

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL. Thursday, 25th July, 1901. Third Reading-Industrial Disputes-E. M. Fulloon - Gorse on Rangitaike laver - Inspection of Private Schools-Young Persons Protection Bill. The Hon. the SPEAKER took the chair at half-past two o'clock. PRAYERS. THIRD READING. Accidents Compensation Bill. INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES. On the motion of the Hon. Mr. McLEAN. it was ordered, That there be laid on the table of the Council a return of industrial disputes, supplementary to that laid upon the table last year on 19th September, being a return from 1st April, 1900, to 31st March, 1901. E. M. FULLOON. The Hon. Mr. W. KELLY asked the Minister of Education, What steps the Government have taken to give effect to the recommendation of the Native Affairs Committee contained in their report of the 27th September, 1900, on the petition of Emily Maria Fulloon, and agreed to by the Council on the 28th September, 1900 ? That unfortunate woman had on three occasions come to Wellington with this grievance, and, as far as he could ascertain, nothing had been done to carry out the recommendation of the Native Affairs Committee of both Houses. The report of last session's Committee was,- "The Committee recommends that a full inquiry into the claims of the late James Fulloon to any of the confiscated lands mentioned by the petitioner be made by any one of the Commissioners who formerly investigated the titles to the land on the East Coast, and that such inquiry be held as soon as the Government can arrange for its taking place."

<page:612>

He had a letter from the petitioner in which she said that nothing whatever had been done to carry out the recommendation of that Committee. Two reports had been made last session. The first was objected to by the Hon. Mr. Cadman, who was at present absent, and on his motion it was referred back to the Committee for reconsideration. That honourable gentleman attended the Committee, and a thorough investigation took place, all the papers in connection with the matter having been submitted by the Native Department. He thought it very hard that nothing had been done to carry out the Committee's recommendation. On the 28th September, the day following that on which the Committee reported, the House adopted its recommendation. He hoped to hear from the honourable gentleman that something would be done to set this grievance right. The Hon. Mr. W. C. WALKER said the Government had taken the whole matter into consideration, and determined that they could take no action in it. GORSE ON RANGITAIKE RIVER. The Hon. Mr. ORMOND asked the Minister of Education, Whether the Government will take steps to stop the spread of gorse on the banks of the Rangitaike River, which, if not checked, will spoil that river for tourist trout-fishing, whereas by a small expenditure now the gorse can be

effectually stopped ? The Rangitaikē River was one of the finest trout streams in the world, and was becoming of world-wide fame. About eighteen months ago a great fisherman was paying a visit to New Zealand, who devoted his life to sport. He had been fishing in America, Norway, and Scotland, and said that no stream he had fished had the same sport and attractions as the Rangitaikē. It formed a great attraction to tourists, and the attraction was becoming more and more every year. He had been informed that the gorse there was a considerable hindrance to the sport, and it had increased considerably, and men conversant with the place, and sportsmen, said that in another year or two, unless it was attended to, the river would be unapproachable. A very moderate expenditure would enable the river-banks to be cleared. He thought something like £100 to £150 would answer the purpose, whereas if it was allowed to go unchecked much longer it would be almost impossible to do anything with it. He believed the river ran largely through Crown lands, and the Crown had duties connected with the matter, in addition to conserving what would be one of the attractions of tourists to the district. The efforts of the Government in the direction of tree-planting in the thermal-springs country were deserving of great praise, and he should say that the persons in charge of that would be proper persons to intrust with the direction of the clearing of the gorse. He hoped the Minister would tell him that the Government would devote some of the funds which he believed were at their disposal for noxious weeds to dealing with this pest, and thereby assist in the maintaining of what would prove a great national asset in the shape of a great attraction to the tourists whom we were so anxious to get to visit New Zealand. The Hon. Mr. W. C. WALKER was informed that the Rangitaikē River flowed to the sea at Whakatane and Matata. Along a part of its course the freehold had been granted right up to the bank of the river, and the Crown could not interfere with the riparian rights of the owners. On another part of the river then owners. was the usual chain reserve along its banks, and possibly the Crown ought to remove any gorse growing there. Higher up the river the land was altogether sold or in the hands of the Natives right up to the bank of the river. Therefore it was a difficult matter, unless the honourable gentleman should say the exact spot at which the gorse ought to be cleared, to say what was to be done. He acknowledged that the honourable gentleman had made out a strong case, and in the interest of making the country as attractive as possible to tourists it should be safeguarded and improved, and the Crown undoubtedly might remove the gorse so far as it owned the land. As regarded the other part of the river, he was afraid, as gorse was not a noxious weed within the meaning of the Noxious Weeds Act, they could not compel any one to remove it from his land. the bank of the river, or his boundary. He could assure the honourable gentleman that, as far as the Government was concerned, they would do their best to improve the condition of the river. The Hon. Mr. ORMOND explained that the part of the river referred to was not the part at which it emptied into the Bay of Plenty. but higher up the river. It commenced where the coach-road crossed the river on the way to Taupo, and flowed down about thirty miles. He fancied a good part of that was Government land and some was Native land. He did not think there would be any difficulty in having the gorse cleared if the Government authorised the expenditure of £150.

INSPECTION OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS. The Hon. Mr. FELDWICK -- I move, That there be laid on the table of the Council a return giving the names of the Education Bours of the colony which permit their Inspectors to examine private schools under the provisions of section 95 of " The Education Act, 1877," and the names of those which refuse so to do. The motion does not quite explain itself- perhaps I had better make some remarks upon the subject. Honour- able gentlemen are possibly not aware that the Education Act is administered by different Boards of Education in different ways. In some parts of the colony, when managers of schesis -for convenience called " private schools." but which very frequently mean Roman Catholic schools -apply for . Inspectors to examine 1 these schools that service is willingly granted i. and children attending those schools received their standards in the same way that children attending the Government schools receive theirs. The children are so examined in Southland. I am informed by my hancer- able friend Captain Baillie that they are »0

<page:613>

examined in Marlborough, and I believe they are so examined in Nelson, and I fancy they are also so examined in Westland. But certain Boards, either because their Inspectors are overworked or from sectarian feeling on the part of members of the Board -- or the pre- dominating party in the Board -refused to ex- amine the "private " schools. All I can authoritatively is Southland. speak about The schools there are regularly examined, even to what are called the " high schools" in the convents, with the most beneficial results. The managers of these schools and the parents of the children attending them are very grate- ful for these examinations. There is more in this motion than appears on the surface, in this way : it touches the question of the ne- cessity for Inspectors of public schools being brought under central control, and of one system being in vogue throughout the colony. I believe there is a Bill with that object in view in another place; but it is in the hands of a private member, and very likely it will never reach the Council. The question is one of great importance. My resolution, how- ever, merely asks for a simple return stating what Boards have examined private schools and what Boards have refused to do so. The Hon. Mr. REEVES. -- I have very great pleasure in seconding the motion of the Hon. Mr. Feldwick. I think it only right that In- spectors of schools should in every case examine private schools. There are various reasons why they should do so. In the first place, private schools are to a very great extent a saving to the Government, and we have it on record -- I have seen it myself . that those private schools -convent schools and others take a far higher standard than the Government schools do. It Take ordinary education is so in every case. and music : you will find that the Catholic schools obtain a far higher standard than is obtained in the other schools. I do not care who says to the contrary, I know that to be a fact. My opinion is that Education Boards throughout the colony should have no control whatever over the inspection -that the inspection should be made by officers appointed by the Govern- ment, who would be free from all local influ- ence ; and I trust the time will come when the (Government will see its way to act in that direction. The Hon. Mr. T. KELLY. -- Personally, I have no objection to private schools being ex- amined, but I do object to their being examined by the ordinary Inspectors of the Education Boards. The function of the Education Boards is to administer the Education Act to the best of their ability and local knowledge, and. if their Inspectors are to be hampered by being compelled to examine all private schools which may apply to be so examined. I think that will be very unjust indeed to the public schools, because a great portion of the time of the In- spectors will be taken up in inspecting pri- vate schools. If it is considered a politie thing or a correct thing to examine private schools, I think that should be done by a different staff of officers, supplied by the General Government ; but to say that the Education Boards shall be compelled to examine all private schools when the children of those schools could go to the public schools -- I do not think it would be right. The Hon. Mr. BOWEN .- There is no doubt a good deal in the complaint of the honourable gentleman who has just spoken - that the Boards of Education have been crippled in means; but there is no doubt that the Legis- lature intended that every private school in the colony should be examined if it wished to be examined. It was considered an advantage to the country that no school of any standing could venture to remain unexamined by an Inspector : the public would thus have some guarantee as to the quality of the teaching in private as well as in public schools. That was the intention of the Legislature, and I regret that it has not been carried out by. all the Education Boards. With regard to inspection, I have always been of opinion that the In- spectors should be under the control of the Department of Education. I dread the effects of centralisation, and should strongly object to departmental interference with the general management of primary schools ; but inspec- tion stands on a different footing. I think that Inspectors should be removed from time to time from one district to another, and not remain too long going the round of the same schools. The present system appears to me wrong altogether. Inspectors now have not the time to do their work thoroughly. It is too often a question of examination, whereas examining children is the least important duty of an In- spector. What we want of

Inspectors is that they should be guides and helpers of the teachers, especially in outlying districts. They should watch their manner of teaching ; take note of special ability, and encourage those who have to struggle with difficulties ; point out where they are wrong ; and, in fact, appear at the schools as friends rather than as dreaded examiners dropping on schools only to find fault. They should be able to recognise and not to snub originality. I do not think there are enough Inspectors. There is always little enough money for the proper maintenance of the schools, and therefore there is a tendency to reduce the number of Inspectors. I do not think it is realised how important the visits of properly qualified Inspectors are throughout the country, especially in the case of detached schools -- schools at a distance from the centres of population-in order to keep up the standard of education to what it ought to be. I should be very glad to see a special vote passed for inspection on a larger scale than exists at present. so that the whole scope of the Inspectors' duties might be enlarged, and that they should have time to give more attention to the working of schools than is now contemplated by most of the Education Boards. The Hon. Mr. TWOMEY. - The non-inspection of private schools is quite contrary to the intention of the Education Act and to the policy of the country. The policy of the country is compulsory education, and you allow,

<page:614>

outside the public schools, an education to take place which you do not inspect. That is entirely opposed to the policy of this country, and it should not be permitted. These schools ought to be inspected, so that the country would have a guarantee that proper education had been received in those schools. The object of education is to train up the citizens of the State, and for that reason the compulsory method has been adopted. But here you allow children in private schools to go uninspected, and thus you do not know whether those children are receiving a proper education or not. I believe - and the opinion is held by some lawyers-that a proper construction of the Education Act makes it mandatory on Education Boards to inspect such schools. However, some of them have refused to do so, though others have not, and the proper step to take is to make that point clear and plain, so as to compel Boards of Education to perform their proper functions, and inspect these schools. The Hon. Mr. W. C. WALKER. - Sir, there is no doubt that the logical intention of the Act of 1877, under which education is made compulsory, was that before exemption could be pleaded it should be shown that a child was receiving private education elsewhere -- that the State should be assured that that education was of sufficient character. No doubt that was the logical intention of the Act of 1877. Since then the Act has been administered without very much attention to that part of it. As far as the Government is concerned, they have always been jealous to see that no children were placed at a disadvantage by reason of private schools not being inspected, and they have appointed Inspectors to give certificates on the passing of standards, in order that the children attending private schools may be qualified for the public service. I regret that certain Boards have not been broad-minded enough to consider it to be their duty when asked to inspect the private schools. I think it was the intention that they should inspect. No one can say it was the duty of the Government to do it, because Parliament deliberately, in the Act of 1877, took the inspection out of the hands of the department and put it into the hands of the Boards. But, if the intentions of the Act are to be observed, they should be observed by those parties upon whose shoulders the statute places the burden of inspection. I consider, therefore, that those Boards which have been narrow-minded enough or short-sighted enough not to inspect have not been doing their duty under the Act. But, as I said before, in order to prevent any injustice or hardship, and to protect the rights of the children who are receiving education at private schools, the Government have for many years past approved of Inspectors especially to meet the case of those children- to protect their right as far as their entrance into the public service is concerned. To say the inspection should be taken away from the Boards is to open up a very wide question indeed, and I am not prepared at the present moment to enter upon a discussion of it even,

much less to propose legislation on the subject in Parliament. Our education system under the Education Act is gradually being tested. We are finding out what amendments have to be made, and it is better not to anticipate possible reforms which have to come, but to deal with the reforms that we have at the present moment to our hands, and we have a very large one at the present time in the matter of teachers' salaries. which I am quite content this year to place in a satisfactory position. As to private schools, which cannot get such inspection as they think they are entitled to, I may state my belief that the intention of the Act was that they should be inspected, and I may say the Government has all along endeavoured to meet the occasion by preventing those children who attend private schools from incurring any hardship or disadvantage by inspecting them specially so as to qualify them for Government appointments. The Hon. Mr. JENNINGS. - Is that the case when the Board does not appoint an Inspector ? Motion agreed to. YOUNG PERSONS PROTECTION BILL. On the question, That this Bill be read the third time. The Hon. Mr. JENNINGS said, . Sir, before you put the motion that this Bill be read the third time I have just two or three remarks to make in connection with it. I have opposed this measure consistently ever since it was introduced into this Council, and I have done so for reasons which are conscientious, and which I believe to be sound. I do not hold it is a good thing in a country like New Zealand, with the advantages that our young people have, that undue repression should be put upon them, such as this measure provides. I quite admit there are certain things that will pain any one who goes through the cities ; but I hold --- and statistics uphold my contention -it is not to the extent that warrants the introduction of a Bill such as this. With clauses 12 and 13 I have every sympathy, and I cordially support them. I think those clauses are necessary, and they make that portion of the Bill acceptable. Now, Sir, I had occasion to visit Wellington during last Easter, and at the street corners here I heard whispers against the innocent daughters of some of your best and most-respected citizens. The slanderous and vile things that were said simply astonished me. Again, I know of a case in Auckland where a spirited, light-hearted, joking woman was slandered by a scandalmonger to such an extent as to cause her almost to lose her situation. Even the other girls, her fellow-worker -. turned against her ; and to justify herself and her good name she laid an action for slander against the person. Two respected doctors before the Court declared the girl a *virgo intacta*, and the jury and Judge found the slanderer guilty. That scandalmonger cooled his heels in Mount Eden Gaol, having been sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment. It is knowing these facts, and being so deeply conscious of the harm that may be done to young children, has induced me to oppose this Bill, and which will compel me to vote

<page:615>

against the third reading. I have also to point out to the Minister in charge of the Bill that in Committee I endeavoured to have an amendment carried to effect that these so-called Protection Officers should wear some badge or uniform : and I gave an instance of what had occurred in this city, where two men were committed for trial for personating a detective and vilely assaulting a young woman. I say, if this Bill becomes law, if some such badge of office is not worn, you will have things occurring in this colony such as have been proved to have occurred in London and Paris under the C.D. Act. I do not think the Bill is at all necessary, for the law at the present time is quite sufficient, and does deal with neglected children. Frequently we see in our Police Courts cases of children brought up as being neglected, and the law provides for dealing with them. I detest this Bill, because I believe it will do injury ; and I do not think it will at all accomplish the object which the introducers have sought in asking us to place it on the statute-book. The Hon. Mr. McLEAN .- I shall not detain the House discussing the merits or demerits of this Bill. As is well known, I do not like it even in the condition in which it now is, although it is very much improved, though not to the extent we thought it was last night. There is this still in the Bill : that it is at the discretion of the officer whether he gives the parents notice or not. Now, in my opinion, that notice should be given. It should not be left to the discretion of the officer, and depend upon whether the answers are satisfactory.

Do you mean to tell me that the officer ever would be satisfied with any answer? Rarely so. I should say that very few notices will ever be given to parents in these cases. This is really a Bill to foist upon the colony a lot of billets for billet-hunters. There is no doubt of that in my mind ; and we shall have no end of "discreet women " getting billets under this Act. It is wonderful the amount of patronage that is asked for. The Bill is not to be brought into operation but by leave of the Governor, and I hope it will never be put into force. At all events, I shall put on record my opinion by voting against the third reading of the Bill. The Hon. Mr. T. KELLY .- A great change has been made in this Bill by the Council since it was first sent down by the Government. Upon its first appearance it was to come into operation throughout the colony upon the passing of the Bill. Owing to amendments made by the Council this has been modified to a great extent. It can now only be brought into operation in boroughs or counties by Order in Council, and the Government of the day must take the responsibility of bringing it into operation within any special district. That is a great change for the better. There must be a specific statement made and evidence furnished with regard to juvenile immorality in a borough or county before the Governor in Council would be justified in bringing the Act into operation. considered it was a slander upon the people of the colony to say that juvenile immorality was rampant within the large towns of the colony. That is not for a moment to be believed. Undoubtedly there is, to a certain extent, juvenile delinquency in the towns of New Zealand, as in all other towns, but it is untrue to say that it is specially prevalent here. The only effectual way to remedy that, to my mind, is to impress upon the parents to be more careful in the control of, and to remove temptation out of the path of, their children. Another amendment made by the Council was that it applied to young persons, when first introduced, of the age of sixteen and under. The Council reduced that to fourteen. It may be admitted that children of such tender years who are found in the street at late hours ought to be dealt with as proposed by the Bill, but that cannot apply to those of a more mature age. In consequence of these amendments made in the Bill since it was brought down it is much more workable, and I am content to give it a trial, and to see what effect it will have in remedying the evil complained of. The Hon. Mr. REEVES. - As the Bill now stands I wish also to vote for it. It has come within my own knowledge that even in some small towns in the colony which I could mention young men under the age of eighteen, and sometimes mere boys, congregate about the corners of the streets and make use of filthy language, so that any respectable female passing by is subject to insulting remarks. I think the time has come when we ought to put an end to such incipient larrikinism, or " hooliganism," as it has been called in the Old Country. At one time I was certainly indisposed to vote for the Bill. When it came before the Council last session I voted against it, but there have been alterations and improvements which make it more acceptable, and I have risen for the purpose of explaining my reasons for voting for the Bill. The Hon. Mr. PINKERTON .- Sir, I have no wish to delay the Bill for any length of time. I have good reason to believe the Bill will pass, but when it has passed it will be a perfectly useless measure. One objection I have to it is that we advertise ourselves to the world as a most immoral people, and say that we cannot trust our young folks in the streets after nine o'clock. If that is so, it is not our young people that are to blame-it must be our old people. Why not prevent the old people from being in the streets after nine o'clock, instead of preventing the young who are perfectly innocent, and are doing what their own parents allow ? If the older people were not there the young people could not take much harm. As to what my honourable friend Mr. Reeves has said about finding at the street-corners a larrikin element of youths of seven-teen, eighteen, or more, who use vile and filthy language to females, I quite agree with that ; but there is a law now which will prevent that. Every person using such language can be brought before a Magistrate and properly dealt with. L.

<page:616>

on the Bill as it first came down, but still it is a Bill that will advertise us to the world as a highly immoral people; and I am prepared to say that we are not a highly immoral people. We may have foolish young

people, and there are foolish young people in every city and in every country in the world : we may have careless parents, and there are careless parents in every town in the world : but when you have passed this Bill. and when it becomes law, you will not have effected one iota of good ; you will not have done anything to prevent the same sin going on then as now, you will only make it worse by driving it into the slums. The wrong- doers will be a little more cautious and a little more careful, but the sin will go on just as it That is my reason for ob- has been doing. jecting to the Bill. The Council divided. AYES, 20. Kelly, T. Stevens Arkwright Swanson Barnicoat Louisson Bolt Tomoana Montgomery Reeves Twomey Bowen Walker, W. C. Rigg Harris Williams. Jenkinson Scotland Smith, A. L. Jones NOES, 11. Ormond Johnston Baillie Pinkerton Feldwick Kelly, W. Shrimski. Gourley Kerr Jennings McLean Majority for, 9. Bill read the third time. The Council adjourned at twenty-five minutes to five o'clock p.m. #cc-zero HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. Thursday, 25th July, 1901. First Readings-New Member-Land for Settlements Bill. Mr. SPEAKER took the chair at half-past two o'clock. PRAYERS. FIRST READINGS. Omaka Investigation Bill, Charitable Gifts Bill, Cook County Vehicle Licensing Bill, Young Persons Protection Bill. NEW MEMBER. Mr. F. H. HASELDEN took the oath, and his seat for Patea. LAND FOR SETTLEMENTS BILL. On the question, That the amendments made in this Bill in Committee be agreed to, Mr. WILFORD (Wellington Suburbs) said, -- I move to recommit the Bill in order to re- consider clause 9, which is the provision giving power to the Governor to make regulations in defiance of "The Public Works Act, 1894." 'I move for the recommittal of this clause for the following reasons: In the first place. I do not consider it proper that power should be given to modify any statute law of the land by regulation or rule. Mr. SEDDON (Premier) .-- Will the honour- able gentleman allow me to interrupt him for a moment ? The honourable member for Dune din City (Mr. Barclay) has an amendment on the Order Paper to recommit this clause. I referred the matter to the Crown Law Officers, and we propose to strike out the words to which excep- tion is taken and substitute the following : - " The provisions of . The Public Works Act. 1894.' relating to claims for compensation. are hereby modified in as far as the same are incon- sistent with the principal Act and this Act." It will save time, perhaps, if I say that we are not going to object to the Bill going into Committee at once. Mr. WILFORD. - The other objection I have to the clause is that it is not explicit : the clause itself does not define the extent or scope of the power. It states that the Governor mav from time to time make regulations prescribing the procedure and forms to be used. and making and disposing of claims for compensation. I do not believe in the proposition. I do not consider that power should be given for regulations to he made in the way set out in the Bill, and I think there will be no safety to the public because there is no check whatever as to whether the regulations made are ultra vires or not. Any regulation made in pursuance of a statute should always be made subject to that test- that it should be within the authority and sub- ject to the scope of the statute enabling it to be so made : and if any regulation is made which is ultra rires, that regulation would he set aside by a Court of law. No regulation made under the authority of this section could be set aside on the ground of being ultra vires. The defence of it being ultra vires would be available to no one who pleaded it. I might say that the side I have taken in this matter is the side I have taken from the first. On the second reading I disagreed with the clause, and in Committee I divided against the clause, -the voting being twenty-eight votes for and thirty-two votes against. On that occasion several members said to me that they were not aware of the purpose of the division, and that they had only just arrived in the House when the division-bell rang. I feel quite sure that some of the members who voted with the mi- nority on that occasion would now, if they were given an opportunity, help to excise this clause from the Bill. I cannot, I am sorry to say. accept the amendment of the Premier, because I am afraid of its effect. Mr. SEDDON .- Then I shall not recommit the Bill. Mr. WILFORD .- That is a matter for the House. I will vote against the clause, because I disagree with the principle set out therein. Mr. HERRIES (Bay of Plenty) .- I do not quite understand the amendment of the Pre- mier. I think this clause ought to be struck out altogether. I do not think the statute

law should be overridden by regulation, and I trust

<page:617>

when the clause is recommitted the clause will be so amended that the statute cannot be overridden by regulation. Mr. SEDDON (Premier) .- As I understand it, the recommitment is moved simply for the bond fide purpose of amending what is looked upon as necessary-that is, to prevent the modifying of the statute law by regulation. If that is the understanding I have no objection to this clause being recommitted, but if it goes beyond that I certainly object. When the Bill was in Committee I promised to look into the matter. My attention was called to the point by the member for Wellington City, Mr. Atkinson, and I think by one or two others, and I then said I would look into the question. I have had the matter looked into. The following are the reasons why the clause was placed in the Bill as it stands now: The provisions of "The Public Works Act, 1894," differ from those of the Land for Settlements Act as regards the procedure for making and hearing claims for compensation, and the time at which steps should be taken, and necessarily so. The constitution of the Court before which the claims are made is different from what is provided in the Public Works Act. The two Acts differ in respect of the payment of Assessors, and, consequently, what was intended was that the regulations under the Land for Settlements Act should obtain where they differ from the Public Works Act. It would have been better if it, had been put that way at first. This clause, of course, will practically have altered the statute law by regulations. Mr. WILFORD. - Now, it will validate an ultra vires regulation. Mr. SEDDON. . No. Now, section 18 of the principal Act says that the provisions of the Public Works Act, in so far as they are modified use#cc-zero by the principal Act, shall apply to claims for compensation under the Land for Settlements Act. That is already in the Land for Settlements Act. It is clear and explicit, and it is desirable that those modifications should be specified by regulation. Now, as that is already in the original Act, this clause is not at all inconsistent, but was contemplated when clause 18 was put in the principal Act. However, the objection is that you are modifying an Act of Parliament by regulation. That I hold to be constitutional, and I am supported by the honourable member for Dunedin City (Mr. Barclay) in that contention. It would, of course, be dangerous- Captain RUSSELL .- You supported it the other night. Mr. SEDDON .- I always stick to my Bill, and, in any case. I should have had it amended in another place. However. I prefer that we should go into Committee, and do it here as long as I am met by the House fairly. I cannot agree to the clause being struck out altogether. Mr. WILFORD .- What would be the good of striking out those few lines ? Mr. SEDDON .- After the words, " principal Act," I want to strike out all the following words, and insert the words "the provisions of 'The Public Works Act, 1894,' relating to claims for compensation are hereby modified in so far as the same are inconsistent with the principal Act and this Act." Captain RUSSELL -Where do they differ ? Mr. SEDDON .- They differ. first of all, in the way of hearing claims for compensation ; they differ as regards the constitution of the Court ; and they differ as regards the payment of Assessors. Mr. ATKINSON (Wellington City). - The amendment I understand the Premier desires to adopt if the Bill goes back to Committee is to strike out all the words in the 9th clause after the word "Act," in the fourth line, and to substitute "The provisions of . The Public Works Act, 1894,' relating to claims for compensation are hereby modified in so far as the same are inconsistent with the principal Act and this Act." An Hon MEMBER. - What is the good of that if there are regulations ? Mr. ATKINSON .- You are referring to the second part of the clause, the power to make ultra vires regulations. I am quite with the honourable member for the Suburbs as to the second part, but I agree with the Premier that There the first part requires amendment too. are two improper powers given by the clause : First, the power to legislate by regulation ; secondly, the legislative sanction to be given to regulations already made, even if now ultra vires. With regard to the amendment now suggested, I would ask the House to consider whether the words are necessary at all, and whether section 18 of the principal Act, which we are amending, has not already the same effect which it is proposed to enact by this amendment. The

terms of section 18 of the principal Act are :- "Every claim for compensation under this Act shall be deemed a claim for compensation within the meaning of . The Public Works Act, 1894,' and all the provisions of that Act, save in so far as the same are modified by this Act, shall apply thereto for all purposes in like manner as if the land to be taken under this Act were land taken for a (Government work under that Act." Therefore, the amendment the Premier suggests would not carry the matter further than section 18 of the principal Act, which he proposes to amend. We should, I think, strike out the 2nd subsection. Mr. BARCLAY (Dunedin City) .-- It is true that I cannot claim to be completely proficient in the forms and methods of procedure of this House, and it was with some considerable surprise that I observed a fellow-member to- night rise and propose exactly the same motion which was on the Order Paper in my name. How it was that that gentleman chose to do this is difficult for me to understand. because it seems to me it was the sort of thing one member ought not to do to another, unless, indeed, he is very anxious to advertise himself. 8.0. It seems to me, Sir, that the matter might have been settled without any discussion whatever. The proposal of the Premier to alter

<page:618>

the clause as he has explained to the Committee is entirely satisfactory, as far as I can gather. By the alterations which the Premier proposes the objectionable feature of altering statute law by rules and regulations is entirely deleted from the clause. It was indeed interesting and amusing to hear the honourable member for Wellington Suburbs objecting to that clause on the ground. somewhat haltingly and weakly, that he thought it was rather improper. Why, he does not seem to know that if that clause is allowed to go as it is it violates the very gravest and most fundamental principles of the Constitution. He never seems to have had an inkling of that fact. He has no idea of the enormity of the offence, but goes and tells the Committee that he thinks it is rather improper. Well, I hope the Premier's suggestion will be entirely carried out. It is entirely satisfactory to those of us who understand the question and the subject, and I feel sure it will be satisfac- tory to the House as a whole. Mr. WILFORD (Wellington Suburbs) .- Sir, Mr. SPEAKER .- The honourable member cannot be allowed to speak again to the amend- ment he has moved. Mr. WILFORD .- Am I not allowed to make a personal explanation ? Mr. SPEAKER. - Yes, you may do that. Mr. WILFORD .- I would like to point out that the statement made by the junior member for Dunedin City (Mr. Barclay) with reference . to me is quite incorrect. I always take the greatest care in speaking with absolutely no warmth when discussing a matter which reflects personally on myself. I would like to inform the honourable gentleman that the "jumping of the claim " was done by him and not by me, because when the discussion took place in Com- mittee I moved the very same thing I am moving now. The honourable member was not in his seat at the time, and when I saw that he was inclined to jump my claim I took care that he should not do so effectively, although he might succeed in advertising himself by placing his motion on a Supplementary Order Paper. The honourable member seems to be an adept in that particular class of advertisement which he accuses me of taking part in. I can assure him that I had absolutely no intention what- ever of allowing him to jump my claim, and that I intentionally got up and spoke before he could have an opportunity of what might be termed "poking his nose" into business which did not concern him. Mr. BARCLAY (Dunedin City) .- Speaking in strictly personal explanation, I desire to say that I knew absolutely nothing, and this is the first I have heard of any motion or intention to move by the honourable member for the Wellington Suburbs. Mr. WILFORD .- That is what I said ; you knew nothing. Mr. PIRANI (Palmerston) .- I cannot see how the Premier's amendment touches the question at issue at all. I want to know whether the Premier is willing that sub- clause (2) should be struck out. That, I under- stand, is the clause which violates the funda- mental principles of our Constitution according to the junior member for Dunedin City. Do I understand the Premier that that is to be struck out ? Mr. SEDDON .-- No. Mr. PIRANI .- Well, that is the part of the clause I object to, and, therefore, I strongly support the motion of the honourable member for the Suburbs to recommit the whole of the clause, so that we can

have an intelligent vote as to whether we are going to validate regulations which are made in violation of the law as it stood. Now, the member for Dunedin City (Mr. Barclay) seems to object to his claim being jumped ; but he forgets that just before the motion was moved he was in earnest confab with the Premier. We know that when the Premier takes the trouble to go round to a private member just before a motion is moved, and discusses the matter affably with him, there is something in the wind, and I clearly received the impression-and other members, and I think the member for the Suburbs too-that it was for the purpose of preventing the moving of the recommittal. If the member for the Suburbs had not moved the recommittal of the Bill, there are half-a-dozen other members who would have, because there is no doubt that the most objectionable portion of this clause is subsection (2), but therein the amendment is peculiar, because, if you look at section 18 of the Act of last year, it is exactly what the Premier's amendment will make clause 9 of this Bill. Now, I say this : that in connection with the whole land-settlement policy -not only land for settlements, but the whole of the land-laws of the Government- they frequently issue regulations which are in contravention of the provisions of the law. Mr. SEDDON .- I will go on with the Bill without recommitting it. Mr. PIRANI .- We are not asking the Premier to recommit it ; we are asking the House. And it does not matter a button what the Premier thinks, or what he is going to do ; if the House orders the recommittal he will have to recommit. But I say I can produce a number of regulations of the Government with regard to the settlement of the land which are in contravention of the provisions of the Land Act. Now, I say this : that if regulations have been made in contravention of the law, and we are asked to legalise them, then it is only fair to the House that we should be told what the regulations are which are ultra vires, what the effect of them has been, and why they should be legalised. If the House is not taken into the confidence of the Government in that respect. I do not think it is fair to ask us, without that confidence, to legalise them as is proposed by section 9. Mr. McGOWAN (Minister of Justice) .- I beg to move that the recommittal be confined to the first part of clause 9. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL .- As a point of order, I would ask if the position is now not this: There is, first of all, a motion for the consideration of the report, on that an amendment, and subsection (1) to meet this amendment. Then on that a second amendment. another warning is given by the member for Mr. SPEAKER .- The original motion has Palmerston, that they are going to fight the been disposed of by the omission of the words other subsection, which is quite a common " the amendments be agreed to." The position thing. now is, to add in lieu of the words omitted the words, "the Bill be recommitted for the further consideration of clause 9" ; to which a The motion proposed was to recommit the further amendment is moved, to insert after the whole clause, but the paragraph to which he word " consideration " the words, " of the first took exception was No. 1. subsection." If these words should be inserted, and the Bill be recommitted, the Committee will be debarred from dealing with the second heard. At all events, it was simply to amend subsection of clause 9. The second amendment paragraph 1. Let us get into Committee, and get on with the business, and not stay here till is in order, as the first amendment has become probably two or three in the morning. I want practically a substantive motion. Mr. SEDDON .-- I hope this is not an attempt to facilitate business, and that is why I con- to keep the Bill where it is, for if that is so I sented to the clause. I hope, therefore, that the desire to ask the House to negative both pro- House will divide now. posals, and let the Bill go to another place where it can be amended. I do not care about actually confirmed everything I have said. He doing that, but I do like to have good faith has admitted to the House that my conjecture kept. The member for Palmerston said he saw that he was consulting the honourable member me in conference with the member for Dunedin for Dunedin, Mr. Barclay, about this recom- City, and he came to the conclusion that it was mittal was absolutely correct. I knew nothing with the view of stopping the recommittal. about it, but it struck me while the Hon. the Mr. PIRANI .- No, no, but to stop me Premier's back was interposed between the Speaker and the honourable member for Dunedin moving. Mr.

<page:619>

SEDDON .- It was nothing of the kind, City when the Speaker was putting the question, and I do not see why you have come to that that there was not much opportunity for any conclusion. I desire to do this : Objection was member in that position of being observed if he taken to subsection (1), and it was pointed out rose to move an amendment. As a matter of that great power was given to Ministers, which fact, had the honourable member for Wellington would practically enable them to set aside an Suburbs not risen, the motion to agree to the amendments would have been carried. Act of Parliament. I then said that I would see what the necessity was; but it was neither the member for Wellington Suburbs nor the member for Wellington Suburbs rose. member for Dunedin City (Mr. Barclay) who short-he only resumed his seat afterwards. called my attention to it. The member for Wellington Suburbs explained Mr. PIRANI .- The member for Wellington #cc-zero that one of his reasons for moving the recom- Cit v. mittal of section 9 of the Bill was in reference Mr. SEDDON .- It matters very little to me to subclause (2). If the Premier was genuine in who it was, because I desire to know how we his desire, why did he not consult the member stand. I should not like to see anything im- of the House who pointed out the defect in the perfect in the legislation, nor should I like any great constitutional change made which might clause to him. The point I wish to accentuate is that it was the member for Wellington be used wrongly. I therefore, after conference with the Law Officers, made up my mind that Suburbs who took exception to subclause (2), and this was a new departure, and decided to get it that is not the subsection that the honourable altered. After seeing the Law Officers I took member for Dunedin was objecting to at all. How then can it be said that the member for that amendment to Mr. Barclay this evening to Wellington Suburbs jumped his place ? show it to him. Mr. PIRANI .- Why Mr. Barclay ? say that the statement made by the Premier Mr. SEDDON .- Because he had this motion on the Order Paper for the recommittal of of what took place in respect to the conversa- tion he had with me is strictly correct, and the clause 1. statement made by the honourable member for Mr. PIRANI .- My conclusions were, then, Palmerston is utterly and entirely incorrect. correct. Mr. SEDDON .- I then showed the member could judge, consulting me with the object of for Dunedin City the amendment that I pro- getting me to withdraw my proposition and pre- posed, and arranged for him to move the re- vent the Bill getting into Committee. That committal, which I would not oppose. statement is entirely incorrect. I can only sav, Mr. BARCLAY .- That is so. with reference to any difficulty that might have Mr. SEDDON .-- Then, he said that the first arisen in my catching your eve, in consequence amendment proposed by the Law Officers did of the Premier intervening, that I certainly do not go far enough, and I asked him to see the not think I should be under any greater dis- Law Officers, and to let me have an amendment advantage in that respect than the honourable to meet the case, and that is the amendment member for Palmerston. Mr. PIRANI .--- Mr. Wilford's. Mr. SEDDON .- That was about subsection (1). Mr. PIRANI .-- No, subsection (2). Mr. SEDDON .-- I can only speak of what I Mr. PIRANI (Palmerston) .---- The Premier has Mr. SEDDON .- 1 was in my place when the Mr. PIRANI .- The Premier's memory is very Mr. BARCLAY (Dunedin City) .- I rise to He said that the Premier was, as far as he

<page:620>

Mr. SEDDON (Premier) .- I do not know that any other man in the House would have conceived that which was stated by the honour- able member for Palmerston -that I purposely interposed between the honourable member for Dunedin City and himself, so as to prevent him catching your eve. It so happened that when the honourable member for Wellington Suburbs rose I was sitting in my place here. Mr. WILFORD (Wellington Suburbs) .-- Sir, might I suggest that perhaps it would be just as well to get on with the Bill. I have listened to three or four speeches discussing the ques- tion of to whom belongs the credit of having discovered the wrongful effect of this particular clause. It does not matter who discovered it ; if it is discovered, that is sufficient. Let us get on with the work. and put the clause right. So far as I am concerned, I know perfectly well who first introduced the matter, but we need not go into that. I shall

suggest to the Hon. the Premier, however, that he allow the whole clause to go into Committee, for my motion was this : "That the Bill be recommitted for the purpose of reconsidering clause 9." The House divided on the question, " That the words ' the first subsection of' be inserted in the motion before the words ' clause 9.'" AYES, 31. Allen, E. G. Hall O'Meara Parata Hall-Jones Barclay Bennet Hanan Seddon Steward Hogg Carneross Symes Carroll Houston Ward Duncan Lawry Witheford. McGowan Field Mckenzie, R. Fisher Tellers. McLachlan Flat man Colvin Fraser, A. L. D. McNab Mills Stevens. (Hilfedder NOES, 29. Rhodes Arnold Heke Russell, G. W. Herries Atkinson Russell, W. R. Hornsby Bollard Smith, G. J. Hutcheson Buddo Lang Tanner Collins Thompson. R. Laurenson Ell Thomson, J. W. Fraser, W. Massey Meredith Tellers. Graham Pirani Millar Guinness Monk Wilford. Hardy PAIRS. For. Against. Morrison - Allen, J. Lethbridge Napier. Smith, E. M. McGuire. Majority for, 2. Words inserted, and Bill recommitted for the reconsideration of subsection (1) of clause 9. IN COMMITTEE. Clause 9, subsection (11. - " 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 re- spect of the compulsory taking of land under the principal Act, and for that purpose modify- ing the provisions of 'The Public Works Act, 1894,' in its application to such claims." Mr. SEDDON moved to strike out all the words after "principal Act," and to insert the following words: "The provisions of . The Public Works Act, 1894.' relating to claims for compensation, are hereby modified in so far as the same are inconsistent with the principal Act and this Act." Amendment agreed to. Bill reported and amendments agreed to. On the question, That the Bill be 8.30. read a third time, Mr. HERRIES (Bay of Plenty) said. - Sir. as a great many incidents took place in Commit- tee, and as many amendments were moved. which traversed the whole land policy of the Government, it seems to me to be proper that some discussion should take place on the third reading ; otherwise the actions of members who moved the various amendments in Com- mittee, where their speeches were not reported. might be open to misconstruction and probably would be misconstrued by their political enemies. I had the pleasure of moving an important amendment, allowing all settlers under the Act to acquire the freehold. It was stated in Committee, and also has been stated all through the colony, that the Opposition --- no, I will not say Opposition, because we all support the Liberal policy. I will say that the ex opposed to Seddonism are anxious to give people the freehold, in order that they may buy up their estates and bring back the old system of the aggregation of large estates. I take this opportunity of totally denying that this is our intention. We are quite willing. and always have been willing, to have an Act passed to limit the amount of freehold that any one person can hold. And that is the reason why we approve of the Land for Settlements Act, because it does so limit the amount that can be held by one person, because the State can step in at any time and take the freehold from him ; therefore the Act of which this is an amendment is certainly a check to any large aggregation of estates that could take place. But why, Sir, do we desire to allow every person to acquire the freehold? It is be- cause we desire every man to be free on his own place. It is said that the lease in perpetuity is as good as the freehold. So it is theoretically. Theoretically you can have a 999-years lease, and as long as you pay your rent you have what is as good as a freehold. But practically it is not as good as a freehold The settler under the lease in perpetuity is still under the thumb of the Land Board, and as long as the Land Board is a political machine I say it is wrong that any settler should be under the thumb of the Land Board : and though per- sonally members of Lands Boards may do nothing to cause suspicion to be cast upon them -they may act uprightly -still I know from my own knowledge, that fear is in the heart of the settlers and they have some indetinite ideas that if they vote against the Government it is quite possible they may suffer for it through the Land Board, and I say that is not a position

<page:621>

which is for the benefit of the country settlers, { drained swamp, as the amendment of the and it is not a position in which country settlers ought to be placed. And we also know that under the lease in perpetuity

you cannot transfer unless with the consent of the Land Board. Under the freehold you can transfer, and a man may cut up his property amongst his children : but under the lease in perpetuity a settler always has to have the consent of the Land Board. That is one of the principal reasons why I wish to give the settlers the freehold. But the principal reason, to my mind, is that nearly every settler I have spoken to in my electorate who holds a Government leasehold has expressed a wish to have the freehold, and it is my duty as their representative to endeavour to give to them that which they desire; and that is the reason which impelled me to move the amendment which, I am sorry to say, was rejected in Committee last night. I regret that that amendment, together with other amendments, was rejected. I will not deal at length with clause 9. That has been dealt with by other honourable members. It is an inherent wrong as the member for Dunedin City (Mr. Barclay) pointed out-and it is contrary to the principles of our Constitution, that regulations should override the statute law. He may be satisfied with the amendment of the Premier, but I am certainly not, because it is not right that regulations should override the statute law. Why are we asked now, in subsection (2) of clause 9. to validate certain actions which are illegal? The honourable member for Dunedin City (Mr. Barclay) is in the position of voting to validate illegal Acts. I say that is a position I am surprised that a member of the legal profession and a professor of constitutional history should have taken up. I say that no man should take up the position of endeavouring to validate that which was wrong at the first ; and the illegal acts must have been done intentionally. It was not a mere slip, because last session we had a consolidation of the Land for Settlements Act, and if the regulations were contrary to the Public Works Act they ought to have been set right then, or an amendment of the law should have been passed. That would have been the constitutional way of dealing with the matter. I will not deal with the amendments which the Premier made in Committee. They are on their trial ; but there was one amendment that I must, in the interests of my constituents, object to very strongly, and that is the compulsory residence from the very beginning and for all time. Now, that will be most unpopular in the country. I believe the Premier has done it with a view of checking dummyism and speculation, but I think that should have been done away with by a far better method for the settlers. I say it is grossly unfair to compel a settler to go at once and live on the land. Of course, this course is less unfair as applied to a Land for Settlements Bill, as the land is supposed to be fit for settlement at once ; but it is quite possible there may be undrained swamps in a property taken over, and is it fair to compel a settler to go and live on an un- Premier compels him ? The Land Board has no option. The Board has no power to allow a man to reside off his section, and it seems to me this will be a gross hardship to settlers. It has always seemed to me that compulsory residence, if strictly enforced, will have the effect of preventing genuine settlers from going on the land. Suppose 1, on my farm in the Waikato, have a man working for me on wages; why should that man not be allowed to take up a piece of land under the land-for-settlements policy, using his wages to improve it, and, when he has improved it and brought it into cultivation, settle and marry and become a good settler ? An Hon. MEMBER .- You would not be able to come down here for the session. Mr. HERRIES .- No; if I had a section of land under this Act I should be prevented by this clause the Minister has put in from coming down to Parliament, because I should be compelled to reside on my property. Mr. SEDDON .-- All the more reason why we should keep the clause in the Bill. Mr. HERRIES .-- The trouble is that it precludes me from taking up a section if I wished to do so. But I think the Premier should consider the question of allowing genuine settlers to take up land without strictly enforcing the compulsory residence clause. I know there are plenty of young men who are not able to take up land because they would have to give up their employment and wages and " do a perish " for several years on a piece of land ; whereas it would be far better to allow them to earn their wages and spend their wages on a piece of land which they could settle upon when they wanted to get married and become settlers. Then, there was another amendment of the Premier's. It was inserted, I believe, with a good intention, but I am sorry the amendment in it moved by the member

for Palmerston was not carried. The clause I refer to reads as follows : " It shall not be lawful for a lessee under this Act to transfer the land comprised in the lease within the period of five years from the date of such lease." The member for Palmerston moved that a man should be allowed to transfer to a member of his own family. If that had been accepted by the House it would have mitigated the harshness of this provision. The intention of the provision is, I believe, to prevent speculation, and, although it will tend to a great extent to prevent speculation, I think a lessee should have been allowed to transfer to members of his own family-that is, if the Land Board raised no objection to it. And, as the whole question of land policy is under discussion, I must express my regret that the Government have not brought down any provision for making the Land Boards elective. Why, we had the honourable member for Geraldine accusing the Boards of all sorts of malpractices. I do not know whether he is going to get up in the House and reiterate the statements he made in Committee, but they were such as to horrify us : and the sooner, in my opinion, the

<page:622>

system of nominated Land Boards, especially so far as members of this House are concerned, is done away with the better. I think it is unfair for their political opponents at elections to find that members of the House occupy positions on Land Boards, for it gives them an influence over the settlers that is wrong. Now, Sir, in conclusion, when this Bill is passed what will be the general idea created ? It will be seen that great faults have been discovered in the present land-for-settlement policy of the Government. The Premier himself has confessed in Committee that the system of the ballot is nothing short of gambling and swindling. He has endeavoured by the new clause 8 to mitigate that, and to try and prevent the evils he has so graphically described in Committee. But I want to ask why it is that, when during all these years this gambling and swindling has been going on at the ballot-box. -- for the Premier told us he had seen it, that he had attended the balloting and had seen the manipulation of the ballot - why is it, then, that no Bill has been brought down before to try and defeat this swindling? The Premier pretends to know about it ; why is it that we have this provision to prevent it put simply in a land-for-settlements clause? Why is it not in a Land Bill, to apply to all Crown lands? I do trust the Premier, now he has admitted the almost entire failure of his land policy, now he has admitted that the machinery is altogether defective- I do trust that he will bring down another Land Bill and try to remedy these defects in the same way as he has done, or thinks he has, in this Bill. This is only a partial measure. It does not apply to the whole of the lands of the colony. and if the system of ballot is wrong for the land for settlements it is equally wrong for all the Crown lands of the colony ; and the effect is that there will be two ballot systems, one for the land for settlements and the other for the rest of the Crown lands of the colony. I trust we shall see an amendment brought down, tardy though the remedy must now be; and, though it should have been done years ago, I trust it will be brought down, though even at a late stage of the session. Mr. MILLS (Minister of Trade and Customs) .-. Sir, the speech we have just listened to is precisely like a great number of other speeches that we have heard in this House during the last ten years. It is a very good Opposition speech, and there can be no doubt on which side the honourable member for the Bay of Plenty is to be found. We always know where to look for him and what to expect. Therefore I was not at all surprised to-night to hear him defend the freehold tenure as the panacea for all evils. That has been reiterated over and over again in this House ; but at the same time we have managed to make headway, even though it may have been at the point of the political bayonet, in forcing this land-for-settlements policy through the House. Day after day has been consumed in what we may call useless argument, argument which in many cases has been nothing more than obstruction - a mere wasting of the time of the House. Mr. Herries But, after all, we have managed to carry the policy through ; the colony has approved of the policy ; and now, when the Premier deems it advisable to go a little further to protect the interests of those in the country who need that protection most, we have to fight the battle over and over again. But, Sir, the

Liberal party are prepared to do battle, and to stand to their guns so long as is needed, in order to carry on the policy that we feel is best and most beneficial for New Zealand. I was very much surprised to hear the remarks of the honourable member for the Bay of Plenty in respect to the Land Boards. Sir, I think these remarks were most uncalled for. Sir, the honourable member for the Bay of Plenty told us that the Land Boards were political machines. I say it is a disgrace to any man who utters such a sentiment in this House, because every one who knows the colony, as a great number in this House do, must acknowledge the great services which are rendered by those gentlemen who occupy the high position of members on the Land Boards throughout the colony. An Hon. MEMBER. -- What did the Premier say about them? Mr. MILLIS. --- Well, the Premier expressed an opinion with regard to the Land Boards in only a general way, saying in some instances it might be wise to make some change; but it does not follow, because there may be some few exceptions, that all the members are not the proper class of men to administer the Land Act and its amendments. I challenge contradiction to this statement from any one who has any knowledge of the Land Boards of the colony. We have on those bodies men who have devoted a great deal of time and evpatie to the interests and welfare of the districts which they represent, and we are very largely indebted to the good local knowledge and sound common-sense of the men who give their services to the country by sitting on those bodies. Therefore I consider it most unfair to have any reflection cast on men of that class, who are not here to defend themselves. An Hon. MEMBER. - There are plenty of them here. Mr. MILLS. - I am alluding to those members of Land Boards who do not hold seats in this House: those who are here can defend themselves. But, Sir, the Opposition have always taken a jaundiced view of any matter which reflected at all on their policy or party, and therefore they call these Boards political machines, simply because they do not carry out a policy which their party wish them to do. But, Sir, the members of the Land Board have to guide their actions by the statutes which have passed through this Parliament, and they administer them to the best of their ability; and I venture to say, in spite of all the -I was going to say rubbish about the fraud, although I must qualify that statement, as I admire the desire for it in some who have imbibed that sentiment from their childhood, but at the same time I believe in progresses, moving steadily forward -- I am quite satisfied

<page:623>

that for every one person in the country who wishes now to acquire the freehold there are from three to five at least who prefer the lease in perpetuity, with its reasonable and wise provisions. The lease in perpetuity has enabled hundreds of poor men to make homes for themselves in this colony, when they had not the ghost of a show before it came into operation. In olden times men struggled and strove for two or three years, and sometimes longer, to acquire sufficient means to purchase a small piece of land, and when they came to take it up they had to work another three or four years to save money with which to fence it and turn it to account. And now what do we find? They come before the Land Board, deposit their half-year's rent, go to the ballot, and practically secure part of a fertile meadow for a homestead; or they go in for another class of country, rough bush land, and hew out homes for themselves and families in the back blocks, in what had been a primitive wilderness. And therefore I say these provisions made by the Government are those which are approved of by the country, which is shown by the great number of applications which are put in. And it does not matter a rap what my honourable friend the member for the Bay of Plenty will say to the contrary, the facts are indisputable. Sir, I have always been told that the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and what is the result of this land-for-settlements policy, I ask? Go where you will, take any district you like, name any estates which have been purchased by the Government up to the present time, and you will find there on them a lot of thriving settlers, and I believe that with one exception - a very small place, and that is in my own district - there are none other of these resumed estates but what you may call an unqualified success. And if that is the case, knowing it to be so, why should we not, each and all of us, join together and pass a law in such a way that we know it will prove

beneficial, and encourage those who have to live on the sections and make their living out of this land. None of us wish to rack-rent them ; but I have heard it said on the other side that the Government have paid in some cases too much for the land; in other cases that we wish to confiscate other people's property ; whereas it is the naked truth that every one of these estates has been offered-well, I might qualify that by saying with one or two exceptions-to the Government ; and in the case of those that have been bought the Government have had to pay the fair and full value for what they have acquired. It is well understood that if you take New Zealand as a whole there is not a very large area, and it is quite time that some of these large estates which cannot be profitably worked by the owners themselves should be used for closer settlement. I might use a good many more arguments in favour of the Bill, but it is now at its third reading, and therefore we can be perfectly satisfied of what the final result will be: but before I sit down I wish to reply to a few remarks which fell from the honourable member for Wairarapa with regard to the Advances to Settlers Office. Now, Sir, I have heard from some members casually, at other times in personal interviews, that there is some dissatisfaction with regard to the administration of that office ; but such dissatisfaction is not, I think, genuine, it seems to me one-sided, with this exception : that in some cases the valuers who have gone to value the holdings of applicants who wished to borrow from the office have not given them what they deemed a fair estimate of the value of their lands and improvements. Well, Sir, that may be, or it may not be ; but let us look at the true position for a moment. When first the advances-to-settlers policy was initiated in this House it was agreed upon by both sides of the House that the cardinal principle must be the safety of the State first ; and those who want to borrow from the Advances to Settlers Office should not forget to bear in mind that there is a limit to the advances that can be made by the Board. The Board is limited to advancing more than 50 per cent. on improvements, or three-fifths on freeholds. With these limitations in regard to what can be borrowed on the capital value, applicants who have been used to borrow as much as three-fifths and four-fifths of the value of their property, and in some cases more than its value, and had to pay a very heavy interest for their loan, if they had not to pay a rack-rent rate of interest, are naturally disappointed. But it is impossible for the Board, who are acting under and within the four corners of the statute, to do more than the statute provides. At the same time, there may be reasonable grievances now and again with some valuer who may not take the same rosy view that the settler does. We know that the man who has lived on a certain place for many years often becomes attached to it. He takes a very different view from that of a stranger. Accordingly, when applying for a loan he makes a statement putting a value upon his property which to others may seem fictitious. That is not so in all cases, but there are very many such instances. Then, when the replies come from the office, if not satisfactory the applicants feel aggrieved. In many cases the first thing the applicant does is to rush to a member with his grievance. The member listens to him, but he hears only one side of the question. The member cannot possibly go into details of valuation of properties; it is simply impossible for him to do so. Therefore I would ask honourable members to be very careful when receiving these statements. So long as I preside over the department I shall at all times be very pleased to give all the information that I possibly can to refute misstatements that may be made. In two or three cases I have had independent valuations made, and I can assure honourable gentlemen that these valuations have generally borne out those of the department. When one remembers that the Advances to Settlers Office is now doing a business of something like \$500,000 per annum, we can reasonably expect that there will be some cases of valuers not taking as rosy a view of things as

<page:624>

the applicants would wish, and reporting accordingly. Before sitting down I would say this: that the valuers themselves should take more responsibility than they do. I say emphatically that a man who is suitable and competent to be a valuer should have the courage of his opinions when he goes to make a valuation. At any rate, let me say, he should never say anything to mislead the applicant, but he should

let them clearly understand what his views are with regard to the holding that he is valuing. If this were done in all cases there would be much less unpleasantness. The statement of the honourable member for Wairarapa that they are sent out and instructed to make a low valuation for certain purposes is most unwarrantable, and I desire now to assure the honourable gentleman most emphatically that his statement is not correct. So far as I know, nothing of the kind is done : and I assure the House that the gentleman who is the head of the department has but one desire, and that is to do the best he can for the applicants for loans, whilst at the same time carefully and jealously guarding the interests of his department. I have only to say, in conclusion, that the office I refer to had up to the 31st March last advanced nearly \$3,000,000. The honourable member will, therefore, readily understand that it is quite likely that amongst the great number of those who apply for a loan unsuccessfully there may be misunderstandings ; but I know that the wish of the Valuer-General and of the Government is that we should get as near as we can to bed-rock valuation, so that all loans applied for may be made upon the valuation upon which the applicant has probably been paying taxes for two or three years. That would only be right and fair ; but if there are alterations in buildings and other improvements the property has to be revalued before any moneys can be advanced. In conclusion, let me say, when statements against the department are at times being circulated broadcast, I would ask honourable members to remember that "One story is good until another is told." Mr. HOGG (Masterton) .-- This Bill, Sir, when it was introduced, appeared to me to be a somewhat harmless Bill. It was intended, I believe, to cure a few omissions and defects in the consolidation measure that was passed last session. The very protracted debate, however, that we had in Committee last evening proves that it has served an exceedingly useful purpose. It has enabled members of the House to give their views generally on the land question and to deal with matters of great importance and magnitude to the people. When I say the people, I mean not only country residents but the people of our towns. It has led members to give free expression to their convictions. It is a very wholesome thing that such a discussion should take place, because it enables constituents to ascertain how far the opinions of their representatives are consistent with the opinions they hold themselves. Now, there is one thing I give members on both sides of the House great credit for, and that is the fact that they are, in my opinion, tolerably fearless and always prepared to state unreservedly what their views are on this matter. That is, I think, of infinite importance, because I believe there is no question of greater concern to the people of a colony like this than the land question. It is of importance in every part of the world, in the older as well as the younger countries. But it is of special consequence to a community of producers, such as we have in New Zealand, where there is so much fertile land in occupation, and so much Crown land yet to be disposed of. I say no question can occupy the attention of Parliament of greater importance than the question presented by this Bill. I do not wish to say a solitary word that will be harsh or insulting to members who hold different convictions to myself. They have a perfect right to enjoy their opinions with reference to the manner in which the lands of the colony should be administered. Nor do I wish to say one word that can be considered or construed as unbecoming or harsh in the slightest degree regarding those who have acquired large possessions in the colony. Some of them are personal friends of my own : some of them I know are pioneers who came here in the early days, and had to go through huge vicissitudes, and, having done so, I do not for a moment blame them for obtaining the lands they hold. Neither do I blame those who have secured the freehold in preference to the leasehold. They have a perfect right to take advantage of the laws of the country ; but, on the other hand, the question arises, What is to be said of those who make laws that are not based on justice ? I heard the term used last evening by the honourable member for Napier. He began talking about justice. I can assure the honourable gentleman that some very extraordinary things have been done in the name of justice not only in connection with land, but in connection with other matters. It has been said. "Justice, what crimes have been committed in thy name!" There are varying degrees of justice. The

dividing-line between justice and injustice is a very fine one, and difficult to detect at times. Now, Sir, we have had what I call a very mild criticism of this Act at the hands of the honourable member for the Bay of Plenty, and I consider he has not by any means shown that this Act is unnecessary. He has brought forward arguments that I think can very easily be met, and perhaps the House will pardon me if I refer to a few of them. The first argument that he brought forward was this: that every one should be intitled to the freehold, because the freehold was the best tenure. But when he tells us that the freehold leaves the land perfectly free he falls at once into a mistake of a most obvious character. How can the freehold be absolutely free to the possessor? Is it not a notorious fact that there are plenty of people paying a great deal more to the local bodies in rates on their freehold lands than the occupiers of adjacent land holding their leases in perpetuity from the Crown are paying in rent? In my own district there are a considerable number of

<page:625>

people paying far more in rates and taxes to local bodies than they are paying in the shape of rent to the Crown. I think that disposes of the honourable gentleman's first ground of objection to the leasehold and his preference for the freehold. At all events, it demolishes the argument that the owner of the freehold is able to hold his land free. It does nothing of the kind. He pays rates and taxes, and they become very heavy, especially if roads and bridges have to be constructed in his neighbourhood, and he is called upon to assist other settlers in carrying out necessary improvements. Then, Sir, the honourable member referred to Land Boards as "political machines." I happen to be a member of a Land Board, but I have not discovered that I am simply a political machine, neither am I aware, as the honourable member has asserted, that the settlers are afraid to exercise their votes as they think proper when the general election comes round. Why, Sir, the ballot surely secures them against that. - never in the exercise of my privileges as member of the Land Board seek to inquire how a man has voted, whether he is Conservative or Liberal, or whether he has been a supporter or an opponent. I think it is well known and recognised throughout my constituency I do not like talking about myself - that in doing what I think is right and proper for the individuals who consult me, either on the Land Board or elsewhere, I am absolutely blind as to their political convictions, their creed, or their country. Then, Sir, the honourable member says the freehold ought to be conferred on every one, because all wish for the freehold. But is it not a notorious fact that people often wish for many things they cannot expect to obtain? They wish sometimes for things that would be very prejudicial to themselves, and it is a very good thing: that their wishes are not always granted. For instance, there is a saying. "Oh, King, live for ever!" but the king does not live for ever. People might wish to live for ever, but they cannot do it. Their wishes are not realised. The hungry man looking through the baker's window wishes to get everything he sees there, but are his wishes granted? No. Whatever he requires he must pay for. Many people wish to be millionaires. A good many people wish to become members of this House, but when they go before the electors they are defeated. Therefore, as far as the wish is concerned, it is no argument whatever. The simple fact that a person wishes to exercise some power, or to claim some property that he may have no right to whatever, is no argument at all. The burglar wishes to dash through the jeweller's window and sweep away the jewellery. He would like to break into the bank and scoop up all the gold and silver. But the fact that he has such a desire is no reason why wishes of the kind should be granted. The wish of the American slaveholder was to retain his slaves and do what he wished with them. That wish was not gratified. It was a wish that caused a war, and that war had to be fought in the cause of freedom and humanity. And if it is found by the community to be prejudicial that one section of the people should own the land and another till the land - that the owners should be able to live in idleness, reaping what they have never sown, while other people are huddled into the cities and cannot get on the land - if such a state of things as that is produced, the community has a perfect right, notwithstanding the wishes of those who

have benefited by acquiring land, whether legally or illegally, to demand that there shall be reform, and that the wishes of the few, being inimical to the interests of the many, shall no longer continue to be gratified. Then, the honourable member has objected, I think, to compulsory residence. If there are people in a country like this prepared to take up the land, to make their homes and rear their families there, the land should not be held from them. Are the men who own the land to be allowed to travel where they like and become absentees? I think we have twelve hundred of those individuals in London and on the Continent at the present time. They are getting large revenues from the land although they are not residing on it, and they are not helping the country in any shape or form. I am astonished at the honourable member, because I believe he has Liberal instincts. I know he is warm-hearted towards the community, and he has many traits in his character that I admire. I am, therefore, astonished that he should be found in favour of absenteeism, a thing which has been a curse to every country where it exists. I am sorry there are no absentees present. The honourable gentleman has also referred to the system of ballot. All I can say on that is that it is a very difficult question. I am aware that the ballot system has grave imperfections, but we are endeavouring to rectify the mistakes of the past, and the present ballot system has a good deal to be said in its favour. Of late I have attended several ballots in this district, and I must admit that the way in which the land has been distributed appears to me to be tolerably fair and equitable. In reference to the question of Land Boards and the manner in which the Boards are appointed, I quite agree with the honourable gentleman that it would be a great improvement if not only the Land Boards but the Education Boards were elected on a universal franchise. If any amendment of this kind is brought forward in the House I, for one, will support it. I think the people should be clothed with power to deal with Land Boards and Education boards and everything of an important character affecting their interests. But, Sir, the honourable member for Hawke's Bay brought up an old identity-shall I compare it to old hash? Captain RUSSELL.- No; I think young fry would be better. Mr. HOGG.- I would not call it that, because it has undergone a resurrection. It could hardly be designated young, seeing it was buried in Hansard, at any rate, for a few years. He revived this old resolution to affirm a principle. What principle did he wish to affirm? The principle that every owner of a large estate required by the Crown for public purposes should have the opportunity of conferring on

<page:626>

his family-every member of it from the infant upwards-five hundred acres of land. As the Act stands, the owner can keep for himself a thousand acres. But the honourable gentleman does not consider that sufficient. One thousand acres of the pick of the estate is not sufficient for a family home. He maintained strenuously, and tried to trade on the sympathies of members of this House, that every owner should retain five hundred acres for each member of his family- Mr. A. L. D. FRASER.- Hear, hear. Mr. HOGG.- If a principle of this kind is to be maintained it follows that the man who is in a position to purchase or acquire land, if he has a family, must be allowed in a similar way to take up large areas instead of being limited to What does it mean? What would 640 acres. happen? A man with a family of six little children-perhaps most of them girls, who would never be likely to occupy land at all- would be able to retain for himself four thousand acres - an estate equal in size to the borough in which I live-one of the largest in New Zealand, in which there is a population of over four thousand souls. That is to be conferred on one individual. I say we have not got land enough in New Zealand to enable us to distribute it in huge areas like that. Mr. A. L. D. FRASER.- Do you not give fifteen hundred acres to one person under the Land for Settlements Act? What is your argument worth? Mr. HOGG.- You give a thousand acres. I am very sorry the honourable gentleman is trying to correct me. He is the latest convert of the honourable member for Hawke's Bay. Must I congratulate him on being converted, coming out in new colours, and occupying the Opposition benches in regard to the land question? What I pointed out-and the honourable gentleman cannot deny it-is that had this resolution been passed, a man with six young

children - mostly girls, perhaps, who would be never likely to occupy the land -- would be able to select four thousand acres. That is what the honourable member for Napier, representing a constituency that has suffered more than any other in the North Island owing to the way in which land has been locked up in huge areas, voted for and supported in this House. The honourable member for Egmont stated that because I opposed that proposal I could have no regard for my family. I have as great a regard for my family as the member for Egmont, but I happen to have a little consideration as well for the family of my neighbour. I do not want to see my family clothed with land and the family of my neighbour going naked. We are taught to love our neighbours as ourselves ; and I think there would be a great reform in the land-laws of this country if the people and the members of this House had a little more consideration for others, especially for the poorer classes. I do not blame the freeholder for choosing that tenure. He has a perfect right to get the best tenure the law allows ; but I am not prepared to say that in the interests of the community a tenure should be perpetuated which enables one man to monopolize large areas of land which ought to be distributed amongst the crowd. Surely the State can be trusted as a landlord. In Committee I was attacked because I stated that I thought the freehold tenure would not always be encouraged. What I maintain is this : that we ought to have a uniform land system. In the face of what we have witnessed since the Land Act of 1892 was passed, can it be contended that the land reforms which have been introduced have not been advantageous ? The lease in perpetuity has been the means of anchoring hundreds-I may say thousands-of families to the soil of New Zealand. It is one thing to place men on land ; the difficulty is to keep them there. If you give them the freehold, they are tempted on every side to mortgage their properties, and by-and-by the mortgagee comes along and turns them off, and where there was a large community you will have a few huge sheep-runs. What has happened to our Native population? See how their land has been scooped up. An Hon. MEMBER .- By the Government. Mr. HOGG .- No; but by gentlemen whom I am sure the member for Napier likes to support. See what the Twelve Apostles did in the neighbourhood from which the honourable member comes-where a poor Native was hunted like an opossum up a tree. What I maintain is this : that private ownership or private landlordism is synonymous with slavery of the very worst kind. If you leave people without land. or make them tenants, they are slaves and serfs. Is that what the member for the Bay of Plenty would like to see ? Mr. HERRIES .- I want to give the freehold. Mr. HOGG .- I believe he wants to have a restriction of area ; but does he agree with the member for Hawke's Bay that each man ought to have about four thousand acres for himself and his family ? Is that the nature of the 9.30. restriction ? I think he is perfectly safe in advocating restriction of areas. if we are going to have areas of that character. But if you retain the State as the landlord the people are safe. The State, which is really the people, will take very good care that the agere- gation of homesteads will not take place, and that land-monopoly will not be allowed. may be said, " Well, we cannot trust the State." All that I can say is that if the State cannot be trusted to exercise the powers and prerogatives of a wise and generous landlord. then I think there is only one other course, and that is to municipalise our lands, and place their administration in the hands of the communities under a universal franchise. In that case you will have the Land Boards-elected by the people in the way suggested by the honourable member for the Bay of Plenty-administering the lands, and preventing such a curse-the curse of old nations and young colonies - as private landlordism from raising its evil head in a country like this, where there is plenty of free land, and where the people should have access to it. What has been the redemption of the

<page:627>

people of this country ; what has been the means of sweeping out of existence the deprecated swagger nuisance; what has suppressed the cry of the unemployed, and brought prosperity to hundreds of homes where there was nothing but darkness and distress threatening them before? What has done all this ? Sir, it is owing to the way in which our lands have been administered. It is because in the back

blocks, notwithstanding all that may be said about the difficulties of the settlers there, you will find families in a position of comparative independence and able to maintain themselves. There is no want of food as a rule in those places. There is no such thing as absolute privation. There are none of those fearful things that may be witnessed in the back slums of our cities. There is neither crime nor destitution nor depravity nor nakedness. If you clothe the people with the land, no matter how poor a man or a woman may be, they will gradually overcome all their difficulties and become prosperous, happy, and contented. Mr. HORNSBY (Wairarapa) ... Sir, I did not take part in the debate in Committee on this Bill, because I had determined to reserve any remarks I might have to make for the third reading, and to give my reasons for the votes I cast during the Committee stage. Sir, as a candidate for a seat in this House at the general election. on every platform on which I spoke, I enunciated this principle : that if the freehold could be surrounded with sufficient safeguards to prevent the aggregation of large landed estates, then I preferred the freehold to the leasehold. And every vote I cast during the passage of this Bill through Committee was based upon that declaration on the public platform when I was seeking the suffrages of the people of my electorate. But I have always held as a cardinal principle of the land policy that there must be a limit to the holding-power of any individual. Now, Sir, as I said the other day in the discussion on this same Bill, it is not the freehold itself that has been the curse of older countries; it is the aggregation of large estates ; and if we want to do something that we shall be blessed for in years to come, when we are no longer here, I say that it will be the passing of a law that would limit the holding - power of any individual. Now, Sir, last session, on the 19th September, I asked this question of the Minister of Lands : " Whether, in view of the continued acquisition of large estates, he is prepared to recommend to his colleagues an increase of the graduated land-tax ?" as a means, of course, of preventing the further acquisition of properties by large landed proprietors. I would now point out that since that question was asked one at least of the settlers of the colony has gone on adding to his already largely overgrown estate. And there is no law to prevent him. I was in strict sympathy with every effort that might be made, and I am still in sympathy with every effort that may be made, to make this sort of man give up a very large portion of his estate. In the case I refer to, the person is the owner of something like a hundred and thirty thousand acres of land, and yet when a piece of rich land that was fitted for dairy- ing purposes was in the market, and could have been purchased by the Government, but was not- when that land was known to be under offer, this gentleman went and snapped it up, and turned it into a fattening-paddock and cattle-yards. Had that land been purchased by the Government, at least a dozen families could have been settled upon it, and we could have started a dairy factory at Martinborough. The piece of land which I refer to was held at the time by Mr. William Bidwill, and was purchased by Mr. Riddiford, who shortly after that also purchased an estate on the East Coast, and is still going on adding and adding to his possessions. Now, I say it is the duty of the Government to take into their most serious consideration the necessity of bringing in a measure which will prevent the perpetuation of this sort of work in the colony. If the members of the House are in earnest on this land question this is one of the first steps we ought to take, and it will be one of the best steps taken for the prevention of people building up large landed estates in the colony. Now, there has been a good deal of talk about those who have sympathy with the amendment that was proposed by Captain Russell, the honourable member for Hawke's Bay. I steadily voted for that amendment, and I say this: that with modifications-for we would have insisted upon the modification of it --- with a little modification it would have been one of the things which would have popularised the land - for - settlements policy in the colony more than anything that has ever been done by the Legislature. Sir, I have in my mind at the present moment a group of families in a valley of the Wairarapa. One of these families, when the father was alive, possessed something like eighteen or twenty thousand acres of land. Since the father died and the sons came into possession of the property it has been cut up into blocks of from three thousand five hundred to four thousand acres. In their turn these men had families, and

by-and-by, when the natural distribution of this land amongst the members of these families takes place, there will not be one of these men owning more than a thousand acres of land. That is the natural distribution that ought to take place, and that will take place. I hope. Yet people turn round and say that that is an improper way of dealing with the land -- that we have no right to deal with it in that way. And then, Sir, you are going to do this : to say to each one of these men, " You and your family must turn out, and strangers- we do not care where they come from, either from this or any other colony-shall come in, forsooth, and take possession of the property, and perhaps hold it in equally large areas." And these strangers are to be allowed to do this after the State has cut up an estate compulsorily. As an example of what may go on under our land-for-settlements law, what happened when the Langdale Estate was cut

<page:628>

up ? What was the proportion that was to be given to the public in that estate ? I say that had it not been for the strenuous opposition of the member for Masterton and myself this would have been done : that certain people who lived on that estate -- people who were not the children of the owners, who were not relatives at all of the owners, but simply the rabbiters, and ploughmen, and managers and sub-managers-these men would have had the largest portion, and the best portion, of Langdale divided between them, and by whom ? By the department. They would have divided the best portion of the land ; and had it not been for the strenuous opposition of the member for Masterton and myself that iniquity would have been perpetrated in this colony. I sent a telegram to the Minister of Lands, and I told him that if he allowed this thing to be done it would aim the greatest blow at the land policy of the Government that had ever been aimed in this colony, and fortunately the idea was not carried out, and the success of the Langdale Settlement is most positively assured. Now, this I say : If that sort of thing were allowed by the Land Board, acting in conjunction with the Minister, then what is wrong about giving the members of a man's family the right to have a certain portion of the estate ? If it is right for the ploughman and the rabbiters, and for the manager and sub-manager to get a portion of an estate -- without submitting to a ballot, mark you ---- if that is right, then is it not right also that the members of a man's family, who are bred and born and who grow up on an estate, should be given the same chance that the Government would have given to the manager and sub-manager, the rabbiters, and others in the cutting-up of a large estate ? You must admit that the contention is a fair one. Now, Sir, with regard to some of the remarks that have been made by the Minister who is in charge of the Advances to Settlers Office. The honourable gentleman has stated to-night that the only thing he is anxious about in administering the affairs of that office is that the security shall be good to the State that the "safety of the State shall be assured," he said. What are the facts for I am perfectly certain the Minister does not know the facts of the case ? I am perfectly certain the honourable gentleman does not know the workings of the office over which he presides as Minister, and I will give you the reason : because what was stated to-night is proof to me that he does not know what is going on under his very nose. I will give the names and establish the matter as I go along. In the first place, there was a man who had wrought for years on a lease in perpetuity in the Wharau-Kaiwhata district. Phillipson is the man's name. This man worked there for years. He borrowed 5200 from the Advances to Settlers Office. He sought to borrow \$200 more, and he was denied. They told him in so many words that his security was not good enough. Now, Sir, I interested myself on his behalf, because the man submitted to me the returns from his property in the shape of wool and the sale of his stock, from year to year, and I saw at once that the man had ample security according to the law, more than ample security for the money he was asking from the Government. He asked for an extra loan of \$200. Now, Sir, when that application was laid before the Lending Board it was refused. Then, what happened a few months afterwards ? A few months afterwards that man, in disgust .. when he could not make as much headway as he desired on account of not having sufficient stock for his property, because he could not get money so that he could put more stock on the land-sold out to two adjoining land-holders.

He sold the value of his improvements on his lease for \$1.200 in hard cash without any stock at all. He sold his stock at auction ; and yet this man, with twelve hundred pounds' worth of good security, could not get \$400 from the Advances to Settlers Office. And then to talk about assisting the poor and the struggling settler. I say this: that the office concerns itself mainly with the gated security business, and does not care a snap of the fingers for the man who is buried away in the back blocks. The Nitz brothers, in the same district, sought to borrow a similar sum of money from the Advances Office, and they were refused ; yet, Sir, it is computed ?; a valuer who knows what he is talking about -- and sometimes the Government valuers do not -- that these two brothers have sixteen hundred pounds' worth of improvements on their holding, and yet they cannot get \$400 from the Government Advances to Settlers Office. Now, the Advances to Settlers Office was started for the purpose of assisting the small man above all others. It was started to rescue the struggling settler from the hands, from the grip as it was stated, of the money-lender. It was to prevent the hard-hearted money-lending companies here from wringing every farthing out of the men in the way of interest ; and yet, instead of help being given, these men are actually forced to go to a loan company and to pay 7 or 3 per cent. more than they would have had to pay for the money to the Government Advances to Settlers Office. These men are living on the back blocks ; they did not hold gated security ; but they held sixteen hundred pounds' worth of improvements on their property: valued by a competent valuer, and yet they cannot get \$400 from the Government : and I say that is simply a scandal. There is some talk about the Minister obtaining independent valuations. I will tell you how these independent valuations are made. A gentleman comes up to the settler's house, and he is very much : when he gets there. He waits overnight. and after breakfast next morning he takes his way up to the top of an adjacent hill and looks around him and says, " Oh, that will do, I have seen enough." and he comes down and goes away to make his report. He never goes over the man's property : he now goes out to see where the value is, or to look where the improvements are. I can prove what I am stating here. I do not make this assertion on the information of "the man in the street." I am not saying this for the mere sake

<page:629>

of saving it, but because I believe that it is { profitably settled - in fact, more profitably necessary that the thing should be exposed before the public of this colony. I endeavoured to have this matter out with the officers of the department, and before I came into the House I say that I failed with the Minister, and when I failed with the department to get this matter put right I did what I believed was right: I brought it up in this House, and the floor of this House is the place for me to ventilate what I believe to be an injustice, and as long as I am a member I shall continue to do so. Just a word or two in conclusion- Mr. WILFORD. Ha! nearly time. Mr. HORNSBY .- The stupid interruptions of the member for the Suburbs will not divert me for one moment from what I have got to say. An Hon. MEMBER. - Why take notice, then. Mr. HORNSBY .-- You can be worried by a little dog snapping at you in the street. Now, Sir, just a few words in conclusion with regard to the question of land purchase. The other night, in response to an interjection by myself while this Bill was going through the Committee stages, the Right Hon. the Premier said that if the amendment moved by the member for Hawke's Bay was passed we would get no land purchased in the Wairarapa. Very well. we have had no land purchased in the Wairarapa, and so far as I can make out An Hon. MEMBER. - What about Langdale ? Mr. HORNSBY .- Langdale is in the Masterton electorate. It is on the East Coast. I say this, and I believe that the Right Hon. the Premier is aware of it, and I believe that he regrets it as much as any one else does : that numerous offers of land have been made in the Wairarapa members of this House, and I am more than glad to buy the present owners, none of which has been accepted. An Hon. MEMBER. - Look at the quality of the land. Mr. HORNSBY .- The honourable member knows as much about the quality of the land as he does about good taste. There are many estates in the Wairarapa the owners of which are perfectly willing and ready to sell to the Government.

There are estates which can be purchased, and which will be readily settled by the young men in that part of New Zealand, and that was one of the reasons why I opposed clause 8 of this Bill when it first came down. I opposed it because I know that hundreds of young men in the Wairarapa are anxiously waiting to get the opportunity to settle upon a piece of country. They do not care what it is - bush land, open land, any land you like-open it for them in the Wairarapa and they will take it up. They are saving money for the purpose, as they desire to do what is right and proper in the young men of this country- that is, to become worthy settlers. I would now impress as far as I can upon the Government the necessity for testing what I have said here: that there : are landholders in the Wairarapa who are will- ; that rebate of 10 per cent. to the Crown tenants ing and even anxious to sell to the Government. I believe if the owners of the Dry River and other estates in the Lower Valley were ap- proached they would sell to the Government at fair market-values, and that land could be freehold system ; secondly, Sir, as I pointed settled than some of the purchases already made in this colony. Mr. COLLINS (Christchurch City) .- Sir, I have no intention to attempt anything like a defence of the land-for-settlement policy, nor do I deem it necessary that any such endeavour should be made. Nor do I intend to follow the example of previous speakers in detaining the House while I make anything approaching an -- electioneering harangue or platform address. All that is necessary to say on this Bill has al- ready been said, and, as this is a motion for the third reading of the Bill, honourable members will agree with me that the shorter we make our remarks the better it will be for the House. I would not have risen at all, Sir, but for the ex- press purpose of putting upon record two mat- ters which I think are of sufficient importance ■ to require it. The House will remember that when in Committee an additional clause was moved by the honourable member for Auckland City, Mr. Fowlds. That clause was to the fol- lowing effect : -- " Section fifty-two of the principal Act is here. by repealed. and also ' The Crown Tenants' Rent Rebate Act, 1900,' in so far as it applies to any land held under the principal Act, and the fol- lowing substituted : "Where in any case, in the opinion of the Land Board. the rent is too - high. the Minister, on the recommendation of the Land Board, may make such reduction of the rent as the Minister and the said Land Board may deem reasonable." " Now, Sir, I believe that that resolution would have commended itself to the majority of mem- say that the leader of the House himself ex- pressed his concurrence with at least the first part of that clause. He himself agreed that it was necessary that section 55 of the principal Act should be repealed. But one or two objec- tions were raised by members who themselves were favourable to the principle underlying the clause, and on the recommendation of the Premier it was deemed advisable to withdraw this clause so that the Premier himself might, as he undertook to do, bring down an amending Bill dealing with the whole question that is embodied in the Crown Tenants' Rent Rebate Act. Now, Sir, I take this opportunity of most heartily and sincerely congratulating the Minis- ter on having decided to take that step. There is no need for me now, Sir, to remind the House of the extremely bitter and accrimonious debates that took place last year on this question. And I would not have spoken to-night, 10.30. Sir, but, as I took a very considerable part in the debate, I am delighted that the Premier has promised now to take the lead in remodelling the whole Act so far as this par- ticular difficulty is concerned. Speaking for myself, the chief ground of my objection to was the fact, first of all, that I thought it was the thin end of the wedge which must eventually lead to the ultimate destruction of the present system of land tenure and the readoption of the

<page:630>

out at the time, I felt quite sure it would be absolutely impossible for that rebate to be ade- quately granted, and we have seen as the result that those prognostications-I have not the slightest desire or intention to pose as a pro- phet before the House-that everything I said then was absolutely correct ; and we have dis- covered that in one part of the colony the rebate was partially granted, in another part of the colony it was wholly granted, and in still another part it has not been granted at all. Therefore, taking all things into consideration, I am quite sure that the best thing to be done is to reconsider the whole

question of rebate to the Crown tenants, and to devise some means by which the rents can be so adjusted as to make it impossible for any Crown tenant to be called upon to carry an unnecessary burden. The only other point on which I wish to touch, and it follows so closely on the remarks I have just made as to be at once sequential, is that the Premier declared-and I am glad again that he did so-that he would rather surrender his position as Premier of the colony than surrender to those who are clamouring for the reinsti- tution of the freehold to the Crown tenants. Sir, I am glad of this, because it appears to me that this is really the dividing.line between those who are still Conservative and the modern Liberal. If there is a dividing-line at all, this is the dividing-line. I admit at once that, on many, if not on the majority of matters, it is an extremely difficult matter to draw the line between Liberal and Conservative -- the voting is so close, and cross-voting is so general on many questions, that it is almost impossible for the dividing-line to be drawn at all ; but, after the discussion of this evening on the question of the land policy of the State, there is still a dividing-line. There are some who think there is no sound tenure other than the freehold tenure ; and I am glad that the Premier has declared his unswerving loyalty and strict adhesion to the principle of leasehold tenure, and that he would rather sur- render his position as Premier of the colony than see that system at all abrogated in favour of the readoption of the freehold system. Mr. SEDDON .- Allow me to make the posi- tion clear. I said in respect to the tenure under the Land for Settlements Act. Mr. COLLINS .- Sir, I have not the slightest desire, of course. to misrepresent the right honourable gentleman, and I am quite willing to admit that he said what he has just de- clared. I have not the least desire to take up the time of the House, but I simply wished to put on record the facts I have just brought be- fore the House, and I hope the House will par- don me for doing so. Captain RUSSELL (Hawke's Bay). Sir. I have no intention of trespassing long upon the attention of the House. There can be very little doubt that the real debate took place last night. We know exactly what the result of that debate is going to be, and though we were arguing with one another last night, what we are doing to-night is endeavouring through Hansard to speak to a wider audience than is to be found within the four walls of this Cham- ber. It is right and proper it should be so : and it was perfectly evident that the Right Hon. the Premier was conscious that there is a wider audience than was to be found in the limited number of honourable members who listened to him when he halted and hesitated about his views on freehold and leasehold tenure. As he so frequently does, he blew hot and cold with the same mouth. He is for free- hold to-day and for leasehold to-morrow, per- petual lease on one occasion and lease in per- petuity on another ; but there is a dangling freehold for the Crown tenants whenever the Premier thinks it is the proper time to hood- wink them. An Hon. MEMBER .--- They have always had it. Captain RUSSELL .- And they always will have it, though my honourable friend opposite hopes they will not. The member for Christ- church City, Mr. Collins, says the dividing-line between Liberal and Conservative will be the granting or withholding of the freehold tenure. Sir, the dividing-line is the pavement in the cities. Many of those honourable momiers who walk about the streets in thin-soled shows. who would be unwilling to put on a good honest pair of thick-soled boots and walk about the country, are the theoretical politicians, who know exactly how land ought to be managed : and people like myself, who have spent a lifetime on the land, are supposed not to know the sentiments or the feelings they have been called " the prejudices " - of the people who live in the country districts and are the main-stav of our prosperity. Sir, happily this country is not yet so unfortunate as the Australian colonies, where the aggregation of people in? large cities is a sad political factor in the (- vernment of those States, and more than half the population are not producers, but dwelie- in the towns. New Zealand is not set so bene! as that. And I do not care how soon the day comes when it is put to the vote at a general election whether the farmors of this country are to be the slaves of the pohtician- of the colony, or are to be allowed to be masters on their own freehold. I hope that day mav come quickly, and if the result relegatos m. : O oblivion I am quite prepared to go down nicht- ing a good fight. The idea of aiming at para- larity by trying to pander to the cry of the socialist and

the craze of the hour is one I do not care for. Such popularity is not worth having. "The idol of the hour is the mois wooden puppet, and the doing of the popnier thing seed of no harvest." That is a quota- tion from a writer Meredith by name - where works. I venture to believe, will becom : classics in English literature. Sir. I have no doubt that the infinite wisdom of the honourable ment of for Ashley is on a par with that of the groa: English writer, but it was not the honoura. le member I referred to on this occasion. It is too often found now that men in public life are afraid of their convictions, and anxious mainly to be the mob's wooden puppet, but such a coure achieves the merest temporary popularity : bat it is far better-and it is advice I tender to

<page:631>

the right honourable gentleman-to be not afraid of his convictions on the freehold or any other question, for assuredly trimming and turning and waiting to find out where the breath of wind called popularity will come from is a policy that will bring that right honourable gentleman to grief, although he thinks himself so absolutely invulnerable. As the honourable member for Masterton was speaking-I am sorry he has gone away-he said that for one man who wants the freehold there are three or four who prefer the lease in perpetuity; and honourable members round the House have been continually asserting that the lease in perpetuity is better than freehold. I have myself been guilty of using those words upon former occasions, but I am not afraid to change my opinion, and I have good cause for changing that opinion now. What does the Right Hon. the Premier say, and what Bill are we to be asked to pass by his colleague, the Minister of Lands? That, however, is quite a different thing. We shall get a Bill with the Minister of Lands' name on the top of it, but he will have no more to do with the conduct through the House of that Bill than I shall have-not so much, indeed. I will, if necessary, move amendments in it, and the Minister who has charge of the measure will not even understand it. As for trying to explain the provisions of his Bill, everybody knows that would be abso- lutely futile on his part. But the Bill is to be called the Fair Rent Bill, and under that Fair Rent Bill there is to be a principle embodied which the honourable member for Masterton himself admits to be wrong. What were his words? " What is to be said of those who make laws which are not based upon justice." (Here the honourable member comes.) The honourable gentleman used what may almost be called an aphorism when he inveighed against "those who make laws which are not based upon justice." He used that phrase in connection with the settlement of people on the land by leases in perpetuity. I maintain that any law with the provisions contained in that Fair Ront Bill, which provides for the constant re- valuation of leases held in perpetuity, is not based upon justice, but, on the contrary, is a down- right and absolute fraud upon every person who has taken up a piece of land under the lease-in-perpetuity clause of the Land Act, as the lease in perpetuity gives a leasehold for ever at a fixed rent, one that cannot be raised. am not now going to argue as to whether the form of tenure called the lease in perpetuity is a wise one or not ; I do not believe it is ; the freehold is better. I believe a great deal of logical argument is to be used in favour of what is known as the "perpetual lease " ; but the lease in perpetuity has nothing whatever to recommend it if there is to be constantly in- creasing rental and revaluation. But I do maintain that when the State has deliberately entered into a compact with certain people " in perpetuity," whatever happens they and their descendants should be allowed to occupy the land for the 999 years which the State has agreed upon ; and it is a deliberate wanton fraud to perpetrate on those men to alter that which the Crown has given them deliberately after careful consideration, unless the tenant is willing to vary the terms of his lease. An Hon. MEMBER .- Who proposed that ? Captain RUSSELL .- The Minister of Lands has a Bill to that effect, now in my possession. An Hon. MEMBER .- The acting Minister ? Captain RUSSELL .- What shall I call him ? I am not allowed to name the honourable gentleman, but I believe he is the member for That honourable gentleman is so Oamaru. little interested even in this Bill, of which he ought to be in charge, that he has gone out into the lobby. He has not taken the trouble to remain in the Chamber to listen to the debate.

But, of course, he has his substitute; the Premier staves and takes charge of the Bill for him. The additions we have made to the Bill "Queer," no are many of them very queer. doubt, is a strange word to use; but I do not know a better one to apply to some of the amendments introduced by the Premier last night. He was suffering -and no one was more sorry than I, for I was suffering in a somewhat similar, though lesser, degree-from a cold, as I am at present ; but I could only conclude that the right honourable gentleman really did not know what he was introducing into the Bill. This clause, printed as clause 8A, is one of the most remarkable provisions ever read or thought of in connection with a Bill. Why, Sir, if Gilbert had written such a bur-lesque of land-selection and placed it on the stage, to music composed by the late Sir Arthur Sullivan, every one would have said it was such an utterly impossible absurdity that they ought not to insult the public intelligence with such manifest trash. What does the honourable gentleman do by way of meeting the iniquities he admits there exist in the present ballot system ? He proposes that there shall be two ballots, and that everybody-I believe he him- self says the most charming young ladies, mem- bers of families, and ladies who are not mem- bers of families- Mr. PIRANI .- Barmaids. Captain RUSSELL .- Did the right honour- able gentleman say " barmaids " ? I could not quote him without due deliberation ; but I be- lieve it was barmaids the right honourable gentleman specially referred to - barmaids would be included in the double ballot, under which, it would appear to me, that the small farmer and the working-men will be excluded, and in all probability not allowed an opportu- nity of getting a piece of land ; but the lady of the bar, who has no more desire to settle on the land than I have to serve behind the bar, will be put on the land and compelled to reside on it continuously to the exclusion of those who really want to get farms. But there will be the man with a fair-sized capital who wants a fair-sized piece of land ; and, on the other hand, there will be the man with small capital who wants a small piece of land. How are their natural and legitimate aspirations to be dealt with. A hat is taken, and the man who wants a large block,

<page:632>

and the man who wants a small block are to. gether put into the hat. Mr. ATKINSON .- No; they have a hat each. Captain RUSSELL .- No, no. As I read the clause it would appear to me that a certain number of persons after, in all probability, all those who really want to settle on the land are eliminated by the process of the first ballot, are to have names put into one hat, and the num- bers of every variety of differing size of sections are to be put into another, and the consequence will be that probably a man with large capital who wants a large piece of land, will, in all pro- bability, draw a very small section, whilst the man who wants a small section will have a large piece allotted for him ; neither of them are to be allowed to transfer their holdings, they must live on them continuously, and forfeit their deposit if they do not take up what they did not apply for and do not want. A greater piece of burlesque than that introduced by the Premier I have never seen played on any stage. Why, he ac- tually fell into the trap we set for him last night. We would not argue about this clause. It was so absurd that we laughed in our sleeves. The Premier, finding we did not argue, believed it perfect, and we divided against it only after he inserted these comic words in the Bill. I see the Premier is laughing at his own folly. Mr. SEDDON. - Time will tell. Captain RUSSELL .- Yes, we will see. Now, I want to say a few words about the clause I endeavoured to introduce in the Bill. And here I would say that though the Premier endea- voured to delude the House, yet he did not con- vince the House for a single moment. Though he asserted over and over again, with an itera- tion which, if it were not unparliamentary, I . might call damnable, that the passing of my amendment would upset the whole land-settle- ment policy, and that I, an old Tory, was en- deavouring to do something to prevent the people going on the land. Why. as I looked round the House, and as I listened to the honourable gentleman's speech-I believe I am right in asserting that if a division could have been taken according to men's consciences there are not ten men in the House who would not have voted for my amendment. But there, the omnipotence of the Premier once more pre- vailed, and

honourable members whose sympathies were with the principle I endeavoured to give effect to voted against the clause, and, like the member for Auckland, Mr. Withford, they disagreed altogether with the principles which the Premier enunciated, but voted to avert his wrath. What I am anxious to give effect to, and I shall read it so that it may appear on record, is this :- "Where an owner of land has children born in lawful wedlock, the areas limited by sub-sections two and three of section 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 one thousand acres for each such child ; and of pastoral land, an additional area of two thousand acres for each such child." When the honourable member for Napier asked if I would do so I agreed to a modification of my scheme, and when other members threw out suggestions I said on each occasion that I was not wedded to my own particular words. but what I wished to affirm was the principle that a man's family should be allowed, when compulsorily acquired, to share in the land which their father, after perhaps forty or fifty years of strenuous toil, has converted from a wilderness into a paying estate. I said that. in many instances, I knew where the children had been working alongside their father, and, instead of taking actual remuneration from their father they worked on the estate, and were living under the promise that, when the fatal day came when the estate had to be divided, they would be allowed to share in the estate which by their labour they helped to create. Is there anything monstrous in such a proposition as that ? Is there anything in my suggestion that a single man in this Chamber would not attempt to do if he were able? If there is a single man in this Chamber who says that he would not try to bequeath to his own children his own property, I say that he would not receive the approval of reasonable people. Now, what will be the effect of my proposition ? The Premier endeavoured to prove that under that clause it would be difficult to obtain any estate for settlement, and he drew attention to the third subsection of clause 12. I was quite prepared to allow that to be modified if necessary. All I wished was to affirm the principle that a man's children should have the right to participate on the division of his estate. Now, just let us consider for two or three minutes what the State is doing at the present time, and what my proposal means. The Right Hon. the Premier spoke as if every man was the father of at least eight children, though only a short time before the honourable member for Masterton led us to understand that every man who owned land refused to have a family, and only the poor were prolific. I do not understand why that should be so; but if, as he told us distinctly, all the large families are to be found in the slums, while the wealthy classes had no families at all, it would be impossible to argue on the premise that all landowners have eight children. What I do suppose is that there will be an average of three or four children, and that there should be an area of five hundred acres given to each child : and as the Land for Settlements Act is meant principally to divide estates, I maintain the principle would not be vitiated by the proposal I suggest ; because it is only a matter for arrangement that the 500-acre blocks of land should be vested in each individual child if it was considered desirable that that should be the case. And the argument which has been put forward by the Premier that if the land-owner really wants to benefit his family the estate ought to be divided up during the life-time of the father, was merely a sophisticated argument, the truth being that, in a majority

<page:633>

of instances, it would be impracticable. If the | for the people who had no capital, yet is now Right Hon. the Premier had his will to compel being perverted and distorted into granting the owner of the estate to subdivide his land at people areas of land at the expense of the State the present time, what would be the result on amounting in value to close upon \$5,000. the land being subdivided? Now, clause 8B infinitely more reasonable than that which the says : " Every applicant who obtains an allot- Government, led by the Right Hon. the ment under this Act shall reside continu- Premier, has been administering. My honourously thereon." Well, then, there would be very many cases of men with children of whom able friend the

member for Pahiatua yesterday the eldest might be fourteen or fifteen years of age, while three or four of them would be under that age, and yet under the contemplated provisions of this Bill every child would be obliged to go into continuous residence upon that property man did not say so? If he thinks it a desirable party and could not transfer it. Fancy a child condition of things perhaps he will allow me to of a year old in compulsory and separate residence. Surely nothing could be more absurd than that. And yet, because the parents object to the alienation of land, of one capitalist coming over and to that, the Right Hon. the Premier says the acquiring thirteen sections, which were occupied by thirteen holders. father is a public enemy - a public enemy, merely because he endeavours to retain for his children that which he has come by honestly. that altogether. Let us examine the position : At the outside you are asked to reserve for each child 500 acres, which we may take at an average value able member approve of 1,509 acres being given to one individual ? of \$5, or perhaps \$4, an acre. That is to say, each child would get two thousand pounds' worth of land. Now, let us see what has happened lately? What is the meaning of the Right land, the rental being 6s. 2d. an acre. Hon. the Premier having deposed the Minister of Lands from the administration of the Land no water on the land. for Settlements Act? The Minister of Lands, though it is set out in the Act that he shall man says that there was no water on the land. If what the honourable gentleman says is correct - administer the Act, is allowed to have nothing rect --- I incline to the belief that it is incorrect to do with it. Probably the Right Hon. the - it shows how monstrous the administration Premier thinks the Minister of Lands would not, of the Right Hon. the Premier is, in putting in connection with it, exercise that political men upon land -- poor people upon land where patronage that the Premier himself can and does, and that it is which has led to the deposi- there is no single drop of water, so that they and their stock will be starved. But I feel sure tion of the proper Minister from the adminis- the honourable member is wrong. He will find tration of the Act. But what has actualle hap- no large blocks on the Hatuma Estate where pened in a late subdivision of an estate? I there is not any water to be got. However, find that in the Hatuma Estate, in one instance, that is the position : 1,500 acres given to an out- a selector has been allowed to acquire 4,654 sider, and 500 acres refused to the son of the pounds' worth of the estate. Under my pro- soil. As to the principle of the land-for-settle- posal each child would get only two thousand ments scheme. I have said on every occasion, pounds' worth of land, or two thousand five as strongly as I can, and I say it now, that I hundred pounds' worth at the very outside, think the system of the compulsory acquisi- practically one - half only of that given to a tion of land is put into operation in only too stranger under the present law. As I have said, many instances for political reasons, and not in the Hatuma Estate I find that one tenant in the interest of settlement. has received 4,654 pounds' worth of the estate. that compulsory expropriation contains the That. surely, is distinctly in advance of any- most dangerous principle that has ever been thing I have proposed. I proposed that of first- laid down : and though many persons believe class land each child should be allowed to re- the compulsory acquisition of land will only ceive five hundred acres. Five hundred acres apply to the large holdings, I tell them that, so at \$5 would be two thousand five hundred sure as the sun shines to-morrow, when the pounds' worth of land for each child, as against large holdings are consumed, the appetite the Premier's 4,654 pounds' worth. which one created by eating will be sure to crave for the selector has been allowed to take up on the medium-sized properties, and they will be swal- Hatuma Estate. The Premier, no doubt, will lowed next, and that when the medium-sized say that is only a particular case. Is it a par- properties are all gone the smaller properties ticular case? I find another tenant on the will be eaten up also. And why? Because Hatuma Estate received 3,097 pounds' worth the honourable gentlemen on the Ministerial of land : vastly in excess, you will see, of what benches are land-nationalisers. They are like I proposed under my scheme. And so I might the honourable member for Masterton, who go all through the system of land for settle- says he will never be satisfied until the State is ments, which in its inception was based on the the

sole landlord in New Zealand. The sole theory that there was to be small settlements Well, I maintain the scheme I proposed was Mr. O'MEARA .- I did not say so. Captain RUSSELL .- The honourable gentleman Mr. O'MEARA .- I spoke about the monopoly- Captain RUSSELL .- And you disapproved of Mr. O'MEARA .--- Undoubtedly. Captain RUSSELL .-- Then, does the honour- Mr. O'MEARA. . That is second-class land. Captain RUSSELL .- No; this is first-class Mr. HALL .-- The reason was that there was Captain RUSSELL. . The honourable gentleman- I maintain

<page:634>

landlord in New Zealand! What does that mean ? It can only mean one thing, that they will dispossess everybody, whether he owns a quarter-acre section in the towns or a tract of country in a rural district. The intention of the Government, if they possibly can, is to nationalise the land, and, if it is not so, I would like to know why they are sitting upon Who was the distinguished those benches. gentleman who gave them their first standing in this colony ? Mr. Ballance. And was he not the father of land-nationalisation in New Zealand ? Were they not humble disciples of his? If it had not been for Mr. Ballance's ability we should never have heard of one of those honourable gentlemen. It was Mr. Ballance's mana that first placed them on the Treasury benches, and he was essentially a land-nationaliser, and Ministers advocate the same theory. Now, I would ask, are those persons who have been induced by the Government to take up land under various leasehold tenures to remain State serfs on the land ? Are the men who have been given a lease of 999 years likely to agree to that lease, ever increasing in value, being subjected to a perpetual process of revaluation ? I affirm there is no single man who lives on a farm-or I do not know him, at any rate, if there is-who will not vote against the Government wanting to so rob him of the value of his self-denial and improvements. Do the honourable gentlemen think that the Crown tenants are going to submit for ever to being made subject to the whims of the theorists who live under the shine of the gas-lamps? I can tell them of many instances of men who are supposed to have supported the Government because they acquired their land under the leasehold tenure, but who have since said, " We are going to vote for the Opposition, because they are going to give us the freehold." And the demand for freehold will grow stronger and stronger as sure as we endeavour to legislate in this Chamber against it : and the day will come when the people resident in the country will refuse to be any longer under the domination of the theorist. Then, instead of the theoretical politician in the towns, it will be the practical country farmer who will have his say in legislation dealing with the tenure of the land, which he has created by his work, and on which the prosperity of the colony entirely rests. Mr. WILFORD (Wellington Suburbs). - I propose, first of all. Sir, to reply to almost the last statement made by the honourable member for Hawke's Bay, Captain Russell, and I cannot help admitting that I feel distinctly sad at the attitude taken up by the honourable member, considering the speech that he made in this House a short time ago. In the first place, we heard the honourable gentleman arguing with a great deal of force: we heard him putting before the House propositions to the effect that as soon as the Government have acquired all the large estates that are still to be acquired they will then turn round and acquire the small estates that are left, and will swallow up the whole of the land, and become, as he | for Wairarapa in his speeches in this House described them, land-nationalisers. I should like to point out to the honourable gentleman how absolutely inconsistent that remark of his is with the speech we heard him make recently. We heard him describe the absolute failure of the Government in regard to its land-for-settlements scheme in the acquisition of property. In one breath he tells us the acquisition of property by the Government is a failure, and that it was an altogether wrong principle upon which the Government are acting in acquiring land. He argued, first of all, that the acquisition of land under the land-for-settlements system has been a failure; and yet, in the very same breath, he tells honourable members that he feels quite sure the Government will go on acquiring large estates until they have eaten them all up, and then they will go on acquiring the smaller estates that are left. Does the honourable

member mean to say that the Government are going to discover at once, or very soon, that the acquisition of land for private settlement is a failure, and that, notwithstanding its glaring failure, therefore they are going to keep on acquiring not only large estates, but also the smaller estates as well. Which is correct? Are the Government going to be satisfied that their policy is a wrong policy? The honourable gentleman prophesies -- not Cassandra-like, because Cassandra prophesied, and was laughed at, and yet her prophesies proved to be true -- the honourable member prophesies that the Government will go on acquiring land, and then afterwards that they will not acquire. What is the meaning of it? Surely one statement or the other must be incorrect. I leave honourable members to say which is the incorrect statement. I want to reply now to the remarks made with a good deal of heat and vehemence by the member for Wairarapa, and I wish to show that honourable member that one or two of the statements he has made in reference to the Government land valuers are absolutely incorrect. I propose to deal shortly with his statement, first of all, in regard to land valuations, and I regret, and I am sure every member here will also regret, the statement made by him in regard to that department. One feels a kind of diffidence in discussing the way in which the honourable member puts his grievances, or the grievances of his constituency, before honourable members. Dooley said, "Hennessey, my man, a wet eye means a dry heart." That is to say, that when an honourable member complains and constantly whines about the grievances of his particular district he does not carry conviction into the minds of honourable members, and his words lose the weight they would otherwise carry. Now, the honourable gentleman has a mind of his own, as every one of us has; he has his own Wonderful! right, his own power of speech, his power of repartee and rhetoric. He has his own power of expressing his thoughts, and of finding fault, and he told the House he had got a grievance against the Valuation Department. Honourable members will agree with me that the honourable member

<page:635>

ways seems to have a personal grievance against on fifteen hundred or two thousand acres -- and some one. I have had occasion to defend the Registrar of the Supreme Court against an attack of those constituents. A vacancy would arise, attacked by the honourable gentleman. We have had on one occasion an attack made by the honourable gentleman on an old member of this House, Mr. Buchanan, and we saw as the result of that attack on Mr. Buchanan that idiotic advertising fulsome measure which was bustled along in the House for a time and then dropped, called the "Limitation of Profits Bill." Now the Valuation Department is attacked. Why, forsooth? I will tell honourable members the reason: the reason is because the Valuation Department has not seen fit to adopt the suggestion of the honourable gentleman in regard to the appointment of a particular man. I say the honourable member recommended a Mr. Bennett for a valuator of property, but Mr. Bennett has not been accepted, though the suggestion was made that he should value property in Mr. O'Meara's district. The honourable member for Wairarapa considers that the Valuation Department treated him unjustly, and therefore he is quite ready to tell honourable members that that department does not know how to conduct its own business. It is a shame that that department should not see the way in which it ought to go. And what do we next find? That the honourable gentleman says that the Valuation Department is a rotten department of the Government, and one that does not carry on its business in a proper manner. Why, forsooth? Because the valuer who goes to value a certain property "rides to the top of a hill," he says, "stops there, and has a look around," and then goes away and makes his report without going over the whole property. I need only tell honourable members that you do not require to eat a whole cake in order to find out that it is unpalatable. One bite may be quite sufficient to satisfy you that it is not good to go further; and I suggest to the honourable gentleman that the valuer who went to see this property probably got into those rubble-beds about Featherston and Greytown. So far as that property of Mr. Cotter's is concerned -- a property in regard to which they tried to dig the big stones into the ground -- the property that some

individual desired the Government to acquire in the honourable member's constituency-we know that individuals in that district wrote to the Government and forcibly suggested that no such acquisition should take place ; and they said it would be wrong that such property should be purchased. Anybody who travels through those stony wastes in the direction of Greytown and Featherston will discover that, if the Government had been induced under the Land for Settlements Act to acquire land there, the result would be that the honourable gentleman himself would never be returned to this House again. Just think of that. A crowd of tenants would spring up in that part of the country where the land had been acquired and sub- divided, families would populate the district and curse the Government for acquiring land i going to the Court. We have therefore the upon which a living could not be made-whether the honourable gentleman would feel the loss and I would ask honourable members if we would be able to fill it. Why those hard words with regard to the Valuation Department ? There is no necessity whatever for them. Then, the honourable member says that the member for Wellington Suburbs knows nothing what- ever about land-values. That may be the honourable member's opinion, and he is en- titled to it. His opinion is worth a good deal -- to him. He must remember, however, that probably no individual gets a more general smat- tering of the values of property, or, rather, an idea of the relative value of property, than those concerned in land transactions ; in fact, they get a better idea than even the member for a par- ticular district. The honourable gentleman's reflections upon the department were quite un- called for. It has excellent officers, who carry out their duties in a fair and impartial manner ; and I do not think there is any necessity to make personal attacks upon the valuers, who are doing able work for the colony. I propose now to deal with the question as to why the Government do not purchase land in that par- ticular district. The reason is that under the Land for Settlements Act it is the duty of the Government to acquire properties that will be reproductive. There would be nothing gained otherwise. What is the position as far as the Wairarapa is concerned ? There they had land to offer owned either by Mr. Riddiford or land such as I have already described at Greytown and Featherston, and if the Government purchased the latter land the transaction would result in a dead loss to the colony. I refer to those stony pieces. I do not know how many hun- dred acres go to the sheep, but a good many, I think. Again, there are other blocks of land in the honourable member's district which, I am prepared to admit, are good properties. He refers to those which are owned by Mr. Riddiford, whom I have known for a long time. Mr. Riddiford is absolutely opposed to me in politics, but he is a shrewd, capable business- man. When the Government go to him to acquire his properties he says the value is so- and-so. and he knows that if they will not pay what he asks the Government must go to the Court. Knowing how much Hatuma cost to acquire, however, the Government are wary of taking any proceedings like that if they can agree otherwise. Therefore if you look into the alleged grievances of the honourable gentle- man you find that there is the poor land, which is not worth having, and the rich land, which you cannot get without tremen- I know the Government has dous expense. tried to acquire property from Mr. Riddiford. He has also land in the Lower Hutt, and there is no finer land than that. The Hutt is not in my district. excepting a small part of it. Mr. Riddiford is prepared to sell his excellent pro- perty to the Government when the Government treat with him for it, but the prohibitive price absolutely prevents them doing so without

<page:636>

same difficulty in the Hutt as in the Wairarapa, and I think I have clearly shown honourable members that it would not be advisable for the Government to acquire land in that part of the country at the present juncture. Now we have another case-that of a man named Phillipson. I do not know who he is, but I suppose he wanted his grievance aired. Let me say this with regard to the honourable member : Phillip- son, whoever he is, had a (2000) loan from the bank. He said he wanted to get some more money, but he could not get it with- out going to the loan company and paying extra for it. He said later on that that individual sold his property for a large sum of money -I think he said \$1,200, but I do not know what the

price was. What does the honourable member mean by talking that nonsense in this House? When the man wanted \$200 more, and his improvements were worth \$1.200, and he already had \$200 from the bank, why did he not go to the bank for the money? What did he want chasing about loan companies and paying commissions if he had \$200 from the bank and he could sell for \$1.200? It seems an extraordinary thing, and one that ought to be explained before one can take it that there is a real and fair grievance. It is for the idea. In regard to that matter surely, of airing some other grievance that ought not to have been brought on to the floor of this House at all. There is one other matter that I wish to speak of, and that is this—it is a peculiar fact, and one that I wish honourable members to take note of, especially when the votes of money for public works are before the House: We have here the honourable member for Masterton, Mr. Hogg, and the honourable member for Wairarapa, Mr. Hornsby, both representing practically the same district of the colony, the one honourable member suggesting that the Government should acquire lands in his district and cut them up for settlement, while the other member for the same district Mr. Hogg is absolutely silent on the subject. Are we to understand from that that the two members have a divergence of views in regard to this matter? Are we to assume that the views of the honourable member for Wairarapa are antagonistic to the district the honourable member for Masterton represents? I do not know. Let me finish up by saying this: Let me tell the honourable member for Wairarapa—I do not know what his political heaven is, but it is evidently painted blue, with cast-iron dogs on the lawn, or something of that sort. But if the honourable gentleman will preach the doctrine to the Government as I intend to do, and as I pledge myself to do to the best of my ability, if he will help as I will earnestly help to get the Government to cut up for the people of the colony the lands they are already possessed of in the Assets Company; if they will deal with these large properties that are remunerative already and which the people are ready to buy, real good will be done. Take the Upton Downs and Weld Hills Estates, which the Hon. Mr. Mills knows all about, and which are well-watered and well-timbered properties. Situated on the banks of the Awatere, bounded on the north side by the Medway, it will be found that there is plenty of timber and plenty of water on that property, which adjoins the Richmond Brook Estate, and which in its turn adjoins the Starborough Estate, which has recently been cut up by the Government. That is a promise which the Government and the Hon. Mr. Mills are aware the settlers in that district wish to acquire. I am aware that a valuation of that property was made recently by a brother of the Manager of the Assets Board, and I am aware that the chairman of a local body in Blenheim has made representations to the Government for the acquiring of that land. Let that land be cut up and given to the people. You have got a tremendous saving in the machinery of procuration. I shall always advocate that, and I feel quite sure the Hon. the Minister is coming to this idea: that he must give first help in obtaining the cutting-up of these properties already acquired and reproductive. Now, I can realise the argument against it, and I further realise that if you are going to discuss a question of this kind you should not only look to what are the arguments, in favour of it, but also the arguments which are against it. I am aware that this estate is a payable estate. I know the Assets Board are receiving a fairly good income in return for the capital invested; and probably if you asked them why the property is not cut up the answer will be this: because it is probably making a good return, and helping to equalise a deficiency which has been created somewhere else. And if that deficiency which has been created somewhere else is not met by the purse of some other land there will be a deficiency and altogether a failure in the passing-out of these estates. Sir, I trust the Government will take into consideration, in view of their powers under this Bill, the advisability of at once going to work in this matter. I trust they will take the earliest opportunity of cutting up some of these estates, and if they do that they will do a great deal of good so far as this colony is concerned. My question in regard to clause 9 I will discuss no further. I think I will say this: that it seems to me futile. After I divided the House upon this matter—I divided the House, when twenty-eight votes were received in regard to clause 9 again—thirty-two; and I divided the House again to-night, when twenty-

nine votes were received against thirty - one - I have done mais best to get that clause exeised from the Bill. I have failed : but I do feel in my own mi this : that the principle still left open in ties clause is not a principle that should command itself to this House. I say this. and I am quite sure the honourable member for the Ba of Plenty will bear me out : that, though he was the first member to speak in regard to clause 9. and though he spoke about the que- tion of the Government making regulations under the provisions of that statute. I was the first one to point out to this House the question of creating ultra vires regulations.

<page:637>

The honourable member for the Bay of Plenty I raised. Sir, let me say finally that. although will admit that, and that is my objection to these are misrepresentations, I do not al- this clause now : and I feel that. notwithstand- together blame the member for Wellington ing the words added by the Premier, which are Suburbs for having made those misrepresenta- mere surplusage, we still have the danger-we tions ; but I do say, Sir, and I say it by way of shall still have the possibility that regulations clearing myself in the matter, that I treat with at some future date may be introduced which the utmost contempt the action of the Minister are absolutely ultra rues. And what will be the who gave him that information during the result ? I am quite prepared to say that this is supper adjournment. struck out of the latter part of the 1st sub- section of the clause, which said that no regula- as a personal explanation I might be allowed tion should be made modifying " The Public to say, in answer to the honourable member Works Act, 1894." The Hon. the Minister for Wairarapa, Mr. Hornsby, that during the said to me, when I told him that that did not supper adjournment I did not speak to any meet the case, that it did. With all due de- Minister on any subject. Furthermore, I ac- cept the honourable member's apologies for his ference to the Right Hon. the Premier, I con. attitude towards me this evening. sider he is not putting a right interpretation on that section. With the greatest deference to his opinion. I say that section does not carry - Sir, as the Minister in charge of the Taxation the meaning that the Premier tells us it does. Department as well, I wish to emphasize what I maintain, absolutely, that the Government has just been said by the honourable member bave absolute and supreme power to make for Wellington Suburbs, Mr. Wilford ; he never these regulations, and whether they are wild spoke to me, and I never spoke to him on the rares or not the House and the country has no matter under discussion in any way. As Minis- redress. ter in charge of the department I feel it incum- Mr. HORNSBY (Wairarapa) .- Sir. I rise to bent on me to say that the Hon. Sir Joseph make a personal explanation, having been mis- represented by the last speaker. The honourable me, had qualified any promise he gave by this member for the Suburbs stated that my antago- statement : that the valuer must be a suitable and competent person. I acknowledge that nism to the Valuation Department was brought about by the refusal of that department to the person nominated by the honourable mem- appoint Mr Bennett as a valuer. Sir, I give that ber for Wairarapa. Mr. Hornsby, was a very a most emphatic denial. and I say that Mr. : ood settler, a man for whom I have every re- Bennett was proposed by me to the predecessor spect and would like to have found employ- in office of the Hon. Mr. Mills: that I received me - and he has put it in writing that he has a distinct promise from his predecessor in office that the gentleman should be appointed when never made a valuation of that class in his life. there was a suitable vacaney : and the only desire I had in the matter and it stands in ing into something more pleasant than the writing- - was that the man should first of all undergo an examination to prove conclusively that he was a qualified man in every respect pleasant to honcurable members-1 must say before the appointment should be made. That was my desire, and that is my desire still. I say I hold the promise of the predecessor in office of the Hon. Mr. Mills for that appoint . Wellington Suburbs. I think the whole of the ment. and that anything I may have sand with r gard to the department did not proceed in any way from the fact that Mr. Bennett was not appointed to the Taxation Department. Then, Sir, the honourable member for Wel- speaking. And parenthetically I may say, Sir, lington Suburbs inferred that I had recom- mended the purebase of some stony plains near Featherston in the occupation of Mr. Cotter.

is a great deal too much interruption, which is Sir, I never made a recommendation with very disconcerting to some members who are regard to that estate. As member for the district I forwarded a petition which was signed great improvement if there was not so much in Greytown and district, and I wrote and told of it. Sir, : intimated when the Bill was in the Minister that I objected to the purchase of Committee that I would like to hansom the stony land, but recommended the purchase use the reason why I supported the amend- of the "home padd. eks." The honourable member for the Suburbs learned his lesson very ! Bay, and why the additions that : proposed badly in the half-hour's adjournment. He to it were not carried by this House. I think further stated that I said Mr. Phillipson borrowed money from the bank. Sir. I never mentioned the bank. I said Mr. Phillipson borrowed \$200 from the Advances to Settlers for Settlements Act than myself. But still, Office, and that he wanted 4200 more and with all revolutionary pieces of political machinery could not get it. That was the contention Mr. WILFORD (Wellington Suburbs). Sir, Mr. MILLS (Minister of Trade and Customs). Ward, who was in charge of the office before ment for. but he is a man who has honestly told Mr. A. L. D. FRASER (Napier) .-- Sir, drift- unfortunate recrimination that has been introduced, I go so far as to say it is far from 1 sympathise with the honourable member for Wairarapa with respect to the position in which he has been placed with the member for speech of the member for the Suburbs was a tirade-an attack-on the member for Wairarapa, because the member for Wairarapa had to reprimand him for interjections while he was without reflecting on your conduct of the House in any way, that during speeches there addressing the House, I am sure it would be a I am justified in saying that no 11.30. member in the House is a stronger supporter or a greater admirer of the Land machinery, it has its defects, and it will take

<page:638>

years before it is made perfect : and I will not allow it to go forth that I in any way was endeavouring by an amendment to minimise the popularity and weaken the operation of that statute. I really hoped that, with the amendment the honourable gentleman proposed, with the additions I made, and to which he agreed, it would, instead of retarding prosperity and weakening the operation of the Act, have made it more generally popular, and would have given it-I might go so far as to say -- the hall-mark of approval of the entire colony. I consider that long before the hands working on the estate, long before the shepherd manager or the sub-manager, long before even the proprietary partners banded together with the object of honestly making money out of their property-long before them, it is the absolute duty, the sacred duty, of the Government to consider the children brought up upon and so closely connected with the land that may be taken from them and their parents under the compulsory clause. It was a sacred duty of the Government to recognise this, and to adopt the amendment as proposed by the honourable member for Hawke's Bay, with the amendment I proposed to add, and no honest man could have opposed it. I sincerely trust the Premier, when he replies, will explain to the House and to the country the contradictory position of the statute as it stands now. I refer to the special consideration given to partners in land taken, by which they can retain a thousand acres each. If it is just to them, how much more so is it to the children of the owner? Now, leaving that for a moment, let me say that I feel sure the House and the Right Hon. the Premier will believe me when I assert that my only intention in moving an amendment to any measure is to, . if possible, in my small way make it more workable and more acceptable to the people of the colony. I do not know why the honourable member for Masterton should take such a special interest in me. I seem to him a kind of bête noir ; he speaks about me with, I might almost say, a scowl on his face, and turns round and glares at me with those stony eyes in a way that would demoralise a more sensitive person. Then he rushes into pathos, and, to quote the honourable member for Hawke's Bay, very often "flapdoodle." Mr. HOGG (Masterton) .- This is the highly refined member for Napier, who reprimanded the member for the Wellington Suburbs a minute ago. Mr. A. L. D. FRASER .- These are not personalities. With regard to the criticism of the honourable member for Masterton, I have yet to learn that he is an M.A.

in refinement ; no doubt I shall learn it some day. I hope the honourable member will not take offence at a little playful banter. I do not intend it in an offensive way. But I cannot understand why he should allude to me in the pointed way he does, saying I was a convert to and was drawn at the chariot-wheels of the Opposition-that my seat should be on the other side. And why ? For the simple reason that I supported an amendment proposed by the honourable member for Hawke's Bay. My honourable friend the member for Masterton is one of those narrow-minded poli- ticians who feels it his absolute duty to oppose any suggestion or amendment coming from the other side. It is not so with me. I recognize that good can come out of " Nazareth," and that good sometimes comes from the Opposi- tion. Mr. HOGG. - " Nazareth " is over the way. I suppose. Mr. A. L. D. FRASER. - I quite anticipate that " Nazareth " is foreign to my honourable friend. Leaving this, the honourable member for Masterton went on to say. " Are we going to have large estates accumulating, and are we going to have land held in the large areas it has been- - land filched from the Natives ?" And then he drifted back into ancient history-the dusty, cobwebby times of thirty odd years ago. He spoke of the " Twelve Apostles." They are also historic. And he spoke of how they accu- mulated large estates in Native lands, and he said that such a policy is entirely antagonistic to the policy of the present Government. The honour- able gentleman is an exemplification of what the honourable member for Hawke's Bay has said -that we have these theoretical town men speaking on the land question and on other sub- jects of which they know nothing. What about Native land? Who has filched large estates from the Natives? The "Twelve Apostles" were but a circumstance compared to this. And if the " Twelve Apostles" Government. gave 5s. or 2s. 6d. an acre in those days, it was a thousand times a fairer price than 0s. or 10d. given by the Government to-day. And I can cite case after case within the last five years, or even the last twelve months, in which the Government have been giving 6s. and 10s. an acre, when the Natives have been pursued by private purchasers at \$2 and \$3 an acre, and the private purchasers have been willing to pay 10 per cent. Native duty on the top of that. And what is the position ? When the Govern- ment purchase, the Natives, unfortunately, are left stranded and without an acre to their name. When the Natives receive 50 per cent. or 25 per cent. of the value of their land from the Crown, no inquiry is ever held as to whether the Natives have sufficient left for their maintenance : but when a private purchaser buys the land he has to appear before the Trust Commissioner, and satisfy him that the Native owners have -ti- ficient land left for their maintenance, and that the price is a fair price. Is any inquiry held now when the Government purchase ? Mr. SEDDON. - Yes. Mr. A. L. D. FRASER. - The Premier av- "Yes." I have said when a private purchaser buys land he has to go before the Trust Com- missioner and satisfy him, first, that the price is a fair one, and, secondly, that the Native has sufficient land left for his maintenance. Now, the Premier says that the Government does the same. I absolutely deny it. And further than that ---- Mr. SEDDON. - You are wrong. Mr. A. L. D. FRASER. - The Premier says I am wrong. Why, I have forgotten more that

<page:639>

the honourable member ever knew of Native land legislation. Mr. SEDDON. - Of instructions to Native Land Purchase officers. Mr. A. L. D. FRASER. - Who fixes the price? The Government. Who purchases the land ? The Government. And let me go a step further, and show the injustice that is being done to the Natives in the purchase of their land by the Government. When a pri- vate individual purchases land from a Native trustee for minors, he has to pay all the pur- chase-money into the hands of the Public Trustee, who retains the money in trust for the children : but when the Government purchase land from a trustee for minors they hand over all the money to the trustee, and it often hap- pens that when the unfortunate minor comes of age he has not 6 ft. by 2 ft. to bury himself in, or a sixpence to jingle on a tombstone. An Hon. MEMBER. - I can give you half a dozen such cases. Mr. A. L. D. FRASER. - Such cases are numerous. Then, again, the Government will not allow the Natives to sell to any one, and land and his family, and the Land for Settle- they will not allow them to lease the land. The Premier has told us what is

perfectly true : there is an earth-hunger. But he did not say that the Government, to relieve this, will not allow the Natives to lease their land-in many cases for a rental equal to what the Government is giving them for the freehold. And what is the result ? Thousands of acres are lying idle in the North Island because the Government have had a surfeit of purchasing land, and now, dog-in-the-manger-like, they will not allow the Natives to even lease. The unfortunate Natives have incurred certain liabilities and they cannot pay their honest debts. Why, within this very building, how many Natives have waited upon the Native Minister this session and asked him to allow them to amend was this :- sell or lease their land in order to pay their debts ? But he cannot accede to their request because of the wretched legislation of past sessions. Mr. SEDDON. -- Tied it all up. Mr. A. L. D. FRASER. - "Tied it all up!" But does the Right Hon. the Premier consider it is just to the Natives that they cannot lease or sell any portion that is of no use to them ? I say at a later stage I shall go fully into this matter before this House, and if honourable members will only take the interest in it that I think they will, and that I think they should, we shall have such legislation on the statute-book that will remove for ever these bastard attempts at legislation we have seen in the past I have, Sir, really drifted away few years. somewhat from the subject, but the matter I have mentioned should be of the very greatest interest to the House, and I hope it will not be like it was last session, when during the passing of Native legislation we could scarcely keep a quorum in the House, though we sat from nine o'clock at night to nine o'clock in the morning dealing with the subject. I sin- | only yesterday, and who may leave it again as cerel: hope that I shall have the support of honourable members who hear what I have carried in this House by a thinking House, to say, and I shall ask them to support me, even though it may be against the Government. I have only one word more to say, and that is that, after all the arguments I have heard, I see no reason to alter my mind or regret the action I took last night in regard to the provision for the children of the owner. I regret that but two country members on the Government side-the member for Masterton and the member for Wairarapa-supported us upon the question. I was pleased to see the honourable member for the Wairarapa had the courage of his opinions, and was prepared to go into the lobby and vote in favour of what was an undoubted justice to those who own the land. Suffice that though Captain Russell's amendment did not meet with my entire approval, for if passed in the form proposed it might have opened the door to abuse, still I supported it-firstly, because the principle was a sound one; and, secondly, that with the additions and safeguards I proposed to add in Committee, and which were accepted by the member for Hawke's Bay, I felt all danger would have been removed, justice done to the owners of the Act immeasurably popularised. Mr. T. MACKENZIE. - Sir, I do not intend to take up much of the time of the House at this late hour, but I wish to place a few of my views of this land - for - settlements measure before honourable members. First of all, I should like to say I regret very much that the House did not see its way to carry an amendment I proposed, which contemplated enabling the grown-up sons of an owner of land taken under this Act to obtain the small quantity of 200 acres each of first-class land or 500 acres each of second-class land. I think it was a very fair amendment, and yet only ten members out of this House of seventy-four supported it. My " Any legitimate son (of or over the age of seventeen years) of any freeholder whose land is resumed by the Crown for settlement purposes shall be entitled to take up for his own use an area of such land not exceeding two hundred acres if it be first-class land, or not exceeding five hundred acres if it be second-class land, provided always that he shall farm the land so taken up." Of course, I meant that amendment to apply to land beyond the five - miles radius of the who has just spoken regarding this Act-that it will take time to make it a perfect, workable, and acceptable Act to the great bulk of the people of New Zealand ; and no principle will better secure that end than that the sons of the early settlers in this country-the sons who by their self-denial and their assistance to their parents enabled their parents to overcome the difficulties of early colonisation and to reclaim the land either from a swamp or the primeval forest - shall have a prior claim over men and women who may have landed in

the colony quickly as they came. Until that principle is

<page:640>

and not defeated by a number of men who un- thinkingly walked into that lobby without the slightest comprehension of the measure- An Hon. MEMBER. - Who are they ? Mr. T. MACKENZIE .- Why. Sir, there are members in this House who when the division was taken were practically unaware what the motion was. Read the names of those who voted against my motion. It was an early hour in the morning, and they were perhaps taking a little rest in the lobbies. But they walked into the lobby and voted against that amendment, which provided that the grown- up son of a farmer should have the right to 200 acres of his father's property if he intended to settle on that property and become a farmer. Why, I know of them in the Clutha district, and in the district I represent, where farmers have four or five thousand acres of land, whose sons probably for years have done the hardest portion of the work of the farm, and yet they will not be entitled over a stranger to take up a single acre of it. I say you are striking at the very root of that patriotism and love of country that is so essential for the de- velopment of a country. Now, there is another point in connection with the land for settle- ments which ought to be introduced in the measure, and that is that a portion of the cost of the property should, as early as possible, be liquidated by the person who is taking it up. make that suggestion in order that the Govern- ment may be absolutely safe in the investment of their principal. What prevails just now? You are buying estates at their present current values, and, of course, those of us who have studied at all narrowly the question of land- values now, and the competition to be faced, are of opinion that it is not likely that the present land-values will be sustained. If that is correct, then when the fall takes place who is to suffer ? If the occupiers are unable to carry on they will throw up their properties, and the Government of the country will have to suffer, which really means all the people of the colony. Now, if the Government wish to make this measure safe and wise, which no ! doubt is what they intend to make it. they ought to adopt the same principle here to a i are erected on freehold property. There .. limited extent that now obtains in connec- tion with the cash advances to farmers that is, that a certain proportion of interest, as you know, in the 6-per-cent. ratio goes to liqui- dating the original loan. You will then safe- guard the principal, and make the estate se- cure, and at the same time you are not doing anything that will injure the occupier, because . he will then pay a lessened amount of interest on the cost of the property. A great deal has been said on the relative merits of the various systems of occupation of land -- freehold tenure, lease in perpetuity, and the deferred-payment systems. My own opinion is that an optional system should prevail, and that a man should be able to take up land on the conditions best suited to his requirements, and that, so far as freehold is concerned, you should not permit a large quantity of land to aggregate into an individual's hands. It does not, to my mind, signify much what tenure the people occupy the land under, if they have the option of taking it up under the tenure that best suits them, so long as we do not permit the aggregation of estates in the hands of a few men. If a man has capital to spare, why should he not have the right to pay for the freehold with that capital, and then be free from the continuation of the payment of interest ? We all know that people have come to New Zea- land from the Old Country in order, in many instances, that they may obtain freeholds. The people left the Old Country because they could not get a freehold there, and they wanted to "e able to get it and say. " This is my freehold, and I shall have the right when I die to hand the property over to my successors." If there are others who have not any desire for the irep- hold system, there is the leasehold for them. and there is also the 999-years lease. That, : course, is giving the freehold without requiring the people to pay the principal cost down. The State, of course, is committed to the 999 veats without even getting the price of the frechon, and so parts with the right to that land. Of the honourable member for Wairarapa I do not think much more need be said. I do not think he made out a good case in connection with his friend who was required to pay 3 per cent. extra on his advance. I feel persuaded that if the security were good there are numbers of people 1 in this town

who would only be too glad to advance the money at a lower rate than Thor 8 per cent. An Hon.

MEMBER .- It was a leasehold pre- perty, you know. Mr. T. MACKENZIE. - Even so: if the security was good I think he would get it at a less rate of interest. We had, of course, the member for Masterton complaining that the sons and daughters of settlers in the South had come up from the South Island because ties were driven away from the South owing to the large estates there. We also were told by him that the very best buildings in Dunedin were erected on leasehold properties. That statement is absolutely incorrect. The very best ballns. hotels, insurance offices, and merchants' offers many, of course, erected on the town sections- leasehold property -- and I think it is a v. ry good thing indeed there is that leasehold property, and that the town should get th. benefit ; but I merely allude to the sta :- ment of the honourable gentleman to show that it is not absolutely correct. reativ: the very best buildings in Dunedin erected on freehold property. And as for :i. complaint that the children of southerners it !: the South and came to the North. why. Sir. ... honourable gentleman himself did the very salt. thing, but not to get on the land. If they have done that, if they have taken with them from the South that enterprise for which the Sort was so long distinguished, surely it is a nikt thing to do if the lands were in occupation :n the South, and while these large estates wif being cultivated large quantities of Nat.ve l lands in the North Island were unoco.

<page:641>

pied and uncultivated. Until these lands had been taken up and occupied by the hardy sons and daughters of the South it was time enough for him to complain of the large estates in the South. They did the best they could. They came to the North and took up lands that were unoccupied, and did not disturb the large estates in the South. The amendment moved by the honourable member for Hawke's Bay, Captain Russell, I supported on account of the principle, but I consider the area too large which he intended to give to the sons and daughters. I do not agree with the honourable member for Masterton when he says that freeholders were only serfs, and that the freehold tenure had been the curse of New Zealand. Has this country been cursed? Has it not been an exceedingly prosperous coun- try, and have not all the tenures that have ob- tained -- have not all the different systems that have obtained from even the squatters' days tended to advance the country ? As for the large areas that were taken up by the squatters in the early days, I may point out that those squatters were a means of colonisation. They brought high-class stock to the country, and they employed numbers of people at good wages, and all around many of these stations in the early days the very best settlement in this colony was formed ; but as the demand for land has increased these large blocks of land must come into use. To refuse to admit that the large landed proprietors did fill a very useful place in the early development of the country is, I say distinctly, ungenerous. For my part, I shall be glad to see the Bill made a workable one, and if that is done I believe it will be in the interest of the people of New Zealand. Mr. HASELDEN (Patea) .-- I cannot allow this land-for-settlements question that is now before the House to pass without saying a few #cc-zero words on it. There is no question on which the people in the country districts feel more keenly than this question of the compulsory taking of land for settlement. I must say that this land-for-settlement scheme is wrong in principle from start to finish. The thing amounts practically to robbery and confiscation. In the first place, much of this land was taken up in the early days. The Government has given a title to it, and, after the settlers have felled the bush and sown it in grass, after they have fenced it by the help of their sons and even of their daughters, that land is taken from them by the Government; and for what reason ? Because the people in the towns have been frightened to go into the back country, and because they covet their neighbours' land. The land that has been improved in face of so many drawbacks and difficulties they covet and wish to take, and therefore they bring pres- sure on the Government to seize that land, because it is now easy for them to settle on. The Government back up these people because of their votes, and they are the means of keeping them on the Treasury benches, and that is one of the principal reasons for the acquisition of these estates. Then, how are they acquired ? I am not conversant

with the South Island, but I can speak of the North Island, and most of the estates were acquired at above their fair market values, with the result that this Government, which is supposed to represent the working-man, are bound to charge a rack-rent for the land because they have paid for it more than it is worth. And with the inflated price of land and the bottom tumbling out of the wool-market land-values must also fall, and with these de- pressing conditions the farmer will have to pay land-tax on higher valuations. I say that if the people want land let them carve out homes for themselves in the back country; but at present, through the continuation of the system of compulsory acquisition of estates, there is a feeling of intimidation spreading throughout this country amongst the landowners that does not augur well for the happiness and prosperity of the country. One gentleman told me that he would vote for me, but would not give me his open support, because if he did so he would be a marked man by the present Govern- ment. That occurred at the last election the other day. He said he would be marked, and his land would be acquired. I do not say that that would be likely, but that was his feeling. Most of the estates that have been acquired have been freely parted with by the owners because they have got more for them than they could have got in the open market. The sum of \$12 per acre was paid for an estate in my district which a few weeks before was offered to a friend of mine for \$10 per acre. The Living- stone Estate, near Hawera, was bought only a few weeks ago. A man said he would pay any rent for a part of it for a year or two, and then he would fall back on the Government and ask them to reduce it. The honourable member for Wairarapa mentioned the question of the Government valuers, and stated that some of them did not understand their business, and the honourable gentleman never said a truer word. And another thing is that the Go- vernment put a man in a position that is not fair to himself. Three valuers should be appointed instead of one; two should be practical farmers, and the third should be a business-man. Then we should not hear anything of the bribery that goes on now in connection with the acquirement of these estates. Members laughed at me just now when I said there was a reign of terror prevailing in the country; but let me say that a lady said to me that she would shoot the first man who crossed her boundary to take her land -the land that she intended to leave to her children. That is the way the people are already feeling in this country over the land question. In all the cases where estates have been taken the land has been reproductive, and carrying stock. There are still thousands of acres yet to be taken up that are at present lying unproductive; and why should not the Government first attempt to settle the people on these lands, and leave the owners of the estates that are reproductive alone ? I saw the name of Mr. McCardle mentioned in the morn- ing paper, stating that he had informed the Land Board that there was better land available in the Waikato district at 10s. an acre than the

<page:642>

Government were giving £5 for. I know that a Mr. McCardle in the ballot drew section after section for his own family, and another three sections for Mr. Dudding; and the matter was brought before the Minister of Lands, who simply stated that the McCardle family had been rather more than fortunate, but there was nothing in it. I do not know whether that is the same gentleman 12.0. or not. I would ask, Why should we buy land at this price with borrowed money whilst there are thousands of acres lying idle? With the fall in the price of all produce the price of land must fall, and the speculation is a bad one. There is no occasion to burst up these estates in the North Island ; if left alone they will be divided naturally. A man with four or five sons will divide his land be- tween them, and they again with their children. I met a settler in the back blocks who had far too much land to the acre, it was piled up nearly sky high. He asked me if I thought two hun- dred acres sufficient to make a living on, and I said that I did not think two hundred acres of that land was sufficient. He said he thought that he ought to get two hundred acres more, to which I replied that he had better be careful or he would be "burst up, " it was only a matter of time when four hundred acres would be con- sidered too much. I contend that we have no right to interfere with the acquisition of es- tates in this country until the whole of the un- productive land is made productive. I thank honourable

members for the kind hearing they have given me. Mr. MONK (Waitemata) .-- I shall not keep the House very long. It is with very great pleasure that I rise to compliment the honour- When able gentleman who has just sat down. I last addressed the House I deplored the small- ness of the number in this House who were intimate with the interests of land-occupiers, and I feel that in having this gentleman here one more has come to our assistance, and I hope he is the beginning of a troop that will represent this most important interest. Nearly everything has been said that can be said on the objects of this Bill, but there are one or two things that have struck me. One is, that the honourable member for Napier should speak apologetically for voting as he did. Indeed, Sir, that is one aspect which the Premier should be ashamed of that he should expect a member to vote for what he believes to be entirely wrong. This morning the honour- able gentleman was spoken of by the Premier as an erring one. That the Premier should make party questions of mere trivial matters, and that those who come here to support him should be denied the freedom to vote as they think right, is immoral. The honourable member for Wellington Suburbs made some disparaging remarks upon the speech of the honourable member for Hawke's Bay. I am sure that speech will compare well with the honourable gentleman's own speech, for it is consistent, and will be instructive to the country. Then, again, the remark was made by the honourable member for Christchurch City (Mr. Collins) that it is difficult now to distinguish the dividing-line between Liberal and Conservative in this House. Cannot dis- tinguish them ! Why, Sir, they are as easily distinguished as Brummagem jewellery is from that which bears the hall-mark. Their's is only a resuscitation of conceptions that were laid aside as fallacious ages ago and supposed never to be recognised again ; while those on this side of the House who have spoken in opposition, and who have the courage to con- stantly advocate certain principles, are ad- vocating principles that have stood the test of time, which to them is equivalent to the hall-mark. An honourable member says "Oh," but he is one who can say that the policy of the Government has tended to raise the price of butter from 4d. to 1s. a pound. I think the honourable member has good intentions. I would not say anything to disparage what he said, but I hope that in time more information and light will come to his mind, and he will be a valued citizen and mem- ber of this House-I mean so far as his poli- tical views are concerned. Now, Sir. I just want to make one remark with regard to what was stated by the honourable member for Masterton. He made the remark that there were persons paying to the local bodies a higher rate upon their freehold than their neigh- bours alongside them were paying in rent to the Crown. I defy him to furnish an instance. If the land was valued at £30 per acre, the highest rate that local bodies could levy is only 3s. 9d. per acre. Why, just look at the returns that are placed before the country as to what they are charging per annum for the lowest-priced lots in the Hatuma Estate, 5s. to 6s. Although I hope it will not take place-and no one hopes it will not take place more sincerely than I do. and in my own interests as well as those of every other person in the colony-but I say that there is no certainty that the values of produce will be maintained at the rates now attained. Now, then, I wish to deal with one further remark made by the honourable mein- ber for Masterton. These men he is now speak- ing of so grossly, whose property he would have confiscated by Act of Parliament. and not allow to retain a few acres to their children. are men to whom I feel I am under obligation -although I do not believe in large estates- but these are men to whom I am thankful. because in many instances they sacrificed their property in undertaking risks, and made loves in shipping our produce to the London mar- kets; and the values that in time they esta- blished has brought the land into demand. enabling such men as the honourable member for Masterton to talk in the style he now talk- in order to tickle the ears of his constituents. Mr. HOGG. -- I spoke very highly of the pioneers. Mr. MONK. - Yes, you did. You spoke highly of them while they were of use to you. but you now desire to plunder them without mercy. Now, then, I come to the Right Hon. the Premier. I am not against the acquisition of large estates by the Crown for the purpose of

land for settlement, but I am against paying ! that if Sir John McKenzie had been upon those high prices for these estates; and I blame the Government themselves for inflating these values, and compelling the country to pay the high values for these estates, when they are themselves holding large properties which they are neglecting to put upon the market. Why is it that the Premier, with the control he has, has not had these estates cut up? Is it this \$250 a year that is placed to his credit for doing nothing as member of the Assets Board ? Can it be that he has a mercenary object? I do not think so. Does the Premier ignore the fact that the people are clamouring to have these estates cut up and placed at their disposal so that they may settle on them ? Then, again, what excuse can the Right Hon. the Premier offer for the large area of Crown land that he is allowing to lie idle, when there are a large number of surveyors unemployed and only too ready to offer their services for the purpose of cutting up those lands and enabling people to take them up? I say to those who have large estates -and the Government are the largest estate-holders in the country at the present moment -- now is the time to as rapidly as possible dispose of this land, while the prices of produce are at such a level as to offer every possible inducement for the acquisition of land for dairy and pastoral purposes. The Government, in buying estates, are acting with great inconsistency. I shall charge them-and, I think, justly -- with neglecting favourable opportunities ; and I charge them with wasting the public money by allowing it to lie idle in these lands which twenty or thirty years ago were paid for, instead of placing them at the disposal of those who, when they occupy them, increase the assets of the country by the first hour's work they put on the land. Now, Sir, speaking for myself-and I speak with some knowledge upon these matters-if the Government would give me the choice betwixt 500 acres of their good prairie land and 500 acres at the higher rate I should have to pay for the special lands bought for settlement. I should most certainly take the unimproved land, because my first day's work would, so to speak, be equivalent to an investment in my favour on that land. But when I go and buy these improved estates, which I may call the velvet cushion with which the Government are coaxing people to go and settle upon land, instead of offering the rugged seat of the pioneer -instead of doing that they are inducing these people to take up land, as was forcibly remarked by the honourable member for Patea, without any risk. They have placed at their disposal a capital of \$2,000 or \$3,000, as said by the honourable member for Hawke's Bay, and they can use it so long as the values permit them to pay their rents, and at the end of a few years, should depression come, they can either give up their holdings or bring such pressure to bear upon the Ministry occupying those benches as will cause them to reduce the rents. Sir, the Premier knows very little of what he is doing in these land speculations ; indeed, he knows so little that I assure him benches and had been in charge of this Bill it would have come out in a very different form from that in which it now appears. The Hon. the Minister of Lands will see to this- and I know that in him I am addressing one of practical knowledge on the subject : and he knows that what I am saying upon this matter is absolutely correct, and that there is an unnecessary risk in buying these large estates while the Government are in possession of large areas of prairie lands. It is the duty of the Government to crowd the market with these lands, and as much as possible to leave unpurchased these improved estates, which their present policy is enhancing the value of. Now, there is another influence that is being impressed upon the country, and it is a very serious one -- namely, that by the purchase of these improved lands the Premier is diminishing the revenue. They are contributing largely to the land-tax. The Premier himself knows he has got a special land-valuation department that had its origin a few years ago at the instance of Sir John McKenzie, who promised that land should be specially valued in order that the country might have a reliable valuation of its lands, but which valuation has proved in almost every instance to be incorrect. It has resulted not in that valuation department disappearing, as was the first intention, but in being a permanent burden on the country, to the extent at the present time of about \$30,000 a year. And these valuation officers are travelling up and down the country -a costly sauntering brigade-changing valuations or seeing if they can change them,

and adopting every possible pretext for increasing the values, simply because the price of our produce is a little higher than it was before, although there is no certainty that it will be maintained much longer, and no certainty that there will not be a clamour through the country presently to lower these values. But these men are constantly investigating the values of property to see if they cannot increase the values, and so increase the revenue. Now, when the Premier purchases these estates he at once effaces their contributions to the revenue and removes them for ever beyond the reach of the valuer for land-tax purposes, and no direct revenue accrues from these large blocks of land after they have been cut up. Now, with regard to the freehold, honourable members can rightly tell me there is a perpetuity of tenure in 999 years. But, Sir, there is something else, which the Premier does not understand, because he has no sympathy with land-occupation ; he is not a farmer, and he does not realise that when a bond for occupier of land- I am speaking now of the genuine settler, who has an inborn love of the soil and of its concomitants -- takes up an area and works it he looks on that area as his savings-bank. No matter, Sir, what may be the terms of his lease, he has it ingrained in his very nature that he would like to have that land as his own to put his savings into. The owner of a homestead feels that there is no other property in

<page:644>

which he can deposit his savings and the accumulations of his life as well as in his homestead. He knows that other properties may disappear. If he trusts to the Premier and puts his savings into the savings-bank, he knows the honourable gentleman will take the money out and lodge paper in its place, and he does not know what contingencies may arise in the future. This House may yet have to legislate to compel the depositors in our savings-banks to accept Government paper instead of receiving back the coin they lodged in them. Of course, I will not suppose that such a thing will happen, but no thoughtful man will deny that in a country like ours, in the face of the competition that this colony must receive from different parts of the world and is receiving at the present time, caution should be observed. No one, Sir, can say what the levels of land-values will be ten years hence. The Premier objects to the option of freehold being given to settlers under this Act, and I understand he has, so to speak, staked his political existence before many witnesses in this House that he will never concede the granting of freeholds to those who are holding land on lease in perpetuity, or who are buying land on these improved estates. But I feel as certain as that I am standing here that these tenants will yet clamour for their freeholds. They will desire to place their savings in their properties, and even though they may for some years have no fear of their ability to meet the demands of the State landlords, yet there will arise in time in the mind of any man who is & mere tenant a thought that the day may come when he will feel he cannot easily find the amount of rent the State landlord requires, and that he would much rather be free. No doubt he will improve his place, and in the course of time, as he goes on to accumulate savings, he will feel that he would like to put them not in the savings-bank, but in his property, so that in his old age he will know he is not open to the demand of the landlord every six or twelve months for rent, a demand that perhaps in his old age may impose an anxiety that will detract from the pleasure and happiness of his life. Mr. LAWRY (Parnell) .- Sir, I took no part in the debate on this Bill in Committee, and therefore I think I have a perfect right to make a few remarks on the third reading of the Bill. Before I proceed to deal with the measure I would like, Sir, to usurp what might be considered one of the functions of the Opposition- that is, to congratulate the honourable member for Patea on his election to this House. I may say, however, that I wish the election had resulted otherwise. At any rate, Sir, the honourable gentleman, in his speech to-night and in his addresses on the hustings, has proved to the House and to the country that he is no political hybrid, but an out-and-out Oppositionist, and that he is a gentleman who has been elected to take one side in the House, and we shall always know where to find him. On reading the honourable gentleman's address to the electors it struck me, however, that he ! assumed to himself the functions of the political reformer. I might remind him that there was once a gentleman standing for the American

Congress, and some person said, " We realise that you are fired with patriotism ; that you have great ability, great thoughts, and can clothe them in appropriate language, and ex- press them in suitable words ; but what could one man like you do in a sink of iniquity like that ?" The reply was, " If you take a bottle of scent and throw it into a tan-yard it would not take away the smell, but it would qualify it." I understand the honourable gentleman has come here as a bottle of scent. The honourable member who has just sat down made a remark which I think was quite uncalled for and un- generous in reference to the Right Hon. the Premier. He inferred to the House, and I dare say he meant it to go forth to the country, that the Premier was keeping back the estates of the Assets Board from being cut up because he was getting \$250 a year as a member of the Board. I never heard a more ungenerous statement made in the House, and I think the House and the country should resent such an assertion. I would ask the leader of the Opposition and honourable members on that side of the House if his statement could bear any other construction ? Then, coming to the leader of the Opposition --- Captain RUSSELL. - The member for Hawke's Bay. Mr. LAWRY. - Well, if he is not the leader of the Opposition it has no leader and it has no following. I was very sorry indeed to hear the honourable gentleman's remarks about the Minister of Lands. The Minister of Lands was not in his place, and the honourable gentleman, by more than inference, declared he was incap- able of taking charge of any Bill associated with his department. Captain RUSSELL. - No; I said the Premier would not allow him to. Mr. LAWRY. - The Premier always allows his faithful followers to do anything they like. But, Sir, would the honourable member inform us, when he sat on those benches- Captain RUSSELL. - A long time ago. Mr. LAWRY. - It will be a long time before he will sit there again. Was the honourable gentleman, when in charge of any Bill that had been drafted for him, ever distinguished for any great ability in conducting the measure through the House ? Captain RUSSELL. -- Yes ; certainly. Mr. LAWRY. - Yes; his position was as in- congruous as a chimney-sweep would be making a watch. He never should have been on those benches if he had been faithful and honest to his convictions. I have told him that before. Captain RUSSELL. - It is your only speech, I think. Mr. LAWRY. - Well, I can make another speech. I may say I have some degree of sympathy with the clause the honourable gentleman drafted, and which he wished to be incorporated in the Bill, and for once in my life I agreed with the member for Palmerston. He put the question very clearly before the

<page:645>

Committee when he said there was no neces- sity for such a clause. At the present time, if the honourable gentleman wishes to avoid the operation of the Land for Settlements Act, there is nothing to prevent him dividing his estate amongst his family. Captain RUSSELL. - I can give you some, but I am not likely to. Mr. LAWRY. -- If the honourable gentleman gave me a slice I would say that it was the re- ward of merit, and that it was the only generous thing the honourable gentleman ever did in the whole course of his life. I may say that I would take a slice from the honourable gentle- man, but I would not take any position as the nominee of any Government that ever existed in New Zealand. I take it that this land-for- settlement policy teaches the country one great lesson, and that is that the wealthy men of the country, the great landowners, should not wait until they are about to die and then leave their estates to be divided amongst their families; nor should they leave their estates for rapacious lawyers to quarrel over through the provisions of a will which no one can understand, and which the trustees can scarcely ever administer. During this debate we have had several questions discussed. We have had first and foremost the great question of lease- hold versus freehold. One honourable member said that under the various systems of lease- hold the leaseholder could not transfer his land without the permission of the Government. I would ask if this is not a wise provision. If it is not a wise provision, why did not the honourable gentleman who propounded the theory declare that a lawyer, when drafting a deed of mortgage. should be prohibited from putting a clause in the deed that the mortgagor should not transfer

his liabilities without the consent of the mortgagee ? Then, it has been said that the State is a tyrannical landlord. I would ask if the State is as tyrannical a landlord as the ordinary mortgagee. Captain RUSSELL. - Much more so. Mr. LAWRY. - I have never known the State to foreclose when a man showed that he was endeavouring to pay the interest upon his holding. I have known thousands and thousands of mortgagees to foreclose because they saw an opportunity to make money by doing so. Then, the question of administering our lands has cropped up in this debate, and upon that particular matter we have had a vast amount of information. We know that the benefits of a law depend upon the administration, just exactly as good government depends upon sound and economical administration : and I think the present Government have shown that they are capable of sound and economical administration. Then, we come again to the question of 12.30. Land Boards. I have always contended, Sir, that the Land Boards of the country should be elective, and I have always contended that no member of this House should accept any position as a nominee of a Government. I remember well the political fight that took place in New Zealand when the honourable member for Eden and myself were on different sides, as we are now-the great contest between Mr. Whitaker and Mr. Tole. Up to that time I had never taken the slightest interest in politics, except local ones. Sir Frederick Whitaker asked me whether I would assist him in the election. I said, "No." I had never taken any interest in politics up to that time, but I said, " I recognise that you and the party surrounding you are acquiring large estates and principalities by means of advantages which are not open to myself and others; and I tell you honestly, although I do not know Mr. Tole from Father Adam, that I am going from this day to work in order to secure the election of Mr. Tole." Sir, on the declaration of the poll Mr. Whitaker declared that he owed his defeat principally to the energetic work done by Frank Lawry. Then, when the election was over, Sir George Grey wrote to me offering me a seat on the Land Board. I wrote back saying. " Supposing, now, I had worked as energetically against the party as I have done for the party, would you have offered me that seat ? " He said, "No, I should not." Although it has been said, Sir, that the deceased statesman was not honest, he was honest in his reply to me. Well, I said, " Keep your seat, and give it to somebody else." Now, coming to the honourable member for Palmerston : When he was first elected to this House it was to support the land-administration of the Hon. Sir John McKenzie. Sir John McKenzie appointed the honourable member to the Wellington Land Board to administer the Land Act as it existed, but the honourable gentleman very soon kicked over the traces, and he was ejected from his office by the Minister who had appointed him. Mr. PIRANI. - No. Mr. LAWRY. -- Well, he was not reappointed. Sir, when the honourable gentleman was appointed I recognised that he had remarkable ability as a politician, but none as a statesman ; there is a great difference. I recognised it was a fatal mistake to place the honourable member on the Land Board, because he knew no more about the requirements of land-settlement or about the quality of land than a mischievous kitten knows about the locomotion of a gigantic elephant. Mr. PIRANI. -- You have been approving of me all along. Mr. LAWRY. - I do not approve of "rats." Mr. PIRANI. -- You have ratted often enough, at any rate. Mr. LAWRY. - If the honourable gentleman can prove I ratted once during the whole course of my political life I will resign my seat to-morrow. An Hon. MEMBER. -- Do you remember your first speech ? Mr. LAWRY. - Do I remember my first speech ? What did I then say ? An Hon. MEMBER. - That you would support Scobie Mackenzie. Mr. LAWRY. - I said I would support any party, no matter what. if they would abolish

<page:646>

the iniquitous property - tax and substitute therefor a tax upon land and income, and when this party got into power and initiated that policy I supported them, and have supported them from that day to this. I would remind the honourable gentleman that I supported the Atkinson party. Mr. PIRANI. - Before you ratted. Mr. LAWRY. - " Ratted !" The honourable gentleman knows all about ratting. But I was faithful to my election pledge, and when there was a no-confidence motion moved against the Atkinson

Government on the question of the land and income-tax I voted against the Government, and told them that on the occasion when I was elected I promised so to do. I was instrumental in aiding my friends on the Government benches in abolishing the property-tax, and I have been a consistent supporter of them. As to election pledges, I tell the honourable gentleman I am different from him: I have never yet given a pledge except on the public platform, and have never answered a political question outside of a publicly and duly convened meeting, and never mean to. The result is that no person has ever dared, during the course of my political life, to charge me with violating a political pledge. Mr. PIRANI .- Not because it would not have been true. Mr. LAWRY .-- It would not have been true. and could not have emanated from any one but the honourable member for Palmerston ; and no one would have believed him. I take it that this Bill is simply what I may term a perfecting measure. Then, coming back to the question of Land Boards, it has been said that the Land Boards of the country are practically useless - that they have no administrative power. Sir, I know very well that they have but very slight knowledge. Take my honourable friend here, the member for Ashley. I would like to ask what he knew about land when he was appointed a member of the Land Board. The honourable gentleman said in this House the other day that the Canterbury Land Board was a model for the Land Boards of the colony. Well, that says very little for the others, but it says a great deal for the honourable gentleman's egotism. Sir, I think I shall ask the Government to appoint a Royal Commission during the recess to inquire into the working, the duties, and the administration of the Land Boards ; and I would suggest that the honourable member for Ashley and the honourable member for Ashburton should be the Commissioners, and should go round the country and tell the Boards how to administer the Land Acts of the colony. The Premier the other day said there was not a member of the House who would not accept, if offered, a seat on a Land Board. If the nominee system is really to continue, and I dare say it will continue, I should like to see my honourable friend the member for Eden placed on a Land Board. An Hon. MEMBER .- Because he is a man of weight ? Mr. LAWRY .- Not only is he a man of weight, but he differs in many respects from the honourable member for Palmerston. He is a man of intelligence, and not only is he physically broad, but he is intellectually broad. Sir, it has been said that the Land Boards of the colony are simply instruments in the hands of the Ministry of the day. I was very much surprised to hear my friend the member for Marsden say that in Auckland the Land Board had nothing whatever to do with the valuation ; they never inspected the land they opened for settlement ; they simply had to accept the Surveyor-General's plans and valuations, and had to vote "Yes" or "No" upon every question that came before them. I would ask members of the House how any man with any spark of independence could occupy a position of that nature. I was very proud indeed to hear my honourable friend the member for Manawatu, a man with practical knowledge, a man who knows what land is, what the settlers can do upon land, and who realises to the fullest extent that land for occupation is only worth what you can make out of it : I heard him say that they manage things very differently on the Wellington Land Board-that whenever a block of land was put up for sale or lease they do not accept the official statement as to the value of that land ; they inspect and value the land for themselves. An Hon. MEMBER .- Who do ? Mr. LAWRY .- The members of the Land Board. I do not know whether they charge their travelling expenses, but if they did it was money well earned; because no man could administer the Land Act without knowing what the land was fairly worth and what could he make out of it. Now, Sir, a great deal has been said about opening up land in the King country. My own impression is that we are opening up land in the King-country fast enough. I remember, a very few years ago, when I went through the Awakino country it was dense bush, and was an unknown territory. The Auckland Land Board, at the instigation of myself and some of my Taranaki friends, put that Awakino country on the market -- of course, at the request and at the desire of the then Minister of Lands. To-day, instead of being a desolate wilderness, the whole landscape is dotted with smiling homesteads, and, figuratively speaking, the wilderness is now blooming and blossoming like the rose. Lately we have had

a lot of land in the so-called King-country placed on the market, and I am very glad indeed to see that, for the benefit of the bona fide settlers, the whole of the country is being gradually acquired. But what we want, in Auckland more particularly, is that men who are placed on the Land Boards should know the country they are dealing with. Sir, very shortly the land in the Ongarube Valley will be available for settlement, and if I were asked, knowing the country as I do - if I were asked to take the whole of the country from the Poro-o-tarao Tunnel to Taumaranui, I would not take it ; and yet you may have a Land Board, without a knowledge of the country, in Auckland administering the land, and it may have hundreds of

<page:647>

settlers placed on this land ; and, if I were | for those estates. Coming to the Bill which we asked my opinion, I would rather see them | have before us, I need hardly say I am in favour of taken to Mount Eden Gaol. Then, again, there is the question of giving married men a preference as selectors. I think that preference should be given to young men who are going to be married. Give them the opportunity of carving out homes for themselves in the wilderness. I would like the young men of the country to travel about, and see what the settlers have done : to go into the settlers' houses to see the comparative comfort of those people who are living in good dwellings, and who were, in the course of my memory, living in huts - men and women who have overcome difficulties that at first appeared insurmountable - that have risen, as it were, step by step in the social ladder, until they have achieved not only comfort, but luxury. I would like the young people to see and realise that the greatest joy of these settlers' lives is in looking back upon difficulties overcome by united effort, sweetened by mutual love, mutual confidence, and mutual forbearance. Mr. FIELD (Otaki) . - I have no intention of keeping the House more than a few minutes, and possibly I should not have spoken on the third reading of this Bill had it not been that I 2HR H had not the opportunity of listening to or taking part in the discussion on the second reading. wish to congratulate my old and esteemed friend and newly elected member for Patea, who spoke to-night, on the candid style of his speech. He expressed opinions that we on this side of the House cannot agree with ; but at the same time those who have known him for many years, as I have, must recognise that he has come here as a staunch representative of the country settler, and I trust and believe that we shall find him to be a representative in every sense not only use#cc-zero of the large settler, but of the small settler. Furthermore, he has shown courage which I think no other member on his side has as yet approached. He has shown a degree of boldness which no member has so far aspired to - namely, he has condemned in toto, and from beginning to end, the land-for-settlement policy. I am one of those who believe in the land-for settlement policy, and I believe also in opening up land - the waste lands of the Crown, - also Native lands. I consider that the two policies ought to go side by side together ; but there is one thing concerning this land-for-settlement policy about which I would warn the Government. It is my opinion, judging by the outlook of markets for produce at the present time, particularly in view of the fall in the wool-market, that the Government should go very slow indeed in the purchase of large estates. I am not speaking of the smaller estates near the towns, for workmen's homes, but of large estates in the country districts. " I strongly advise the Government to hesitate about such purchases until they have put the markets of this colony on a satisfactory I understand, and I hope, that these basis. markets are being attended to as they should be ; and if they are not being attended to, let the Government be very chary indeed as to the large estates they acquire, and as to the price they pay the general objects of the Bill. I am the more so because I r present a district which has suffered perhaps more than any other electorate in the colony owing to landowners taking advantage of the defects in the existing law. In two cases where land was very urgently needed in the vicinity of Wellington for workmen's homes, the object of the Act was defeated through its defects. Blocks of land which it was very necessary should be taken for workmen's homes were negotiated for in the belief that the owners were bona fide entering into

negotiations for their acquisition by the Government, but these gentlemen took advantage of the time so gained to transfer, in one case, the whole or portion, and in the other the whole road-frontage, to their near relatives. This Bill, so far as I read it, will have the effect of putting that matter straight, and that will be a very great step gained. Coming to the new clause moved by the honourable member for Hawke's Bay, Captain Russell, with regard to owners of land being able to keep back from acquisition by the Government certain areas in respect to the number of children in their families, I desire to say that I am entirely in sympathy with what he attempted to effect by that clause ; but I could not vote for it, because, framed as it was, as he must himself see, it must have had a pernicious effect. The clause was certainly in the right direction, but it was a very crude attempt at draftsmanship, and would not attain the object which the honourable member desired. I could not go so far as the honourable member for Napier did, and vote for the clause of the member for Hawke's Bay, and trust to luck to get a proviso added later on to have it straightened out, so as to render it a workable and satisfactory measure. It was better to vote against it, and to leave the Bill as it is ; and that is the course I took. I am of the opinion that in the case of old settlers who have lived in the colony for many years, who have brought up a family on a tract of country, and have improved that country, if it is the intention of the Government to take their land for settlement, they should be given more consideration in respect to their children, who may have been brought up on that property, than the selfish bachelor or the newcomer. I disagree with the honourable member for Hawke's Bay as to the amount to be reserved for each child. I think it is excessive; but in any case I feel it would be a mistake to fix a hard-and-fast rule. The better course would be to 'affirm the principle in our legislation that special consideration should be given to the owners of land taken under the Land for Settlements Act who possess families. As to what the consideration should be, that could be left to the discretion of the Land Purchase Board. I think that would be a better plan than that suggested by the honourable member for Hawke's Bay. In the case of land being taken under the Land for Settlements Act from old settlers, it is usually the case that these settlers belong to the wealthy class. Their sons are therefore

<page:648>

men of substance, and are usually the right stamp of settlers for us to encourage to make this colony their home, and endeavour to prevent them from leaving us. That seems to me a further reason for giving consideration to Honourable children such as those referred to. Able members are probably aware that inducement is being offered to the sons of our pioneers to settle in South Africa, in the Argentine, and elsewhere -- inducements more enticing than we can offer-and it behoves us to be careful not to drive any of these settlers or their families from our shores. Coming to the new clause suggested by the member for the Bay of Plenty, as to the granting of freehold, I would say that I am one of those who believe in the acquisition of freehold being allowed. That those Crown tenants who desire freehold should get it under certain restrictions. But, holding the views I do, it would be impossible for me to vote for the new clause of the member for the Bay of . Plenty. His clause would have the effect of giving the freehold holus-bolus to any Crown tenant without any restriction whatever. We should then have, as has happened in the case of large blocks of Crown land in Hawke's Bay, where land sold in freehold on the cash or deferred-payment system in small sections lapsed later on into the hands of one owner, and the whole land-settlement policy set at naught. That is what would have happened if the clause of the member for the Bay of Plenty had been carried. On this subject of freehold tenure, the present Minister of Lands was twitted with having given utterance to sentiments, when the Land Bill of 1887 was before the House, which were entirely different from his sentiments of to-day ; but I believe that he has not changed his real opinions at all ; and I have good reason for believing it. Not long ago a Native township was cut up in a portion of my electorate. The areas were small -- from a quarter of an acre or so up to about four acres. The Natives desired that the land should be disposed of in the freehold, because it would encourage the erection of

better buildings and improvements, and they asked me to approach the Government on the subject, and I did so. saw in particular the present Minister of Lands, and he expressed entire sympathy with the desire of the Natives, and agreed that, in the case of small township settlements where there was no fear of the aggregation of sections so as to form a large area in the hands of one person, the freehold might well be given. That was his opinion expressed outside of the House ; but when I asked the question in the House, he turned round on me with a look almost of ferocity, and said that as long as he administered the lands of the colony not a single acre over which he had control should go into the hands of private people. Those, I am convinced, were not the sentiments of the Minister of Lands, though expressed by him, but the sentiments of some one else. It seems to me that the freehold could be granted under restrictions which we could without difficulty frame—restrictions on something like the lines last night proposed by the honourable member for Palmerston. On the platform, some two years ago, I advocated some such scheme as that, and I am still of the same opinion ; and if some such proposal comes before the House I shall consider it my duty to support it. I could not agree with the honourable member for Palmerston as to his suggestion for transfers to be allowed to members of families except in cases where members of families already possess land. In the first place, it is very difficult to interpret the meaning of the word "family," and it is very difficult to interpret the meaning of the word "possess." Furthermore, it seems to me that transferring from one member of a family to another might be more dangerous than anything else, because more dummyism takes place amongst members of families than in any other cases. It has been stated to-night by, I think, the honourable member for the Bay of Plenty, on the question of Land Boards, that it is unfair that members of Parliament or of this House should sit on Land Boards, and one reason alleged was that it gave them an undue advantage over their opponents. It seems to me that probably the reverse is the case. It seems to me that, as a rule, the man who sits on one of these Boards makes more enemies than friends. I shall be quite willing, however, to see a rule introduced by which no member of the House shall sit on a Land Board. I am in entire concurrence with the honourable member for the Wairarapa as to the increase in the hands of individuals of the large areas already held by them. He made representations to the Government on the subject, asked questions in the House, and suggested that the evil might be remedied by adding to the graduated land-tax or by legislation. I trust the Government will take the matter seriously into consideration, and render the continuance of this state of things impossible in the future. We have had the Government Advances to Settlers Office to-night attacked in somewhat round terms by the honourable member for Wairarapa. Already in this House I have had something to say on the subject of the administration of the Government Advances to Settlers Office. I have said that, particularly, small settlers have not got the loans to which they were entitled, and which they were led to expect they would get under this very excellent system. I can multiply instances 1.0. where I consider that settlers have been unfairly treated, and I have long ago commended this thing to the serious attention of the Government. But as to saving who is to blame, I think I am quite certain that the Superintendent is not to blame. I am satisfied that the Minister at present in charge is not to blame, nor, indeed, do I think the last Minister who was in charge of the department is to blame. I am not going to say that the Government is to blame : but there is no question as to who will get the blame, and that is the Government. They will get the blame, and they are getting the blame every day throughout the whole colony. We have had also the Land Valuation Department discussed to night somewhat severely by the honourable member for Wairarapa, and, no doubt, there

<page:649>

must have been some foundation of fact for his remarks. Speaking, however, on my own experience of the Land Valuation Department, I have had none but the most favourable experiences of the working of that department, beyond that there is complaint by local bodies as to its cost. Perhaps in my own district we have been more favourably situated than other districts, and the valuers in my district may have done

better work than those in other parts of the colony. The values may have been somewhat high in some cases. I may here remark, though, that some of these valuers are very insufficiently paid. It is not my intention to go into the controversy between the honourable member for the Suburbs and the honourable member for Wairarapa, but in justice to the honourable member for Wairarapa I would mention one point he omitted. He referred to the case of a Mr. Phillipson, who received an advance of \$200 from the Advances to Settlers office, and who asked for a further sum of \$200, and, finding himself unable to get it, afterwards sold his improvements on the property for \$1,200. It was urged by the honourable member for the Suburbs that, assuming that the improvements were worth £1,200, armed with his deeds he could have gone into any of the banks and obtained the necessary sum of money which he required. I say this is not so. The banks will not lend on Crown leases, and that is the reason why it is so very unfair that settlers holding these Crown leases are not able to obtain from the Government Advances to Settlers Department the amounts they are led to expect they can, the reason being that the Government departments only will, as a rule, lend on Crown leases, and if they refuse there is no hope for the settler. I need not take up the time of the House any longer. This is all I wish to say. I particularly wished to explain the attitude I took up on these two main propositions by two honourable members on the other side of the House—namely, giving consideration to owners with families when their land is proposed to be taken under the Land for Settlements Act, and the question of granting the freehold. Mr. PIRANI (Palmerston) .- Sir, the speech of the honourable member for Otaki may best be characterized as the confession of an errant politician. I cannot understand the ground he takes up and the reasons he gives for not supporting the different clauses which were proposed in Committee. The main ground he gave for that opposition—and I presume it is because of his legal training—is confined to quibbles about the wording or draftsmanship of the different amendments. Now, I would like to ask him, as he supported all the amendments which were put in by the Premier, whether he considers those amendments models of law draftsmanship. Why, the honourable member himself supported a clause which meant that a man during his lifetime and after his death shall reside continuously on a section. I will read it to the honourable member : "Every applicant who obtains an allotment under this Act shall reside continuously thereon." Mr. FIELD .- That is all right. Mr. PIRANI. - There is no power to exempt a man from residence, and to carry out the provisions of the Act he must be buried on the section if he dies before the end of his lease. There is no definition of residence either in the principal Act or in this Act, and therefore this clause is either a dead-letter or it must be carried out to the very letter. Now, take the honourable member's reasons for not supporting the different clauses that were proposed in this Bill. First, he told us he approved of the amendment of the honourable member for Hawke's Bay. Mr. FIELD. - I said I sympathized with it. Mr. PIRANI .-- The honourable member said it was a good amendment, but it wanted restrictions. Mr. FIELD .- - No; I said I sympathized with it. Mr. PIRANI. -- And that it was improved by the suggestions of the honourable member for Napier, but that further restrictions were necessary. Why did the honourable member not propose the necessary restrictions ? Then, the honourable member told us he was in favour of the motion moved by the honourable member for the Bay of Plenty in reference to the freehold, only he wanted restrictions; and in the same breath he said that the suggestions I had made in that direction met with his approval, and that two years ago he proposed similar restrictions on the platform that would have effected the end he desired. If he was sincere in that, why did he not, here in the House, propose the restrictions that he suggested on the platform ? Why, the honourable member will find in Hansard some eight years ago that those very restrictions were proposed by me. Therefore it is not recent, and, I say, if it is necessary and if it is advisable that these restrictions should be put in the Bill, why did the honourable member not take the initiative? He knows as well as I do that any proposal coming from this side of the House will not receive the support of honourable members opposite. Why, then, did he not take the initiative and assist to get reforms such as he mentioned on the statute-book ?

Then, he told us the reason he objected to the motion allowing transfers to be made to members of a selector's family who were not possessed of any land was that there were no definitions of "family" or of "possess." Now, the honourable member, as I said before, is fully capable of giving us those definitions and of assisting to perfect such a proposal, and yet I have never heard him since he has been a member of the House propose an amendment in any Bill that has come before the House. Mr. FIELD .- Rubbish. Mr. PIRANI .- I believe it is rubbish that a member of his ability, and of his training, and of his experience should not give us the benefit of his knowledge to perfect what can only be crude clauses when they are drawn up by lay- men. But we do not get that, and surely he should not blame honourable members who are not able to give us those perfect specimens of

<page:650>

draftsmanship when he does not even offer assistance. Why, over and over again honour- able members on this side of the House who have had a legal training have assisted the Premier in his draftsmanship. We had an in- stance of it to-night. An amendment of a clause was suggested to the Premier last night by an honourable member on this side of the House, and to-night we had a similar amend- ment brought down by the Premier. Mr. FIELD. - And yet you say this side of the House never takes suggestions from your side. Mr. PIRANI .-- And I repeat, that the other side do not accept amendments from this side : but the Government comes down later on with those very suggestions, so as not to give the original mover the credit. When the Premier introduced this Bill he said it was a Bill of urgency, and that it was absolutely necessary that it should be passed. Even before it was printed he wanted it read a second time, be- cause it was a Bill of urgency. Now, has there ever been a Bill that the Premier knows of in this House which has been treated with less urgency. not by himself but by his party, than this Bill? Why, we have had discussions by Government supporters on subjects ranging from Dan to Beersheba, from the Advances to Settlers Department to the Valuation Depart- ment, and Goodness knows what else, on this Bill. We had also what I might characterize as a bear-garden exhibition between supporters of the Government to-night. I think it is unfair to members that they should be kept here listening to this sort of squabbling between Government supporters under the pretence that they are discussing a Land for Settlements Bill. I might point out to the honourable member for Otaki that there is some reason for the alarm shown by the recently elected member for Patea as to the Government's land-for- settlements policy. I may say that since I have been in the House I have been a consistent supporter of that policy ; but I do say there is every reason on the part of those who believe in a man being allowed to retain a reasonable amount of land as freehold when they know what the proposals of the Government in this direction have been. Does he know that not very many years ago-in 1897-the Govern- ment brought down a Bill by which the maximum amount of land allowed to one owner under the Land for Settlements Act was to be twenty-five acres. In any part of the colony the Government could take away a two-hun- dred-acre farm from a man and leave him only twenty-five acres for himself. In the face of such a ridiculous and unjust proposal - which was, of course, scouted in the House - how can we be surprised that gentlemen living in the back blocks, and who have only seen this phase of lands-for-settlement principle, are afraid of what the result will be to small holders. I do not intend to go at any length into the subject to-night, but I should like to emphasize one or two points which I brought before the House in Committee. I say it is the duty -the urgent duty -of the Government to bring in legisla tion by which they should limit the aggrega- tion of extensive freehold estates in the colony. I say, then, if they intend to do their duty 1 to the settlers in the colony, who desire to see a proper state of things in connection with the land. they should limit under the Land Transfer Act the right of any man to register more than, say, 640 acres of first- class land and 2,000 acres of second-class land which was Crown land after the passing of the Act. Then there would be no fear of the ery about the aggregation of estates. But the first important amendment to the Act in the Ball proposed by the Premier, apart from the machinery clauses, which were

necessary to perfect the original legislation, is the extra- ordinary provision the Premier introduced it regard to the ballot. Personally. I have always said the ballot-system was faulty and wanted amendment, and no one would be more pleased than myself to see some attempt made, even at this late stage, to stop the crying seandals going on in connection with the selection of Crowe lands ; and if there is any part of the Crown lands which want to be safeguarded more than another, surely it is those we are acquiring at so great expense under the land-for-settlement system. Therefore I welcome the proposal of the Premier, and although criticizing those proposals I do so in no captious spirit, because I admit that the distribution of the land to the applicants is one of the most difficult problems in connection with land-settlement. And if the Premier s proposal in the Bill works out as suc- cessfully as he is sanguine enough to think it will do I shall be pleased to accord him the praise he would deserve in solving what I think is the most difficult problem we have to face in connection with the land-f-r-settlements sys- tem. At the same time I may be forgiven for having a little partiality for a proposal I made myself. I placed on a Supplementary Order Paper a proposal for what I think would be a better system of distributing the land to intend. ing applicants than that at present in force. or the amendments introduced by the Premier ; but, in the face of the fact that the Premier had brought other proposals before the House. I did not desire to take up the time of the House by bringing forward my own proposal. because I knew very well that it would only lead perhaps to a long debate, and was certain to be rejected in view of the Premier's pro- posals. As the Premier is practically respon- sible for the administration of this Act. it is only right, perhaps, that his own proposals should be accepted in preference to those of an irresponsible member. At the same time it is well perhaps, in view of future events which may take place, that I should place on record what my proposals are in connection with the ballot for land. They are as foi- lows : - "A list, to be called the 'applicants' list.' shall be kept in the principal Land Offire in each provincial district, and such list shali be open for public inspection during office hours. "(1.) Such list shall contain the names, ad- dresses, and occupations of persons

<page:651>

desiring to take up land whose appli- cations shall have been approved by the Land Board. " (2.) Persons wishing to have their names placed on the applicants' list may apply to the Commissioner of Crown Lands at any time. "(3.) At the next meeting of the Land Board of the district in which such applica- tions are made, the Board may ap- prove of any of the applications, on being satisfied, as far as possible, that such applicants will be likely to prove bona fide settlers. " (4.) In the event of more than one applica- tion being received on one day, the Land Board shall by ballot decide priority of position on the applicants' list. " (5.) An applicant may have his name placed on more than one list upon satisfying any Land Board in any district that he is likely to prove a bona fide settler. "(5A.) Every applicant shall renew his appli- cation annually, and by doing so will retain his order of priority on the ap- plicants' list. " (6.) When land is open for selection in any land district, the Land Board shall notify the first person whose name ap- pears on such list, and shall give such person the right to take up one sec- tion ; should he exercise that right or not within seven days of such notice being posted to his address the person whose name is second on the list will be given a similar privilege ; and the same right shall be given in succes- sive order to each person whose name is on the applicants' list, until all the names on the list have been dealt with. "(7.) Should there be any land which is not selected, the Land Board must pub- licly notify that such land is open for selection. " (8.) After an applicant has had the option of taking up a section his name shall be removed from the applicants' list, providing that if he does not take up a section his name will remain on the list following those of the other ap- plicants. "(9.) Subsection three of section forty-nine of the principal Act is hereby repealed. " (10.) No selector of land shall be allowed to transfer his land except to a member of his own family not already pos- sessed of land: Provided that the Land Board may accept a surrender of such land, and pay the selector compensation for improvements, the amount payable to be decided by

arbitration." I regret that something has not been done in the direction I have advocated, but at the same time I trust that the proposals made by the Premier will be more satisfactory than the present system, and that they will result in the prevention of a very great deal of the speculation which takes place under the land-for- settlements system. Mr. BARCLAY (Dunedin City) .- I do not intend to delay the House more than a few minutes at this hour of the morning. I have already expressed my views in regard to this Bill on the second reading, and it is unnecessary for me to repeat them now. I might, however, perhaps refer to one remark which fell from the honourable member for Hawke's Bay. He referred to the policy of cutting up estates, and the policy generally adopted by the (Government, as a popularity-hunting policy. That remark might be made about every reform that has ever been effected in the political world. It might have been said of the Reform Bill of Lord John Russell : it might have been said of the Reform Bill of Mr. Gladstone ; it might have been said of the repeal of the Corn Laws; and it might have been said of every reform that is now universally agreed has been for the benefit of mankind -that they were popularity-hunting measures. As a matter of fact, they are nothing of the kind if they are genuine reforms. They are measures which give the masses of the people rights and privileges which have been withheld from them. And it is time, indeed, that what the honourable member for Hawke's Bay calls the socialist from the city should come upon the field and have something to say about the land-grabber, the "gridironer," and the land-shark. However, the main reason why I rose was to offer a personal explanation to the House. Earlier in the evening I used, perhaps, some severe expressions in respect to the honourable member for the Suburbs, Mr. Wilford. I felt somewhat aggrieved that he had moved a motion which was on the Order Paper in my name. At the time when I spoke, it had escaped my memory that a very few words of conversation had taken place between us during the afternoon, which I need not detail. They were very brief and hurried words of conversation, but they were such as might have justified him in believing that it was understood I would not object that he should move the motion. That being so, I regret that I should have used the terms which now appear perhaps unduly severe; and, as those words appear in Hansard, I thought it only right to say what I have said. I have no very high opinion of the man who, having done what appears to be an injustice to another, has any hesitation in saying so. and endeavouring to repair whatever mischief he may have done. Mr. WILFORD (Wellington Suburbs) .- May I say something now in regard to what the honourable gentleman has just stated, Sir. Mr. SPEAKER .- You can signify your acceptance of the honourable member's apology. Mr. WILFORD. - I had rather it was not put in the way of an apology at all. I feel quite sure the honourable gentleman was under a misapprehension when he spoke. I am perfectly satisfied that the impression his words appeared to convey was not meant at all, and I can only add that I shall be always ready, if on any occasion I should happen to be under a

<page:652>

misapprehension, to acknowledge it, as the | socialists of the towns were trying to break honourable member has done. I accept his explanation. Mr. LAURENSEN (Lyttelton). - I do not intend, Sir, at this hour of the morning to do more than refer very briefly to a few of the remarks which have fallen from some of the previous speakers, and to the views I hold in connection with the land policy of this country. A good deal has been made this morning, last night, and yesterday morning. of what has been called the inordinate length of this debate. But, Sir, when we consider the importance of the subject with which we are dealing, and the far-reaching effect anything in the shape of land legislation may have, not only upon us but upon future generations, I am sure none of us who have the interests of the country at heart will begrudge a long debate upon it. The honourable member for the Bay of Plenty made a suggestion that I should like very much to see given effect to. That suggestion was that where a man employed on a station or a farm or in business in town is desirous of taking up land, some regulation should be framed which would enable him to take up land and yet continue in his situation, earning capital to enable him to work the land, one condition being that he should expend a certain sum by way of improvements upon it

from month to month and from year to year, and then after a certain period he could go and reside upon it. By that time his plantations would be well under way, and his building and fencing completed, and the place fit to live upon. I know of a number of very striking instances in the town I belong to of men who are desirous of taking up land-some of them business men and men in situations-who would be willing to spend from \$50 up to \$200 or \$300 a year in improving a piece of land if they could get an opportunity of taking it up. Having improved it they would be willing to go and live upon it for the rest of their days. Mr. MASSEY. . I hope you will support that when the Land Bill comes down. Mr. LAURENSEN. - I shall be only too pleased to support any reasonable amendment in that direction that may be brought forward, the only condition being that the amendment shall be so drawn as to prevent dummyism. Sir, I was struck with some of the remarks of the honourable member for Hawke's Bay He said he considered that this country had not yet reached the pitch of the Australian Colonies in the drift towards the towns. I wish he was speaking what is correct, but I regret to say he must have been speaking under a misapprehension. Why, 40 per cent. of our population is already in our towns. In this new country, where we should almost all be producers, 40 per cent. of us are already congregated in the towns, and the drift towards the towns is increasing every day. And not only is that so, but I find that one-fifth of our population is aggregated in the four large cities. This evil is now becoming quite common to almost all English-speaking countries, and all thinkers deplore it and see the evils of it. The honourable member then went on to deplore that the time that those among us who believe in the freehold system. But no socialist of the towns wishes to interfere with the country. We recognise as strongly as the honourable member who has made his first appearance to-night-the member for Patea-the necessity for conserving the interests of the country. We recognise that the country is the backbone of the colony, and are prepared to meet the country people in the fairest spirit possible : but we want them to exhibit like tolerance towards us who are in the towns. Most of us who live in the towns have come from the country, and with many of us our life's ambition is to accumulate a sum of money and then take up land and settle in the country, and be country settlers for the rest of our lives. Our interests, we know, are identified with those of the country settlers, and theirs are identified with ours; we ought, therefore, to recognise that we are mutually interdependent. The honourable member for Hawke's Bay referred to the wickedness of any one proposing to deal with those people who have taken up land under the lease in perpetuity. I do not believe in the lease in perpetuity, and I tell the House frankly I am opposed to the freehold system, and very bitterly and strongly opposed to the lease in perpetuity. I want to see the perpetual-lease system-a modification of Mr. Rolleston's system, or, in other words, the system of periodical revaluation -- back again. I believe that is a fair system, but I object to the clause giving the holder of the lease a right to acquire the freehold, and in that I believe I am expressing what will come to be the opinion of the whole country. Honourable gentlemen who talk so glibly about acquiring the freehold of property, five hundred acres by this man and a thousand acres by that, within five or six miles of the towns, do not realise that this country is really of very limited extent. If every acre of land in the colony was divided amongst the men, women, and children of the colony, small as their numbers are, it would not come to more than fifty or sixty acres to each of them ; and I should like all to realise that any approach to land grabbing, or land monopoly, especially in the neighbourhood of the towns, is something that will materially injure the well-being of the men, women, and children of the whole country. Let me say, in connection with the perpetual-lease system-and I believe the majority of members agree with me-that we have no moral right to interfere with the people who have already taken up land under the system of lease in perpetuity without compensating them. What I want to see is that no further leases should be granted under that system -- that the system should be stopped, and stopped without delay. I should like honourable members to recognise the rate at which we are drifting. Under our land-for-settlements system we are buying up land at the rate of about fifty thousand acres per annum. and at the same time we are parting

with our national freehold estate at the rate of two hundred thousand acres per annum. Is it no:

<page:653>

national estate should remain in the hands of the and my remarks will be purely of a technical nature. If this Bill has done no other good it nation should cry " Halt " ; that it is time to stop has benefited us in this way : it has had the this lease-in-perpetuity system, and to entirely stop any further sale of freehold in this country. effect of giving us some good speeches- speeches The honourable gentleman who re- mostly reasonable and moderate in tone, and 1.30. which showed that a majority of the members presents Waitemata, Mr. Monk, quoted me as having said that the Government had of the House are inclined to do justice to the raised the price of butter. Now, I said nothing of the sort. I said the Government system of on the second reading of the Bill, I stated insisting on having the State grading of butter, that the most serious objection I had to this and going in for the State regulating the arrange- ments in connection with the dairy industry, had had a very material effect in increasing the price of our dairy productions. I pointed out that while ten years ago the price of butter in the London market was as high as it is to-day, yet that the producers were then only getting 4d. and 5d. a pound for it ; while to-day, with the price no higher in London, they are getting 10d. and 11d. These are incontrovertible facts, and cannot be gainsaid. Now we see that every progressive country under the sun recognises the value of grading its productions, and putting them on the market under an efficient system of inspection, and, Sir, in doing that the present Government has conferred a boon on the pro- ducers of the country. The honourable gentle- man also went on to say that the love of the freehold pervaded our race. He said it was the ambition of every British-born man and woman to hold a piece of freehold. He said it was a love that we all inherited from our forefathers. men, I am glad that clause was struck out, as Sir, what, after all, does experience sav in this connection ? I am astonished at an honour- able gentleman like the honourable member not knowing how ridiculous is such an asser- tion. Why, out of the whole population of Great Britain not 1 per cent. ever possessed the consideration from the Committee. With re- freehold, or ever had the slightest chance of possessing a freehold. Almost every man and woman in New Zealand are directly descended from people who were either tenants at will or else leaseholders. It was one of the abomina- tions of the Old Country that it allowed the freeholds to be the monopoly of a certain small number of individuals, who rack-rented their tenants, and reduced them to a state of bondage. That is what we want to see stopped, and that is what the Government land system and the Government land-for-settlements policy is intended to prevent. I am proud to see that the Premier has had the courage to bring down a measure like this to still further enlarge the scope of that beneficent legislation, and I hope he will not allow himself to be stopped by the clamour raised by interested people from going further, by increasing the land-tax, and putting bis foot down and saying that for the future the fee-simple of not another acre shall be sold and not another lease in perpetuity will be granted. In doing that, he will find behind him the solid support of every right-thinking and justice-loving man and woman in the country. Mr. MASSEY (Franklin) .- I expressed my- self fully on the second reading of the Bill, and therefore I do not think it necessary to say very much now. However, I wish to deal with a few points before the debate closes, pioneer settlers of the country. While speaking measure was contained, I think, in clause 6. According to clause 6, as it was brought down, when once the Government had opened negotia- tions with a landowner-when once they had asked him whether he was prepared to sell his land, and what price he was willing to sell at -- that then for an indefinite period he could not sell it, or lease it, or cut it up. or even divide it among his children. He was compelled to hold it until the Govern- ment were pleased to say that the negotiations had concluded. I am pleased, therefore, that an amendment has been inserted which pro- vides that if the Government do not complete the purchase within twelve months from the time they have expressed their intention of taking the land, then the owner may consider the negotiations have come to an end, and he will have the opportunity of disposing of it in any way he thinks proper. Coming to clause 8, which

proposed to give preference to married it really meant that married men coming from some other country or colony would have the preference over even natives of this country, over the sons of our own settlers ; and I considered the proposal was not worthy a moment's regard to clause 9, the clause dealing with regulations, this clause has been amended but I hardly think improved, because subsection (2) still remains. Subsection (2) is that part of the clause which deals with regulations - which validates regulations even though they may be inconsistent with statute law, even though they may override statute law. Such regulations will be validated by the second part of this clause. I am sorry that it has not been struck out, and I am very much afraid that it is intended to cover up some illegal practices in connection with the Land for Settlements Department. With regard to the new clauses which were moved by the Premier, and which were inserted in the Bill almost without any amendment, the clauses are so ill thought-out, and so crude, that if they go on the statute-book in their present form I am sure they will prove almost unworkable. Still, I am willing to admit that the underlying idea is good; and if the Premier will only have the points which are expressed in these clauses "licked into shape" in another place I believe the effect will be to greatly lessen, even if it does not do away with, the land speculation which exists in connection with the ballot system. I can hardly say, though, that I approve of the clause which makes it necessary for an applicant to reside continuously on a section he has drawn, or that I can approve of the clause which provides that a settler

<page:654>

who has drawn a section cannot transfer that, know what might happen under the compulsory section to any member of his family, as circumstances might arise which would render it desirable for him to do so. Coming to the amendment moved by Captain Russell, I supported that amendment on this occasion, as I have supported it on previous occasions, because I approve of the principle contained therein. That amendment provided that a landowner whose land was being taken should have the right to retain a certain area for each of his children. And I ask, Who has the best right to the land in such a case? We must remember that the family of a settler are very often his partners -- to all intents and purposes his partners. They may have helped to buy that land; in all probability they have helped to improve it; but when the Government take it away they deny the right to the head of a family to retain any area, even a small area, for his own family. I say that in this respect the law is unjust, and I am sorry that Captain Russell's amendment was not inserted in the Bill. As to the amendment moved by the honourable member for the Bay of Plenty, with regard to the freehold, I do not think it received the support which it deserved. I have always supported the freehold, because as a country settler I know it is not a question of thinking - that the freehold tenure is the best form of tenure under which a country settler can hold his land. It is the tenure a large majority of the settlers approve of, and if we provide for the freehold tenure in connection with the Land for Settlements Act it will have this advantage: we can take the money which the settlers will pay for their freehold and use that money for the purchase of other lands for settlement under the Land for Settlements Act, and thereby prevent what is being gradually used at the present time the transfer of the ownership of our lands to people outside the colony. An old argument has been brought forward that if we have the freehold system it would mean the aggregation of large estates. But members who have expressed that apprehension evidently know nothing about the history of land tenure in other countries. If they knew anything at all about it, they would know that it goes in the other direction, that with the system of freehold, and free-trade in land, the tendency has been for holdings to become so small that in thousands of cases it is almost impossible for the owners to make a living on them. If you want to prevent the aggregation of large estates, all that you have to do is, as has been suggested in this debate, to amend the Land Transfer Act, so as to make it impossible for a man to have land transferred to him after he has acquired a certain area. the Premier will introduce reasonable legislation in that direction I will support him in doing so. I am sorry there has not been a modification of

the compulsory clauses of the Land for Settlement's Act, as these clauses have, in my opinion, done far more harm than good. Men holding comparatively large blocks of land which they have been anxious to sell have been afraid to approach the Government, because they did not ! he spoke of him in anything but complimentary clauses. They feared that the Government, having their attention drawn to it, would take their land compulsorily, and that they would not receive a fair price, but only what would be decided upon by the Court set up for the purpose. Some little time ago I made a calculation as to the cost per head to the State of the land-for-settlements system, and found that it was as nearly as possible \$1,000 for every settler placed upon the land. We have two systems of land settlement : the one, the land-for-settlements system, and the other the system under which we settle the Crown lands of the colony. When under one system we find that settlement is costing us nearly \$1,000 per settler, then I think we ought to do more in the other way, because the land already belong to the Crown, and the only outlay is the cost of survey and roading. I think, Sir, that if we did more in the way of opening up the Crown lands of the colony, we should not be required to do so much under the land-for-settlements system. I am very pleased to see the interest that is being taken in this subject -probably the most important that will come before the House -- and I hope that interest will continue, because if it does I am satisfied that perhaps in the near future we will place legislation on the statute-book which will promote legitimate and genuine settlement, and do justice to all concerned. Mr. O'MEARA (Pahiatua) .- As I did not speak on the second reading of this Bill. I do not think I would be doing my duty were I not to refer to some of the remarks made during the course of the debate by the different speakers, more especially by the member for Hawke's Bay. With respect to the recriminations indulged in by two honourable gentlemen. I have nothing to say on that point, excepting to repeat the old adage that out of evil comes good. I have heard it said to-night that influence was being brought to bear upon the (Government to place an incompetent valuer in my district - a district which is particularly unfortunate at present in that respect. I would here ask, if a valuer is to be sent, that he will be capable of making correct valuations and of wide experience. I would tell the gentleman in charge of the department that there is a good deal of dissatisfaction in connection with the valuations of the present valuer, and that I hope the gentleman referred to to-night will not be sent to this unfortunate district if he is incompetent. It appears to be a dumping-ground for incompetents. This being his first speech, I listened to the honourable member for Patea with a certain amount of attention. I thought it would have been wise if he had remained quiet for a few days to see how the business was worked instead of commencing his speech immediately on taking his seat in this House. That is the course usually followed by new members. The honourable member referred to a gentleman whom I know very well - one who has been a pioneer settler in the district in which I am living. I think

<page:655>

shadow of Ruapehu. I can understand the terms. When the honourable gentleman was speaking about Mr. McCardle I came to the conclusion that he had never met him, for if he had he would never have spoken in the way he did. Now, the facts are these : that Mr. McCardle settled in that district, and he was an industrious settler and one who had the respect of his fellow-settlers, as I feel sure he will have of those where he is going-in fact, I am sure he has it already. Members on the other side of the House have been proclaiming to-night that the sons of farmers are entitled to a share of the lands of the colony. What is the result ? This gentleman settles in this newly-formed district with his two adult sons. They participate in the ballot, and are fortunate in drawing three sections, and for this the honourable member for Patea protests and denounces one of the best of settlers. The ballot was for Crown lands. Would the honourable member debar a man going there with two sons, or ten sons, the right to take part in a ballot with his fellow-settlers for land that has been thrown open ? I say that the honourable member is unfair and unreasonable, and if he had sat here for a week he would not have introduced a subject of this sort on to the floor of the House. At all events, he would have made himself acquainted with the facts, which

he has not done. Mr. HASELDEN .- It is all in the Hansard of last session, and in far stronger terms than I used. Mr. O'MEARA .- I was not in the House, and did not hear it, and the statements of some members as contained in Hansard are not always a reliable authority to quote from, more especially when that statement condemns one who has done so much for the colony as Mr. McCardle has done. Take the statements made by the honourable member to-night, for instance, and, speaking of this settler, he has not cast a reflection on him only, but also on every Government official, including the Commissioner of Crown Lands for Auckland, and those associated with him in the drawing of this ballot. He has almost accused them of dishonesty in the ballot. Mr. PIRANI .- He repeated the words of the Minister of Lands. Mr. O'MEARA .- I do not care what the Minister of Lands says. I am not going to be tied down by anything he says. I am speaking of what the honourable member for Patea said in this House to-night. Then, we are told that there is no necessity to enforce this Land for Settlements Act. The honourable member says, " Why do not they go into the back blocks." Where are the back blocks? In my district there are none. There is no more Crown land to be taken up in my district. There is a land-hunger there ; and there is only one way of relieving it, and that is by the acquisition of estates. I sincerely hope that the Government will acquire some of the estates in my district. The time is ripe for it, and if they do they will have any amount of applications and they will be well settled. I am afraid the honourable gentleman has remained too long under the feeling of a new member perfectly well, because I was possessed with it myself when I came here; but when he has been here for a few weeks he will be more generous to those who are opposed to him. Sir, I was sorry to hear the honourable member for Waitemata . and I think it was uncalled for- refer to the action of the Premier in not prosecuting the sale of the estates owned by the Assets Board, so that he might draw his honorarium as member of that Board. Now, Sir, I think it was unjust ; I think it was unkind and unfair for the honourable member to make such a charge against the Premier. Mr. MONK .-- He never made it : you cannot understand English. Mr. O'MEARA .--- Well, perhaps not. The honourable member's English is very peculiar sometimes, and so contradictory that it is exceedingly difficult to follow his arguments. At all events, I hope he will be more generous, or, if not generous, at all events fair to the Premier. He takes every opportunity to upbraid the Premier for some supposed fault or another. He now supports the Land for Settlements Act, but I remember a time when the honourable gentleman did his utmost to prevent this Act being placed on the statute-book. The honourable gentleman has protested in the loudest possible manner against the passing of every Liberal measure which has been universally approved by the people of the colony. I do not think he can deny that. The honourable member for Waihemo, in my opinion, proposed a very good amendment to this Land for Settlements Bill, and I supported him in it. He explained the meaning of his amendment and also explained the five miles distance from a city. His amendment was that sons of owners whose land has been acquired, and who are over seventeen years of age, shall have the right to acquire or take up 200 acres first-class land, or 500 acres second-class, provided they farmed it. Now, I think that is an exceedingly reasonable proposal to attach to the Land Act, and on that account I voted for it. I should like very much to see the honourable member for Hawke's Bay present, because he stated that I agreed to the passing of a statute which gave the settlers of this colony a thousand acres and over. He instanced the Hattuma Estate, and said I did not object to that. I said, "Certainly not ; if the land is second class land or third-class land he is entitled to a greater area." I believe in the area as laid down by the Land Act --- that is, 640 acres of first-class land, and the area laid down in respect to second-class land. But what I did say was this : that in my own electorate where there were a number of sections, or, rather, a block in the North Tairātea cut up into a hundred acres of exceedingly good land, one man goes in there, and, owing to his wealth, he simply mops up the whole country. I do not blame this gentleman. What I do condemn is the law that man allows it. This land, I understand, was cut up by the Ballance Government. Well, what is the result? Instead of having thirty or forty

<page:656>

settlers in this particular special settlement, | tion of the land, and if the dairy industry which is contiguous, I may say, almost to the towns of Pahiatua and Woodville, we have there at the present time about four or five settlers remaining. There was another settlement in an exactly similar position, also in my electorate. Well, if that is done all over the colony, what does it mean ? It simply means depopulation, and, unless the Government step in and stop the accumulation of property such as this, the result will be that you will have little or no small settlement at all. It is only the thin end of the wedge for the purpose of again creating large holdings. Now, at the present time a wealthy New Plymouth firm has come into my district and is buying out the freeholders there -those who have taken up land under the perpetual lease. I do not think that is right. The settlers there are prosperous. One settler on Monday last told me that off a hundred acres of good land he could take \$300 a year at dairying. In these cases it behoves the Government to see that these small sections are not wiped out of existence altogether. I agree with the honourable member for Palmerston in a great deal that he said to-night, more especially in respect to the restriction of the freehold. If that were done I think it would be a very good thing. As far as the lease in perpetuity is concerned, what exists at the present time ? There may be four lessees who hold a hundred acres each. After ten years residence is required no longer. The holder may leave his land and go where he likes. He may sell the product of his land -- that is, the grass-to his neighbour. What is to prevent monopoly there ? The Act cannot prevent it ; the Government cannot prevent it; and the man's lease cannot be altered. For these and other reasons I think there is room for improvement in the lease in perpetuity. With respect to private land offered to the Government for the purpose of purchase, I wish to say that not long ago the Government were offered a station, a fairly large area of land near to Takapau, in the electorate of the honourable member for Waipawa. It was offered them at a reasonable value. Now, I was informed the other day that the land is at present selling at \$9 an acre, and yet the Government could have acquired the whole of it at \$6 or \$7 an acre. I consider that when an estate like that is voluntarily offered to the Land Purchase Board, they should acquire it before they put into force the compulsory clauses of the Act. also consider that the lands in the hands of the Assets Board which are suitable for settlement should be purchased by the Government and settled at once. With regard to acquiring large estates, I think the Government should act very carefully. We find that for dairying land they have paid as much as £20 to \$28 an acre. Well, butter at the present time is fetching a very fair price, but how long will that continue ? A corner may be established any day. Look at wool. Three or four years ago it was selling at 7d. and 8d. per pound, while now inferior classes are selling at 3d. Of course, the low price of products will bring down the value - receives a set-back, land-values must necessarily fall. The honourable member for Frauklin stated that the lands which have been acquired under the Land for Settlements Act could be sold and the money obtained from the sales set aside to purchase other properties. Well, I would ask the member for Waitemata this question : If he were the Minister of Lands, and the member for Franklin was the Premier, and the member for Ellesmere was Colonial Secretary, how much land would they purchase with the money they obtained from the sales of these lands ? I believe that not one of these gentlemen would touch his friends' lands, and the result would be that the money would be placed in the Public Account and would be spent on public works, and the present Government would be accused of a huge borrowing policy, and extravagance; whilst they would claim to be a non-borrowing party but they would be entirely living on the money raised by their predecessors in office. I would certainly object to that. Sir, I have no objection to the settlers securing the freehold, provided the area is restricted. If there is no restriction. however, I shall never vote for the freehold. I think it is wrong in principle to purchase land from one owner and sell it to almost his next-door neighbour. Land taken under this Act should be continued under some form of lease, but the freehold should not be given. There is an estate in my district that is held by an absentee, and the people of

Pahiatua have been agitating that it should be cut up. It is on the margin of the town ship, and if the Government were to .0. acquire this land under the same terms as they acquired Hatuma, they could acquire it. I think, for about #4 an acre; because it is nearly non-productive, and on that account if they were to acquire it on the same terms as Hatuma, they would have to pay a very small figure for it. The \$60,000 was also mentioned by the honourable member for Hawke's Bay. He stated that Mr. Purvis Russell offered the Government #60,000 to release him from the bargain of selling his estate. Now, any man who knows anything about the Land for Settlements Act must come to only one conclusion-that such an offer must have been a bogus one, and that he never thought for a moment the Government would accept the offer. If, Sir, they had accepted it what would have been the result ? The complete upsetting of the Act ; they could not, in my opinion, have acquired another estate under the statute. On this account I think the offer made was a bogus one, and the Government were within their right in treating it as such, no doubt. If he thought the Government would have accepted it, he never would have made it. Another statement was made, I think, by the honourable member for Bruce, and was a very specious one, and one that would take very well on the public platform, and would be accepted by a non-thinking people. He said, " If a man has \$30,000, why should you not take that and divide it the same as the land ?" There is no

<page:657>

analogy whatever between money and land. One is a limited commodity, and unless your large area of land is divided you lessen your population by compelling them to seek elsewhere for a home ; the other does not affect the population. So there is no analogy between the two. With respect to Native lands, I have Native lands in my district, and notwithstanding the statement of the honourable member for Napier, it behoves the Government to be extremely careful in dealing with Native lands. One chief in the district is desirous of disposing of his property ; several white sharks are anxious to get at this unfortunate chief, to get it at their own price. I took time by the forelock, and wrote to the Native Minister, telling him what I knew in connection with this chief's desire to dispose of his land. Everyone who knows the nature of the Native knows that if a price is offered, and he is hard up, he will not stick at a pound or two. I think the Government is justified in interfering in the disposal of Native lands : but they should go further : either take it themselves in trust for the Natives-in the same way as the West Coast reserves - and cut it up and lease it and pay the Natives, or pay the Natives a fair price for it and invest the money. I think that would be a good plan. I do not know much about the land north of Auckland ; but about the southern portion of Hawke's Bay and the Wellington Province, if the Government would do that, they would do good to the Natives and add to the prosperity of the colony. I have nothing further to say. I do not think there is the slightest doubt about the Bill passing. I do not suppose there will be a division. Mr. SEDDON .- I think there will. use#cc-zero Mr. O'MEARA .- I do not think so ; I think it will be carried on the voices. Mr. MONK (Waitemata) .- I wish to make a personal explanation. I have been charged with saying that the Premier kept these lands locked up for the sake of getting \$250 a year. I wished to direct attention to the Assets Board, for the public have the impression that they have no desire to realise on the asset estates. This is the language I used :- " Is it this \$250 a year that is placed to his credit for doing nothing? Can it be that he has a mercenary object ? I do not think so." That is taken from my Hansard proof, as taken down by the reporter. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL (Riccarton). - The length of the debate on the third reading and the amount of ground covered makes it almost necessary that members should speak in connection with it, otherwise it was not my intention to have done so. A great deal has been said during the course of this debate in connection with the freehold tenure, and it was stated that last night the Premier said he was not prepared to grant the freehold tenure to those who are holding leases in perpetuity under the Land for Settlements Act. I understand that the honourable gentleman confined his statement entirely to the leaseholders under the Land for Settlements Act, but that he is not prepared to take up the same

position-or that he has not expressed any opinion on the point- regarding all the other leaseholders throughout the colony. Now, let me remind honourable members that the land-for-settlements leaseholders are a very small portion indeed of the leaseholders throughout the colony, and that, therefore, when the Premier expressed that opinion he is leaving himself a very large margin as regards the other lands held under lease in perpetuity, and which are outside the Land for Settlements Act. He holds himself free to give the freehold to leaseholders not under the Land for Settlements Act. A very large part of the lands of the colony is still sold on freehold granted to purchasers by the Government of the day. Therefore the Premier weakens his argument in favour of the leasing system by the fact that his own Government is at the present time-and has been throughout its whole existence-parting with large areas of land for freehold and for cash. Mr. SEDDON .- NO. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL .- I will give you the figures. During the financial year just closed they received £78,000 for cash sales, and during the previous year they received only £73,000. I am quite aware of one explanation that may be given - namely, that a large amount of this money is in connection with the conversion into freehold of lands that are held under the deferred-payment system ; but that only applies to a small portion of the total amount. I venture to say that, if the Government followed out logically the principles laid down by the Premier in connection with the maintaining of the leasing system, the proper course to pursue is to restrict, as far as possible, lands being sold for cash to the cases where selectors are completing transactions under the deferred-payment system. An Hon. MEMBER .- Town lands. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL .- I do not see why town lands should not be leased as well as any other. In fact, I am inclined to think that it is more necessary in that case. Take large towns like Palmerston North, which has progressed so much in thirty years, and is bound to grow into a great city in the future: the natural thing is that the Crown should retain the freehold, and have a system like the Glasgow leases or periodical revaluation. I understand that the Commonwealth Government are not going to sell an inch of the capital city : the land is to be leased. There can be no doubt if that is done it will be a source of great and increasing wealth. I think that is a perfectly sound position. I wish to refer to a remark made by the member for Masterton with reference to the revaluation of the leases in perpetuity. The honourable gentleman knows that I have always advocated the revaluation clause. I still advocate it, and I intend to keep on advocating it until it is given effect to. I have never proposed that the State should break the contract with those who have that land. I am in favour of a revaluation clause being passed which shall only apply to future transactions, so that those taking up land under the re-

<page:658>

they are. In regard to the land which is parted with, it may be necessary that the Government in future should buy back these leases in perpetuity, just as they are buying back freeholds now. Or it might be possible for the Government, in order to cover the position, to legislate that when transfers were made from one person to another such transfers should be subject to the condition that the land should be brought under the revaluation clauses. There are various ways of meeting the matter ; but I am of opinion that the lease in perpetuity as it exists at present is wrong, and I think it is immoral so far as future generations are concerned. I also think it is unjust to the freeholders in this colony that there should be so large an area of land in the colony that is not paying land-tax, while the freeholders and leaseholders not Crown tenants are paying a land-tax of 1d. in the pound. In regard to lands for settlement, the returns show that nearly two millions' worth of land have been obtained under the land-for-settlements law ; that is, two million pounds' worth of land which before it was purchased by the Government was paying 1d. in the pound as land-tax is not paying a penny in the shape of land-tax at the present time. Of course, there can be no wonder, under such circumstances, that the Government valuers have hardened up the valuations at every possible point, because, if the taxable land has shrunk to the extent of two millions by the purchase of lands for settlement, the Government are bound to keep the land-tax up as high as

they can ; and the effect, I can assure the Premier- Sir J. G. WARD .- The new settlers, even though they are not paying land-tax, are pay- ing a great deal more in other ways to the State than the single large landowner did under the old system. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL .- I do not know on what principle the honourable gentleman will say that. He may say that the total amount that is coming into the Treasury is greater through the land-for-settlements system than it was under individual ownership ; but surely his mind is sufficiently logical to see that, if you have on one side of the road a settler who owns five hundred acres of land and is paying 1d. in the pound land-tax, and on the other side of the road you have a man who has a lease in per- petuity-999 years-who is not paying a copper in land-tax, the position of those two men is not just or equitable, whatever may be the total amount coming into the Treasury. But that has taken me from the point I wish to make. What I wish to say is that the effect of reducing the taxable land in the way I have mentioned is causing the Government valuers throughout the whole colony to harden up the valuations to such an extent that in Canter- bury, and throughout my electorate, there is a general feeling that the valuations are being forced up. And I tell the Government, while I do not profess to be an expert in land-values, yet I believe that a large quantity of land throughout this colony is taxed upon a value which will not be sustained, and they must expect as years go on that those valuations will be reduced. Now, a great deal has been said in the course of this debate in regard to the question of dummyism. I hold, Sir, that dummyism in land-for-settlement lands would almost entirely disappear if the Government adopted an energetic policy with regard to put- ting the land on the market. I do not wish to go over the ground which has already been traversed in connection with the previous part of this debate; but I venture to say that the returns which were laid on the table by the Premier show conclusively that although, as he claims, a number of purchases had been made which were unknown to the public. which appeared in no public document. and which could not be known or anticipated by myself or any member of this House, yet the fact that those purchases had not been paid for until after the close of the financial year was sufficient proof to my mind that the lands were not available for settlement, because, after all, the dispute between the honourable gentleman and myself is not a question so much as to whether the land has been purchased as whether the land is available for settlement. Mr. SEDDON .- That is not the question at issue. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL .- I say it is. I do not care what lands are purchased if they are to be held over for two or three years. I want to see the lands placed on the market. If they purchases were not paid for until after the 31st March, then it is quite evident that they could not have been placed on the market. and were not available for settlement. However, I think there can be no doubt that the enormous num- ber of applications that have been sent in to the Land Boards , for every block of good land that has been placed on the market shows that the Government have not kept pace so far as purchase is concerned with the demands of the people. It is evident from the number of such applica- tions in the case of some choice spots. as in Waikakahi there were for one section, that the demand has been much greater than the supply, and that it is only by the Government placing in the market a much larger area that they will be able to dissolve that which they describe in the Governor's speech as the earth-hunger. Let me say that I agree very largely indeed with the criticism of the member for the Bay of Plenty on the action of the Assets Board as to placing land upon the market. I think it is a pity the House does not insist upon a full and de- tailed report from the Assets Board of its trans- actions, and the steps that have been taken by it during a year in connection with the selling of the various assets. The relation which the colony sustains to the Bank of New Zealand, and through the Bank of New Zealand with the Assets Board, justifies this House, I think. in insisting upon a very close supervision over the actions of the Assets Board. The country is entitled to expect from the Assets Board a full and complete report, and I hope it will be moved for this session. We should have a full report of the steps taken during the last year. of the quantity of land sold, and any and all

other particulars ought to be available to us. I wish also to say a few words in connection with the new clause of the Bill moved by Captain Russell, because it is the same amendment that was moved by him in 1894. In 1894 I voted against it ; but the other evening, in Committee, I voted for it, and I will briefly state my reasons. In the first place, when the Land for Settlements Bill was brought down in 1894 we had to exercise the utmost care that the new principle that was being started should receive every possible chance. If honourable members were to look back to 1894 they would see how very simple were its provisions ; and the Bill, which was then a very simple one, has now grown into a large and complicated measure. I voted as I did in 1894 because we then thought that the new principle ought to be given every opportunity of being carried out. But, as time has gone on, experience has shown that various amendments have been wanted, and one amendment that was shown to be wanted is in subsection (3) of section 12 of the Act of 1900. Provision is there made by which if there are two or more owners in partnership they are allowed to rank as individual owners, and to retain each the prescribed minimum as defined in the interpretation clause of the Act of 1894. That was not in as the Act was passed in 1894, but the point I make is that the Land for Settlements Act has gone through a process of evolution, and that as it has evolved into the large and complicated measure which we have now on the statute-book it has been found that some of our fears in 1894 proved groundless, and, on the other hand, that changes have developed which have rendered other provisions necessary, and that these have been given effect to in the more elaborate and complicated legislation of last year. Now, I say this: that experience has shown us that, so far as the compulsory clauses of the Act are concerned. Captain Russell's amendment could be inserted in the Bill without any material principle of the Bill being affected, without any injustice being done to the colony, or without any chance of the land-for-settlements policy being delayed. Therefore I voted for it, because I hold if it is right that partners, who are unlimited in number-according to sub-clause (3) of section 12 there might be seven or ten acting as working partners on a farm- should be entitled each to hold a thousand acres of first-class land, then it is certainly not unjust or unfair to the country that if a man has his own son or daughter living with him on the property, they should be entitled to hold, say, half the amount which partners may hold, because Captain Russell's proposal was that only five hundred acres of first-class land each should be retained by the members of a family, whereas each of the partners in a firm can retain a thousand acres of first-class land. I say, therefore, without any hesitation, speaking myself as the father of a large family, that I think we ought to deal more fairly with the family side of our legislation ; and I think that the proposal made by the honourable member for Hawke's Bay was not an unjust one, and that the necessity does not exist in this colony at present that we should take away from the children of a man the right to share in the family home, particularly as we only a year or two ago passed a Family Homes Protection Act to protect the homes of the people. Of course, it has been said that land is different from other forms of wealth ; but, as I said when the Bill was going through Committee, if instead of a man having his money invested in land he had it invested in a brewery, or a newspaper, or any other kind of business, would it be considered fair and just that he, having his family working in the business with him, should be told he was only entitled to retain one part of that business, and that the rest of it was to be divided around in the shape of shares amongst persons who became shareholders in a joint-stock company? That appears to me to be a fair illustration of the matter. I should like to say, with regard to what has been said about the freehold tenure, that I believe the lease in perpetuity is really another form of the freehold tenure. It is for What better is a freehold than 999 years. that ? In fact, from the point of view that I take as a Liberal it is worse than the freehold. However, I do not wish to elaborate on that point, as I have previously expressed my opinion on it. But if the Government wish to prevent the aggregation of lands in large estates I see no reason whatever why an agrarian law should not be passed for the purpose of limiting the area that may be held by each person ; and if when land is cut up and sold as freehold on a Crown grant, we provide that that land should be occupied by a

person, and that for all time there should be one person resident on that section, I see no reason why the aggregation of large estates should not be prevented in that way, and each section remain intact as it was when it was sold. I have never flinched in my support of the land-for-settlements policy, which I believe is certainly calculated to promote the prosperity of this colony as a whole. I should like to say one or two words regarding the double ballot that is being introduced into the Bill. I have grave doubts whether that will be a success in the form it has been passed. I think, as the Bill provides that there shall be two ballots, it will be almost impossible for a selector to get the particular section of land he desires. I do not think that people will send in applications in globo for one out of twenty or thirty sections that may be open. I think where a man is going to make a home for himself he likes to go over the particular block he has taken a fancy to ; then he puts in his application, and he does so after thinking out in his own mind where he will build his house, and where he will place his steading on his farm ; and it will not suit to provide that he shall simply send in an application and take any particular section that may be allotted to him. However, that will be a matter that will be tested by experience as time goes on. I will refer back for one moment to the clause proposed by Captain Russell to say that that clause would only affect the compulsory purchase where

<page:660>

there was a family. Where there was no family involved, of course, no effect would be caused by the clause being included in the Bill. Where there actually was a family, then I know of no one who is so much entitled to share in the holding as the young men or daughters who have grown up upon the farm, and have come to regard it as almost a part of their very existence. I think it would be well if the Government had given an illustration of not what might occur, but of what had actually occurred in connection with the compulsory purchases under the Act, and whether this clause would have the effect of destroying the principle of the Bill that is now before the House. I can only say that, so far as the Bill goes in the direction of destroying the undoubted dummyism which we are all aware has taken place for years past, it will have a good effect; but whether it will accomplish all that the Government hope for is, I think, open to question. Mr. MEREDITH (Ashley). - Having spoken at some length on the second reading of this Bill. I do not desire to detain the House at any great length ; indeed, were it not for the new clause 8, which compels me to rise and address the House, I should not have spoken. The member for Masterton, in speaking to-night, referred to the early settlers not in the most complimentary language. When one considers the hardships, discomforts, privations, and difficulties the early settlers had to encounter in this colony. I think they are entitled to every praise and credit. Speaking personally, when I meet one of these old colonists, be he dressed in fustian. in home-made tweed, or in broad-cloth, I feel disposed to take off my hat and do him reverence for the valuable service he has rendered to the colony. There was a time in the history of this colony when a man coming from the neighbouring colonies or from the Old Country, and taking up a block of land, say, in Canterbury, was looked upon with the utmost approval. There was a very great scarcity of money at that time; true, land was sold at a low price, but there were very few to buy it, and when a man had money the land was taken up in large blocks. I do not see that these people who took up the land in large blocks in the early days committed a crime. I believe that many honourable members who so frequently declaim against these early settlers, if they only had the opportunity themselves, and the energy and perseverance to submit to hardships, would have willingly stepped into the shoes of these people. The whole condition of matters has changed. The views of the people of this country in reference to the holding of large blocks of land in an unimproved condition have very much altered. The old state of things is passing away, and I think we ought to speak of these early settlers in a more kindly manner, they having rendered valuable services to the colony. It has been stated during this debate on the third reading that the Bill is intended to prevent the aggregation of large estates. I am pretty well acquainted with the Provincial District of Canterbury, from

the north to the south and from the east to the West, and I am of the opinion that since the abolition of the provinces in 1577-twenty-four years ago-there has been no aggregation of large estates in that district, except that the land acquired by the Midland Railway Company, under the contract of 1885, has in some instances gone towards enlarging one or two estates, greatly against the will of the majority of the people of Canterbury. On the other hand, there has been going on for years the disintegration of large estates. I might be permitted to point out two estates in North Canterbury, in my own electorate, where a natural and voluntary subdivision has been taking place. About forty thousand acres of Glenmark has been subdivided within the last three years into ordinary-sized farms, and a population has been established on that land, and smiling homesteads have sprung up occupied by a thriving, industrious population. Then there is the Lyndon Estate. That estate consists of about 36,000 acres. Some time ago the owner offered 10,000 acres to the Crown under the Land for Settlements Act, and the Government declined to purchase at the owner's valuation. The owner thereupon sold a portion of it himself. Later on he sold the balance to the Government. That was subdivided into eight blocks, and is now held by eight Crown tenants who are likely to do very well. The same owner has lately offered 16,000 acres additional to the Government, and I have been informed that the Government is desirous of closing with him in the purchase of that area. Taking the 10,000 acres already disposed of, and the 16,000 acres under offer, there will be left to the owner 10,000 acres. In the opinion of every right-thinking man in this House the owner of the Lyndon Estate is justly entitled to the undisturbed enjoyment of the remaining 10,000 acres for the benefit of his family. As I have already pointed out, the idea of the aggregation of large estates in this colony, at least so far as Canterbury is concerned, is purely a myth. When I rose. I did so for the purpose of referring to new clause 8, which was introduced early yesterday morning. I had not seen the clause until one o'clock yesterday morning, when I found it printed on Supplementary Order Paper No. 10. and I, in common with other members, went hurriedly through the several paragraphs of the clause. It was impossible for us, in our physically exhausted state, to give that clause the careful consideration to which it was entitled to before being embodied in the Bill. I have since carefully examined the clauses, and have arrived at the conclusion that in their present form they are absolutely unworkable, and the Land Boards will find it so. The regulations under which land is disposed of at present are infinitely superior to those in these new clauses. It has been said that the object of these clauses is to prevent dummyism. Having been a member of the Canterbury Land Board for eleven years, I can honestly say, from personal knowledge, that no case of dummyism that could be proved to the satisfaction of the Board has come

<page:661>

before the Canterbury Land Board during the last eleven years. We have had cases of adventurers and speculators coming in and obtaining land and preventing the bona fide settler from taking it up, but I am not aware of any case of dummyism. So that the present Act is sufficient to cope with the difficulty of preventing what was some fourteen years ago in this colony known as dummyism. Sir, under the operation of the new clause, what will happen? Clause 8, sub-section (1), states, - "Whenever land acquired under the principal Act is cut up for occupation, the allotments shall be classified according as they are suitable for ordinary farms, or dairy farms, or small grazing-runs, or partly for farms and partly grazing-runs." All that this paragraph provides for has been done for years. When a block of land is bought, it is subdivided under the supervision of the Land Purchase Commissioners. The District Surveyor, who is intimately acquainted with the land, is then called upon to write out a description of each section, and that description is most accurately and correctly made out. The description of each section is forwarded to Wellington, and is subject to revision by the Minister of Lands. Then there is issued a hand-book. As a rule, the information given in the hand-book is so correct and so accurate in detail that I have heard applicants state that it is unnecessary for them to go and inspect the land for themselves. Sir,

in reference to sub- clause 8A, let us assume that a block of land is subdivided into thirty sections, varying from fifty acres to 400 acres. We will assume that a man with his wife and two sons, who have spent all their life working on a farm, and are therefore acquainted with farming in all its operations, desire to have a home of their own and to establish themselves on the land. They make an application to the Land Board for sections 3, 8, and 15, say, containing respectively 300 acres, 360 acres, and 400 acres. The Commissioner of Crown Lands immediately informs them that under the provisions of the Bill before the House for its third reading they cannot make application for any particular section, but that they must go to the ballot and take their chance of the largest or the smallest. After some hesitation these four people, belonging to the same family, decide to go to the ballot. Supposing one hundred persons apply for the sections, the first thing to do is to ballot seventy out. One of the four is successful in being retained in the ballot. But this man, instead of being allotted a section of 360 acres, or 400 acres as he desires, is allotted a section of fifty acres. The applicant is disappointed ; the small section is of no use to him. The Commissioner of Crown Lands immediately asks him if he is willing to take up this fifty-acre block. He states that the block of fifty acres is of no use to him and his family- it is too small ; and yet, if he refuses to take up the fifty acres, his deposit is to be forfeited. There is no provision made in this Bill to return that man his deposit in the event of what I have stated happening. Now, I ask honourable members, is that fair, is it right, is it common justice? Then, again, on the other hand, it may be that a man of small means, but of high aspirations, desires to go in for a section of the same block. He expresses his wish to go in for blocks 4, 7, and 11, containing respectively fifty, fifty-seven, and sixty-one acres. The Commissioner informs him that the law will not permit him, under the provisions of this Bill, to make application for any particular section. After some hesitation, the man agrees to go in, and the result is that he comes out of the ballot with a 400-acre section allotted to him. He tells the Commissioner that it is utterly impossible for him to work that area, and that what he wants is an area of fifty acres or more. The Commissioner asks if he is prepared to take the section of 400 acres, otherwise his deposit will be forfeited. Now, I ask, is that fair? Would it be right and proper ? Then, again, the seventy persons in the assumed case I have stated will feel themselves greatly disappointed if they are excluded from going to the ballot. Then, Sir, there is no reference whatever in this clause to the question of deposit. Under the existing law it is fixed that a person going in for a number of sections pays as his deposit half a year's rent for the highest-priced section. No such provision whatever is made in this Bill, and if a man of small means goes in for a section, and is called upon by the Commissioner to place a deposit equal to the rent of the larger sections, he is at once excluded from the ballot. Let me illustrate the point : The Government have lately bought an estate of fifty acres in the neighbourhood of Belfast. I know the land well. It is proposed to subdivide the block into ten half-acre sections, one ten-acre section containing the homestead, and into seven five-acre blocks. I can easily imagine that a number of workers in the Belfast Freezing-works will go in for some of these half-acre sections, as they front on to the Great North Road, and are within a few chains of a good public school. Others, on the other hand, will go in for the five-acre and ten-acre sections. But it may so happen, according to the provisions of this clause, that a person going in for ten acres with the homestead thereon will have to take the chance of being allotted a half-acre section ; and if such smaller area is allotted to him he may simply say it is of no use to him-it is too small- that he wants a ten-acre or a five-acre block. I believe, if this Bill is passed into law in its present shape, it will cause a considerable amount of friction, and I would suggest to the Premier that in another place the Law Draftsman should be called upon to redraft this clause and make it more workable than it appears to me at the present time. Clause 8, eliminated by the Premier, was an objectionable one, and the honourable gentleman took the right course in his own motion in eliminating it. On the other hand, however, I say that to introduce clauses that have not been carefully considered by the House is to make a mistake-one that is likely to bring the

<page:662>

land-for-settlements policy of the colony into discredit. So far, it has been one of the most popular planks in connection with the Liberal platform. I think, Sir, if a conference of Land Boards of the colony, including the Commissioners of Crown Lands, had been held, and if this question had been submitted to them, they would have drawn up a measure of a workable nature, free from political bias, and in which there would be no class legislation, but in which fair and even-handed justice would be meted out to all. Mr. SEDDON (Premier) .- Mr. Speaker, in rising to reply to the speeches on the third reading of this Bill, I must say it is hard to know whether to congratulate the Opposition or to commiserate with them. At all events, there are some reasons for congratulation. In the first place, I congratulate the leader of the Opposition, the member for Hawke's Bay, for having shown to the country his attitude on this question. I would like to say to the Opposition that he is still the leader of that party, for, at all events, he leads them very well in any way that is possible when he desires to injure or interfere with the land - settlement policy or the land-settlement legislation. Sir, one member stated, in the course of the debate, that everything in connection with our political history had been brought into the discussion on the Bill. Well, I may say at once in respect to this land-for-settlements legislation that it has had a most beneficial effect in those parts of the colony where large estates have been cut up and on which people have been settled. It is all nonsense to talk about sending people to the back blocks or to the State lands. The State lands are situated so far away from means of communication that you must first of all have your means of communication made. Mr. HERRIES .- No. . Mr. SEDDON .- The member for the Bay of Plenty says "No." I say that, if you take the King-country, of which we have heard so much lately, it is only recently you could go there at all, or that you would dare to send a surveyor and cut up the land ; and during the time we have been able to take action we have not lost any time. I suppose that at the very least there will be about 100,000 acres ready for settlement. Mr. HERRIES .- There is land near Tauranga. Mr. SEDDON .- Yes, there is land round about Tauranga ; but there is some of it, if we are to believe all we hear, that would not feed a goat to the acre. At all events, we must put our people where possible on lands that will support them. Coming back to the question of placing the people on the land. This cannot be done without time and money. I say now, that if we asked the House for the necessary vote, I question very much whether the staff is sufficient. I am told there are numbers of surveyors willing and ready to work. We find quite a different state of things. I say there is work to do to such an extent that if we doubled our staff we should not have sufficient to cope with what is wanted in the way of surveying to open up lands for settlement. We have a state of things existing which has taken time and money to remedy. Under the cursed system that existed-the throwing open of land for settlement prior to survey, the desire to part with the people's heritage in the way of giving the freehold for cash-we have been for years trying to pull up this survey work, and that has kept the country back. Let the responsibility rest on the right shoulders. The responsibility must rest on the shoulders of those honourable gentlemen opposite. During the debate it almost rested upon the question of the family selection, as it has been called. Sir, the family selection sounds very nice indeed ; but let us look at the returns which have been laid on the table of the House, and I wonder the Press and members have not gone into those Here is a return to the order of the returns. honourable member for Dunedin City (Mr. Mil- lar). You will find that there is an increase in the numbers of small holdings from a hundred up to a thousand and four thousand. Does it The increase from \$30,000 to stop at that ? \$50,000 in value in ten years is from 838 to 394, and fifty-six of an increase of landowners in the colony whose lands are valued at from \$50,000 to \$100,000. Then we come to the number from £100,000 to \$200,000, and the number has gone up from thirty-seven to thirty-nine ; we have two more landowners than we had when we placed our graduated land-tax on the statute-book. Mr. MASSEY. - Companies. Mr. SEDDON .- So far as my argument is concerned, it does not matter whether they are companies or individuals. I knew what I was speaking about the other night when I said the time

was not far distant-and it is nearer than those honourable gentlemen think- when we shall have to increase the graduated land-tax, and stop the abuses that are going on in the country. In the face of the land we bought-two million acres, almost-you find these increases going on. And they talk about the present system of taxation on land being unfair. I only say it is high time some one pointed out the abuses that exist, and endeavoured to stop them. In regard to the amendment of the honourable member for Hawke's Bay, providing for the family of an owner of land in case the Crown takes the land, let me point out to honourable gentlemen that included in this was a partnership. The member for Riccarton brought in the question of partners, and argued that as long as there were partners getting the right to share and take their 1,000 acres of first-class land, 2,000 acres of second-class land, and 5,000 acres of third-class land, why should not the family share? Sir, I fought that question of partners as fiercely as I fought the question of dividing the land amongst the family. I ask. Where does that come from? That came from those honourable members opposite, just as this proposal comes with reference to the family. According to the amendment of Captain Russell, it was to include subsections (2) and (3) of section 12. He deliberately intended, and he

<page:663>

deliberately moved, that not only should the family of the private owner, but also the partners should share in that; and the member for Riccarton and every other member who voted-the thirteen members who voted for it-voted for this. We will take four partners with five owners working in partnership on an estate. That would mean that there would be 5,000 acres for the partners. Then there are twenty children - that is only giving four children each -and that means 500 acres each : 10,000 acres-that is, 15,000 acres of first-class land. Then as to second-class land this proposal would give 10,000 acres: 2,000 acres each to the owners, and twenty children at 1,000 acres each, 20,000 acres: a total of 30,000 acres of second-class land. Then we come to third-class land. The partners would have 25,000 acres, the children 2,000 acres each, 40,000 acres : making 65,000 acres. I say, in face of that fact, it was a diabolical and deliberate attempt to say that you shall have no land under the Land for Settlements Act. And when you apply that to land in Canterbury, where you have such slices taken out of an estate on behalf of the partners and on behalf of the family, there would be none left either for workmen's homes or for small-farm settlements. And I therefore say that I was delighted to find that there were so few members who voted for that pernicious amendment. I say that Captain Russell is consistent in that. I have nothing to say against him in respect to the matter. But I do say that there are those who fought this battle before, and I am sorry to find their names put on record as voting practically for the repeal of the Land for Settlements Act. Sir, there is no gainsaying the fact. Must there not be something wrong? That terrible number thirteen-that unlucky number thirteen. And who are the thirteen? They are Messrs. A. L. D. Fraser, W. Fraser, Hardy, Herries, Hornsby, J. Hutcheson, Lang, Massey, T. Mackenzie, Monk, Rhodes, G. W. Russell, and W. R. Russell. Those are the thirteen. I will say nothing further. Then we are told deliberately that the tenants of the Crown would be found voting against the Government. My answer to that is this: I say the tenants of the Crown, having been given fair opportunities, given means of communication, and many of them having been placed upon the land who unfortunately would never have been placed there had it not been for the land-system of the party now in the majority-to say that they would vote against the party that has given them the great opportunity of their lives is to say that there is no gratitude in man. I will not believe it. We have been told this story time after time, prior to every general election, and yet we have had our numbers increased; and I believe myself the more people you put upon the land, and the greater the opportunities you give the people, the more will the Liberal majority be swelled. In fact, it has increased to such an extent that there is practically now no Opposition. Then, there are one or two matters in connection with the debate which I regret have occurred. I regret that a -- controversy has arisen between the honourable member for Wairarapa and the

honourable member for Wellington Suburbs. I am still more sorry that the honourable member for Wairarapa should have made that charge he did against the Advances to Settlers Department. I say, unless a member is prepared to give all the facts and name the cases in question, he has no right to deliberately say, as the member for the Wairarapa did, that valuers were sent up by the department to deal with applications for loans, and were directed to bring in a low valuation. Mr. HORNSBY .- I did give instances. Mr. SEDDON .- The honourable gentleman has not given instances, and I say he has done a great injustice to the officers of the department. I stand here and I say that no such instructions were ever given by the officers of the When a Advances to Settlers Department. statement is made like that, reflecting upon the officers of the department-a statement that they are prepared to do a thing of that kind-if I were the Minister of that department I would call upon any one who made such an assertion to face a Committee and prove his assertion on the floor of this House. An assertion of that kind must tend to shake the confidence of the public in a department which has done so much good. The system of cheap money to settlers has been of good service to the colony. May I tell the honourable member what came under my own notice: I say that a deliberate attempt was made to corrupt that department ; that parties conspired and attempted to get a large sum of money upon land there, and the department, after putting in three or four valuations, was supported upon every occasion ; and events, subsequent to the death of the party who made the attempt, proved by the sale of the property that even the department's valuation was more than what was given for it. It is very much better to keep things safe and sound than to advance more than property is worth, and so risk the success of the department. An Hon. MEMBER .- Its valuation for taxation. Mr. SEDDON .- As regards valuation for taxation we never yet come to take up an estate, and more particularly large estates, but we find that the owners want £1 or \$2 per acre more than they have been paying land- tax upon. That is what is the matter, so far as valuation for taxing purposes is concerned. Of course, the Legislature last session gave the Government power to remedy defects with regard to valuation; but that does not affect the department, or the officers of the department. Then we come to this question of freehold. Freehold, indeed! I say that in many cases, unfortunately, these people are only nominally the owners of the land. These large estates that figure in the return they are nominally the owners of, but \$35,000,000 is the amount of the mortgages upon them. And yet these men fancy themselves the owners, when

<page:664>

they are mortgaged up to the eyes. Why, their souls were not their own till we brought down the cheap-money scheme. They were previously the mere slaves of the money-lender. Now money can be got from the State at 4 per cent., and the State has security; but before the mortgagee got the farm, and the farmer "got the road." An Hon. MEMBER. - What is the rate of interest ? Mr. SEDDON .- The return does not give it. I know what it used to be : a man could not get money under 8 per cent., and sometimes had to pay 15 per cent. I was rather amused at the reference to my worthy colleague, the Minister of Lands, who seemed to be taking matters very quietly. The leader of the Opposition asked why he was not the member in charge of the Bill. "Why is not the Minister of Lands here, as by law he is supposed to be the Minister to administer the Act?" And then, quietly and quite unthinkingly, he said, " We want him here, because he would not get the Bill through." Now we understand the reason of their anxiety to have another Minister than myself in charge of this Bill- because he would not get it through. I know there is no Bill we can bring on the floor of this House the Opposition object to so much as this particular measure ; and there is one thing in respect to which they are to be congratulated, and that is the accession to their ranks, and in that respect I congratulate them, because the latest addition to their ranks has told the country what is now meant by honourable members opposite, but which they have not had the moral courage to tell the country. The honourable member for Patea told us to- night that this legislation was "robbery and confiscation." I want to be correct as to the term he used ; he said it was "robbery and

confiscation." Now, Sir, there is an honest Tory ring about such an assertion that you can understand ; but why do the honourable gentlemen opposite, who are holding exactly the same opinions, not tell us that? I am giving them the opportunity to-night of saying " Yes" and "No," in voting for this legislation, and when that time comes they will be found voting in the "Ayes " lobby. That is, Sir, where they will be found -- voting, according to the views of the member for Patea, for robbery and for confiscation. Now, I must come to the remarks made by the member for Napier, Mr. A. L. D. Fraser, I cannot allow them to go unchallenged. He asked us why should we not allow the Native lands to be sold or leased the same as other lands. Then he said that in the case of a private individual who bought Native land, he had to go before the Frauds Commissioners, and that the Frauds Commissioners had to see that the Natives first got fair value, and, secondly, that the Natives had sufficient land left to keep them. He said that that was not the case with the Government. I say, Yes, it was, unquestionably. My reply is that our instructions are in each case that the officers purchasing had to certify the same as had the Frauds Commissioners. An Hon. MEMBER .- What officers ? Mr. SEDDON .- The land purchase officers. And then, Sir, I want to show fraud, deliberate fraud, because if the Frauds Commissioners have done their duty how is it that we have so many landless Natives in the colony ? I say that, so far as concerns the question of the Frauds Commissioners, it was no safeguard at all. The way they obtained lands, and the frauds in Native lands, simply meant that there was a free-trade in fraud, and it simply meant that the Natives were outraged in many instances; and there are thousands to-day who are reaping the benefit, while the unfortunate Native is landless and in many cases dependent. If that is what we are to go back to-if that is the system of trading in Native land-then, I say, it is high time it was locked up. It has been locked up, Sir ; and, for my part, if there is never again any Native land obtained, I say I prefer that to the system of wrongdoing that went on freely under our legislation. It may be, Sir, that in the amendment we have made we have departed from the original track. The other side now deem we want a change. We all know our system of balloting has led to speculation. I have been twitted with saying that I was going to enable barmaids to become settlers. I did not mention that. What I stated was that there had been considerable dummied land, and that those impracticable persons had induced barmaids to become applicants, and in this nefarious way they had succeeded in obtaining land. The other side never suggest anything at all ; they never do. They simply find fault with what we do. This Bill will help considerably our land-for- settlements operations and legislation. I say it has been found that this amendment was urgently required, and the time we have taken up has shown me clearly and conclusively that this Bill marks the line of demarcation between the two parties in this House. It is a question of land for settlements and of Liberalism on this side of the House. It is a question of going backwards and of parting with the heritage of the people-the aggregation of large estates- of wealth to the few, and of poverty to the many-on the part of that side of the House. That is the policy of the gentlemen opposite, and hence I say we are entitled to vote for what we conceive to be just and right, and we can safely trust the people. I beg to move the third reading of the Bill. Mr. A. L. D. FRASER (Napier) .- I wish to make a personal explanation. I regret there should have been any misunderstanding as to the statement I made, and which the Premier contradicted. The Premier has so very flatly contradicted my statement that there was never any inquiry made when the Government purchased from the Natives, that I can only say I have witnessed hundreds of signatures, and that no inquiry has ever been made as to the value of the land and as to the price to be paid. Mr. SEDDON .- In reply, I wish to state that it would not be the time when witnessing the signature to the land purchase with the land purchase officer to make inquiries.

<page:665>

The land purchase officer would make inquiries and ascertain for himself, he having the records of the land. But, where a man was simply brought in to witness the signatures of the Natives he only would have read over to him the price and the conditions the Native was asked to sign. But I say that outside the law

those were the instructions of the department. When I said that was the case the honourable member denied it was the law. I say it was the instructions, and I know what I am speaking about. Mr. A. L. D. FRASER .- I will simply say that, whatever were the instructions, it was never done. The House divided. AYES, 33. Hall-Jones Allen, E. G. Rhodes Herries Russell, G. W. Arnold Buddo Hogg Seddon Smith, G. J. Carroll Hornsby Houston Tanner Collins Colvin Laurenson Ward Wilford Duncan Lawry Field Witheford. McGowan Mckenzie, R. Flatman Telers. Mills Fowlds Barclay Fraser, A. L. D. O'Meara Palmer. Hall NOES, 6. Tellers. Heke Massey Carncross Haselden Monk Stevens. PAIR. For. Against. Fisher. Bollard. Majority for, 27. Bill read a third time. The House adjourned at twenty-five minutes to four o'clock a.m. (Friday), until half-past two o'clock p.m.