, and two-acre sections. Now, this block of land was duly advertised in the public papers, and yet there were only applications for eight out of the thirty-six sections. Why is this ? Is it the fault of the Land Board ? Is it the fault of the size of these sections ? I say No; the workmen in Christchurch do not want large blocks : they cannot afford to pay for them. There is >> much land to be had in the neighbourhood of Christchurch that the working-man can acquire it on reasonable terms and under whatever form of tenure they think proper; they can acquire the freehold, they can get it on deferred payment on a purchasing clause. or they can

rent it. They have the utmost choice. and the consequence is- although I have no doubt there is a necessity for land to be acquired

<page:533>

by the Land for Settlements Board in other centres-there is no such necessity in the immediate neighbourhood of Christchurch. Several blocks have been acquired in the neighbourhood of Christchurch during the past seven years, and they all have hung fire. The same day these sections were balloted for, a block known as Rainchiff was offered for lease. It was pastoral land, consisting of 538 acres, at a rental of 3s. &d. per acre for the block, and there were eighteen applicants. Another block offered a short time before, known as Takatu, consisting of 1,400 acres of pastoral country, at a rental of 3s. yd. per acre, there were thirty-five applicants for ; while for the Kohika, known as Teschemaker's, consisting of 3,820 acres, divided into fifteen sections, there were eighty-six applicants, or an average of six applicants for each section. I admit there is some force in the argument that land in the neighbourhood of Christchurch is bringing high prices, and the particular block I referred to, for which there were only applicants for eight sections, was acquired at something between £90 and £410 an acre ; but, inasmuch as streets had to be laid off, with the cost of survey and all expenses connected with the acquisition, it would mount up to about £4132 an acre, which at a rental based on 5 per cent. on the capital value, gives an annual recurring rental of \$612s. per acre. Honourable members will see at once that when land is acquired at such a price and is leased at £612s. an acre, it would not pay any working-man to become the leaseholder of more than sufficient as a site for a cottage. Two acres at \$134s. per annum would not do more than give a site for a house and garden and keep a cow, the keep of which at that rental would be too expensive a luxury, and no man but a Chinaman could grow vegetables to make it pay at such a rental. These are facts which should weigh with members, so that they should not make sweeping changes without duly considering the position. Sir, I now come to a remark made by the honourable member for Christchurch City, Mr Collins, and I wish to clear up this point. He referred to the 10 per cent. rebate under the Crown Tenants' Rent Relate Act of 1900. He stated that in Canterbury the rebate was allowed to all and sundry of Crown tenants affected by : that Act, while it was not so in Auckland, and ! it was only partially granted in Otago. Honourable members must be aware that the Land Boards have nothing whatever to do with the administration of that Act. Its administration, sardise it again; but that regulation the is carried on purely by a Board set up under the Act, consisting of the Commissioner of Crown Lands, who is a Government servant, and the Receiver of Land Revenue for the land district, who is also a Government servant. Now, Sir, it happened in Canterbury in this way : the Commissioner of Crown Lands was on sick-leave at Rotorua. There was therefore at the time only the Receiver of Land Revenue in Canterbury. At each meeting of the Land Board the members did me the honour to elect me chairman, but under the Land Act there is no power to appoint a Deputy Commissioner, of an applicant before the Canterbury Land and consequently I had no legal status, and could not take a place on the Board as constituted under the Crown Tenants' Rebate Act of 1900. The Receiver of Land Revenue, a careful public servant, found himself in a difficulty as to the meaning of the Act, which was entitled the Crown Tenants' Rent Rebate Act, and he thought that he was justified in making an all-round reduction to the Crown tenants mentioned in the Bill who applied for the rebate. The Receiver of Land Revenue came to me and asked my opinion. I said to him, " Well, the intention of the Legislature in placing that Bill on the statute-book was this-that if a Crown tenant held a block of land where the capital value was in excess, the Receiver of Land Revenue, after careful consideration of the circumstances of the whole case, and knowing that the Crown tenant had an actual grievance, could make a rebate ; and in such a case as that I would make a rebate of 10 per cent., but not otherwise." I, moreover, pointed out to him that it would apply to persons in Taranaki, in Wellington, and in other places who had gone on to the back blocks where they had no roads, where there was difficulty of access, where they had during the winter months,

through the inaccessibility due to the absence of roads, to carry everything on their backs. I said the Act was to meet such cases as those, and he had to carefully consider all the circumstances before allowing the 10 per cent., and that this was in my opinion the intention of the Legislature. He came to me a second time, and even a third time, when I repeated my view of the question, and I then said that he had better refer the matter to the head office in Wellington, and ask for guidance. He applied to the Head Office, and received the reply, " We give you no advice ; there is the Act, interpret it as you think proper, you have the administration of it." Now, the Receiver of Land Revenue is not to blame, and no member of this House has any right to cast any slur on the Boards constituted under that Act. This House is to blame in allowing that Act, to pass. Sir, I would like to devote a few minutes to the most objectionable feature of this Bill, and that is clause 10. Clause 10 embodies a regulation passed some time ago, and sent to the Canterbury Land Board, and I presume it was sent to other Boards also. That regulation was read to the House by the honourable member for Ashburton, who is a member of the Canterbury Land Board, so that I need not have members of the Canterbury Land Board considered unjust and unfair, and we said to the Commissioner, " No; we will not admit the legality of that Order in Council ; we will place it on one side," and it so happened, without consulting a legal gentleman, we were right and the Crown was wrong, and the regulation *nitra vires*. Now, Sir, with the intention of making it a statute law, that regulation is embodied in clause 8. That clause as it now stands is unfair. A married man to have the preference ! Why should he? Take the case

<page:534>

Board. Among the questions asked, one is " Are you a married man ? " and the applicant answers " Yes." The man may have his wife and children in Timbuctoo. They may be in South Australia. We do not know whether he has got a wife and children at all, but he makes a statement on oath. Another man may come from Taranaki, or from the wilds of Auckland. He is asked if he is a married man, and he says "Yes." Under this clause Land Boards would be forced to admit all married persons. Another man may have taken out an order of separation from his wife, yet he will say he is a married man and will be admitted to the ballot. But the sons of the early colonists, the men who have borne the heat and burden of the day, those noble early pioneers of the colony who have made the colony what it is to-day, and not the result of Conservative nor Liberal Governments -these sturdy sons and daughters of the country, a slur is to be cast upon them. What does this clause mean ? When the Premier stood on the platform on the wharf on the day the First Contingent sailed for South Africa and addressed the multitude, including the men who were going away, he eulogised them, and spoke of the noble parents from whom they had sprung. He said, " You go, and you carry with you my blessing, and may prosperity attend you " ; but he might have added, " By the time you come back to New Zealand I will introduce a Bill and place it upon the statute-book that no trooper need apply for land in New Zealand." That is the meaning of it, unless the trooper has married a Boer widow with a family of children in South Africa. In the name of the young men of the colony, in the name of all that is just and right. I protest against this clause of the Bill. Mr. A. L. D. FRASER (Napier) .- This debate seems to have drifted into a general criticism of the land-for-settlement question, and possibly that has been forced upon us, first, by the speech of the honourable member for Hawke's Bay, and subsequently by such hysterical speeches as we listened to a few moments ago. Unlike the honourable member who has just sat down, I must congratulate the Government on section 8. We have been continually told that there is unfortunately a decrease in the population of New Zealand, and I think it is commendable of the Government to encourage people to get married, so that they can settle on the land, because possibly one of the Ministers on the Treasury benches may have to go on the land soon, and he will have to get married first. It is, Sir, very necessary, I think, that we should criticize the whole of the land-settlement policy, and especially one section of it which has been dealt with by some honourable members to-day - that is, the compulsorily taking of land.

I agree with the compulsory taking of land if that compulsion is dealt with honestly, without any personal feeling, and the broadest interpretation of the word "justice" is given to it. Now, I say at once that the compulsory clause should never be brought into effect unless there is no other land that can be obtained in that special district or that part of the colony. And that brings me immediately to reply to the honourable member for Hawke's Bay in regard to the special case he brought under the notice of honourable members to-day. I am sure that honourable member did not intend to do an injustice to the Government. but if his words, uttered as they were in this House, are read in Hausar a false impression may be conveyed to its readers. The Govern- ment, I can say with confidence, did not under- stand the circumstances, and if they had it is possible they would not have taken that land. as I believe they propose to do. The circum- stances of that case are these : Some twelve months ago the lady who owned the property offered it voluntarily to the Government at a price. The Government had it reported upon, and then offered £3 17s. 6d. an acre for it. the lady asking 44 10s. After further inspection the Government offered \$4. This, as honour- able members will recognise, took at let: twelve months, because the machinery under the Land for Settlements Act has to be var; carefully worked, otherwise very grave mistakes will be made. Now, the Government did not know when that lady offered the property to them that she had in her mind a smaller pro- perty to buy for herself in her declining yer and for her children after her. Mr. SEDDON .- We understood she was go- ing Home. Mr. A. L. D. FRASER .- The Hon. the Pre- mier says he understood the lady was going Home. She was not. She was about to by a property for herself and her children. At ane rate, during that twelve months she bat the opportunity of buying that property, and cone- quently the Government, not knowing da: fact, have gazetted the property to be taken under the Land for Settlements Act. and Lay that unintentionally a great injustice has trmn done to that woman. I wished to explain that matter in reply to the honourable memier ter Hawke's Bay. The same honourable mont-r also denounced the whole of the land-for-wtt- ments policy, as he did in 1896. I can see him now, standing on the platform in the election : f that year, denouncing such legislation in the bitterest language he had in his voca! they. Now, I would like to know if the honouravie member. or any other honourable member in this House, would have dared at last election to stand on the platform and advocate the repe al of that Act. Not one. Consequenth we wie w have it recognised throughout the country and in this House that that Aet has been one of the most advantageous to the colony that ha- inen passed in this Chamber. We are often ask d the question, " What has made the prospect of New Zealand ?" There are many ros sons, but I say the cru of the prosperity 's the Land for Settlements Act. In coming to the Bill, I take it, Sir, that if there was of; the one section in it -the one section allowing the Government to participate in sales in ale tion-this Bill is really worthy of the conside s. tion of the House. It has been brought under my notice -- I have witnessed it myself -where. unfortunately, the owner of the property is in

<page:535>

the hands of a mortgagee, who has foreclosed ment taking up properties in Canterbury. No on the land, with the result that it has been doubt he knows Canterbury well and its wants. sold considerably under its value, because no ; My interpretation of the Land for Settlements one cared possibly to bid against the little ; coterie who wished to secure it. Now, if the i people on the land in thinly populated parts of Government had had power, as proposed in this Bill, to take part in that auction the owner of the property would have received a better value, there would have been no confiscation, and the Crown would have purchased land that could have been thrown open for settlement, that would be beneficial to the colony and to the settlers who were fortunate at the ballot box. Therefore I sincerely hope that for the sake of that section alone the House will agree to the measure. Leaving the honourable member for Hawke's Bay and that special portion of the Bill, I may say I was rather amused at some of the remarks of the honourable member for Riccar- ton. Of course, I do not think the Bill itself troubled the honourable gentleman very

much. If I may be allowed to use a vulgar colloquialism, I would say he wanted to have a slap at his bete noire the Premier. We have had in this House quotations from many authorities, and we had one the other evening from the "Encyclopædia of Political Science." We had one from the "Sunlight Soap Annual." We have had them from all quarters of literature, and to-day we had the honourable member for Riccarton quoting the "black-book" of the Hon. the Premier. That black-book is a very useful one, because it reminds that honourable member of statements he has made in the past, when contesting an election, that now he is in the House he looks upon in a different light. In passing I may say that the honourable gentleman and that black book should not be strangers, because honourable members know as well as I do that for years past he has been in many people's black-books, not only in the Premier's. I wish now to say a word about another remark of the honourable member. He deprecated the right of members of this House to sit on Land Boards. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL .- I never said anything of the kind. Mr. A. L. D. FRASER .- Oh, well, I apologise. I understood from the last member who sat down that you had said so. I regret that you did not say so, because I should agree with it if you had, for you would be expressing my views. I say it is wrong to place a member of Parliament in a position where political influence can be brought to bear. I say that in many instances men are put on Land Boards totally incompetent for the position, and they are put there simply because they have "M.H.R." after their name. It is quite unfair to place them in that position, for on many occasions they have to deal with their own constituents; and, though a man may be as honest and as true as sunlight, he cannot but be influenced by the fact that people are supporters or opponents. For this reason I think the Act should be amended to the extent of not allowing members of Parliament to sit on Land Boards. The honourable member for Riccarton also strongly advocated the Government Act is that it was especially intended to place the country. Now, comparing Canterbury with Hawke's Bay, we find in Canterbury about nine million and a half acres of land, and in Hawke's Bay six million odd acres. Canterbury has 145,000 inhabitants, and Hawke's Bay only 37,000, and I suppose it will not be unjust to say that in the matter of superiority of land for close settlement Canterbury cannot compare with Hawke's Bay. I think I am correct in saying that the Land for Settlements Bill was brought down by the Minister with the idea of increasing the population in such places as Hawke's Bay, and little has been done there; in fact, with the exception of Hatuma, practically no lands have been taken up there for close settlement. Now, there are lands there that need not be taken compulsorily, lands now open for the Government to purchase, and we find from what has happened there that nothing but success has attended the efforts of the Government. We heard the honourable member saying men paid rent in Canterbury amounting to £6 per year. I do not know that he meant that #6 per year per acre was the rent, but I know of two or three blocks in which men are paying the Government £1 10s. per acre rent, and the men are doing really well out of four or five acres. Mr. TANNER. - It is not to the Land for Settlements Board that that rent is paid, but to private owners, and it shows the demand for land. Mr. A. L. D. FRASER .- Of course, if there is a comparison of close settlement, Canterbury is closely settled compared to the district I represent, yet I find a far better exemplification in Taranaki, which is an object-lesson not only to New Zealand, but to the civilised world. An Hon. MEMBER. .- Nelson is much better. Mr. A. L. D. FRASER .- I can hardly credit the statement that Nelson is better than Taranaki. They have in Taranaki about a third the acreage we have in Hawke's Bay, and yet they are within two thousand of the population in that district. Now, I specially mention these figures to show that the Government, in taking up the matter of land for settlement should not be so particular, perhaps, as to its geographical locality as to putting people on the land where the country is sparsely populated. And, Sir, while we have in Canterbury 145,000 inhabitants and only 37,000 in Hawke's Bay, it is the absolute duty of the Government to take up land there as soon as possible and place people upon it. Now, this earth-hunger is no extravagant statement or idle platitude. I know the earth-hunger does exist. In Hawke's Bay, to meet the dozens of dissatisfied people who returned from

Hatuma unable to get sections there was heartrending. These were not people who were going in for idle speculation, but they were men who had a few hundred pounds of their own, and whose sole idea was to go on the land and do justice to it and to themselves. A solicitor told

<page:536>

me that in Hawke's Bay after that ballot at least eight or a dozen men came to him and asked what were they to do with their money until there was another ballot. I merely mention these facts to show that the words used in the Speech from the Throne on this subject were perfectly true, and not marked by the slightest exaggeration. In fact, more extravagant words might have been used in connection with it. There was one amendment to the Land for Settlements Act that I did hope the Government would have considered-I should like to have heard the opinion of honourable members upon it-and that is this: Where there are a number of large estates adjoining one another and suitable for close settlement, that the Government, instead of taking up one of these blocks only, should take six or seven thousand acres out of each of them, and make one string of settlements as near as possible to the railway-line. I have in my mind's eye estates in Hawke's Bay, and particularly near to Napier, that would not only be highly suitable for close settlement under this method, but if it were adopted a business-man would not feel the sting of so-called confiscation, for the remainder of his land would benefit. It would increase the value of what was left to him, owing to the fact of the close settlement that was adjoining it. I would ask the Premier to say, when he is replying, whether he will be prepared to receive such a suggestion and give it favourable consideration, and so amend the Act as to empower the Land for Settlements Board, instead of purchasing the whole of a block, to take portions of each estate that adjoins. It is undeniable, I suppose, that in purchasing land for settlement we should take advantage of the money the colony has spent in roads and bridges and railways. And in advocating the taking of land, especially in the district I have the honour to partly represent-honourable members may save for which I am holding a brief, and no doubt I am-I maintain we have opportunities of securing some of the best land in the colony without enforcing the compulsory clause. Nature has lavished all its blessings upon that special district except population, and the Government should immediately, if the Minister of Lands will agree with my suggestion, set about taking estates, or portions of estates, that they have such favourable opportunities of obtaining. I do not think I will at the present time say anything more upon this subject. I only once more ask the Premier if he will, in his reply, consider the suggestions I have made. Mr. GILFEDDER (Wallace).- Sir, while agreeing with most of the remarks that have fallen from the honourable member for Napier, nevertheless, I must take exception to one opinion expressed by him-that is, that members of Parliament should not have seats on the Land Boards. Now, I maintain that members of Parliament are no more susceptible to sinister influences and to political bias than any other individuals in the community, and we : it the added value that would be given to the cannot complain if the newspapers sometimes severely criticize us when we in this Chamber | it would recoup the Government for the outlay will attempt to so belittle ourselves. It is ridiculous to find in the legislation of the country how members of Parliament are debarred from taking places on public bodies and enjoying the privileges that are extended to others. Take, for example, an Act passed a short time ago, and which debars members of Parliament from holding seats on the Board of directors; I refer to the Bank of New Zealand Act of 1898. Here now we find members of the House actually declaring that members of Parliament should not have seats on Land Boards. I may say I have no seat on a Land Board and I never had, but I know from experience that members of Parliament who have been placed on those Boards are discharging their duties faithfully and well, without any bias or without being susceptible to any political influences that I am aware of. I hope that the discussion of this measure will have the effect of infusing some life and vigour into the operations of the Land Purchase Board, and that in time to come the Board will endeavour to acquire for closer settlement those estates suitably situated for settlement, so that poor men may be

able to take up small selections and make homes for themselves and their families. It is well known that the best properties are not being offered to the Government. It is mostly properties that will not find a ready sale by other means that the owners endeavour to palm off on the Land Purchase Board and on the people of the colony. I maintain that the Board should be more zealous in their endeavours to bring about the acquisition of such desirable estates, no matter what part of the colony they are in -that is, provided they are favourably situated for settlement and not too remote from the main roads and railways. They should also be in open country for the most part, so that those who take up the sections will be able to work them from the start, instead of having to wait for years before they get a sufficient return to enable them to pay their rent. I agree with the honourable member for Napier that a good deal of the property in Hawke's Bay is admirably adapted for closer settlement-the properties, for example, of some of the "Twelve Apostles " might in the interests of the colony be acquired for the purpose of giving the people facilities to take up land for themselves. Then, we have round about Timaru large estates admirably adapted for close settlement, and I consider that pressure should be brought to bear on the Government by those interested to endeavour to induce them to purchase some of those estates and have them thrown open for settlement. Then, we have in Otago a large estate called the Moa Flat Estate. It is partly good agricultural land, and I consider that that estate should be acquired by the Government. In the case of the Moa Flat Estate there is a large area of land that has no railway or road facilities such as have some of the properties in Canterbury and Hawke's Bay ; but if the Government would acquire the estate and then construct a railway to land by the expenditure of public money upon

<page:537>

in constructing the line in the shape of the additional interest they would receive, and at the same time provide facilities to the settlers to get their produce away. Then, in Southland we have the Heddon Bush Estate, some twelve or fourteen miles from the railway. I understand that estate is not offered for sale by the owner, nor does he desire to part with it ; but if that property were acquired, and a light line of railway constructed to it along the Limestone Plains, it would be greatly in the interest of the settlers in that locality. That estate, which at the present time only employs a few hands and carries a few thousand sheep, would be admirably adapted for the purposes of the Act. On those estates that have been acquired we now find that instead of a few thousand sheep there is a large and thriving population ; and not only that, but there are probably more sheep on the land as well than there were previously, because it is the settler with two hundred or a hundred and fifty acres that will make the most out of his land, and the consequence is that besides agriculture you will find in the aggregate the lands are carrying more sheep now than they were when held by the squatter before being acquired by the Government. Then I contend, looking at it from an agricultural point of view, and taking into consideration the question of frozen mutton and wool, the land is returning double, or even treble, what it was before being acquired by the Government. Figures will prove that the operations of the Government under " The Land for Settlements Act, 1894," have been in every way successful, and we may have every hope that in the future they will be equally satisfactory. Of course, it is an easy matter to single out and disparage an estate which has perhaps not turned out so remunerative or so well as might have been expected. But no matter what financial institution or land company might go in for extensive operations of this sort, nevertheless there will be in some cases properties that will prove more or less unpavable. But, taking it all through, I contend, and I think that every honourable member will bear me out in saying, that the land-for-settlement policy of the present Government has been eminently successful, and reflects the greatest credit upon the Administration, and especially on the author of that policy, Sir John McKenzie. I consider that the distinctions between Crown land and land acquired by the Government should be removed. The Act says that once land is acquired by the Government it becomes Crown land, but there is a great difference between land acquired by the Government under the Act of 1894 and ordinary Crown

land. Selectors under the latter system have the option of selection for cash, leasing with the right of purchase, and the lease in perpetuity, whereas under the Land for Settlements Act he has only one choice- Hobson's choice - namely, the lease-in-perpetuity system. In one case he is required to pay rent at the rate of 5 per cent., whereas in the other case he pays at the rate of 4 per cent. I contend that this anomaly should be removed. In a part of my electorate the river Waiau divides Crown land on one side from land on the other side which has been acquired by the Government. It seems ridiculous to say that where a piece of country is simply divided by a river, the selectors on one side should pay on the capital value 5 per cent, while on the opposite side of the stream they only pay 4 per cent. There is also another point in connection with this Act: Why should tenants be called upon to pay 5 per cent. on the cost for roading and bridging for all time? With regard to buildings and other such improvements the amount may be paid off in a specified number of years, but for roading and bridging the expenditure is added to the original cost of the land, and the selectors have to pay 5 per cent I hold that is unfair to the selectors. I hope that in time to come the Government, taking courage from past experience or from the experiments they have made in acquiring estates for closer settlement, will be more prudent in taking up land which is favourably situated for the purpose of giving effect to this Act, and thus give opportunities for closer settlement, so that the productive capabilities of the land may be increased, and, if they do so, I contend that they will be acting in the best interests of the community and for the benefit of the colony at large. Mr. PIRANI (Palmerston). - It is very pleasant to listen to the rounded periods and eloquent phrases of the last speaker, but when you come to boil down his speeches to hard facts you do not find very great results. For instance, just now he pictured to us the glorious lot of those settlers who acquired land from the Government and who run a hundred sheep on their sections, making, I suppose, \$25 a year to keep themselves and their families. I wonder if the honourable member has ever tried to live off the profits on a hundred sheep. If he had I am sure he would not talk of the splendid prospects obtained. He also spoke of the Moa Flat Estate as a place particularly well suited for agricultural purposes; but I am informed by an honourable member that there are more hills than flat on that estate, and, as to it being fit for agricultural purposes, although a practical farmer himself, he said it would be about the last place he would care to do practical farming on. Sir, the Premier introduced this Bill as a measure of urgency; but throughout his speech there was nothing to indicate where the urgency came in, and it was left to the ingenuous Minister of Lands to explain to the House really where the urgency came in. The Premier did not tell us, in referring to clause 3, that that was the urgent part of the Bill, and that votes for expenditure on roads on lands for settlement were stuck up because the Auditor-General refused to allow the money to be spent without legislative authority. It appears the same trouble we always have in regard to our hurried legislation occurred last year. There was passed a consolidating Land for Settlements Act. and the Government were so impatient to get it through and took so little trouble to consider

<page:538>

out of the Act the operative clauses, under which they would have power to construct roads on lands purchased for settlement. While they took power to enable them to lay off road on these lands, they allowed to drop out of the measure the provision by which they could make them after they were laid off. But I do not think there is any such great urgency for this measure even for this purpose, because the Government have a department, which some years ago I named the Government emergency department, which has, as usual- if not more so-been quite equal to any emergency during the last year-the department under the control of the Solicitor-General, for I notice he not only interprets Acts as passed by us, but he actually puts words into the Acts and then gives an opinion, not on the Act itself, but on the words he reads into its clauses. Therefore, in regard to this land-for-settlements trouble, the Solicitor-General was equal to the occasion, and explained how-certainly after inquiry from the Governor

as to where he obtained the authority . how it was possible to say the construction of roads was included in the term "laving off" roads. An elastic conscience like that is a convenient possession for a Solicitor - General under the present "game. So, taking this matter alone, it was not such a grievance as the Minister of Lands made out, although when we get a Solicitor-General who will not interpret the law to suit the powers that be, but will interpret it fairly, the difficulty may arise. It is just as well, therefore, to have an amendment of the law before such an appointment takes place. The Premier, in introducing the Bill, travelled over the whole question of land for settlement. He first told us it was a technical Bill ; then he dealt with the iniquities of Land Boards, the evils of the present system of ballot, and Goodness knows what else. So far as the Land Boards are concerned, the gentleman whom the Government and their supporters are constantly talking about -and the work he has done for land-settlement has set an example how to reform the Land Boards. In his Bill of 1892, the Hon. John McKenzie introduced elective Land Boards. Although so many of the party which then followed the Government objected that nominated Boards were retained, still the lines of reform were laid down. If the Government wish to go the proper way to reform them, let them place in the hands of the people the right to say who is to go on the Board and who is not, and not nominate men simply because they are supporters of the Government. Look at the Wellington Land Board now : they have been for two years carrying on their duties with only three members, instead of five as the Act allows, simply because the Government cannot get a supporter pliant enough to act on the Board, or because if they appointed anybody else the honourable member for Pahiatua might think it a slight if he were passed over. Mr. O'MEARA. -- It is represented already on the Board. Mr. PIRANI .- Yes, the Pahiatua district is represented ; I remember that well, because Mr. Reese was put on the Board when the Government refused to reappoint me. Anybody who knows Mr. Reese and the Pahiatua district does not need any further comment from me on the action of the Government in that respect. But I say this, and I say it advisedly : that the members of the Land Board who are appointed by the Government are so appointed simply because they are willing to echo what the Ministry of the day want. I say that is an improper position, and it would be better for the members of the Boards and for the settlers if elective Land Boards were substituted for what we now have. Then, with regard to the ballot. we are told about the difficulties of reforming the ballot. Why, it is the easiest thing in the world if the Ministry will only take the trouble. I have for years advocated in this House an easier system and an improved system, one that would accomplish everything desired, and one which nobody could say that there was such a thing as **Th** political preference in connection with. Government have adopted in the Land for Settlements Act part of the system I have advocated, but they do not seem inclined to make the plunge fully in the direction in which they must go. If they desire to take a beneficial step forward, what could be easier than to make a list of everybody who wanted land. as they apply for it, examine into their belongings, put each name on the list in the Land Office, and as the land comes out for settlement let the man whose turn it is on the list make his selection, and so on till the land or the list of selectors is exhausted. The list could be open for public inspection, and there could not possibly be any interference with it ; and thus every man would be able to get a section after inspecting it, without having a section thrown at him haphazard under the ballot. He could most probably get a section he would like, and he would be very much better suited under these circumstances than he could possibly be under the ballot system which is in force at present. I know any number of men who have gone into the ballot time and again. who have applied for land and gone long distances, and have spent money to inspect the land, and then have gone into the ballot only to be thrown out by somebody who perhaps does not desire to go on the land at all. Mr. SYMES .- Some have tried twenty times and never got a section. Mr. PIRANI .- As the member for Egmont says, some have tried twenty times and could not get a section, and frequently it happens that a man who has only recently come to the colony and applied for land has been blessed enough to draw a section at the first ballot : and I say that is unfair to the man who applies first, and

who ought to have priority of selection when the land is open for sale. I think that if a system like that were adopted by the Minister, and the present ridiculous ballot system were done away with, we would get very much greater satisfaction in settling the land than we get now. With regard to married people being allowed priority of selection, I do not think

<page:539>

such a rule as that, if strictly adhered to, is a proper thing at all. Why, many of our best settlers are single men. I know, at any rate in special settlements, some of our best settlers have been young fellows who have taken up land. They have done all the rough work under difficulties that no human being who had any decent feelings about him would dream of enuring his wife and family to, and by the time the land has been opened up by roads they are able to marry and take their wives there and make a home on the block. It is all very well to talk about speculation in connection with these Crown lands. The Minister can stop speculation in five minutes if he likes by refusing the right of transfer on lands purchased for settlement, merely taking the section over and paying the man who wants to leave his land for his improvements. The Crown tenants we put on the land under the land-for-settlement system are now allowed to bargain and to sell their right to the land, and if this were not permitted we would stop the speculation which goes on at the present time. You would find then that only genuine settlers would take up the land. We are also told that there is a necessity for this Bill because of the expenses which cannot now be charged to the Land Fund. What does that mean? Every year 9.0. we are being told by Ministers how successful the land-for-settlement policy is. We are told what large sums are being realised by the Crown by the occupation of these lands, and what large profits are being made. Now we are told that the very expenses which are being incurred in the acquiring of these lands have not been charged against them. That is a reflection against those who have told us what a profitable speculation it has been for the colony: and I seriously think that if all the expenses were charged to the land, instead of a profit being shown by the Government there would be in many cases a loss. I say that too much is being made, in the North Island at any rate, of this land-for-settlement policy. We have any amount of Crown lands and any amount of Native land that the Government is familiar with the property, and, although Government should road and open up for settlement before they think of purchasing land in the North Island. I do not say as far as Canterbury is concerned that land for settlement should not be purchased. Their circumstances differ from ours, and, as far as roading is concerned, their necessities are not as great. We have spent something like a million and a half in the purchase of land for settlement, and I notice by the state of the Land for Settlements Account this year that there is only some \$93,000 left in it, notwithstanding the fact that during the last twelve months very little land has been purchased. Why is this? Because the Government cannot raise the more than that. I am rather afraid it is going money. The local loan raised last year cost 4 per cent. If we are going to raise money at 4 per cent. for the purchase of land for settlement I think the speculation will be a very poor one for the colony. It is time we recognised the fact that the London market is not available for New Zealand loans, and it strikes me it will be a long time to come before money can be borrowed by New Zealand in the London market at 3 per cent.; and if borrowed at any rate higher than 3 per cent. the result will not be satisfactory, at any rate at the price paid for land in many districts. Under these circumstances, it is wise to call a halt in some of the experiments we are making. Personally, I have always supported the land-for-settlement policy, and I have no sympathy with the attitude of the honourable member for Hawke's Bay in regard to the purchase of land for settlement: and there are a number of members on this side of the House, I am sure, who wish the taking-of-land-for-settlement policy every success, and who desire that it should not be hampered and handicapped by bad purchases. At the same time we think that the interests of the North Island are in another direction, and I trust that those who are anxious to see land purchased for settlement in the South Island will not think for one moment that we are against the system, or that we do not wish it success,

simply because we say that our necessities differ from those of the South Island. It is bad policy to buy land in the North Island when there are millions of acres of Crown and Native land that should be made fit for settlement. Mr. T. MACKENZIE (Waihemo) .- I had not intended taking part in this debate until I listened to several of the speeches. I then felt it incumbent upon me to say something in connection with the important question now before the House. Before going into the general policy of the Bill I will refer briefly to some of the remarks that have fallen from different members. The honourable member who has just sat down has referred to the Moa Flat Estate as being unsuitable for settlement. Mr. PIRANI .-- No: for agricultural purposes. Mr. T. MACKENZIE. - " For agricultural purposes " ; and in that connection the honourable member for Wallace alluded to the propriety of purchasing that property and constructing a railway to connect with it. Now, I may say I the honourable member was perfectly correct in saying there is not much flat property in the country, there is a great deal of useful agricultural land to be met with there, and a property that may not all be suitable for ploughing is eminently suitable for grazing purposes ; and, as there is a large settled district in the vicinity, the farmers there say they can take up the grazing land and work it with their winter country, and thereby employ their own and their sons' time more profitably. The Moa Flat Estate is one that offers peculiar inducements for the consideration of the Government at this juncture. It is an impediment in that district to settlement and railway-construction. It is to be the cause of the construction of a gross political railway job in that particular part of the Otago Provincial District. I say the time has arrived in the history of this country when we should sternly set our faces against any political railway job in the future. We know

<page:540>

what the history of the construction of our railways has been in the past. We know that railways have been constructed, as was the Otago Central, through a gorge up which it should never have been taken ; but it was taken there because of the political log-rolling that influenced the Government of that day. The same thing applies to the railway going out of Port Chalmers and running to the north, when it might have been taken up a fertile valley and so open up some fine country, and at the same time lessen the danger of travelling and shorten the distance between Dunedin and Christchurch. And so on, I venture to say, in connection with every railway in the colony .. Now, what have we in connection with the railway extending from Heriot? You are taken into a part of the district available to a railway now for every farmer within six or eight miles, and I believe it is purely owing to the pulling of political wires -- and I challenge the Minister in his place to make it clear before this House that the land through which he intends to take it is at all a suitable country. If it is continued it will be taken through a gorge where there is no land fit for the plough. It will touch the Clutha River at a point where there is practically no agricultural country, and will be absolutely diverted for all time from the Moa Flat Estate. Sir, I had not intended to speak on this subject, but I wish to say that, in my opinion, the policy of the Government should be this : that, if they do not now see their way to acquire that estate, they should not continue the railway beyond two miles past Heriot, and they should stop at that point until such time as they acquire the estate; and if they never acquire the estate they should not take the railway a single yard further. The Minister has informed me it may be taken to Edievale, six miles beyond Heriot, and from there to the Moa Flat Estate. Well, I have made inquiries since I had that interview with the honourable gentleman, and I find the railway may be taken there, but it would be a retracing largely of the country it has already traversed. I therefore say, in connection with the Moa Flat Estate, that as it is impeding settlement and railway communication, if it can be purchased at a reasonable price, and as the people who own that estate are not residents in New Zealand but are absentees, that is the class of estate the Government should acquire. They would not then be displacing our own people--instances such as we have heard stated here to-night, of a widow and her sons being driven from a property they were cultivating, and that she had hoped to hand over to her family afterwards. In that connection let me say that I never before heard a more unreasonable proposal

than that which emanated from the Premier in connection with that widow's estate. Had they delayed taking the property, they might have seen it-the four thousand acres-divided between four or five persons. Well, as the sensible and practical member for Ashburton interjected at the time, " Why not ? " And, Sir, I would ask who has a better right to the property than the children of the people who hold it-those who have side by side struggled with them in the early days of the settlement ? Sir, if parents cannot have the opportunity of leaving their property to their families it will be a dark day for the industrial future of this colony. Now, we had a statement also from the honourable member who represents Napier on the same subject, and the same from several other members of the House, that the crux of the prosperity of this colony was contingent upon the Land for Settlements Act. Well, now, those honourable members, in making statements of that sort, have entirely lost their idea of proportion. What is the total area acquired under the Land for Settlements Act ? I am not saying anything against it, but I am giving hard facts. The total area acquired up to the present time is 338,000 acres, of less value than \$2,000,000 - actually \$1,800,000. I have just looked up a return laid on the table of the House the other day, and what do I find to be the acreage under cultivation in this country ? There are 12,500,000 acres of land in the country under crop, and there are 21,000,000 acres under grass. The value of that is \$109,000,000. If honourable gentlemen say in this House that the crux of the prosperity of the colony is contingent upon the purchase of property not coming up to £2,000,000, when the balance of the land, as I have said just now, is, according to the Government's own return, \$109,000,000-and when all that \$1,800,000 was actually in use prior to the Government acquiring it, and yielding probably nearly as much- I say that honourable members making statements of that sort have no grasp of proportions, and they ought to be much more careful of their utterances. Not one member has ever hinted that the reason for the increase in value of land was because of the industry of our farmers, not on account of the money we get for their produce. Then, we have had what I suppose, sheets uttered against the Minister of Lands for not buying more land, and we have had him here bringing, I think, altogether disproportionate and undue pressure upon the Minister in connection with the purchase of estates. We have, for instance, the honourable member for Ashburton telling us that the officers of the Land Purchase Department are the most conservative men in the colony, and entirely beyond Ministerial control. We are told by the honourable member for Masterton, Mr. H & Co. that they are not purchasing estates in his part of the country. Why, the whole country almost which the honourable gentleman resorted to till quite recently was in the hands of the Crown. I must say that it is improper policy on the part of this Government to acquire land for settlement where Crown lands are still available. Not only does that interfere with the settlers who are utilising the back country !! by inducing them to purchase lands nearer settlement, but it prevents settlement going there, causes schools to be closed, and increases the discomfort in country places. You thereby really cause the withdrawal of settlers from the

<page:541>

probably that is largely due to pressure, and I frontier settlements. Then, we have the statements made by other honourable gentlemen- as, for instance, the member for Avon, who said that paralysis had seized the Land Purchase Department of the colony. An Hon. MEMBER.- In one department. Mr. T. MACKENZIE.- It is all very well for these gentlemen to make such statements, but, as was pointed out in the very able speech of the member for Ashley, the lands acquired in the vicinity of Christchurch, within two miles of the Cathedral Square, have not been taken ought to do in discussing a question of this up. An Hon. MEMBER.- Quarter-acre sections. Mr. T. MACKENZIE.- Well, if a man cannot take up a quarter-acre section will he take up an acre ? We have men who are probably earnest in their advocacy of the purchase of land, but Sir, they have not that idea of responsibility they should have in connection with this work. The honourable member for Masterton said that the land-owners by retaining their properties now were enjoying magnificent prospects ; and they are, but by whose agency ? By the

agency of honourable members of the House, who are bringing undue pressure upon the Land Purchase Board, by asking that prices should be given out of all proportion to the value of the land. And what will be discovered ? It will be discovered that the very men who are now hounding on members of the Land Purchase Board to acquire properties, when those properties have been acquired at too high rates will bring forward petitions clamouring for reduction of rents, because they could not take the interest out of the property which would repay the interest we have to pay for the money with which the properties were purchased. I have an instance of this in my own district. I was approached by the men who acquired land under these circumstances and told that I should get their support if I promised them a reduction of their rentals. An Hon. MEMBER .- Is that Pomahaka ? Mr. T. MACKENZIE .- No, it is not Poma-haka. The circumstances in connection with that estate are peculiar, and the question has been threshed threadbare on the floor of this House, and I do not intend to allude to that estate at all. I refer to an estate in the Wai-hemo district, and these settlers told me they could not afford to pay the rent. But they also gave me to understand that unless they were promised a reduction they could not support me. Of course, I could not make any such promises. I said the whole essence of the success of our land-for-settlement policy was contingent on the purchasers paying to Government by way of rental a sum equal to the interest we had to pay on the money we have borrowed for the purpose of acquiring these estates, and the honourable members who are now bringing undue pressure on the Land Purchase Board to buy at high rates are, instead of being friends and supporters of the land-for-settlement policy, the biggest enemies of that policy. I would like to refer to a property recently purchased not far from Balclutha. It is from 10s. to 30s. an acre, and land within from five to fifteen miles of a railway-station. The land was purchased at £4 2s. 6d. an acre, and I venture to say the tenants of that land will not be able to pay the interest on that money. The price paid was in excess of the value, but pressure was brought to bear. The Premier said the Land Purchase Board has erred on the side of caution, and I say that it is a right thing for them to do. Honourable members in this House, I am afraid, have not taken that expansive view of the prospects of the permanency of the value of our lands which they importance. I am perfectly sure that every one will admit that I do not belong to the Croaker pessimistic family. I believe in taking a hopeful view of the prospects of the country, but at the same time I am not able to shut my eyes to our surroundings, and the countries and conditions with which we have to compete in the markets of the world. And, Sir, what do we discover-and in that connection you will see I want to point out only that the present values of land in this country are too high ? And if the present values are too high, I then commend the Land Purchase Board for showing a certain amount of caution. I do not believe the present high values will continue in this country. Allusion has been made to the dairying industry. Why, the money that is now paid for dairying land is out of all proportion to what you are obtaining from the produce of that land. The value is being taken, unfortunately, out of the bone and sinew of the young children. But against whom, Sir, have we to compete ? We have first of all in produce to compete against Canada, which is able just now to give for nothing two hundred acres of excellent land to any settler that may like to go over there. I have here an excellent report showing that although the population of the United States is gradually increasing, yet the surplus produce she can now export to the markets of the world is greater than ever. This report I am quoting from was sent to me from London no later than last month. In dairying produce Russia is also coming to the front with an enormous area of country. There is a stretch of eight hundred miles by one hundred miles of country which is excellently adapted for the production of butter, and they can produce that butter at 7d. a pound, perhaps as yet not equal in quality to ours, but the fact that it goes into the London market at that price is calculated to seriously affect the value of our produce there. Then, coming to our pastoral products, wool was never cheaper than it is now. Fancy wool selling at 4d. a pound ! Then, taking oats at 1s. 3d. and wheat at 2s. 6d., I ask. What prospect is there in prices like that maintaining the high value of land, especially when the Argentine is

growing wheat at a profit at 1s. 7d. a bushel ? And then let us come to the actual question of the value of land. There is the Argentine, an enormous area of country, and I have evidence before me here, on the most reliable authority, that you can get wheat -growing and sheep land at

<page:542>

cost of labour there is .£2 per month and found. I think, so that they may be enabled to go about in Those men largely live upon sheep worth 5s. in a way commensurate with their position. We and cattle worth £3. Mark you, I am not ap- I shall, of course, have South Africa brought before proving of this system of labour. I only regret it as a field. Sir, that held is of very little importance to think that our people in this colony have importance compared with others unless our Government is to contend against such conditions, and I am merely pointing this out as a factor in the competition you have to face in this country, 'away the operations of the South African and to show we must not pay fancy prices for ; Customs Union. Those operations might continue. Then, let us come to the taxation in the time after the war is over, and then it will be Argentine. It is £1 per £1,000. It is taxation be impossible for us to carry on any system upon land-values there. There are some municipalities of trading in South Africa. They have 3d. a capital rates that do not seriously affect it, but I merely mention the fact. Now, if you have factors such as these in connection with your land to fight in a country that is not half the distance that you are from the markets of the world, how is it likely that you can maintain your present high values -- the present excessive values that obtain - in the face of such competition as I have indicated? say, therefore, the officers of the Land Purchase Board are to be commended upon the prudence they have exercised in connection with their transactions recently. And, coming back to our own colony, we have heard - and I am proud to know it is so -- that we have exported thirteen million pounds' worth of produce last year. Unfortunately, owing to decreased values our exports will be a million short this year, and if we decrease the produce by a million it will have a serious reflex action on the land-values in this colony ; and, if you continue to pay the present excessive values, how can you expect those unfortunate men to pay interest on that capital and have a surplus for the maintenance of their families as well ? These are points I wish honourable members to lay to heart. I might say, too, that in the competition we have to face we see the very ablest men from the whole of Europe concentrating their efforts in the competition we have to encounter .. Mr. Reynolds, who so successfully established in Auckland the Black Horse Dairy Factory, has made the widest reputation for that brand of butter in the London market ; because you can always get 4s. a hundredweight at Home in excess for the Black Horse brand of butter over any other. He has now got a good salary to go and conduct operations in South America, where many thousands of cows will be milked, and he will bring his experience to bear there in a way that may be seriously damaging to our own country. I believe the honourable gentleman has stated that the Government is anxious to exploit new markets, and I hope the experience they have had of what is necessary will prompt them to put a sum on the estimates that will compensate a man to come and do the work properly. It is a pottering policy they have hitherto adopted ; they are not aware of the seriousness of the position, nor the work the men require to do to bring about the very best results in this country. I give facilities for acquiring the freehold. . And in the opening-up of new markets you require the very ablest men you can employ, and you require to pay them well, and to place sums on the estimates for incidentals in excess of anything you have voted previously in that connection and the Governments of the other parts of the Empire make an effort to sweep pound on butter and cheese, 1d. a bushel on oats, 4s. a hundredweight on flour, and from 1d. to 2d. on tinned and frozen meats. I say that largely the remedy must be brought about by the joint action of the dependencies of the Empire. If we are going to maintain our high system of civilisation and hold our own against these countries I have alluded to with their cheap labour, low civilisation, and cheap land, the dependencies of the Empire must bring pressure to bear on the Imperial Government so that they may extend concessions to the people of our own nation. I again say

it is impossible for us to compete with people who employ inferior labour, and who are nearer to our markets, and who have advantages which we do not possess. Unless that is adopted. I venture to say that the value of our produce will be affected, and that correspondingly, the value of our land will also decrease. Coming now to one or two points in the Bill, I would like to say that I perfectly concur in the view expressed by the Ministry that married men should have the choice of properties. I react 1 to think that we have not considered that matter sufficiently in our legislation in the past. ! Our system of taxation is crude and unwork- able in many respects, and we see the effect it has on the population of this country. Few families would be in the position they are now if encouragement were given to families ; but the people of this country have been made to feel by our legislation that family: - are an encumbrance and a very heavy art. and the consequence is that we see. especially amongst the working people and others. ! : families now number very few. I think that not only should special inducements be extended: 1 to families, as is proposed under this Bill, but that special concessions should be granted under the income-tax and the land-tax, and. i. possible-although it might be almost impossible-in connection with the Custom- duties. The burden of taxation in New Zealand at the present time is borne by people with families. and I venture to think that a principle of that sort is wrong, and I think that the Government in endeavouring to rectify that wrong has made a step in the right direction. I then say !! endorse the opinions expressed by honourable members in connection with the endeavour to that at the present time it is a little unpopular but it matters not how you grant land so ? ? as you do not permit the freeholder to hold : » much ; but there is no tenure which will induce men to do so much as will the freehold, and

<page:543>

therefore I say you should extend to the people that system which will induce them to do their very best to improve their land. Before concluding I wish to say this: it seems to me strange that it is necessary to compulsorily take land when we know that in the hands of the Bank Assets Board there are still magnificent estates ; but I suppose if you expect them to grant facilities for the sale you expect them First, the cost of construction ; second, the cost to work for their own extinction. So long as there are estates, so long will the members of that Board occupy exceedingly comfortable and lucrative positions. But I say that the Government of the country should see, first of all, that these estates are taken from the Assets Realisation Board -that estates like the Moa Flat Estate and other properties that are not being utilised to the best advantage should be acquired, before touching limited properties occupied by parents and families who may hope in the future to hand them down to their children. Mr. HALL - JONES (Minister for Public Works). - When I listened to the honourable gentleman's speech I almost imagined I was back to the year 1893, a time when the honourable member made so many vigorous speeches in opposition to the land-for-settlement policy and in favour of the freehold. Such speeches we have often heard from the honourable member in this House, and, whilst he expresses himself against the land-for-settlement policy-I will not say he is doing it in the interests of the owners; but he wants the Government to make a railway to improve the value of the Moa Flat Estate, and which is so much desired by the owners of that estate should be constructed at the cost of the colony. Sir. so long as I have a seat on these benches this railway shall not be made to that estate unless the estate is acquired by the colony. Mr. T. MACKENZIE .- That is exactly what I said. Mr. HALL-JONES. - No; the honourable gentleman said the line was being made in the wrong direction ; but the honourable gentleman had not the common decency to say that we were only working to a certain point where we could deviate to the right or left-could go forward or stop at the point he mentioned ; he did not say we were working up to that point ; he said if we had gone to that point we would have done right. I do not know what is behind all this, but I do know that some gentlemen from that district are not far from where we are now sitting. and I can only presume that the honourable gentleman is working in the interests of what they wish to have done. I know that influence has been brought to bear to induce the Government to take the railway through that estate. but I say

that under present conditions the railway shall not be made through that estate so long as I am Minister for Public Works. I did not intend to take part in the debate to-night, and I should not have done so had it not been for what the honourable gentleman said about this railway. There is nothing of a political nature about it. The line has been urged before in a good class of settlers upon them, who are ex- the House by petition and otherwise for years. Mr. T. MACKENZIE .- By whom ? Not by Rae's Juuction. Mr. HALL-JONES. -- Yes, through to Roxburgh. The route it is going now, or the route through the Moa Flat Estate, would take the line on to Roxburgh. In considering the construction of every railway-line I have had to deal with I have laid down the principle that there are three things we should keep in view : convenience of settlers ; and, third, the prospective earning-power of the proposed railway. These matters have been most carefully considered in connection with nearly every line I have had to deal with so far, and I venture to say that, so far as any railway-lines I may have to deal with, it will not be said that I have been connected with a political railway. The honourable gentleman talks about the acquisition of the Moa Flat Estate. It is the first time I have heard him advocating anything in connection with the Land for Settlements Act. Why this change ? When the Act was first introduced by Sir John Mckenzie, in division after division, speech after speech, detail after detail, almost every clause, line, and word, the honourable member opposed it. To-night his speech was against land for settlement. but he makes one exception-that we ought to purchase the Moa Flat Estate. Well, I know something about that estate, and there are members in the House who know something about it, and know how far it is suited for ordinary purposes of settlement. The greater part of it is only suited for sheep; and how much is suited for agriculture? Very little, beyond a few hill-tops with cold and comparatively poor soil ; and it would be a cruelty to settle men on it under the Land for Settlements Act unless it was purchased at such a price that they could make a living off it. The honourable gentleman says the existing prosperity is not due to the land-for-settlement policy. Why, the honourable gentleman has been going about the colony with his eyes shut-literally with his eyes shut. Does he know an estate in Southland called Merrivale ? Compare that estate with what it was in the old days-the large increase of settlement there, the work caused by that settlement, the increased production of the soil-let him compare that estate with what it was in the past, and he will see the estate closely settled, the settlers doing well, with comfortable homesteads, and their places in good order and condition. They are all doing well, and does he say that is not conducive to the prosperity of the colony ? Is it not augmenting her exports ? Most undoubtedly that and other estates have contributed to swell the exports which the honourable gentleman has mentioned, and which now amount to over thirteen millions a year. The honourable gentleman referred to the Waikakahi, and he knows that estate, what it was a few years ago and what it is now, and when he refers to high prices being paid he cannot say that the cost of this estate was too great. I mention the Merrivale and Waikakahi Estates because they are of fair area and have

<page:544>

ceedingly contented with their present position. The honourable gentleman has also, I believe, been at Cheviot, and although that estate was not acquired under the Land for Settlements Act the principle is just the same. It was acquired for small settlement, and we know the difference there is now in the position of that estate as compared with what it was before it was taken over by the Government for close settlement. There are numbers of happy homes there, inhabited by a class of settlers who have enormously increased the productiveness of the soil. Then, the honourable gentleman says that the price of the land was too high, and I say that we have heard that speech many times before to-night. We were told when this policy was first initiated that land-values were too high, and that we would be placing settlers upon land many of whom would be unable to make a livelihood off their holdings. We were told that we should pause and consider carefully what we were doing-that we should wait until we had settled the available Crown lands in the North Island ; but I say that the South Island had been in such a position

for some years past that all its Crown lands were sold with the exception of land only rented for pastoral purposes. Why, our settlers' sons have had to leave that part of the colony, either for other colonies or for other parts of this colony. An Hon. MEMBER .- Send them up north. Mr. HALL-JONES .- There is room for more first on the land in the South Island, and, in regard to the land in the North Island, that is required for the sons of the settlers who are already in this Island, and when that army of surveyors, whom we are told by the Minister of Lands are now at work have completed their survey there will be a large area of land available for settlement. And I can assure the honourable member that I am as desirous as he is of seeing these northern lands settled, and I know that my colleague the Minister of Lands is using every energy in that direction, although it may not be apparent at the present time. He is using every endeavour to get this land in the market more speedily, and I saw there myself last November, when through it with some of the Auckland members-and my friend Mr Napier, the member for Auckland City, will bear me out in this statement-land of such a quality that there is none superior in the colony, and only waiting for settlers to open it up; and I , can assure the honourable gentleman that that land will be very shortly put upon the market for settlement purposes. There is as great a demand for land in the North as in the South, and it is our duty to see that those who desire to take up land and to increase the productivity of the soil, and so increase our exports and find labour for those who need it, shall have the opportunity of obtaining land both in the North Island and in the South Island, and we should assist them as far as we possibly can in that direction. But if we take the advice of the honourable member we must pause, because he states that our land-values are too high. Then, again, the honourable gentleman told us, with his usual pessimism, what we were told years ago. I refer to his remarks about the Argentine, and to the competition we are to expect from that country. Yes, : we have heard before of the Argentine. It was a great bugbear when our land policy was first introduced. It was stated that the Argentine would produce so much that New Zealand would be out of the race on account of its distance from a market. What has been the result? Ever since the period spoken of New Zealand has been progressing by leaps and bounds, until we are to-day one of the most prosperous colonies in the world ; while. if we had listened in 1893 to the honourable gentleman and those who were acting with him. We should have been no further ahead than we were at that time. It is true that some of our products are falling in value, and, no doubt. circumstances are different from what they were a few years ago. Wool may be low, our wool is in many cases only a by-product. An Hon. MEMBER .- Oh, oh ! Mr. HALL-JONES. - But the honourable gentleman left out one important factor when he made that statement. I know there are men, and the honourable member for Franklin also knows that there are men, who only grow wool. But there are others who grow wheat and mutton at the same time, and they combine the two. The honourable member said that all prices were low, but he did not mention mutton, and he did not mention the price of sheep. If the honourable member had his way he would say, "Gentlemen, let us clear away" from these Islands. We cannot compete with the Argentine, we cannot compete with Russia with its large export of butter, we cannot send our produce to the Cape. Let us all clear out of New Zealand, and leave it to what it was fifty or sixty years ago." I am sure members of this House want to make this colony what it ought to be, and what it will be, and what members on this side of the House have been making it during the last ten years ; and during the next ten years we shall see as great progress as has taken place in the last ten years, because those who at present occupy these benches are going to stay there for the next ten years, and they will, as in the past, act in the best interests of the colony. It is true that Russia sends enormous quantities of butter to the Old Country, and it is true that the quantity is increasing each year ; but the same remark applies to New Zealand. Take our export of butter ten years ago and compare it with what it is now; and we can find a market for every pound we send away, and there is as good a market for four times the quantity we are now sending. Now, about opening up new markets. The honourable member. if he has kept himself in touch with what is going on, would know that a commercial

agent has been appointed within the last few months, and it is most unfair to criticize at the present time that gentleman or the work he is engaged upon. We may have made a mistake : we might have endeavoured to secure the services of some of who had had experience of the Old Country : but I am sure the gentleman appointed to the

<page:545>

[HOUSE.] Land for 1901.] venture to say he will discharge his duties position is well qualified to carry out the work intrusted to him, and that he will, when he capably for this country, and I am astonished fairly starts on his work, show such results at the Minister being so far gone in his mental as will be satisfactory to members of this House and also to the colony. The amount ing from my utterances. placed on the estimates in the past, I admit, has been small, because we never before had planation, I wish to say the explanation given a commercial agent, and never before had taken such steps in the Industries and Com- gentleman had urged the acquisition of the merce Department as were indicated in last year's Financial Statement. It was then de- termined to take further steps in the direction of endeavouring to find markets where our pro- ducers were not so much subject to the prices ruling in one part of the world. And those steps have been taken, and the agent is only commencing on his work, and the honourable member might wait until he has had time to show us what can be done. With regard to the Bill, I am afraid I am somewhat like the honourable member for Waihemo. He spoke for twenty-five minutes on other matters and then for five minutes on the Bill. I need not say that I am and always have been an ardent advocate of the land-for-settlements policy. I point that fitted in with the railway being pro- realised from the first the advantage it would ceeded with in either direction. I hope, Sir, confer upon the colony. It is not a matter for only one Island or the other, for we must bear in mind that what improves the condition of the North Island reacts on the South Island, and vice versa. We stand as one colony, and must not allow narrow-minded provincialism to come in and hinder or retard the good work we have in hand : but we must work together, not in any carping spirit, but with one object, (Mr. Witheford), " Why buy land in the South to push our colony along and make it what it ought to be. If we do that we need not have any fear of the result, and we need have no fear of those periods of depression which have come to the colony in previous years. make a home in the North ? Why should there Mr. T. MACKENZIE (Waihemo) .- I wish to make a personal explanation. The honour- about Ardgowan? I remember seeing that able gentleman, probably unconsciously, has failed to grasp what I said in the discussion. I said that I did not advocate the purchase of it and a manager. Eighteen months after 1 the property except in connection with the railway-construction, and that if they were not going to purchase the property they should stop the line two miles from Heriot, at a point that would be available for the further exten- on well, and rejoiced that the Government had sion, and if they did not purchase the property they should not put it one yard further ; and that it was a gross political job to divert the line to Rae's Junction, and the Minister knew it. The next point was this : I did not say that the be driven from the North Island ? land-for-settlements policy had not assisted the country, but what I did say was that a member of the House had attributed the entire success are lands constantly being opened up, and there and prosperity of the country to the land-for- settle. However, I do not see why we should settlements policy. I pointed out that the total have these objections raised by North Island money spent on land for settlement was under \$2,000,000 sterling, whereas the value of agri- cultural and pastoral land in use in the colony was \$109,000,000, so that €2,000,000 against £109,000,000 certainly could not have that in- fluence. The third point was this : I did not say a land and form homes for themselves. With re- gard to the remarks of the honourable member single word in criticism against Mr. Gow, the new Produce Commissioner, because he is a most Settlements Bill. 545 equilibrium as to have deduced such a reason- Mr. HALL-JONES .- Sir, as a personal ex- by the honourable member has somewhat cleared the atmosphere. I said the honourable Moa Flat Estate. If he did not do so, I ask honourable members what he did do. Mr. T. MACKENZIE .- Only in connection with

the railway. Mr. HALL-JONES .- Well, really, I think that is rather too thin ; but, of course, I accept the honourable member's explanation. I also say that his remarks concerning the Department of Industries and Commerce would be taken by any member of the House as a reflection on the officer who has been appointed as Commissioner in that department. As for the Heriot Railway, I wish to say that my instructions were that the line was to be taken to a the honourable member will be more careful in his future utterances. Mr. ELL (Christchurch City) .- Sir, I do not think the time taken up in discussing this Bill this afternoon and evening has been wasted, because members have been discussing a question that is of the greatest importance to the people of the colony. With regard to the remark of the honourable member for Auckland City Island ? " I would ask the honourable gentleman why we in the South should have our young people driven away from the South to be large estates locking in some of the towns in the South, as they do at Oamaru ? What estate before it was purchased by the Government, with only two or three shepherds' huts on went over the same land, and I met on it working-men who had come from Dunedin and other places who were settled there. and were getting purchased that estate. It has done good to the town itself: and it would do good to other towns also if we purchased some of the large estates lying round about them. Mr. WITHEFORD .- Why should our sons Mr. ELL .- There is no need for that. There is any amount of land on which they might members to the Government policy of purchasing extensive estates in the South Island for the benefit of the farmers' sons and the poorer class of people who wish to go on the for Ashburton respecting the work of the Land

<page:546>

very many complaints about it, and I think there has been a good deal of reason in the complaints. In the immediate neighbourhood of Christchurch an estate was offered to the Government at \$60 an acre fronting the Ferry Road. The Land Purchase Board would not accept the offer, but some time afterwards they purchased an estate that did not front a main thoroughfare at all -- an estate that lay a quarter of a mile back-and paid \$65 an acre for it, while there was a marked depression running across the land which has had to be filled up, and in addition to which a culvert has had to be formed there, occasioning some extra expense in the matter of roading. Now, that land was cut up into acre and half-acre and quarter-acre sections. The large sections went off readily, and the Minister was asked to join some of the quarter-acre sections and to make them acre or half-acre sections. If they had been acre lots they would have been taken up readily enough, but the quarter-acre sections hung fire. And so it will be with regard to the last estate which has been purchased at the foot of Colombo Street, about two miles from the centre of the city. There in the immediate neighbourhood of where the land is being cut up into quarter-acre sections, within half a mile of it, they are selling two- and three-acre blocks at \$75 an acre, and these are being taken up by persons in Christchurch with the intention of building homes upon them. If we had these other sections a little larger they would not have the difficulty that has been pointed out by the honourable member for Avon, in whose district several of these estates have been acquired. Now with regard to this estate which the Government refused at \$60 an acre. A man who possessed means bought it and sold the large house that was on it and two acres of land for \$800, and is now selling some quarter-acre sections on the Ferry Road at \$80 the quarter-acre. The Government, having refused to take this estate at \$60 an acre, went back from the main road and bought a fifty-acre block at 665 an acre, which had only one old building and a small old-fashioned four- There is another roomed cottage on it. matter I would like to bring under the notice of the Right Hon. the Premier, and that is the claims of labourers in the country districts. No provision so far has been made for these labourers in the way of enabling them to acquire two or three acres of land, the cultivation of which would enable them to tide over the difficulty they have to contend with in not having regular employment ; and when they do have employment they only get 5s., 5s. 6d., or 6s. a day. There are plenty of villages in the South Island, where the land has all been disposed of and settled on, where they have to pay high rents. I mention one place

about five miles and a half from Christchurch, and I got these cases from the men who are renting the land from the farmers in the neighbourhood : Ten acres at \$3 10s an acre ; 5 acres at \$4 ; 15 at \$4 : 15 at \$4; 2 at \$4 10s .; 5 at \$4 : 15 at \$3 10s ; 1 acre at \$4. These lands were taken up by these resident labourers for the purpose Mr. Ell of growing onions and potatoes and different root-crops, to help them to keep a decent home. helping them to provide for their families and to make up for the small earnings they get on account of bad weather and broken time amongst the farmers. It occurs to me that these men have a distinct claim upon the Government in respect to getting land at a reasonable rent. In the immediate neighbour- hood where these men pay these very high rents the farmers are holding the land at \$1 15s., £1 17s., and ■2 per acre; and my late col- league Mr. Lewis brought under the notice of the Land Purchase Board a farm of about sixty acres, which I was brought up on about twenty. five years ago, and which was owned by my father. There were no buildings upon it, and it was offered to the Government at \$40 an acre. but they refused it. It has since been sold at \$46 an acre. There was no doubt the land was absolutely wanted by a number of working- men in the district, who were only earning s. s day when they work, and pay as much as an acre for small blocks of land on which to grow crops so as to eke out a livelihood. I would ask the Right Hon. the Premier to take a note of this fact, and to see if they cannot in the future provide perhaps & hundred or a hundred and fifty acres of land in the different agricultural centres, 50 that these men may be able to get the land at a more reasonable rental, and not at \$5 an acre, that distance from Christchurch- about five miles and a half. I quite agree with the remarks made by my colleague Mr. Collins with regard to the high rents paid by working-men. To my knowledge, in the immediate neighbourhood where I live. about a mile and a half from Christchurch. small cot- tages of four rooms and a small scullery, situated on sections of an eighth of an acre, and some of them smaller than that, are let at 9s. 6d. and 10s., and some at 11s. Now, that is far too much for a man to pay out of his earnings whet. perhaps, he is only receiving 6s. or 6s. 6d. a day. And it is undoubtedly the duty of the com- munity to see that the people who are working for the community are provided with homes at It is a hardship to a more reasonable rent. these men, and a considerable hardship upon a young family -and it is frequently the case the: these men have large families, which shoud have, perhaps, five or six rooms to live in that they should have to live in four small rooms. which is not conducive either to their health or comfort. And in this matter, if the kwal authorities are not in a position to take it y. the Government should consider the advisaiais of assisting the people to get homes, so tesi they may rid themselves of this very basis charge upon their small incomes. I shall sap port very cordially the second reading of the Bil With respect to the high land-values referti to by the honourable member for Waibeme. we cannot possibly expect that the land-vamos in this country are not going to rise when we are lowering the rate of interest. It is very evident if you lower the rate of interest vot simply raise the value of land. With the re

<page:547>

the ballot system ; because when a block of duction of the rate of interest there has been a natural increase of speculation in land, and land is opened, whether it is Crown land or that has caused the rise in the land-values of land-for-settlement land, people become appli- the colony, and we are now on the verge of a cants who have no serious intention whatever land boom. Why, Sir, land is sold at \$60 and of becoming permanent settlers -- people who \$65 an acre five miles from Christchurch. know nothing about land, and do not want to know. They go in for these lands knowing An Hon. MEMBER. - For residences ? Mr. ELL .- No: not for residences, but for that, if successful in drawing a section, they will be able to receive a substantial bonus farms. Captain RUSSELL. - How much in area ? therefor, and if they are not successful in doing so there is no harm done. Sir, I think there Mr. ELL .- I can refer to a block of from ought to be a change in connection with the twenty-five to thirty acres, and in a purely agricultural district. Land - values are un- ballot system. The tender system and the doubtedly on the increase, and it seems to me auction system have been suggested, but I do that, seeing that the cheap money and the re- not

like either. I think applicants for Crown-leased railway freights have reflected themselves lands should be required to give some guarantee in the land-values, we are arriving at a time that they are genuine settlers, and that they when we should have, as the member for Wai- intend to go on the land if they are successful he pointed out. more direct taxation, and in drawing a section, otherwise they should not be allowed to become applicants at all. that there should be a further remission of Customs duties.

Honourable members will suggest ? find then, that when the direct taxation is made more general than it is now and there is less indirect taxation, the farmers will not a certain amount of money, or a guarantee from suffer so much as it is feared they will, but will some of their friends that they are capable of going on the land and becoming settlers, and be better off than they are now. Mr. MASSEY (Franklin) .- I can hardly say intend doing so if successful at the ballot. that I am able to work up as much enthusiasm now. on this Bill as some of the speakers who have preceded me. Perhaps it is because, unlike the Minister for Public Works, who told his con- gentleman knows, of very little value, and is situated not many weeks ago that the district not always done. I have been informed that which he represented had received more benefit at a recent ballot in Auckland two barmaids in from the expenditure under the Land for Settle- city hotels were successful in drawing sections. ments Act than any other district in the colony, I. Sir. represent a district which has received tion of going on the land ? The probability is n, benefit at all from it. However, the Bill before the House has to do with one of the most they would sell the sections as soon as they extensive and important departments of the could find really intending settlers to take them Crown, a department which has the handling over at a profit. But, coming to the Bill itself, of many hundreds of thousands of pounds of course it is of a decidedly technical character, annually, belonging to the taxpayers of the and, personally, I have no very serious objec- tion to it, with the exception of clause 6. I do colony, and therefore I want to say a word or two in connection with it. But, first of all, as to the object to clause 6. According to the side-notes manner in which the Bill was introduced this clause 6 is intended to prevent an evasion of this afternoon : I was more than surprised that Act. Perhaps I had better read the clause :- the Bill was introduced not by the Minister of Lands, who under the Act of last year is avoidance of the provisions of the principal Act as to the right of the owner to select and retain the Minister controlling the department, but any limited part of any estate intended to be by the Right Hon. the Premier. I consider acquired under that section, it is hereby de- his action in introducing this Bill was a reflec- clared that the area of the whole estate shall be tion on the Minister of Lands, and if I were the Minister of that department I should say computed as at the commencement of the nego- to the Premier. "Either I am capable of tations for the purchase under the said Act, and no subsequent disposition of the estate, or managing the business of my own department any part thereof, shall operate to defeat the or I am not. If I am capable of managing the power of the Governor to acquire the land under affairs of my department I must introduce my own Bills, and if I am not capable then it is that Act." time for me to leave these benches." I am not reflecting in the very slightest upon the Minis- mean that if the Government have opened up ter of Lands. I believe that honourable gentle- negotiations for the purchase of any estate, and man is capable of managing the affairs of his have even asked the owner whether he is willing to sell, it is intended to prevent that man from department, and I believe he knows more about doing anything in the way of disposing of his land matters and land for settlement than land, selling it to any one else, cutting it up. or all the other members of the Ministry put to- giving it to any members of his family until the gether. Now, a great deal has been said about Government are pleased to say that the nego- the ballot system, and any one who knows tations are concluded. Is that just? Land- anything about land-settlement must know that there are many evils in connection with owners, I say, have rights as well as any other Mr. SEDDON .- What guarantee would you Mr. MASSEY .- I would require a deposit of Mr. NAPIER. - They have to make a declara- Mr. MASSEY .- That is, as the honourable Mr. NAPIER. -- Why should they not ? Mr. MASSEY .- Had those people any inten- "(1.) In order to prevent any evasion or What do those last

three lines mean ? They

<page:548>

class of the community, but from the discussions we have listened to in this House one would be inclined to think that the contrary was the case. I say what is intended in that clause is positively dishonest, and I shall feel compelled at the Committee stage to move in the direction of striking it out. A great deal has been said about the success of the Land for Settlements Act, and I am willing to admit that the Land for Settlements Act has been a success, but we ought to remember at the same time that several of the estates purchased under that Act have been the reverse of successful. There was the famous Pomahaka Estate. If any one will look at the Land Settlement Report of last year he will see that that estate cost the colony \$22,981, and the amount received from rents last year was \$192 17s. - less than 1 per cent. - though we are paying 4 per cent. on the Pomahaka debentures. Then, there was another estate also referred to in the Lands Report, the Starborough Estate. I think the Minister of Customs knows something about it. It cost \$106,000 odd, and last year we received a rental of \$2,378 from it, a little over 2 per cent. In pointing this out I admit that, taking one estate with another, the colony is not making any loss, but that some of those estates are not so successful as they have been represented to be. So far as the compulsory clauses are concerned, I have never approved of compulsorily taking land under the Land for Settlements Act, and I have not changed my mind on that point. I agree with the member for Napier that no land should be taken compulsorily for the purposes of land-settlement unless it can be shown that it is absolutely impossible to acquire land in that particular district in any other way. It has only been necessary, so far as I can remember, to take two estates under the compulsory sections of the Land for Settlements Act -- namely, the Hatuma and Ardgowan Estates--and probably it would have been as well for the colony if those estates had never been interfered with, because there has been a lot of friction and trouble in connection therewith. I think it would be better, as I have said, to adopt the suggestion of the member for Napier, or else to make a provision that no estate shall be taken compulsorily without the consent of Parliament. I think that would be a check on the Government of the day, and it would probably prevent hardships and injustice being done to landowners. Now I come to what has been said with regard to Crown lands, and I want to indorse what was stated by the member for Waikato--namely, that the Government require to infuse a great deal more energy into the settlement of Crown lands in the Auckland Provincial District particularly, and in the North Island generally. The Minister for Public Works told us that the lands are being opened up as fast as an army of surveyors can open them. I would like to know how many men there are in this army, and how many thousands of acres have been opened up in the King-country, say, during the last twelve months. I venture to say very few. An Hon. MEMBER. - Twenty thousand acres. Mr. MASSEY. - What are twenty thousand acres compared with the large areas lying idle and unoccupied ? Other districts in the colony say they have suffered from land monopoly. but the people in the Auckland District are also suffering from land monopoly in a most aggravated form. We have got three kinds of monopolists : there is first the Government. then there are the Natives, and then there is the Assets Board, of which the Premier is a member. Between those three there are hundreds of thousands of acres of good land, much of it fit for close settlement, lying waste and producing little or nothing, while there are plenty of settlers ready and willing to take it up. I think the Government ought to be more energetic in this matter, and I say no Government is doing its duty which does not open up those lands at the earliest possible date. In conclusion. I wish to say this: that, whether in connection with land acquired under the Land for Settlements Act or Crown lands, any legitimate and genuine settlement will always have my sympathy and support. Mr. FLATMAN (Geraldine). I shall not detain the House more than a few minutes. but I do not wish to give a silent vote on this Bill. I would first support the suggestion put forward by the honourable member for Masterton, that clause 50 in the principal Act should also atges to the country as well as

workmen's homesteads, and specially those with small sections. I do not see why those with small sections from twenty to fifty acres should not be allowed to acquire a loan of \$50 as well as those who take up a section for a worker's home near the city. I think this should apply specially to all those who are small holders. Then, in regard to using the tender system in the place of the ballot for the disposal of land, the ballot system may not be all that is desired, but the tender system would, in my opinion, be infinitely worse. The tender system would give the land to those with most money and who could afford to pay the most rent. In some cases worse than duress might take place. For instance, some would give high prices and crop the heart out of the land for two or three years, then leave it, and it would be worth nothing to the tenant who follows. That is, a thing we must guard against. I believe the Act, as a whole, has been well studied out. in the amendments that have been suggested 3 nights by various members who have could not be carried out and work as well as the present Land for Settlements Act does. The honourable member for Christchurch City, Mr. Ell suggested that land should be acquired by the workers who dwell in our country towns. I have advocated the same thing before. These people have settled in the country towns in prosperous days, and have perhaps bought a half-acre section, and have some nice homes, and they do not care to leave them; and probably they have not saved sufficient money to take a small farm under the Land for Settlements Act, and would be glad of a small allotment. The residential restriction should

<page:549>

be removed, and these men allowed to take up from two to five acres, and not be compelled to reside on it. I am sure if the land was within a mile of their homes they would in their spare time be able to cultivate it themselves, and produce that which is needful for household purposes, run a cow, and keep themselves going when out of work. I hope this will be done, and that the residential restrictions will be removed and some land procured near the country townships for allotment purposes. At any rate, it is worth a trial, and would be inexpensive. The honourable member for Wallace said there were several large estates in different parts of the country that had not been acquired. That is right, and the Bill before us will allow the Government to acquire such land which has been kept away by the principals of companies and absentees not being able to be got at. I trust after the Bill is passed it will enable the Government to acquire land at less cost from absentees and companies whose principals cannot now be got at under the present law. I would seriously advocate that, if land cannot be bought at a price which will enable people to live on it comfortably, it should not be bought at all, for it would only be a means of introducing poverty into a district, and would be ruinous to the colony. Therefore the Land Purchase Board must be careful and not buy land at too high a price. I believe clause 6 in the Bill is just what is wanted. The honourable gentleman who last spoke said it would have been a good job if the Hatuma Estate and Ardgowan had never been purchased; but I think it would have been a good thing if the land had been taken under a compulsory clause at a cheaper rate. Clause 6 is intended to meet such cases; it is only for compulsory purchase, and the honourable member knows that as well as I do. I do not think the Government intend to use it except it is necessary to do so. Sir, I was rather astonished to hear the honourable member for Waihemo as an agent for the practically acting Argentine, Siberia, and other places. I could come to no other conclusion, after hearing his speech, than that each of these countries were going to cut us clean out with their produce. Well, Sir, I believe they will never do that, not even with their men working for less a day, because we have, combined with this grand climate, an enthusiastic, industrious, and energetic people, and New Zealand is bound to come out on top. And though our lands may be high in value, still I believe the colonists of New Zealand will be able to compete with other countries in general produce. Since the Land for Settlements Act came into operation many of the owners of large estates did not wish to part with their holdings excepting at fictitious prices, for the simple reason that they wanted to kill the Land for Settlements Act; but I trust that the Government will continue to vigorously carry on that Act, and I am sure it will be in the interests of the colony to do so. I was sorry to

hear, from the remarks of some honourable members, that the allotments which had been bought for workmen's homes near towns were not a success. The honourable member for Avon said that the Land Board or the Minister had been petitioned to group these small sections together and had not done so. Mr. TANNER .- The Land Board. Mr. FLATMAN. - Well, Sir, that proves what has been said about the Land Boards to be perfectly true-that they are too conserva- tive altogether, and ought to have done their best to suit the requirements of the district, in which they knew perfectly well this provision was required. As to members of the House being members of Land Boards, I do not see why they should not be on Land Boards, and to say that in that position they would be open to bribery is uncalled-for ; but, seeing that they are paid such a small rate for their services, it would not be surprising if they were open to bribery. An Hon. MEMBER .- They are not paid any- thing. Mr. FLATMAN .- They are paid 10s. a day for travelling a distance of a hundred miles, as I understood the member for Ashley to say-I do not know whether he did the distance on foot. But 10s. is not sufficient ; it barely covers expenses when travelling on a railway-pass ; and I do not see why one member of a Land Board should be paid a fair sum while another member is only paid a wage that will scarcely pay his ordinary hotel expenses. I do not think mem- bers of a Land Board, if they were members of Parliament, would be more open to bribery than an ordinary member would, and I say the members of the Canterbury Land Board who have spoken on this Bill have shown their in- dependence : one honourable member told us that he would snap his fingers at the Premier or any one else, and another member said that the Land Board would not carry out the regula- tions sent down to them by the Government. Therefore they showed their independence, and they ought to be lauded for so doing, and for the spirit they showed. I trust that indepen- dent spirit will continue, and that they will show the same spirit as the time for reappoint- ment draws nearer. But we find in the present Bill something that will make them conform to the regulations which this House intends to put in force. I also believe that married men should have some consideration, but how to do that in a fair way I really cannot suggest for the moment. The only thing would be, I sup- pose, to have, as has been suggested, a rule that people with large families should be allowed some privileges over persons with no families. Whether it should be done according to the size of the family, or whether a married person without any family should be allowed the same privileges as the person with a family of nine or ten children, is a matter for argument and consideration. I trust this Bill will pass, and that in its operation it will prove beneficial in many ways. I shall therefore vote for the second reading. Mr. MONK (Waitemata). - Mr. Speaker, almost everything that can be instructively said upon this subject has been said, I believe, and the matter has been admirably ventilated

<page:550>

by various speakers during the debate, but it | not any Government that sits on those benches, affords me an opportunity of alluding to one or two features in connection with land settlement that I wish to bring before the notice of the Minister for Railways. I wish specially to urge upon him the necessity of meeting the desire of the people up north by furnishing them with workmen's trains, and if, as mentioned by the honourable member for Avon, the hunger for i market, and it was only these discoveries being workmen's homes has not been met at Christ- church, there is an abundance of land at Henderson, near Auckland, which the people desire to have purchased by the Government, and which can be purchased at a very low rate: and if workmen's trains are fur- nished by the Government there will be no difficulty in finding abundance of land for workmen's homes at a very low rate, and land that is eminently suited for such a purpose if the Government will only provide the trains ; and, even if there should be some loss in initiating the service, the country will be abundantly recouped in the greater comfort of the workmen and the increased value of national asset which their homes and improvements will produce ; and no Minister for Railways will be held in estimation until more is done in this respect than has yet taken place. I am surprised to note the remarks made by the honourable mem- ber who has just spoken. Of course, those

who have toiled for thirty or forty years in forming for themselves a homestead do not feel very much gratified with the prospect of that home i pect to get for our produce ? Do we go to the being taken away from them-especially if they are surrounded by a grown-up family, intending to divide that property amongst their children- when they find there is a Bill before this House to take away from them the opportunity of so apportioning their property. I can only charac- terize such a proposal as something supremely scandalous : and be it remembered that even if such division does take place during the life- time of the parents the revenue gains, for charges equal to probate duty are levied by Government on such transactions. I do not think the honourable member is a toiler on the land -in fact, I am sure he is not, or he would not have talked in the manner in which he has talked. Talking about the land-settle- ment, he said it was the land-settlement that had made the country. It is special circum stances that have made the land-settlement so attractive and prosperous. Supposing the gentlemen occupying those seats across there had attempted fourteen or twenty years ago the land-settlement scheme which is so attractive - and I admit it is attractive to-day-do you think they would have been successful ? Could they have been successful in 1881 or 1884 when every one in the colony was trying to sell their property, and land which is selling at \$5 or ¥6 to-day could have been bought at \$3 or \$4, when fat cattle were sold at from \$3 to \$3 10s., and when legs of choicest mutton, produced in Hawke's Bay on the lands its member wishes to exploit. w ere ha : ked about at 5d. and 6d. apiece ? Would land-settlement have succeeded then, or would it have been a catchy political or has sat on those benches, that has made the land-set- tlement successful ; it has simply been the interven ion of the Providence that shapes our ends, in the discovery of the refrigerator. the separator, Babcock's tester. It is scientific knowledge combined with mechanical skill which has enabled us to place our commodities on the made which elevated our prospects to what they are. If you had not the blessing of these inven. tions could you place New Zealand products on the London market and get the present values for them ? Members in this House talk such con- sense, and I will tell you why : The agricultural interest is so scantily represented in this House that there are not more than fourteen or fifteen members who get their living by personal con- i tact with farming life. I am glad to see the Right Hon. the Minister admits the correct ness of my statement : but why does he tair. differently when on the platform ? Why talk so differently when introducing a measure like this? I do not want to detract from the pri- tion of the country at the present time. one who is a settler in this country and has an interest in its welfare can be anything but highly gratified that we are so greatly favoured. But when we want to know about the prices, do we go to the honourable gentlemen on the Minis. terial benches and ask them to tell us what is the worth of our land or the price we may ex- land-for-settlement scheme to find these things out? No; we take up the daily paper and refer to the cablegrams we get there from the Old Country, and in the few lines there given we form an estimate of the economic status of our New Zealand homes. Then. Sir. 3 great truth has been uttered in saying that if the Government would only spend a portion of the money they propose to sprid in the purchase of land in opening up the --- ---- large areas of Crown lands they posts- lands that have been lving idle for years and years --- it would be a saving to the country . - a saving of interest on capital invested long : 20. No, Sir ; they prefer to raise €500,000 at 4 : cent., rather than to use the money invested !! those lands perhaps fifteen or twenty years ago. Let us think and act in these matters with a na- sure of common-sense. Let us not have party The Right Hon. the Minister dette- feeling. cates party feeling, party polities, party acti i. He would not even allow farmers to assimile politics with the interests of their avocati c. Why, he does nothing in this House from ginning to end that is not actuated by passv. The alpha and omega of all his policy in : ~ House is simply to exalt his party, and to t. at the Ministry in their positions on those bem. Sir, I believe any Ministry devoid of all these one-sided class measures and party coming - tions, could have occupied those benches - starting as they did on the advancing wave ! ! economic expansion -with just the same wef. taintv as those honourable gentlemen have | occupied them, and with a greater certainty et

<page:551>

tion of the future historians of New Zealand than their administration of the past six or seven years will bring to them. An Hon. MEMBER .-- Nonsense. Mr. MONK .- Yes, it is those gentlemen who talk on subjects about which they know nothing who give utterance to nonsense in this House. However, I promise not to delay members in this debate. The few minutes in which I have spoken on this matter are a sufficient indorse- ment of my sentiments in regard to land-settle- ment. There is, I admit, a land-hunger, and the tardiness which those honourable gentlemen opposite have practised in the opening-up of Crown lands and the notorious defec s of the ballot system have developed : hat hunger, but they might easily have placed half a million more acres in : he market to satisfy tha: hunger than they have, and in doing so they need not have spent any considerable sum of money in the acquisition of land. All the expenditure that was required from them was in paying surveyors now numerously idle in the surveying, and nothing more. They know that right well. Then, we are told about the political railways. Sir, they have allowed us in the north to struggle on for years and years without railways, in localities where men have struggled -as the Minister of Lands knows very well, because he kindly took a trip round to see the state of things for himself -men who have been struggling up to their middles in mud, men who have had to pack up their produce on horses and take it to market, men who went on the land twenty or thirty years ago with the idea -- with the certainty, begotten of promise that in a short time the railway-whistle would be heard near their homes. Yet nothing has been done. Small sums have been doled out to them year after year ; and we know full well that beyond the localities in which they reside there are many, many acres of land on which settlers might be protitably settled, cultivating, improving, and expanding our national output. If honourable gentlemen opposite wish to operate in land settlement with an unassailable certainty of immunity from the complications which depression evolves, there is no process by which they could secure more safety in their efforts than in settling people on the Crown lands of the colony at comparatively low prices. There was great truth in the utterance of the honourable member for Waihemo that we cannot be sure of the value of our products in the future. I do not wish to depreciate them, but all thoughtful men know that there is a limit to the remunerative value of certain products, and, while fair prices have been secured in the Old Country for butter and cheese and meat for some time past. the margin is not large, and what we have had has been much the result of the wave of prosperity that has passed over the world, from which we have felt a benefit. That wave of prosperity has, no doubt, been augmented to some extent by the war in South Africa. It has given to the people of the Old Country a buying-power that we cannot be sure will continue at the rate at which it has been maintained within the last twelve or eighteen months. There is nothing the Government can do with respect to land- occupation, and with respect to the products of the soil, that will assist the country more than in the periods of prosperity to act with that judgment and prudence that will cushion the touch of depression, should it come, with an elasticity that will make its presence a matter of the smallest moment. I hnd my time is up. I have spoken more than the few minutes that I intended to occupy, but I do not wish to trespass further, or to break that very wise rule, for which I ardently thank the Premier, that the hours on two days of the week shall commence at half-past ten in the morning and finish at half-past ten in the evening. If there is anything for & hich the Right Hon. the Premier would secure from me a wreath of laurel on his brow, it is the sacrifice he has imposed upon himself by relinquishing his privilege of being able to "sweat " us after half-past ten. Debate adjourned until half-past ten a.m. on Tuesday. The House adjourned at half-past ten o'clock p.m.