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HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Wednesday, 22nd May, 1901.

PRIVATE BILL BUSINESS.

SHEFFIELD DISTRICT RAILWAY BILL [Lords].

As amended, considered; to be read the third time.

SUTTON-IN-ASHFIELD URBAN DISTRICT (WATER) BILL [Lords].

Read a second time, and committed.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROVISIONAL ORDERS (No. 6) BILL.

Read a second time, and committed.

NORTH BRITISH AND MERCANTILE INSURANCE COMPANY'S ORDER CONFIRMATION.

Bill to confirm a Provisional Order under the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act, 1899, relating to the North British and Mercantile Insurance Company, ordered to be brought in by The Lord Advocate and Mr. Solicitor General for Scotland.

NORTH BRITISH AND MERCANTILE INSURANCE COMPANY'S ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL.

"To confirm a Provisional Order under the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act, 1899, relating to the North British and Mercantile Insurance Company," presented accordingly; and, under 62 and 63 Vic., c. 47, s. 7 (2), ordered to be considered To-morrow.

WEST CUMBERLAND ELECTRIC TRAMWAYS BILL.

Reported, with Amendments; Report to lie upon the Table, and to be printed.

PRIVATE BILLS (GROUP K).

Mr. HEYWOOD JOHNSTONE reported from the Committee on Group K of Private Bills, That the parties opposing

the Rhyl Improvement Bill had stated that the evidence of Frederick Storr was essential to their case; and it having been proved that his attendance could not be procured without the intervention of the House, he had been instructed to move that the said Frederick Storr do attend the said Committee on Monday, 10th June, at half-past Eleven of the clock.

Ordered, That Frederick Storr do attend the Committee on Group K of Private Bills on Monday, 10th June, at half-past Eleven of the clock.

BLACKPOOL IMPROVEMENT BILL.

Reported, with Amendments; Report to lie upon the Table, and to be printed.

PETITIONS.

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION (HIGHER GRADE AND EVENING CONTINUATION SCHOOLS).

Petition from West Calder, for alteration of Law; to lie upon the Table.

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION (VOLUNTARY SCHOOLS).

Petitions for alteration of Law, from Lower Tranmere; and Higher Tranmere; to lie upon the Table.

HOUSING OF THE WORKING CLASSES (REPAYMENT OF LOANS) BILL.

Petition from Cheltenham, in favour; to lie upon the Table.

LIQUOR TRAFFIC LOCAL VETO (SCOTLAND) BILL.

Petition of the Scottish Temperance League, in favour; to lie upon the Table.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES OFFICERS' SUPERANNUATION BILL

Petition from Cheltenham, in favour; to lie upon the Table.

ROMAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY IN IRELAND.

Petition from Oban, against establishment; to lie upon the Table.

SALE OF INTOXICATING LIQUORS ON SUNDAY BILL.

Petitions in favour, from Queen's Park; Retford; Harpley; and Hollinwood; to lie upon the Table.

SALE OF INTOXICATING LIQUORS ON SUNDAY BILL AND SALE OF INTOXICATING LIQUORS TO CHILDREN BILL.

Petition from Westbourne Park, in favour; to lie upon the Table.

SALE OF INTOXICATING LIQUORS TO CHILDREN BILL.

Petitions in favour, from Baltons-borough; Leighton Buzzard; Street; Leckhampton; Glastonbury (two); Farmborough; Salisbury; Brixham; Eccles; Clifton; Lerwick; West Bradley; Moreton-in-Marsh; Weston; White Coppice; Small Heath; Norwich; Chorley; Penzance; Eastwood (two); Burnley; and Peasedown St. John; to lie upon the Table.

SALE OF INTOXICATING LIQUORS TO CHILDREN (SCOTLAND) BILL.

Petitions in favour, from Mid Calder; and Duffus; to lie upon the Table.

RETURNS, REPORTS, ETC.

POLICE ACT, 1890.

Copy presented, of Correspondence relative to the refusal of the Secretary of State's Certificate under Section 17 (2) of the Act to the River Tyne Police Force, for the year ended 29th September, 1900 [by Act]; to lie upon the Table.

DUBLIN METROPOLITAN POLICE.

Copy presented, of Statistical Tables for the year 1900 [by Command]; to lie upon the Table.

TURKEY (No. 1, 1901).

Copy presented, of Further Correspondence respecting the Affairs of Crete by Command]; to lie upon the Table.

LABOURERS (IRELAND) ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

[SECOND READING.]

Order for Second Reading read.

MR. J. P. FARRELL (Longford, N.): Mr. Speaker, I rise for the purpose of moving the second reading of this Bill, and in doing so I desire to express the feeling of concern with which I approach the consideration of the many knotty points which have to be dealt with in an amending Bill, such as that I have the honour to propose. For nearly seventeen years this House has had from time to time proposed to it a number of measures dealing with the amelioration of the condition of agricultural labourers in Ireland. In 1883, on the motion of my hon. friend the member for the Scotland Division, the first Labourers (Ireland) Act was passed in this House. That Bill gave for the first time to the agricultural labourer in Ireland the right to what may be called a foothold on his native land; it for the first time recognised the principle that the labourers of Ireland were entitled to the benefits of an Act which would enable them to retain some measure of ownership in the land on which they lived I admit that the ownership was a tenancy terminable at certain short intervals, but, nevertheless, for the first time in the history of the country, this Parliament

passed an Act which placed the labourer, so to speak, in a comparatively independent position, and allowed him a decent house and a small patch of land at a comparatively reasonable rent. That Act was not, of course, complete. It did not touch the whole, or indeed a great part of the class which it was designed to benefit, but it was, at all events, a considerable step in the direction of improving the conditions of life of a most useful class in our country. Other efforts followed, but rarely, indeed, it may be said, has an Act been passed through this House in which some fault may not be found, and the faults in the first Act were sought to be remedied by the Act passed in 1886. In that year Parliament extended the operations of the original Act so as to include a number of people who had been excluded, and it gave a wider definition to the term "agricultural labourer." Even then legislation for the benefit of the labourers of Ireland had not been fully accomplished, because in 1892 a still further Act was passed to give more facilities for the operation of the different clauses of the previous Acts, and so late as 1896 an Act was passed by the then Chief Secretary, now the President of the Board of Trade, amending the former Acts and still further extending their operations.

I confess that, after these different amending Acts and these different attempts at legislation, it would seem to be almost unnecessary to come to the House for further legislation, but the position we are in with regard to legislation in this House is that invariably the advice which has been tendered to successive Governments by hon. Gentlemen sitting on these benches has been ignored and neglected, and that the officialism which is at the back of every measure promoted in this House, and which necessarily safeguards, as far as it can, its own privileges and its own emoluments; and after all that is what officialism in Ireland really means; steps in and thwarts and prevents provisions which would make measures passed by this House more acceptable to the Irish people. And it is for this reason, and because we who represent Irish constituencies in this House are in direct touch with the people, and know most intimately their wants and wishes and feelings, that we have introduced successive Bills into this House in order to still further amend the Labourers Acts, in order to render them as perfect as, in our opinion, human ingenuity can make them. I feel, therefore, that after all there is no apology and no excuse necessary to be made by us for occupying the time of the House to-day in still further considering the present position of the Labourers Acts, and the position of the labourers of our country as affected by them.

In the first place, we complain bitterly of the delays, the terrible delays, that

take place in putting these Acts into operation in Ireland. The right hon.

Gentleman the Chief Secretary and his able assistant the Attorney General must know by the frequent questions asked from these benches that for a long number of years we have been complaining of the delays which take place in the carrying out of the schemes passed by our local authorities in Ireland. Let me take a typical case as an illustration. I am chairman of the district council in Longford, the most important district council in the county. We have on five different occasions put forward schemes under the Labourers Acts, and not a

single one of these schemes has come into operation under a period of five years. From the time when the representations were lodged to the time that the cottages were built I can assure the House that in every single case in which we endeavoured to put these Acts into operation the period was at least five years. We think that is really a scandal. If all the legislation passed by this House on the subject of the amelioration of the condition of labourers were bulked together I cannot conceive how any body of men in charge of the working of these Acts could make out a case for the delays I have mentioned. That is what is taking place every day, and perhaps it might not be so much a subject of complaint if the delays were unaccompanied by expense. But in every single case in which it has been sought to put the Acts into operation it has been a question of piling up expense at every turn of the game. Therefore, it is not to be wondered at; and I do not blame them; that boards of guardians and district councils in rural districts in Ireland should show diffidence in approaching the question of putting these Acts into operation. In many cases they are thwarted in a most unwarrantable way. Let me take as an instance one of the schemes with which I am acquainted, and which was recently before my district council. That scheme included 150 representations for the erection of 150 cottages. It commenced in October, 1899, but it has not yet reached the stage at which we can definitely say how many of these cottages are to be built, although nearly two years have elapsed, and from the time representations were lodged we have been exposed to a period of what I might call vexatious legal proceedings. After all, the working of these Acts is not in the hands of skilled lawyers. It is in the hands of country laymen, who are not very well skilled in avoiding the legal pitfalls with which unfortunately the operations of these Acts are beset. From the moment that representations are made the district council are subject to obstruction and delay arising from the complicated forms adopted by the Local Government Board. I would not be entitled on this occasion to deliver a long-pondered attack on the Local Government Board. We are accustomed to hear from these Benches expressions of opinion with reference to that Board, but I may say that of all the misfortunes which could have happened to these Labourers Acts the worst in my opinion was that the working of them should be entrusted to the Local Government Board. Their policy no doubt may be guided to a certain extent by considerations of economy, but it is remarkable that, no matter how much they profess to be in favour of economy, their obstruction of the Labourers Acts in Ireland means piling on expense all the time. The representations are first submitted to the rural district council. They are considered by the council, and afterwards notices are served. Notices have to be served on every person remotely or contingently affected, and if in the course of the subsequent inquiry it was found that a man who perhaps was in Canada or the Rocky Mountains or Australia, but whose interests were affected by the taking of land or the proposed erection of a cottage, had not been personally served and was not cognisant of the proceeding, no matter how deserving the case might be, no matter how badly the cottage was required, that representation was instantaneously rejected by the representative of the Local Government Board. The inquiry takes place, and the inquiry I may say is

conducted on lines of the very loosest kind. I have attended several of these inquiries, and practically it is only necessary for a landlord or tenant to say he objects and it is almost impossible to get the inspector to pass the proposal. I will deal of course later on with the means by which we hope to alter that state of things, but as an illustration

I may mention that in the very union with which I am best acquainted, when we put forward 150 representations only thirty-two, or barely a fifth, passed the scrutiny of the Local Government Board Inspector. Solicitors were allowed to appear and oppose the representations, and the extraordinary part of that arrangement is that, in addition to providing a solicitor to put the scheme through, we must also pay the solicitor who appears to oppose the scheme on behalf of an owner or occupier as soon as he succeeds in rejecting our representation. It would seem to me that is practically putting a premium on litigation, because if an enterprising solicitor gets five or six tenant farmers or occupying owners to consent to let him appear for them the rural district council must pay his fees. When the inquiry is over we never know what goes on at the Local Government Board. I asked a question the other day of the Chief Secretary as to the reasons which guided the Local Government Board Inspector in rejecting four-fifths of our scheme, and he said it was not the Local Government Board inspector did it at all, but that the Local Government Board, for reasons of their own, but with which we were unacquainted, had set aside the greater part of the scheme without any notice to us. I think really that is a revival of the old Star Chamber methods, with which we have recently been acquainted in Ireland, but which are highly objectionable in purely civil proceedings. Then there is the publication of notices and the arbitration inquiry, but before that, if any enterprising landlord in the district chooses, he can bring us before the Privy Council, and the Privy Council almost invariably, and on the flimsiest excuse, will throw out any representation which has escaped even the scrutinising eye of the Local Government Board. I have heard the proceeding of the Privy Council, and it is stated; although I do not state it here for the purpose of making any undue reflection on the Members; that it is only necessary for a landlord or an agent in a locality to write a letter to any member of the Privy Council to render it impossible for any district council to secure any scheme, even though it has been approved by the Local Government Board. After we have got over the Privy

Council we have our arbitration, which causes more expense. The arbitrator who was sent down in the case of the Longford Union, when only nine out of fifty-three cottages were passed by the Local Government Board, cost in expenses £;23. That is only a sample of the red tapeism which obtains. This so-called arbitration is really a farce. I ask what qualifications have these gentlemen who are appointed as arbitrators between rural district councils and landlords in Ireland. They are mainly drawn from the same very small class that the inspectors and other officials are drawn from. Most of them have qualified in the rent offices in Ireland, and they are sent down without any other possible qualification for the purpose of holding an arbitration. When all these proceedings are gone through, then at the end of three or four years we may come

to the building of the cottages, but all the time the unfortunate labourer who got up the representation, who got it signed, who gave evidence at the inquiry, whose representative on the rural district council did all he could to get the cottage built, has been sweltering and rotting in his mud cabin.

So far as regards the operation of these various Acts, I have no doubt whatever that many of the complaints I make with regard to the maladministration of these Acts will be controverted by the Chief Secretary or the Attorney General. That is always the case. We are used to it. Nothing we say in this House goes down with either of these right hon. Gentlemen. They have the views put forward by interested officials, and of course they do not listen with any respect to the views we put forward. I think, however, it is enough to say; and I say it in all seriousness; that during the seventeen years these Acts have been in operation applications have been made to the rural district councils and to the Local Government Board on behalf of fully 200,000 agricultural labourers, and the extraordinary result is disclosed in the Report of the Local Government Board which has just been issued; and I call the right hon. Gentleman's attention to the fact that it is fourteen months late; which states that barely 14,000 labourers' cottages have been erected in Ireland. Of course the right hon. Gentleman

may say that the fault does not lie with him or with those he represents. I know myself that in some districts; I am glad to think they are getting fewer; there is a disposition not to put the Labourers Acts into force.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL FOR IRELAND (Mr. ATKINSON, Londonderry, N.): Hear, hear.

MR. J. P. FARRELL: The right hon. Gentleman says "Hear, hear," but the remarkable thing about it is that the districts which have been conspicuous by their absence from the Reports of the Local Government Board have been the loyal districts in the north-east of Ulster; Antrim; Down, Armagh, and portions of Donegal have been practically the counties which have given no effect to the Labourers Acts. As to the policy which guides the district councils in these counties, different views may of course prevail. My own opinion is that they are conservative, and that they are desirous of following a policy which I may call a policy of niggardly economy, and that for that reason they have not seen their way to put these Acts into operation. But throughout the rest of Ireland; throughout Nationalist Ireland; I assert that there has been for years a strong desire to put these Acts into operation, and that there is a growing feeling to make every effort to give effect to the legislation passed by the House for the amelioration of the condition of the labourers, and I would respectfully say that that is a matter in which they are acting entirely in their own interests. There would be no greater misfortune to Ireland, which is an agricultural country, than the keeping in force of a policy which would drive the agricultural labourer out of the country. Such a policy if persisted in must necessarily be ruinous, because after all the labourer, however humble and small may be his surroundings, and although his lot in life is not very prosperous and happy, is yet a factor in our social economy and in the keeping up of the very framework of life in our country, without whom it would be impossible for Ireland as an agricultural country to get on. I am glad to be able to say that

practical efforts have been made to realise that great fact by the Nationalist counties of Ireland. I say all honour to them for it, and I hope they will still further continue in the good work, despite the unfavourable surroundings by which these Acts are almost made unworkable.

I may be told that a great part of what I have been putting to the House is entirely unnecessary, that we have met to consider a particular Bill, and that it would have been better to address myself directly to it. But I think it is right and proper, at the outset of whatever remarks I shall have to offer to the House in support of this proposal, that I should make the position clear as regards the Nationalists of Ireland, and should endeavour to saddle the right horse as regards the failure of these Acts in so far as they apply to rural districts in Ireland. The Bill which I have the honour to propose consists nominally of ten clauses, but practically of eight. It is a Bill which at first sight may seem perhaps a little revolutionary in the doctrine it enunciates, and it may strike the right hon. Gentleman a going too far in the scope of its operations. The Bill has for its object to widen the scope of the existing Acts to facilitate their being carried into operation, and to cheapen the process. I do not know whether in endeavouring to carry these things into effect we have exactly fulfilled the legal requirements of the situation. I am not a lawyer myself, and with one exception the gentleman who considered this Bill are not lawyers, and therefore it may not be actually in distinct accordance with the forms of legal procedure; but in so far as the principles which it contains go, we have given this matter very careful consideration, and the Labour Committee of the Irish party have also carefully considered it, and they think that the principles enunciated in the different clauses are fundamental principles of the greatest importance to the working of these Acts. But if some other form which would give effect to these principles would be deemed more suitable, I am quite sure we would be perfectly prepared to meet any suggestions in that direction which may be offered by the Irish Government.

The first clause in this Bill practically extends the operations of the Labourers

Acts to every person who is a labourer. Previously the definition only included agricultural labourers. We think that definition is too narrow. For instance, it has been found at these inquiries in Ireland that a man, although really engaged in a country district, and living purely by labour, such, for instance, as a carter, a quarryman, or any person engaged in connection with rural mills, is excluded from the operation of these Acts. It is true that, by an Amendment moved in 1886 by the then Member for North Down, the Act was extended to include hand loom weavers, fishermen, and people of that kind, but that was carried out in the interests of particular districts only. In Ireland there are a large number of mills, there is also work going on in many districts in connection with road making, and carting is constantly in progress from town to town. But we have found great difficulty in convincing the Local Government Board inspectors and others that these clauses come within the scope of the definition of "agricultural labourer" in the Acts. Accordingly, we think that in order that

every person who earns his bread by the sweat of his brow in a rural district, and who can be properly described as a labourer, should be included in the benefits which can be derived from the operation of these Acts. We do not think that that is a very revolutionary proposal. Of course, it has been suggested that the operation of these clauses may go too far, and that artisans and people of that class might be included. May I put this view to the House. There are in the rural districts of Ireland very few artisans. There may be one in each parish, probably a carpenter or a smith, but they are very few. They are most useful members of the community in these parishes. They do for comparatively low wages most useful work, and we think it would be a misfortune to the rural districts of Ireland that that class should be compelled, from want of proper housing accommodation and the right to a little patch of land, to migrate into the towns. What you complain of in this country is that your rural population is falling off. That is, of course, because you have great works and factories and great employment to offer the people. In Ireland we have no such employment. We are an agricultural people, and these small mechanics do most useful work for the farmers and labourers in rural districts, and we therefore think, and I appeal to the House to agree with us, that it would be a misfortune that this class should be any longer kept outside the purview of these Acts, and that as they do work of a most useful kind, although not agricultural work, for the farmers they should be allowed to come within the scope of the Acts. As the law stands at present, it is only necessary to say to the inspector, "John Smith is a carpenter," and even though he only be a hedge carpenter, out he goes on the spot. Although the Acts are practically at his hand, he is excluded from it because of the technical meaning heretofore given to the term "agricultural labourer."

In Clause 2 we ask power to prevent the wholesale destruction of our representations. Legal gentlemen may think that perhaps the clause does not do that, and that its legal phraseology will not affect that purpose. I will explain to the House what happens at present, and they will then be able to judge of the effect of this clause. At present twelve men attach their signatures to a representation that a house is required in a particular locality. That representation goes before the district council, and the district council find that the farm on which the proposed cottage is to be erected is too small or the land proposed to be taken is bad, or that it is owned by a litigious person who would oppose the scheme and put expense on the rates. The local district council in that case have no power under the present Acts to change the representation in the smallest degree. They may suggest an alternative site, but with the almost absolute certainty of having the representation objected to at the inquiry. The moment the inspector finds that a particular site has been changed, and that the signatories to the representation are not acquainted with that change, the representation is cast aside. It is to prevent that state of things, and to insure that when a district rural council goes to the expense of publishing notices, that they should have some discretionary power to alter the representation. That is the suggestion in this clause.

Clause 3 proposes to extend the rating power under the Acts. At present the rating power in Ireland is 1s. in the £; and no rural district council, no matter how large or important it may be, or how desirous it may be to put the Acts into operation, can do so if the total cost likely to become a burden on the rates exceeds 1s. in the £. In the Kilmallock Union, where over 400 cottages have been erected, they are desirous of still further availing of the Acts, but it is found that they cannot exceed 1s. in the £; because they have no power to increase the liability. I should explain that men who have studied this question very carefully are of opinion that the more cottages that are built in a district the less likelihood there is of a net loss to the ratepayers, because it must be borne in mind that the cost of administration would be less when extended over a larger area, and also of course the Exchequer grants provided under the Acts of 1891 and 1896 go towards the diminution of any loss that may arise on the total of these cottages.

With regard to Clause 4, I fear the right hon. Gentleman will take strong exception to it. We propose to abolish the Privy Council in Ireland. I think it is high time it should be abolished. As far as the Labourers Acts are concerned, we want to get rid of that aimless institution, which seems to me to be composed of a number of highly respectable gentlemen whose principal business is to block, as far as they can, the improvements of localities with which they have no concern, and of which they absolutely know nothing. The expense also of going before this body is very considerable. Even after the Local Government Board has whittled down, as they almost always do, a scheme it may be brought before the Privy Council, with the result that tremendous cost is incurred by the ratepayers of the district putting it forward. In addition, there is the almost practical certainty that, on the flimsiest excuse, the Privy Council will reject the representations brought before them. I do not expect we will get very much satisfaction from the right hon. Gentleman for that proposal. It would not be in the nature of things that he should view with any great feeling of pleasure a proposal which may appear so drastic, but I do seriously appeal to him to consider that this House has on two previous occasions endeavoured to limit the power of the Privy Council as regards the Labourers Acts. The right hon. Gentleman knows more about technical legal points than I do, but I would seriously appeal to him and to the Irish Government, if they are willing to give these Acts a fair chance, to adopt our suggestion and let questions of fact be tried by another body which has been set up by Act of Parliament, and which fulfils to a certain extent the functions of a court in Ireland. I would suggest as an alternative proposal to the existing law that where there is a conflict of testimony as regards the suitability of a site, or where the landlord or occupier suggests he would be injured by the taking of a particular site, that the question of fact should not be decided by a number of eminent gentlemen sitting in Dublin who have never seen the place, but should be referred to the sub-commission of the district, who can hear evidence on the spot, see the land, and judge accordingly. I suggest that that is a fair substitution. I know very well what the right hon. Gentleman will say. He will say that the Irish Members are complaining of the overplus of work which the

sub-commissions have to deal with. [Mr. ATKINSON assented.] I see the right hon. Gentleman assents to that, but this would be a comparatively trivial matter compared with the work of the Land Commission. It is not every month in the year that representations are dealt with, and it is only in case of petitions that it is proposed to substitute the sub-commission for the Privy Council.

I feel I am intruding too long on the attention of the House, and will leave other hon. Members to elaborate that view during the debate. Clause 6 is an important clause, and I desire to acknowledge freely and frankly that it is a clause which is objected to by many hon. Gentlemen on these benches. I do not find any fault with them for their objection. They are quite right, and if Longford, which I have the honour to represent, was in the position in which their constituencies are, I might object to it also. By Clause 6 we propose to put a premium on the working of these Acts. As things stand at present there are certain Exchequer grants received under the Acts of 1891 and 1896, for the purpose of putting the Labourers' Acts into operation. We propose in this Bill, although we do not make it an essential part, that where counties have absolutely declined to put these Acts into operation; the Exchequer grants due to them should be given to those counties which have put the Acts into operation. Under that clause, if it were adopted, the county of Antrim might lose £4,714, but I must say that since the last Report of the Local Government Board that county proposes to build 102 cottages. Under this Bill, however, we propose that the operation of the scheme should be an annual operation, and therefore I most respectfully suggest that it need not necessarily excite the fears of my friends from Ulster; and I trust, having made my explanation as to the effect of this clause, and our desire to meet them in every reasonable way, that we shall have their support for the principle of the Bill without regard to minor differences.

There is one other clause in the Bill which is, I confess, of a very sweeping character, but which we think is very essential. We propose to apply the compensation scheme in the Allotments Act of England, and in the Local Government Act (England) of 1894. One of these clauses will be of very great value in reference to the compensation for disturbance. In Ireland, unfortunately, differences occur from time to time as regards small holdings. The people are evicted, and put out on the roadside without any compensation whatever. Now, no matter how small a man's holding may be, it is still his home, consecrated by years of toil and hallowed associations; and he is in his own way as much entitled to the occupancy of his tenancy as the richest earl in the land to his broad domains. It is only right that these rights which you have found, in this conservative country of England, necessary to give protection to the small holders, should be given to our working people in Ireland. That is not, after all, a very revolutionary proposal and I await with interest to hear on what ground the right hon. Gentleman

the Chief Secretary or the Attorney General will decline to extend to Ireland the clauses in those English Acts which have been in operation in England, in the one case for fourteen years, and in the other for six years. I freely admit that in presenting this Bill to the House we are subjecting the whole position

to considerable criticism. Well, I welcome criticism. I think nothing has done more good in this House than to have a full and free debate on questions affecting the public interest of our country. I believe, whether the right hon. Gentleman gives us a blank negative or gives us reasons for rejecting what we consider to be our reasonable proposals, this debate will do good. In any case we are advocating the cause of the humblest class of the population; but it is an important class. They do for Ireland a most important work. In an agricultural country like ours they are the most essential section of the population, and before this House refuses to give further legislative relief to these people I would ask hon. Members to remember that they are, in our opinion, as deserving the attention of Parliament as any other class of the community which comes here with their grievances. I beg leave to move that this Bill be read a second time.

CAPTAIN DONELAN (Cork, E.): I have no intention whatever of entering minutely into the details of the Bill, the second reading of which has just been so ably moved by my hon. friend. He has dealt in a masterly manner with its various provisions, and they will also be discussed by the colleagues who will follow me, and who are far better qualified than I am for that task. But I desire to intervene for a few minutes for the purpose of seconding the second reading of the Bill for two reasons. In the first place, because I happen to be chairman of the Labour Committee of the Irish party, which has had charge of this Bill; and in the second place, because I have the honour to represent the Irish port through which the great tide of Irish emigration chiefly flows; and it is the main object of this Bill to stem that tide by endeavouring to better the condition of the working classes in Ireland. Residing as I do in that port; when I have

a chance in the intervals of directing here the destinies of the kingdom; I am constantly brought face to face with the terrible evils which this Bill seeks to remedy; and I am consequently in a position to realise the alarming; I might truly say the appalling; situation. Fast as these huge Atlantic liners follow each other, they are filled up with the flower of our population, the life-blood of the Irish nation, which keeps pouring out of the country in one ceaseless stream. The wonder, indeed, is that any young people are left in Ireland at all. The Chief Secretary, very properly in my humble opinion, visited lately some of the poverty-stricken and famine-haunted districts in Ireland, and it is well that he should have had an opportunity of ascertaining from personal observation how marvellously the Irish people have prospered under the benign influence of British rule. If the right hon. Gentleman is really anxious to fully understand how highly the Irish people appreciate the blessings of British rule he ought to pay a visit to Queenstown during the emigration season. No Government that has any regard for the welfare of Ireland, or, for that matter, for the good name of England, should hesitate to tackle this question. The Bill indicates the best method of dealing with this question, and outlines the only practical remedy, pending the restoration of our stolen Parliament, for arresting the tide of emigration from our shores. That remedy is to plant the Irish working men on the soil, and induce the remnant of the young people who still remain in Ireland to

marry and settle down at home, and so enable them to live and thrive in the land of their birth. As I have already pointed out, that is the chief aim and object of this Bill. An Irish Parliament would have accomplished that good work generations ago, and if some such steps are taken even at this the eleventh hour, the next census may perhaps tell a somewhat less dismal tale than that which just has been told by the late census. It is no new story, unhappily, so far as Ireland is concerned. One thing is certain, that if a remedy is to be applied at all it should be applied at once. There is no use whatever in stitching up a wound after the patient has bled to death. No statesman who values the fair fame of England can afford to ignore this burning question. A dwindling population is the surest sign of discontent, and the spectacle of the wholesale emigration from Ireland has covered England with indelible disgrace in the eyes of the civilised world. In common fair-play the Imperial Exchequer should bear all the cost of past, present, and future schemes for the erection of cottages for the peasant people of Ireland, for the situation is altogether due to British misrule. With the view of facilitating the passing of this measure no provision to that effect has been inserted in it; but if the Government have any sense whatever of justice, they will at least give assistance in that direction. The amount of one week's war bill would go a long way to do what we want, and under existing circumstances the money would hardly be missed, and it would certainly be put to a far more useful purpose. However, if the Chief Secretary declines to admit this liability, which I confess I can scarcely conceive to be possible, or refuses to adopt the suggestion I have ventured to throw out, I sincerely hope that at any rate he will not oppose the Second Reading of the Bill, which is a genuine, if a humble, effort to grapple with the crying evil of wholesale emigration from Ireland. I beg to second the motion.

Motion made, and Question proposed, "That the Bill be now read a second time."

MR. MACARTNEY (Antrim, S.): The course of legislation in behalf of the agricultural labourers in Ireland has been, so far as this side of the House is concerned, singularly amicable. The Agricultural Labourers Acts from 1883 to 1896 have in no sense been contentious. That has arisen entirely from the fact that, in my opinion, the Bills brought before this House had for their specific object the improvement of the Irish farm labourers, and were confined entirely to the wants of that class. Therefore, hon. Members on this side of the House were able to join hon. Members on the other side of the House in promoting such measures as seemed at the time advisable for improving the position of the agricultural labourers of Ireland. But this Bill entirely departs from the scope of all its predecessors. I have read the Bill very carefully indeed, and I find that in almost every one of its fundamental clauses it deprives the agricultural labourers of Ireland of the position which they now occupy, and of the rights which have been reserved to them under previous legislation, and of the financial resources which have been provided by such legislation for their advancement and the improvement of their position. Now it may be quite right that the general interest of the labouring classes of Ireland should be taken into consideration by this House; it may be quite right that those who live in

urban districts should have further facilities made for them to provide for them the houses in which they live; but I am bound to say I entirely object to seeing such proposals carried out at the expense of the agricultural labourer, or by any method which will deprive him of the position which he now occupies, and of the financial resources which he now enjoys under existing legislation. The agricultural labourer in Ireland has been fairly accurately defined in past legislation. It is not a close definition. The matter was very fully discussed in the year 1886, when the previous definition was proposed to be extended by Mr. Sexton to fishermen. I moved an Amendment, which was accepted by Mr. Sexton, who was in charge of the Bill, developing that extension so as to include the hand-loom weavers of Antrim. There are reasons for including both these classes; for it was proved to the satisfaction of the House that in certain districts of Ireland; on the sea coast; the fishermen were, at regular seasons of the year, employed in purely agricultural work. For precisely the same reason the hand-loom weavers of Antrim and county Down were included in the definition, because they were engaged in agricultural operations for a specific term of the year on the farms on which their cottages were situated. But I am bound to say that, outside these two classes, I do not know of any other which can be separated from the remainder of the working classes of Ireland, and who can be shown to be engaged in farm work at

stated and regular periods in the places in which they live. I have a very strong objection to the proposal in the Bill which is to extend to people of the working classes generally the provisions in regard to housing which now exist for the benefit of agricultural labourers. In my judgment, it would in no way assist to promote the interest of the agricultural labourer to do so; and if the hon. Gentlemen opposite are prepared to adhere to that part of the Bill, I must oppose it on the Second Reading. If, however, a distinct promise is made to withdraw that extension of the term "agricultural labourer" in Committee, I will withdraw my opposition to the Second Reading.

There is, unfortunately, a difference in the administration of these Acts between the Province of Ulster and the other provinces in Ireland; a difference to which many causes contribute. It is perfectly true, as the hon. Member who moved the Second Reading of the Bill has pointed out, that the Agricultural Labourers Acts have not been largely availed of in the county of Antrim, and he seems to attribute that to the political views largely held in that county. As a matter of fact, the administration of these Acts in that county is absolutely in the hands of the district councils, and the district councils in county Antrim are wholly composed of farmers, so that they break down; and the defective administration of these Acts is entirely due to the farming class which at the present moment, or some portion of them in Ulster, are professing great friendliness to the interests of the agricultural labourer. There is no denying the fact that in the county of Antrim the housing requirements of the agricultural labourers are defective. But it must be remembered that there are some districts in that county which have been turned into grass, and on which there is no great labouring population, and therefore there is no necessity in these parts for increasing the housing accommodation for the labouring classes.

There are, however, other portions of the county in which these requirements have undoubtedly not been met by the district councils, and these certainly ought to be met. I myself have had complaints from two districts of that section of the county which I represent as to the very considerable delay which has occurred in carrying the representations which had been made to the district councils as to the provision of labourers' cottages. I am disposed to believe that there is a good deal of foundation for these complaints. It is always easier for a district council, popularly elected, to adopt methods by which they can conveniently defer such a matter for after consideration. And, therefore, I am not prepared to say that the fault for putting the provisions of the Agricultural Labourers Acts into operation is entirely to be placed on the Local Government Board. However, I have drawn my right hon. friend's attention to the two cases in the county of Antrim where considerable delay has occurred, and I hope he may be able to give the Local Government Board a hint to hurry up the Department's councils. I have no great knowledge of the West of Ireland, but I am convinced that one of the great difficulties in Ulster is that the agricultural labourers have not the advantage of expert knowledge in the working of the machinery of these Acts. The machinery is very complicated, and not likely to be understood by peasants. I acknowledge that it is extremely difficult to reduce the formulae to simpler terms; but I think the agricultural labourers themselves are not aware of the power they have under these Acts, and these powers have, so far as my knowledge is concerned, not been exercised to a great extent since 1891. I think if these powers had been more largely known to the agricultural labourers, it would have had a considerable effect on the district councils. After all, you cannot throw all the blame on the Local Government Board if these powers which the agricultural labourers possess have not been exercised. I think that the machinery which exists to compel the district councils or any other body which is obstructing the operation of the law, had been properly utilised much good might have been done. There have been considerable difficulties in the operation of the administration of these Acts in Ulster and the rest of the country. Perhaps hon. Gentlemen opposite will not agree with me, but in Ulster the operation of these Acts seems to have been brought into a too narrow assimilation with the actual wants of the district. I have no doubt that a very keen scrutiny has been exercised in Ulster as to whether the proposed housing was for bona fide agricultural labourers, and that the scheme has not been perverted to the housing of other persons. I know that that scrutiny has not been confined alone to farmers, land-owners, and others interested in economy, but to the agricultural labourers themselves. At all events, in the county of Antrim there is an extreme jealousy on the part of the agricultural labourers of any other person except bona fide agricultural labourers being benefited under the Agricultural Labourers Acts. The case is very different in the rest of Ireland. From time to time I have noticed that representations have been put forward for the purpose of housing people who have never been agricultural labourers, but who for some reason or another have excited the sympathy and secured the support of the boards of guardians and their successors. I cannot

for a moment have any sympathy with legislation which has for its object the housing of people of that description. So far as bona fide agricultural labourers are concerned, I am prepared to support hon. Gentlemen opposite for increasing the facilities and widening the financial resources in the administration of the Agricultural Labourers Acts; but when I find a Bill of this description with very ambiguous clauses, it leads me to suspect that if it became law it would be administered not for agricultural labourers, but for another class who for some reason or another have extorted the sympathy or command the support of hon. Gentlemen opposite.

The very fact that this effort has been made accounts for the action of the Privy Council which has been so seriously complained of by the hon. Gentleman opposite. He says that the Privy Council have dealt in the most ruthless manner with the schemes propounded by boards of guardians and district councils. I am afraid that a great many of these schemes were not intended to give any advantage to agricultural labourers, but to further the political aims of hon. Gentlemen opposite.

The Local

Government Board is only concerned with the financial side of the schemes, and if there was not some other tribunal, such as the Privy Council, to revise the decisions of the Local Government Board, great injustice might be done to a large body of the ratepayers throughout Ireland. I have a very strong objection to the clause abolishing the appellate jurisdiction of the Privy Council.

[Ironical cheers from the Irish Benches, and "Hear, hear" from Mr. Hemphill.]

The right hon. Gentleman contemplates that with delight. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will be spared to sit on the Privy Council in Ireland, and to bring his wisdom to bear on some of these schemes. The Bill proposes to substitute for the Privy Council as a court of appeal the Land Sub-Commissioners, but I cannot suppose that that would be any advantage to the agricultural labourers. In the first place, the Land Commissioners have at present quite as much work to do as they can overtake, and the result would be to still further delay the consideration of the schemes brought before them. Moreover, there would be still further arrears in the fixing fair rents of which hon. Gentlemen opposite are perpetually complaining. I am not aware that any delay has been caused by the Privy Council. If hon. Gentlemen opposite say that there has been, let them quote cases, but none have come to my knowledge. The hon. Gentleman says that the Sub-Commissioners would be an admirable tribunal, but how could he secure that the scheme to be propounded before them would be considered if the Sub-Commissioners were not sitting in the locality? They would then have to be taken away from their proper work, and that would involve delay in dealing with cases of fixing fair rents. Looking at the record of the Land Commissioners, and the way they have administered the clauses of the Land Acts, I do not think that it would be in the slightest degree in the interest of the agricultural labourers to have their cases transferred from the Privy Council to the Land Sub-Commissioners. Their record is not of such a character as would induce the agricultural labourers to suppose that their interests would be in any way better protected by the Land Sub-Commissioners than by the Privy Council.

The hon. Member touched sounder ground when he complained of the expense of appeals to the Privy Council. It is absolutely impossible to invent any machinery which would not be expensive, except the hon. Gentleman is prepared to say that in all this legislation in regard to the agricultural labourers no lawyer should take any part whatever. If the hon. Gentleman were to bring in a Bill of that character I would warmly support it; but I think that hon. Gentlemen opposite would be inclined to smile at any such a legislative proposal. We have to recognise that where the interests of occupying tenants and landlords are touched they should have a fair right to defend themselves. The district councils have their solicitors to advise them, and if they make mistakes it is only right that they should pay the costs. I cannot imagine how it can be supposed that, where you take land compulsorily for any of these schemes, such action can be carried out without some legal expense. I am quite ready to admit that under the present system probably more expense is incurred than is necessary. You have got to go to Dublin, and there is a great deal of force in what the hon. Gentleman said about the tribunal giving its decision without seeing the land, because a great deal may depend upon the suitability of the locality. I would suggest to my right hon. friend whether, as a mere question of administration; I believe that it could be done without legislation; he could not impose on the Privy Council the duty of going down to the localities to hear these cases. The Privy Council is composed of very eminent persons, but they have not very much to do. Some of the judges might be spared for this purpose, and I would suggest to my right hon. friend that some of these judges who do not sit too early or too late should be deputed to go down to hold these inquiries, and so save expense to the local authorities. It would be an agreeable variation to the monotony of their court life. I have no doubt that in the interests of public duty the judges would be quite ready to go, and I presume that they would be properly housed and looked after. I have no objection to utilising the services of the county court judge or of the judge of assize. My only objection is that the county court judge has been appointed to do certain duties, and I do not think a county court judge, either in Ireland or in England, would undertake additional duties unless he also got additional pay. But you already have an unoccupied body. Nobody will deny that there are members of the Privy Council perfectly competent to form a tribunal to deal with this matter, of course in districts with which they are not concerned. I do not see, bearing in mind that they have plenty of time on their hands, why they should not act. Still, as I say, I have no objection to the county court judge. The hon. Gentleman has complained very bitterly of the action of the Privy Council. I say that that action was justified to a certain extent by the condition of things in Ireland. The administration of some of the unions has been excellent; take Mallow, for instance, where they have built a very large number of labourers' cottages, and where the arrears of rents amount only to £;41. But there are a large number of unions in which for some reason or other the administration has not been so good, with the result that the tribunal which has to consider fresh applications can feel no confidence in the local authority. The arrears in the whole of Ireland amount at the present moment to

about £;4,562. Ulster's share of that is £;104, of which County Cavan swallows up over £;90. County Cavan, be it remembered, approximates more closely to the political condition of the other parts of Ireland than any other county in Ulster. Bearing in mind the charges made in connection with some of these unions, the tribunal would, I think, have to be extremely careful to see that any fresh schemes submitted were really meant for the benefit of the agricultural labourer, and were not the result of political pressure. So far as the labourers of my own county are concerned, they have not had to complain of the action of the Privy Council, but that action, I believe, has, in nine cases out of ten, been perfectly justified by the evidence brought forward. To Clause 6, which is the fundamental clause of the Bill, I have the strongest possible objection. I do not see why it should appear in the Bill at all. It completely alters

the whole character of the legislation passed on behalf of the agricultural labourer. It specially strikes at Ulster, where there is a large residue of money yet unexpended. In county Antrim alone there is a sum of £;10,000, of the advantage of which the agricultural labourer will be deprived.

MR. J. P. FARRELL: Only for one year.

MR. MACARTNEY: Robbery is no less robbery because it is annual. I object entirely to these larcenies on the agricultural labourers I represent. Let us assume that the Exchequer contribution is not utilised by County Antrim to the fullest extent. The county does not in consequence lose the benefit of the sum; it may be distributed over the local rates; it may go to the board of guardians or to the road authority. There are, therefore, all sorts of reasons for objecting to this clause, which is one of the most piratical I have ever seen. The annual contribution of county Antrim is £;2,500, and why should it be deprived of the benefit of that. Unless the hon. Member is prepared to drop the clause, I cannot support this Bill, neither can my colleagues.

MR. J. P. FARRELL: I have said I am prepared to consider reasonable Amendments.

MR. MACARTNEY: Yes, but the question is what does the hon. Member consider a reasonable Amendment? I do not want to see these contributions touched at all.

The intention of the original Act was to provide for the wants of labourers in each locality and Clause 5, combined with Clause 7, seems to undo the whole of that very necessary provision by allowing board of guardians to carry out schemes outside their own area. As far as I understand the clause, there is nothing to prevent a district council in the south of Antrim from acquiring land in the north of that county, and surely that cannot be for the benefit of the bona fide agricultural labourer. I can understand how it would injure him if this were done. The hon. Gentleman who moved the Second Reading of this Bill and his seconder indulged in some general observations as to their desire to improve the condition of the agricultural labourer. With that desire I cordially concur, but I venture to assert that it is not apparent on the face of the Bill. Indeed, the provisions of the Bill are absolutely hostile to the interests of the agricultural labourers whom I represent. There is another point I would like to touch upon. I do not see anything in the Bill which is calculated to arrest the tide of emigration, and, in my opinion, the tendency

will be to assist the agricultural labourers out of the country, instead of to induce them to remain. General questions affecting the working-classes ought not to be mixed up with legislation intended for the benefit of the agricultural labourer. By all means, if housing accommodation is required, let it be supplied, but at the same time let the urban district councils undertake the duty in urban districts, and confine the operations of the rural district councils to rural districts. One of my chief objections to the Bill is that it would give power to urban district councils to encroach upon rural districts. This Bill is in no sense an amending Bill. It proposes to confer upon a nondescript, un-ascertainable, and indefinite class of people advantages which in the past have been restricted to agricultural labourers. I feel bound, therefore, to oppose it, unless the hon. Member should, in the course of the debate, announce that he is prepared to drop Clauses 1, 4, 6, and 7. [Laughter.] That laughter confirms my opinion that it is not a Bill intended for the benefit of the agricultural labourer, but it is intended to benefit some other class; and, therefore, in the interests of the agricultural labourers whom I represent, I shall vote against the Second Reading.

MR. DALY (Monaghan, S.): As an Ulster Member I have to differ from many of the points put forward by the hon. Member for South Antrim. While I would like to see some of the clauses of this measure remodelled, I am at the same time prepared to support it. I think that in Committee it can be improved very much. One of the reasons that make me anxious that this Bill should be read a second time is that any

legislation this House may pass which would stem the tide of emigration from Ireland should be encouraged and supported. I believe that, while giving the labourers of Ireland comfortable and healthy homes, the measure would be one means of stemming the fast outflow of population from Ireland, because once a labourer is able to get a house from the board of guardians or the district council he becomes able to compete in the labour market, and to sell his labour to the best advantage, whereas if a labourer is bound, as is the case of a great many labourers in Ireland, to the man from whom he has his house, he is liable at any time to be evicted from that house, and that for the moment incommodes the labourer. That is certain to have a bad effect on his children. They become rambles, and I have known a great many instances of children turning out badly on account of having been moved from place to place, and not allowed to settle permanently in one place. The labourers would be able to settle in one place if cottages could be had. Under the present law the expense is enormous when an appeal is taken to the Privy Council. What is most extraordinary is that in most cases where an appeal is taken by the landlord or his agent, who does not want to see the Labourers Acts put in force, it is taken on the most frivolous pretence. The funny part of it all is that in cases where the appeals are taken by the landlords the guardians have to pay the expenses of the landlord in coming before the Privy Council, as well as their own. I say if the law was made that the loser, whether the district council or the landlord, had to pay the expenses, there would be fewer appeals, and the Acts would work more smoothly than at the present time. In the Union of Carrickmacross, to which I belong,

there was a scheme for twenty-eight cottages, and two landlords, on whose property two of the cottages were to be built, appealed against the decision of the guardians, and, to make a long story short, the lawyer's bill amounted to £;452 10s. 10d. I would ask my hon. friend the Attorney General for Ireland whether he can support a law which causes such an immense amount of the ratepayers' money to be paid for law costs in this particular class of cases. I would like also to draw the attention of the right hon. Gentleman to the great expense involved in sending an official down from the Local Government Board to carry out any matter in the way of arbiter or inspector. I will give one case which I am sure will astonish the House. The gentleman, I suppose, is paid a salary by the Local Government Board or some other Department of the Government. He was arbiter in a scheme lately carried through. This gentleman charged 10s. 6d. an hour for travelling; four hours £;2 2s. He puts down 4s. for his expenses from the railway station to the hotel. Any other one paying the money out of his own pocket would have got to the hotel for 6d. I put this to the House as showing the extravagance of these gentlemen when they are out in districts carrying out arbitration cases. When it is coming out of the ratepayers' pockets they do not care how much expense they put on. Other charges in the bill are; night out, £;1 1s., travelling back to Belfast, nine hours, £;3 3s. I brought the case before the House in the form of a question, and I received one of those light replies which the right hon. Gentleman is accustomed to give, and the matter was brushed aside. I would ask the right hon. Gentleman representing the Government to endeavour as far as possible to simplify the procedure with respect to the erection of labourers' cottages. The total expenses of the arbiter in the Carrickmacross case amounted to £;18 18s. 4d. for two days work. Other items of expense in connection with the scheme were; advertising, £;6 10s.; shorthand writer's notes, £;25 5s. 10d., for one day's work or for attending the inquiry. There are a number of other items I will not refer to. The hon. Gentleman opposite said the guardians were not inclined to put the Labourers Acts in force. Is it any wonder, when there are such extraordinary expenses charged in carrying out a scheme? I say that the Government, by allowing their officials to make such charges are doing their utmost to impede local bodies in improving the houses of the working classes of the country.

The hon. Member for South Antrim talked of the proposal with regard to the building of houses for tradesmen. I am sure that the meaning of this Bill is that where there is a deserving tradesman it would be a pity that he should not get a house. I know from my own experience in the country that a great many tradesmen have to leave districts on account of their not being able to get suitable accommodation. These men, carpenters, blacksmiths, and others, were extremely useful to the farmers. Their leaving the districts was a great loss to the farmers. The Government might be well satisfied that those who have to enforce the law in the districts will not be extravagant with the ratepayers' money by erecting too many cottages. If the voters found that district councils were extravagant, the Members would get their walking ticket at the next election. It would be a slight on the people of Ireland for any Member of the House to suggest that their representatives would

not spend the money judiciously. I know from my reference of the boards of the country for over twenty years that the greatest economy is practised in the spending of money. In proof of this I have only to mention the fact that the boards of guardians are in conflict with the Local Government Board, who are trying to put expenses on them that are unnecessary and unreasonable. I say there is not the slightest ground for not trusting the people of Ireland in the administration of all matters connected with the localities. I believe this Bill if passed through the House will be the cause in a large degree of preventing the best blood of the country from leaving our shores. It is a measure which should receive the support of every man who has the love of his country at heart.

MR. O'SHAUGHNESSY (Limerick, W.): I wish to say a few words in support of this Bill, and I hope they will have some effect in convincing the Attorney General for Ireland how inadequate the present law is to meet the wants of the labourers, and how just are the provisions of the Bill now before the House. The actual position of the labourers of the country at present is a very poor one.

The great majority of the working men in our country are badly treated. They have not constant employment, especially in winter and a great part of spring. Hence during all that time they must either get relief or go into the workhouse, or, in default of that, they eke out a miserable existence by living on the charity of well-to-do people. The young people of the working classes, as soon as they manage to scrape together a few pounds, emigrate to a foreign country, generally America, consoled with the thought that they are going to a free country, where they hope their prospects will be greater, and where they will get a decent wage for honest labour. The result is that our country is drained of the very best men and women. They are going away in thousands, week after week, to the terrible loss of the nation. I merely mention these facts to prove the pressing necessity that exists for bettering the conditions of our working people at home, in order to prevent them from emigrating to foreign lands. It is in order to try to remedy this dreadful evil of emigration that I rise to earnestly ask the Government not to turn a deaf ear to our just demands, but to listen to reason and to facilitate the passing of this Bill into law.

The sum and substance of the measure is this. It proposes to give greater facilities to representative bodies in Ireland to work the present Labourers Acts. I maintain that there is great necessity for this. There is too much red tape about them. The Local Government Board are allowed to interfere too much. In the Rathkeale Union, in my constituency, the Local Government Board inspector held an inquiry recently into an improvement scheme under the Labourers Acts, which was proposed by the Rural District Council. His report is just to hand, and I find that he has rejected more than half the applications for new cottages, and a large number of applications for additional allotments. In the scheme there were 281 applications for new cottages. Of these twelve were withdrawn at the inquiry. The inspector sanctioned 103, and rejected 166. There were 273 applications for additional allotments. The inspector sanctioned 186, and rejected 87. This is a sample of what the Local Government Board are doing in

Ireland day after day.

It is a good sample, for, judging from previous inquiries, this was held to be a most successful one. But I fear very much if these applications which had been sanctioned come on appeal before the Privy Council a great number of them will be refused, because the labourers will not be able to attend before the Privy Council to give evidence and to prove their case. It is on that account that I maintain that either the Land Sub-Commission Court or the County Court should be the court of appeal in this instance, and not the Privy Council. I would prefer the County Court. We want also to give power to the representative bodies in Ireland to build cottages for artisans in towns, not organised under the Local Government Act, as hitherto enjoyed in the case of agricultural labourers. Resolutions to that effect have been passed all over Ireland. At a meeting of the Abbeyfeale branch of the League, which was presided over by an able, energetic, and thorough-going Nationalist, Father Casey, the following resolution was passed;

"We call on every branch of the United Irish League, the Land and Labour Associations, District and County Councils, and our Parliamentary representatives, to urge on the Government the necessity there exists for the better housing of the tradesmen in towns which have not been created urban councils under the Local Government Act; and to demand such alteration of the law as will confer on rural district councils the right to erect artisans' dwellings as already enjoyed by urban councils."

That is a most reasonable resolution. We want to levy a rate of 1s. 6d. per £; instead of 1s. I hold that the money could not be better applied than in building labourers' cottages. Why should not artisans in towns, not organised under the Local Government Act, have the same right to comfortable homes as labourers in the country? What proof is necessary to give labourers the right in Ireland which is enjoyed by them in England? It is merely a matter of justice, and it will not do for a Minister to stand up in this House and say as the Chief Secretary recently said in answer to a question, that as at present advised he is not prepared to do so, or that the Government have no money for the purpose, while spending millions of Irish money on the South African War to which the Irish people are strongly opposed. It now remains for us to see what action the Government will take in the matter, whether they intend to legislate or not. If they do not, then the opinion I formed a short time after coming into this House will be confirmed; namely, that in order to get legislation on any subject, no matter what its merits, the Government must be forced to it. That is a dangerous game to play, especially with the Irish people. We in Ireland will stand no nonsense from the Government. It is not for pleasure or honour that we come here. We come here on business of national importance. We come here unwillingly, I confess, but hither we must come for the redress of our local grievances, until we win back our national Parliament. Our business to-night is business that cannot brook delay, because every hour that passes the life blood of our country is ebbing away. We want to stop that, and I am confident that if this Bill were passed into law, and its provisions given proper effect to, it would help to lay the foundation of that prosperity which we all hope for.

MR. RENTOUL (Down, E.): It strikes me that any one who looks at the Bill will find that it is one of the most extraordinary instances of legislation by reference to other Acts of Parliament that has almost ever been seen. It would take days of study in order to get anything like a grasp of the various measures referred to in the Bill. The Bill is drawn as if these measures were entirely within the knowledge of the county councils, and the other local councils which will have to deal with this matter. The Bill is clearly not a Bill to benefit farmers or agricultural labourers, directly or indirectly. It is clearly for the benefit of some other class, but what exactly the other class is I have to still learn. It is proposed to substitute the Land Commission for the Privy Council as the court of appeal. To substitute the much abused Land Commission, which is admittedly overworked, for a tribunal of the high character of the Privy Council, is indeed a startling proposal. The Bill deals with an unused surplus which happens to refer in this particular case to a few Ulster counties, and consequently this is legislation for the rest of Ireland at the expense of certain Ulster counties. If the money is not required in these counties for labourers' cottages, why should it be taken away from that district and allocated to another part of the country? Clearly it is very unfair to certain districts of Ireland. There is a clause which speaks of building houses and letting them practically to anybody. It is suggested that artisans should be housed like other people. Certainly, but that is a different question altogether. These are agricultural labourers' Acts, and why should the money under those Acts be applied to artisans? If there is any defect with regard to artisans' dwellings, let further powers be given in connection with the Artisans' Dwellings Act. As to the question of legal expenses, I am not myself at the Irish Bar; if I were, I suppose I should be described as being as hungry as a hawk. However, as I live in England such epithets do not apply to me as far as Ireland is concerned. The hon. Member for South Monaghan dealt with the question of expenses and appealed to the Attorney General to simplify as far as he could the legal working of these Acts. In that appeal I most certainly join. Those expenses are undoubtedly heavy, but attempts have been made again and again to curtail such legal expenses, and those attempts have failed not on the part of the lawyers, but on the part of those who employed them. In the county courts of England which were established with the idea of allowing men to come forward to conduct their own cases without legal assistance, it was thought that the officials of the court could assist every layman and give information as to how he might conduct his own case, and in this way it was thought that legal services might be dispensed with. We know that the very reverse has been the case. If one side employs a solicitor then the other side is bound to do the same. If one man employs a barrister his opponents also employ one, and we not only see solicitors and barristers appearing frequently in county court cases but we even find K.C.'s there.

MR. DALY: Would the hon. Member decline to make the man who loses the case pay the costs?

MR. RENTOUL: I would not like to discuss the question of costs across the floor

of this House, for it is much too big a subject. Efforts have been made to leave the question of costs in the hands of the presiding judge because of the difficulty of formulating any fixed rules. The costs in this case are in the discretion of the Privy Council, just as they are in the discretion of the judge in a court of appeal. We cannot prevent people from spending money when they are litigating. The very fact that this discretion has been given shows the impossibility of making a law that shall rigidly apply to persons who shall pay the costs in any particular case.

I shall have no hesitation whatever in voting against this Bill as it stands. There are beneficial clauses in it no doubt, and it contains methods for the better housing of the artisan classes, but the one difficulty we experience in Ireland at present is that of keeping the labourers on the land. Our difficulty is to get them to remain on the land, and certainly it is not a step in that direction to take these benefits and apply them to all persons and encourage those who are agricultural labourers to cease to be such labourers, on the ground that if they are able to work in any other way that requires only a slight apprenticeship they will retain the entire benefits of the agricultural labourer. I trust the Second Reading will not be given to this Bill to-day. If this measure has been brought up for the purpose of discussing the position of the agricultural labourers in Ireland, as far as the rules of the House will allow, then the discussion on this Bill will decidedly not be lost. There are differences of opinion amongst hon. Gentlemen opposite with regard to some very salient and important parts of this Bill. This is not a case in which a Second Reading should be granted because the Bill contains one or two things which can be dealt with in Committee. On the contrary, it is a Bill which deals largely with subjects entirely outside of the very question that is here under discussion. It is not in any sense a Bill to amend the Labourers Acts, and that is not a proper name to apply to it. This is really a Bill to take the money allocated for a particular purpose and apply it to another purpose. We saw from the speech of the hon. Member opposite, who dealt with emigration, that this Bill clearly had a far wider object than that put forward by certain hon. Members who have supported the measure. Unless hon. Members opposite are able to give us some better reasons for passing this measure, and unless they can point out some real good that will be done by it I trust the Bill will not get a Second Reading. This is not in any sense a political question, and hon. Members on this side are perfectly free on this question to speak for themselves. Speaking for myself, I do not see that this Bill would benefit anybody in Ireland, and I do not see why it should be read a second time.

MR. T. M. HEALY (Louth, N.): The chief objection taken by the opposite side is that this Bill is not confined to agricultural labourers. If the hon. and learned Member for East Down or the right hon. Gentleman opposite had looked at this question from an English point of view they would have immediately seen that their objection was not a real or valid one at all. What is the history of the position in England in regard to this matter? The first English Enclosure Act was the Act of 1845, and whenever any question of benefitting Ireland is concerned Englishmen seem to forget that we are only now getting some small

vestige of the benefits which were conferred many years ago in old Tory times upon the English population, and yet to-day hon. Members seem to grudge the belated extension of this principle to Ireland. The Enclosure Act of 1845, which ran to 160 clauses, was passed to benefit the labouring poor, and there was no restricted definition of the kind which has now been set forth. The Act of 1887, which was passed by a Conservative Government for the first time, gave compulsory powers because the Enclosure Act only dealt with commons. When in this House in 1887 a Conservative Ministry addressed itself to this problem of benefiting the poor in rural districts and giving them the right to take land compulsorily, did they restrict the Act

to agricultural labourers, or did they provide that it should not extend to the general body? No, the very words of the Enclosure Act were incorporated and it was intended to benefit the labouring classes. In Section 2 of this Act the sanitary authorities get the right to let land in allotments to persons belonging to the labouring population who are resident in their districts. Is it not absurd for hon. Gentlemen opposite to suggest that we are proposing in this Bill something excessive or revolutionary when in your own English Acts you can take as much as three or four acres for allotments? For a long time in Ireland you had only the right to take half an acre, and now you can only take one acre altogether. Therefore, I say that the proposal we here make is only a proposal which has been in existence for a great many years. Of course it may be argued that it is absurd to propose to confer on working men, such as the mill hands in Belfast, or a man employed in a tobacco factory in Dublin or Limerick, the same rights which you give to the agricultural labourer. So it is, but he will not get them because these rural bodies will exercise their discretion, but what we object to is that they should be cribbed, cabined, and confined in such a way that they will be prevented from giving a decent house to a working man. We have had this thing so very often that one feels that we are saying the same thing over and over again for the 900th time. Take, for instance, the case of a roadman, who probably lives in a bit of a cabin on the roadside. It will be said that he is not an agricultural labourer. He is employed on the road as a road-mender, and probably lives in a wretched but under most unsanitary conditions, and if fever broke out in that but the whole parish might be put to twenty times the expense of building him a house. That important fact seems to be forgotten altogether. Why should a district council be restricted in its action if they think that by giving that man a decent house and a plot of land they can prevent an epidemic of this kind. This would not only be within the discretion of the district councils, but also of the Local Government inspector and the Privy Council,

who would see that no wrong or flagrant injustice was done. It would be different if you took a line or a street in Dublin, where perhaps a man was making chairs or working factory hand, and you proposed to bring that man out into the middle of the county of Dublin, and set him out there in a house with three or four acres of land. I say that would be intolerable and absurd. Why not give this discretion to a local authority? It is not likely that a local authority will spend the rates in order to give to undeserving people or to an

undeserving class. I say that this discretion might very fairly be left to the local authorities.

The great difficulty about drafting this Bill has been that we have not only to consider the House of Commons, but it has also to be made acceptable to the House of Lords, and provisions have to be put in it to make it look reasonable. I never read the Bill till the debate began this morning, but I can well understand the difficulties of drafting it. If the drafters tried to widen the definition they would have got into fresh absurdities and pitfalls. I do not think that the way this drafting has been attempted is extravagant, or that there is any reason at all for the very severe criticisms passed upon it by hon. Gentlemen on the opposite side. When the landlords have been relieved of all rates, and only pay the standard rate, in certain cases I think we might reasonably trust the guardians and the district councils to do what is fair and proper in the matter. I take the view that these poor people are a public danger and a public expense. It is quite true that since the Act of 1883 was passed something like £3,000,000 have been laid out upon labourers' cottages, and about £1,500,000 is in course of being laid out. But what is that as compared with the immense problem which has to be solved? There are in Ireland something like 100,000 insanitary houses, and altogether I believe you have only erected something like 14,000 or 15,000 labourers' cottages, after having been seventeen years at work on this problem. During that period you have spent as much on this question of the housing of the poor in Ireland as you spend in a single fortnight in burning houses in South Africa. I think that is a fair way to put the case. It has taken us seventeen years to get this slight measure of redress. I do not agree that even if this Bill were passed it would so largely reduce expenses as some of my hon. friends suppose, for the real difficulty is this: You are applying to microscopical parcels of land exactly the same law as you apply to the London and North Western Railway Company when they want to take tens of thousands of acres. The same section of the Land Clauses Act is to be put in as though you were going to spend £2,000,000 on some big scheme to provide proper machinery. Had we gone on those lines, we should have required forty or fifty clauses, and I should like to know what chance any Irish Bill would have if it had been so lengthy or so cumbersome. Now that the landlords have no rates, the people may be fairly trusted not to be extravagant, and not to run to too great a length in this matter.

The right hon. Gentleman the Member for South Antrim seemed to apprehend that there was some expressed intention to benefit other people, and I think he indicated evicted tenants. He seemed to suggest that this was a Bill introduced for the special benefit of the evicted tenants, but I do not take that view at all. In dealing with a problem like this there is generally a suspicion of this kind amongst Ulster Members in regard to their colleagues opposite. We are dealing with a social and a domestic problem, and with the question of rent and of housing, and really I do not see why an Ulster Member should not address himself to social problems, and there is no earthly reason why he should take a different view of the necessities of the poor and of Christian principles than

that which we take. But, supposing this Act is used irregularly, and that a dozen or a score of evicted tenants obtain irregular benefits? After all, is it worth while to kill legislation to prevent microscopic irregularities of this kind? This double dose of original sin which is supposed to affect the Irish character has led to several Bills passed and introduced for Ireland being overloaded with all these precautions, because it is feared that some individual in some part of the country might get benefited in an irregular manner, although according to the English rule no such restriction exists. Look at this question from a

large point of view. Here is a scheme to help the poor and deserving class, who are being driven out of the country by the existing system. Could you blame a man for leaving a fevered hut in a land where he could not get employment when for £;3 he can go into a house? The English people are splendid at generalities, especially after dinner. I read the other day a very pathetic speech by the Viceroy of Ireland made at a dinner. He was very sympathetic, but how much of that sympathy will enter into the consideration of the right hon. Gentleman in dealing with this measure? The Viceroy simply exuded with benevolence in regard to those unhappy people he had met in Kerry and Cork, but the moment we propose anything in the nature of a remedy, and put one brick upon the top of another to provide them with decent houses, that moment John Bull is aroused and a little foreign gang in this country are ready to insert any condition to prevent us doing anything in regard to this purely local matter. They prevent us from carrying out our own view, from spending our own money on our own affairs and in our own way. In my judgment, badly as the Privy Council have acted, I think the negative mischief that they have done is really more than the positive mischief. Hon. Gentlemen opposite say, "Look at this miserable 1s. or 6d. that the Commission raises the rent by. What good is that to the landlord?" I say it is an enormous good, because it prevents the Sub-Commission all over the country from doing an injustice by not giving proper reductions, and in the same way the Privy Council by throwing out these schemes and preventing the poor being provided for encourages the Local Government Board inspectors to throw out more schemes than they would otherwise do, and consequently only a mere residuum of schemes comes before that august body.

The ideas of the House of Commons upon this question in Mr. Gladstone's time were a great deal more Tory than at present. By the Act of 1883 we were not allowed to take a single acre or half an acre of land unless we came to Parliament for a Bill for power to do so. Such was the view taken of this question in those happily bygone days. I remember one of the Irish landlords fought the local board of guardians, and put us to all the expense and trouble of a big Parliamentary fight both in the House of Commons and the Lords. As much money was spent in costs over two or three labourers' cottages as would have almost built a Royal palace. The Irish Members of that day were reminded that it was necessary to cut out this Parliamentary reference, and that some other body should be provided to take its place. Consequently the clause substituting the Privy Council was inserted. At the time I knew all about the Privy Council, and I was dead against it, but I did not press forward my views

against those of my colleagues. It would have been better for us to have adopted the more enlightened view of the officers of this House. I think it would have been better for us to have allowed the English Parliament to remain as the final court in the case of schemes for labourers' cottages and allotments than to have this little Orange ascendancy nest in Dublin. That is why Irish Members should be most cautious in regard to private Bill legislation when it is proposed to send measures over to the Privy Council in Dublin. If there should be at any time any proposal to invest this body with the powers of Parliament in dealing with Irish private Bills, I should strongly oppose it. Persons who are created Privy Councillors work hand in hand with each other, and it is a regular American log-rolling system. If it is a railway Bill, the man connected with one railway brings up his own privy councillors, and they all work hand in hand. If it is a labourers' scheme, then probably John Young is written to to come down and "chuck this Bill out for me." I remember the horror of the President of the Board of Trade when he had a Bill before the Privy Council about the Donegal Railway, and actually this Privy Council was deliberately backed by the enemies of that scheme because some other railway was interested and then the Government did a bit of counter packing on their own side. The Privy Council of Dublin is just as susceptible

to packing and stands by as a common jury. In the former Bill we suggested the county court judge as a substitute, and I do not know what objection the Government of the day had to that position, but at all events it did not carry. I confess that I do not care very much about the Land Commission. From what I have seen of the Sub-Commission I do not think they have very much sympathy with the labourer. I presume that this Bill has only been framed in this way as a protest against the existing system of administration.

Hon. Gentlemen opposite say that they will vote against this Bill because they do not approve of this or that clause. Well, Sir, whether they vote for the Bill or against it does not make the slightest difference, because if the Bill got a Second Reading everybody knows that this is only a mere performance, and we should never get another day or hour to proceed with the measure. This is your glorious system of legislation in this House. Ireland is convulsed at the General Election to return Members to Parliament, and they puzzle themselves to draft and bring in Bills, and when they bring them in both their Bills and their opportunities and themselves go down in a whole into the earth and they are seen no more. When hon. Gentlemen opposite are so scrupulous in regard to this or that clause which does not happen to meet their views, and when they say they will oppose or support certain clauses, I venture to tell them that their opposition or support is entirely of no importance, because whether the Bill is read a second time or not it will not proceed any further. But this opportunity is a valuable thing as enabling us to put our views before the Government and before the country to ventilate these grievances, and the introduction of such Bills as these is useful in order to allow us opportunities of suggesting some remedy. One clause in particular has been greatly quarrelled with, and exception has been taken to what I call the dog-in-the-manger clause about Ulster. Ulster will not build any labourers' cottages, and refuses to use the money or allow us

to use it either. I have some sympathy with the Ulster Members on this point. The Ulster authorities will not do anything themselves, and they will not let us have the money. At the same time, it is only fair to say that recently they have made some endeavour to build cottages. I think it was an exceedingly good thing that the right hon. Gentleman the Member for South Antrim years ago, in view of the utter neglect of his own and other counties in Ulster, brought forward that very drastic proposal, which we should never have ventured to make, to the effect that where a board of guardians neglected its duty, the labourers should have the right to make representations to the Local Government Board. So far as I know that provision has not been extensively used, but it is there as a rod over these district councils, and I think the Member for South Antrim was entitled to extreme credit for having been the author of that provision. In the Public Health Act of 1890, if a town refuses to provide a water supply or to carry out proper sanitary work, the Local Government Board and the town council can interfere. The Local Government Board is entitled to send an Inspector to hold a local inquiry, and, if necessary, to carry out the work itself. A provision of that kind has had a most useful effect. This Bill has been brought in to remedy an admitted grievance, for the Government cannot contend that the building of 14,000 cottages, when 100,000 are required, is at all a satisfactory or adequate attempt to grapple with this evil.

My hon. friend has suggested this Bill as a remedy for emigration. It is not a direct, but an indirect, remedy. If you look at the answer given only yesterday by the noble Lord the Secretary of State for War, you will find that out of the 15,000 men sent out recently to South Africa no less than 5,000 were men who were undersized or below the physical strength; and is it at all unreasonable that we should suggest that from an Imperial point of view the Government are interested in the attempt we are making to put an end to insanitary dwellings, and to prevent this wastage of the population. On these grounds I would suggest that a Bill of this kind, if it has defects of drafting and scope, should not be criticised in any narrow or small spirit, but ought to receive at the hands of the Government sympathetic attention.

I will say one word more. Though it be true that the Local Government Act of 1898 gave these labourers a vote, and put into their hands the formation to some extent of boards of guardians, that power has been considerably diminished and cut into by the provision compelling these men when under £;4 valuation to pay rates. A great many of these tenants are weekly tenants, and therefore it is no use to say that the landlord will pay the rates. How can you expect a tenant who is liable to eviction at the end of a week to pay rates for six or twelve month? The thing is impossible. The result is that the franchise for boards of guardians and district councils has been conferred on these poor people with one hand and taken away with the other. Not only the local and municipal franchise, but the parliamentary franchise also is affected. I think the Government would do well in any legislation they propose to remove this defect or to revert to the law which in the case of these poor holdings throws the burden of rate-paying on the landlord. I think that this Bill, whatever its defects may be, is entitled to a more sympathetic consideration from the

Government than it has received from the Conservative Members who have already spoken. I hope the Government will not confine themselves merely to destructive criticism, and if they object to the present measure I hope they will only do so by saying that they are ready to bring in substantive proposals of their own.

MR. O'SHEE (Waterford) thought the hon. and learned Member for East Down was wrong in his contention that this money under the present law could be devoted to the object which this Bill had in view. If the hon. Member opposite had taken the trouble to look into the accounts he would have seen that he was wrong, for the regulations of the Lord Lieutenant provided for the manner of distribution of the money in each county. Exception had been taken to Clause 6 on the ground that it took away money from the counties which had not utilised the Labourers Act. That was quite true, but when this Bill was printed the latest Report of the Local Government Board showed that no action whatever had been taken during the seventeen years from 1883 to 1890, since the first Labourers Act came into operation in the counties of the north of Ireland. Yesterday the Chief Secretary obtained information from the Local Government Board that since the publication of the last Report some schemes had been sent up and the building of twenty-two cottages had been sanctioned. The object of this Bill was to prevent the money allocated to those counties being hung up, and if certain counties had made up their minds not to utilise this money it was quite reasonable for hon. Members representing other parts of Ireland, where the Labourers Acts had been largely utilised, to come to this House and ask for a redistribution of this grant, which was intended exclusively by Parliament for the erection of labourers' cottages. The promoters of the Bill did not object to giving a reasonable number of years grace in which the counties where funds had not been utilised for building labourers' cottages might still expend those funds. He urged that the Irish Members were quite as anxious to see the labourers of Antrim and Down as well housed as those in the western counties. He denied that there would be any accumulation of schemes or appeals waiting the judgment of the sub-commission, nor would any extra tax in point of time be imposed on the sub-commissioners. If those other counties were prepared to provide cottages out of this grant, as Parliament intended, there was no reason why they should not be allowed to do so. He was glad to see that a beginning had been made both in Antrim and Down and other counties. He hoped they would go on and build enough cottages to take over the whole of this grant. He thought what he had said disposed of the objections which had been taken to the clause. He was glad that the hon. Members representing Ulster were setting on foot an agitation to secure better conditions for the labourers.

The first clause in this Bill was directed to making the existing law clear. Under the Housing of the Working Classes Act, there was a provision that a rural district council, on application to the county council, could apply the Housing of the Working Classes Act. Though at that time no county councils existed in Ireland, still in the section relating to the interpretation of the Act, no reference was made to that fact. There was a perfectly clear definition as to the people who came under the provisions, and the same definition would apply in reference to the phrase "working classes" in Ireland. It was a great

hardship that the rural artisans, carriers, and road-makers, referred to by the mover of the Second Reading, could not have houses erected for them under the Acts, but a more serious grievance was the fact that the son of an old labourer living in an insanitary house could not get a house built for himself under the existing definition. The Labourers Acts required the person applying to have somebody dependent upon him, so that if a labourer of eighty or ninety years of age happened to be the tenant of an insanitary house, and to have sons twenty or thirty years of age living with him, those sons were not entitled to have a new house built in lieu of the insanitary one in which they were living. If the old man himself applied he would be told that he was not an agricultural labourer, and therefore had no right to apply. Clause 2 proposed to enable the district council to give alternative sites. He would not dwell upon that clause, nor upon the clause extending the rating limit. The latter clause would affect very few unions in Ireland, and, if a district council was prepared to spend a penny or twopence or a few pence more than 1s. in the £, why should they not be allowed to do so, seeing that they represented the ratepayers, without whose sanction they could not enforce the levy? A practical difficulty had arisen in reference to the scheme in the Kilmallock Union. If the rate had reached 10s. d., and a new scheme was proposed for one hundred cottages, of which the Local Government Board inspector decided to pass sixty, and the erection of those sixty would bring the rate to more than 1s. in the £, a number of those sixty would have to be cut out notwithstanding the fact that the inspector had decided that there were just claims for their erection. That was a great hardship and a substantial grievance.

In reference to appeals under the Labourers Acts, the Land Sub-Commission was suggested for good reasons. That body had already a great deal to do under the Labourers Acts.

Under the Act of 1881 the Land Commission, on an application for a judicial rent, had the power of ordering a tenant to provide houses for the labourers employed on his farm. In only 800 cases in the whole of Ireland had that power been exercised, and the majority of those cases were either before or very soon after the passing of the Act of 1883. He did not know of a single case in which labourers had gone into court asking that an order should be made against their employers for the erection of cottages. Except where the farmers themselves had suggested it, the section of the Act of 1881 dealing with this matter had been entirely inoperative. The Land Commission had jurisdiction also in reference to the fixing of rents in cases where the district council leased the land. He did not believe that the objection to the Land Commission on account of the delay in fixing fair rents was a substantial one, as fair-rent applications had to be taken in the order in which they were lodged, so that the applications heard to-day were probably lodged about two years ago. Such accumulations would not accrue in regard to these appeals. In every county in Ireland there were at least two sittings of the Sub-Commission every year, so that at intervals of six months, and in some cases of three months, there would be a tribunal ready to dispose of any such appeals. As in some counties there was not more than one scheme in five years, and the number of appeals in connection with each scheme

was usually not more than half a dozen, the duty would involve but a very slight addition to the labours of the Commissioners. One great advantage of the Sub-Commissioners was that they could visit the locality. The County Court Judge, sitting as a Land Court, would also be a suitable tribunal, because he could refer the matter to his valuer, and that official would inspect the site. The essence of the matter was that there should be an inspection of the site. The hon. Member for South Antrim appeared to imagine that Clause 7 had some sinister meaning, but the hon. Member could hardly have read it, because it absolutely carried out the views of the Local Government Board. The clause was to prevent an abuse permitted by the present state of the law, under which a house could be given to a person other than the one for whom it was erected. As to the suggestion that the clause was intended for the benefit of evicted tenants, it actually would prevent an evicted tenant getting into a house which had been erected for another man. He was very glad that no criticism had been directed against the next clause, which was perhaps the most important in the Bill. That clause proposed to extend to Ireland the English enactments with regard to allotments. Anticipating some objection to the clause, he had come armed with Hansard of 1894. In that year the House carried unanimously a resolution declaring that at once those enactments should be extended to Ireland. Nothing, however, had been done towards giving effect to that resolution. The hon. Member for South Tyrone, who was in the last Government, and the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Dublin University, the present Solicitor General for England, both supported that resolution, but apparently neither of them had ever suggested that effect should be given to the decision of the House. There was no other clause to which he need refer, and he thanked the House for the patient hearing they had accorded him.

*MR. T. W. RUSSELL (Tyrone, S.): This Bill has one supreme vice in my mind, and that is that it is chock-full of proposed legislation by reference. I dislike that method of procedure, and this Bill is one of the most flagrant examples of it I have ever seen. Having said that, I have said about all I have to say against its form. We are engaged in discussing the Second Reading of the Bill, and it does not follow that because a Member supports the Second Reading he is thereby bound to all the clauses and details of the Bill. I have examined the Bill in the most cursory manner, but there are one or two clauses which I certainly could not support if the Bill went into Committee. But I am not struck with the class of opposition with which the Bill has been met. The fact that it applies to other than agricultural labourers is rather a recommendation than otherwise. Nothing can be more shocking than the state of the housing of the town and village population of Ireland. The conditions are as bad, and, in many cases, far worse, than those of the agricultural labourers. At every election that I have gone through in South Tyrone men have come to me and said: "You are trying to do things for the tenant-farmers, and a good deal is being done for the agricultural labourers; are you not at some time or other going to strike a blow for the town tenant and the town labourer?" I say distinctly, although that class does not abound in South Tyrone, that it is no drawback to the Bill, from my standpoint, that it extends beyond the

agricultural labourer, and attempts to do something for the town and village labourer. The habitations of the people in the towns and villages of Ireland are in a shocking state, and I do not think it is a large order that the people of Ireland, now that they and not the landlords pay the rates, should have a discretion as to whether or not they would improve that condition of things. I would also point out, as has been stated by the hon. Member for West Waterford, that this Bill seeks to give effect to a resolution passed by this House some years ago, and for which I voted, in favour of the extension to Ireland of the English allotment system. For five years I had something to do with the administration of the provisions of the English Act, and, so far as I saw, they worked admirably. I have heard Ulster Members; I have done it myself; express their willingness that the allotment provisions of the English Act should be extended to Ireland. Why is it; I ask myself the question; that when anything comes up in the House from the other side, even though the House of Commons has in a previous Parliament approved it by resolution, it does not meet with that reception on this side of the House which it ought to receive? Hon. Gentlemen opposite represent Irish labourers in the south, while we represent Irish labourers in the north; the grievances and difficulties are precisely the same; the remedy is precisely the same. Why is it, I ask, that these proposals do not receive the sympathy and encouragement on this side which they ought to receive, judging by the speeches made at other times? I am prepared to vote for the Second Reading of this Bill, not because I agree with every clause, but because I

am not prepared to go to Ireland and say that I am willing to do this, that, and the other for the labourers, and then, when proposals more or less practical come before the House, speak and vote against them. I intend to vote for this measure also because I am in absolute despair of anything being done by the Government. What do I mean by that? The Government know perfectly well that the Labourers Acts are cumbersome, costly, and in many cases absolutely unworkable; they know that they have been badly administered, that great hardships to tenant-farmers and to landlords have arisen under them, and that altogether it is a code which ought to be overhauled. Yet they propose to do nothing. If the Government proposed to take action, that might be a reason for rejecting this Bill, but what has been the position of the Chief Secretary throughout this Parliament? He has admitted grievances in connection with land, education, and railways; he has admitted grievances right and left and centre; but he does not propose to remove one of them. Therefore, knowing the condition of the Irish labourers, not approving of the Bill as a whole, but seeing some good things in it, and in despair of anything being done by the Government, I shall vote for the Second Reading, if for no other reason than as a protest against that inaction.

*MR. ATKINSON: If this Bill were an attempt to improve the machinery, or to carry to a legitimate goal the wise and beneficent policy of the several Labourers Acts, it would command, I think, the sympathy and support of many Members on both sides of the House, because both parties are identified with that legislation. In 1883 the Labourers Act was first brought in by the hon.

Member for the Scotland Division of Liverpool. It was taken up by the Government and extended in 1885. It was taken up by the Conservative Government and extended in 1886, 1891, and 1892. In 1896 my right hon. friend the present President of the Board of Trade most carefully considered all the machinery and endeavoured to introduce such Amendments as would simplify and cheapen the procedure, and in one particular, at all events, he succeeded in effecting that object. Or if this Bill was one dealing in an appropriate manner with the class which the hon. Member for South Tyrone has apparently taken under his protection, namely, the tenants in towns, it would probably equally command the sympathy and support of Gentlemen on both sides of the House, because, again, both parties are identified with the policy of the Acts for the housing of the working classes. It is because this Bill neither improves the machinery for carrying out the Labourers Acts nor adopts the policy of those Acts, on the one hand, nor, on the other hand, supplies any adequate or proper machinery for carrying out the policy of the Housing of the Working Classes Act, that the Government are unable to support it or regard this debate, after all, as more than an academic discussion.

MR. FIELD (Dublin, St. Patrick): Whose fault is that? It is not ours.

*MR. ATKINSON: What is the policy of the Labourers Acts? It was said that the agricultural labourers were at the mercy of the farmers who employed them, that those farmers provided them with no houses or allotments, that they kept them in insanitary dwellings, and that the labourers were in such an abject condition that if they ventured to complain of the insanitary condition of their houses they were at once evicted and dismissed. The policy of the Labourers Act of 1883, as stated by the hon. Member for the Scotland Division when he introduced it, was this: It was, he said, proposed to grant to rural sanitary authorities throughout the country the same powers as were exercised with regard to artisans' dwellings by urban authorities. The policy, in fact, was to throw upon a certain industry, namely, the agricultural industry, in each rural district the burden of making adequate provision for such of the labourers connected with that industry as were necessary in that particular district. That is obvious from the provisions of the Act of 1883. You are to take into consideration the demands and requirements of the districts, and they are to build cottages and furnish allotments for the labourers who are necessary in that district, To make these Acts into eleemosynary or poor law Acts to support labourers for whose labour there was no demand, to supplement defective earnings, and to raise men from a condition of pauperism who really had no market for their labour, was not the policy of the Acts. Every part of the earlier Act, that of 1883, shows that the requirements of the locality are to be taken into consideration, and if the labourers requisite are not properly housed they are to be properly housed, but it is by no means to supplement the Poor Law Acts. Under these Acts a considerable amount of work has been done, and it is well, before the House attempts to extend their provisions to a class for which they unquestionably were never intended, that hon. Members should see how matters already stand and understand the burden which the administration of these Acts involves. On the 31st March, 1899, there were in Ireland about 16,000

tenants, or approved applications, provided for at a cost of £1,915,180. The average weekly rental is 1s. The gross result, therefore, is that on a capital expenditure of £2,000,000 roughly there is an aggregate monthly rental of only £2,817 15s. Assuming that that was paid for every month of the year, it would bring in only £33 833 per annum, or about 1½ per cent. on the capital expenditure. The sum charged in respect of interest on the different loans is from 2½ to 3½ per cent., and, according to the number of years for which the money is borrowed, the annual outgoing amounts to from £6 10s. 8d. per cent. on a twenty-five years loan to £4 1s. 2d. per cent. on a fifty years loan. That is a very serious matter indeed. It shows that the different rural districts in Ireland, as far as this provision is concerned; except for certain recoupments, to which I shall refer presently; up to the 31st March, 1899 (and since then numerous other loans have been authorised) are losing from 2½ per cent. to nearly 3 per cent. per annum on £2,000,000.

MR. WILLIAM REDMOND (Clare, E.): It is not loss.

MR. FIELD: It is worth more than that to keep the labourers on the land.

*MR. ATKINSON: The hon. Member is not a tenant farmer in any rural district in Ireland in which this is done, or he might change his opinion. But whatever opinions hon. Members may hold on this question, and it may be that they think the benefits derived are worth the expenditure, it is as well to see what the actual cost is.

MR. FIELD: It is their own money.

*MR. ATKINSON: As I say, that represents a loss of nearly 3 per cent. on £2,000,000. It is right to take into consideration as a set-off against that the sum received from the Exchequer contribution. But I would call the attention of hon. Members to the fact, that upon each cottage there is a loss of £3 per annum, and as there are between 15,000 and 16,000 cottages, that means a loss of £45,000. As against that, there is only the £37,000 per annum received from the Exchequer contribution. These figures leave out of consideration altogether recent applications, which, since 31st March, 1899, amount to £287,000. The point I wish to make is that while it may be perfectly fair and just to burden the agricultural industry of a particular district, with the duty of providing for the labourers of that district, even though it should involve a large expenditure of capital, it becomes a matter of vital importance if you attempt to fasten on the back of these labourers, Acts practically a provision for the housing of the working classes in towns, which is quite a different thing. The Irish agricultural labourer to-day stands probably in a more fortunate position than any other agricultural labourer in the world. What is his position? The local authority has power to provide for him a cottage with an acre of land attached to it. Even though the labourer live in a house of his own, the local authority can purchase or lease an acre of land in the vicinity for him.

MR. FIELD: Might I ask the right hon. Gentleman how many cases he can point to in which that has been done?

*MR. ATKINSON: That has nothing whatever to do with my argument. My argument is that that is the law at present. I will come presently to the machinery. I say that that is the law, and that the Irish agricultural labourer in that position

is more fortunate than any other agricultural labourer in the world. It may be; I shall deal with the point presently; that the law is not properly administered, but so far as the law is concerned, there is no other country in the world, so far as I am aware, where a labourer can get a cottage built for him and an acre of land allotted to him, for which he has to pay only 1½ per cent. That is the position. It is difficult to point to any labourer in a more fortunate position. I suppose the hon. Gentleman knows that under the Allotments Act the first consideration before any land is acquired by local authorities must be that they must know that it will let on such terms as will pay. What is the use of talking about allotments in Ireland, when you cannot get 1½ per cent. out of them? I admit quite as strongly as hon. Gentlemen opposite that there does seem to be a defect in the provisions of the Housing of the Working Classes Act, in so far as the Acts extend only to urban districts and towns under the jurisdiction of town commissioners, and it may be necessary to amend the law so as to deal with the case of artisans and others living in towns too small to support town commissioners. But what I say is that it would be most unjust and iniquitous to adopt for the purpose of the Labourers Acts the definition which is given in the Housing of the Working Classes Act as suggested in this Bill, and make farmers all over the rural districts pay for the houses and allotments of land to small shopkeepers and tradesmen and others living in the country towns and villages. That would be a most iniquitous thing. The only remedy that I can see is to create town commissioners, who could deal with this matter; and it is quite a mistake to imagine the money spent would be reproductive. That is the reason why I say this Bill is not conceived in the interest of the agricultural labourer at all. There is scarcely a single provision in it for the benefit of the agricultural labourer. It is a Bill designed and intended to apply the Labourers Acts to a condition of things to which they are not really properly applicable, and to throw the burden of the taxation for the housing of the small shopkeepers and tradesmen upon the farmers in the outlying districts. There is no power to apply the Housing of the Working Classes Acts to towns where there are no town commissioners. Yet in the first section of this Bill the promoters adopt the definition of the Housing of the Working Classes Act. That is rather a strange way of legislating, because there is no definition of "working classes" in the Housing of the Working Classes Act. So that if Clause 1 of this were adopted, it is possible that the local authority would be perfectly justified in law in building houses and securing allotments of land from the farmers for every small shopkeeper or trader in their district. That would be most unjust. If you could secure that the expense would be a special expense, spread over the urban area, there might be something in the proposition, but to extend the operations of the Act at the expense of the farmers would be most unjust. The hon. Gentleman who moved the Second Reading of this Bill says that occasionally there are road-makers and others whose work lies in a particular district, who, because they are not agricultural labourers, do not come within the provisions of the Act, and that these are the persons to whom he wants its operations extended; but he happens to extend the operation of the Act to another class altogether. Now let me say a word with reference to what has been

urged with regard to the machinery of the Labourers Acts. It certainly is an extraordinary thing that, although every Member who has spoken in the course of this debate has complained in reference to the machinery of the Labourers Acts of the cost, of the delay, of the vexatious litigation, and of the Local Government Board, not a single provision has been introduced into this Bill to cure or obviate any one of those evils. A great deal of censure has been passed on the Privy Council, and yet, when I look at Clause 8 of this Bill, I find that a power is given to the Privy Council that has never been given to an outside body in the whole history of this House. That is good comment on the sincerity and honesty of these Gentlemen in putting forward these complaints.

MR. JOHN REDMOND (Waterford): On a point of order, Sir, may I ask whether the right hon. Gentleman is entitled to question the honesty and sincerity of the Gentlemen who make these complaints, that is to say, the Gentlemen who have promoted this Bill and used these arguments to-day?

*MR. ATKINSON: I think the hon. Member is entirely mistaken. I did not attribute any dishonesty or insincerity to the hon. Gentlemen who made the complaints. I said, "the honesty and sincerity of their contentions."

MR. JOHN REDMOND: The right hon. Gentleman is in the recollection of the House. He used the phrase "the honesty and sincerity of the Gentlemen."

*MR. SPEAKER: The right hon. Gentleman did use the expression, but I did not hear the words which immediately preceded it. I was not aware that he was referring to Members of this House, but if he was referring to Members of this House, and used words imputing to them insincere or dishonest arguments, or words which are capable of that interpretation, I am sure the right hon. Gentleman will withdraw them.

*MR. ATKINSON: Of course, Sir, I withdraw the expression, but I never intended to do anything but comment upon the sincerity of the complaints against the Privy Council when at the very moment they were being made it was proposed to confer on the Privy Council larger powers than have ever been given to any outside body, and to say that it shows that these gentlemen cannot have much confidence in the complaints they make. I do not think it is necessary to deal with the complaints of the hon. Gentleman who moved the Second Reading of this Bill. With regard to the action of the Privy Council in dealing with appeals under the Labourers' Acts, a judicial committee of the Privy Council sat;

MR. T. M. HEALY: It is not the judicial committee at all.

*MR. ATKINSON: The Privy Council sat as a judicial body; they had these matters argued out before them, and decided judicially upon the facts and arguments. The judicial committee are called upon to act as a substitute for the House of Commons. Formerly it was necessary when a petition was presented against a Bill that a Provisional Order should be made to be subsequently confirmed by Act of Parliament, but that practice was dispensed with, and the investigation before the Privy Council was substituted for the approval of Parliament. Now what has been said with regard to that substitute appears to me to be really ludicrous. The present practice is this. When a requisition for the compulsory acquisition of land is made, after it has been taken into consideration by the local council

their decision is submitted to the Local Government Board, who send down an inspector to investigate the matter on the spot. The Local Government Board make a Provisional Order. Anyone whose land is to be taken compulsorily would have a perfect right to petition against the scheme, and a petition of that kind comes before the Privy Council as the substitute for the House of Commons. It is now suggested that such petitions should be dealt with by three sub-commissioners from the Land Commission, who, it is said, please no party, who are abused and denounced by everybody, and who are only employed to fix rents. The suggestion that they should be diverted from their legitimate occupation, which they are competent to discharge, and made into a court of appeal from the Local Government Board as a substitute for this House, is absurd. Dealing with the various portions of this Bill, I say that it does

not in any way improve or cheapen the machinery of the existing Acts. In 1896, when we passed the amending Act, we gave most careful consideration to that matter, and if there be any way in which the machinery of these Acts can be improved that will be a perfectly legitimate subject for my right hon. friend to consider, but that is not done by this Bill, which makes no attempt to cheapen the cost or deal with the matter in any way. The only thing it does is to elevate the sub-commissioners into a court of appeal from the Local Government Board. I may further say that it will be for the Government to consider whether any effort can be made to make the Housing of the Working Classes Act applicable to those towns in the country where there are no town commissioners, but this Bill does not do that, and, therefore, to assent to the Second Reading of the Bill would not further in any way either of these two legitimate objects. On the contrary, it would impede them, because it would fasten on the Labourers Acts the Housing of the Working Classes Act, thereby making the farmers pay for the housing of other classes of labourers. For these reasons the Government cannot assent to the Second Reading.

*MR. HEMPHILL (Tyrone, N.): I think hon. Members on both sides of the House have cause to be grateful to the hon. Members who promoted this Bill. It has called the attention of the House to the necessity for legislation on behalf of the labourers of Ireland. I do not suppose there is a single Irish Member in this House who did not pledge himself at the hustings to do what he could for the amelioration of the condition of the labourers of Ireland. I observe that the course taken on this occasion by the Attorney General for Ireland is that which has ever been adopted by the present Government whenever a Bill is introduced by a private Member. We are always told that such measures are academic. Every Bill is academic which is received by the Government with a non possumus, because the only way to turn an academic into a practical Bill is to assent to its Second Reading. The object is to cheapen the machinery of the Labourers Acts, and I think the main provisions of the Bill carry that object out. Why not give it a Second Reading? My right hon. friend, as I understand, admits that the scope of the Labourers Acts ought to be amended, and that powers ought to be given to provide houses and allotments to persons residing in rural districts. Therefore, why not allow the Second Reading, in order to have an interpretation put upon the "working classes," to whom the Bill would extend the operation of the Acts?

That would be properly done by a Committee of this House. This very session my attention has been called to the inefficiency of the present system in a town in my own constituency. In that case there was a scheme for the housing of a number of poor labourers, but it was objected to, because many of the labourers were working part of the year in mills, and are therefore only occasionally employed in agricultural work, so that they are not agricultural labourers within the strict terms of the Act. That shows the necessity for this Bill. With regard to the delay and expense which is caused by an appeal to the Privy Council, the right hon. Gentleman the Member for South Antrim and the hon. Member for North Louth have both rather alluded to me as being a member of the Irish Privy Council. As such I repudiate the suggestion that any member of the Privy Council of Ireland would be capable of such influences as referred to. There is no more honourable body in the world. I know that when one's own merits are in question one should be dumb, but I must be excused for making these observations lest it should be conceived by my silence that I acquiesce in what I must call very unworthy suggestions. I admit that I think the Privy Council is not adapted to the purposes of this Act. I think it is cumbrous and uncertain in its decisions, because it is not a constant tribunal; and since I have been a Member of this House it has been admitted by Members on both sides of the House that the present system of building labourers' cottages requires some amendment. It is necessary, therefore, to substitute some other tribunal for the Privy Council. It certainly does occur to me; and here I agree with the right hon. Gentleman; that the Land Commissioners would be a very bad tribunal. I do not think it would be satisfactory, but a county court judge would, to my mind, be an admirable tribunal. I think that is a matter worthy of consideration, and could be dealt with by the Committee after Second Reading. I am, I confess,

Abraham, Wm. (Cork, N. E.)

Flynn, James Christopher

O'Brien, James F. X. (Cork)

Abraham, William (Rhondda)

Foster, Sir Walter (Derby Co.)

O'Brien, K. (Tipperary, Mid)

Allan, William (Gateshead)

Gilhooly, James

O'Brien, P. J. (Tipperary, N.)

Allen, Charles P. (Glouc. Stroud)

Goddard, Daniel Ford

O'Connor, James (Wicklow, W.)

Ambrose, Robert

Grant, Corrie

O'Connor, T. P. (Liverpool)

Atherley-Jones, L.

Griffith, Ellis J.

O'Donnell, T. (Kerry, W.)

Austin, Sir John

Hardie, J. K. (Merthyr Tydvil)

O'Dowd, John
Bayley, Thomas (Derbyshire)
Harwood, George
O'Kelly, Conor (Mayo, N.)
Beaumont, Wentworth C. B.
Hayden, John Patrick
O'Kelly, James (Roscommon, N
Blake, Edward
Hayne, Rt. Hon. Charles Seale-
O'Malley, William
Boland, John
Hayter, Rt. Hn. Sir Arthur D.
O'Mara, James
Boyle, James
Healy, Timothy Michael
O'Shaughnessy, P. J.
Brigg, John
Hemphill, Rt. Hon. Charles H.
O'Shee, James John
Bryce, Rt. Hon James
Horniman, Frederick John
Palmer, Sir Charles M (Durham
Burt, Thomas
Hutton, Alfred E. (Morley)
Partington, Oswald
Buxton, Sydney Charles
Joicey, Sir James
Power, Patrick Joseph
Caldwell, James
Jones, Wm. (Carnarvonshire)
Price, Robert John
Campbell, John (Armagh, S.)
Jordan, Jeremiah
Reddy, M.
Carew, James Laurence
Joyce, Michael
Redmond, John E. (Waterford
Causton, Richard Knight
Kitson, Sir James
Redmond, William (Clare)
Cawley, Frederick
Labouchere, Henry
Reid, Sir R. T. (Dumfries)
Channing, Francis Allston
Langley, Batty
Rigg, Richard

Clancy, John Joseph
Layland-Barratt, Francis
Roberts, John H. (Denbighs.)
Cogan, Denis J.
Leamy, Edmund
Roe, Sir Thomas
Colville, John
Leese, Sir J. F. (Accrington)
Russell, T. W.
Condon, Thomas Joseph
Leigh, Sir Joseph
Spencer, Rt. Hn. C. R. (N'th'nts
Crean, Eugene
Leng, Sir John
Stevenson, Francis S.
Cremer, William Randal
Levy, Maurice
Sullivan, Donal
Crombie, John William
Lough, Thomas
Taylor, Theodore Cooke
Cullinan, J.
Lundon, W.
Tennant, Harold John
Daly, James
MacDonnell, Dr. Mark A.
Thomas, Abel (Carmarthen, E.)
Davies, M. Vaughan- (Cardigan
M'Cann, James
Thomas, David Alfred (Merth'r
Delany, William
M'Crae, George
Thompson, Dr E C (M'n'ghan, N
Dillon, John
M'Dermott, Patrick
Tomkinson, James
Doogan, P. C.
M'Govern, T.
Wallace, Robert
Dunn, Sir William
Mappin, Sir Frederick Thorpe
Walton, Joseph (Barnsley)
Edwards, Frank
Markham, Arthur Basil
Wason, Eugene (Clack mannan
Elibank, Master of

Mooney, John J.
 Weir, James Galloway
 Emmott, Alfred
 Morgan, J. L. (Carmarthen)
 White, Luke (York, E. R.)
 Evans, Sir Francis H (Maidstone
 Morley, Charles (Breconshire)
 White, Patrick (Meath, North)
 Evans, Samuel T. (Glamorgan)
 Moss, Samuel
 Whitley, J. A. (Halifax)
 Farrell, James Patrick
 Murphy, J.
 Williams, Osmond (Merioneth)
 Fenwick, Charles
 Nannetti, Joseph P.
 Wilson, John (Durham, Mid)
 Ffrench, Peter
 Nolan, Col. J. P. (Galway, N.)
 Field, William
 Nolan, Joseph (Louth, South)
 TELLERS FOR THE AYES; Captain Donelan and Mr. Patrick O'Brien.
 Fitzmaurice, Lord Edmond
 Norman, Henry
 Flavin, Michael Joseph
 Nussey, Thomas Willans
 NOES.
 Acland-Hood, Capt. Sir Alex. F.
 Anstruther, H. T.
 Baird, John George Alexander
 Agg-Gardner, James Tynte
 Arkwright, John Stanhope
 Balfour, Rt. Hn. A. J. (Manch'r
 Agnew, Sir Andrew Noel
 Arrol, Sir William
 Balfour, Capt. C. B. (Hornsey
 Allsopp, Hon. George
 Atkinson, Rt. Hon. John
 Balfour, Rt Hn Gerald W (Leed's
 Anson, Sir William Reynell
 Bain, Colonel James Robert
 Balfour, Maj K R (Christchurch
 surprised that the hon. Member for East Down should oppose this measure, for the
 very men who have been proposing to ameliorate the condition of the labourers of
 Ireland, above all others, are he and the right hon. Member for South Antrim.
 Question put.

The House divided;;Ayes, 137; Noes, 223. (Division List No. 200.)

Barry, Sir Francis T. (Windsor

Greene, Henry D. (Shrewsbury

Nicol, Donald Ninian

Bartley, George C. T.

Gretton, John

Parkes, Ebenezer

Beach, Rt. Hn. Sir M. H. (Bristol)

Greville, Hon. Ronald

Pemberton, John S. G.

Bentinck, Lord Henry C.

Groves, James Grimble

Penn, John

Bigwood, James

Guest, Hon. Ivor Churchill

Percy, Earl

Bill, Charles

Hain, Edward

Pierpoint Robert

Blundell, Colonel Henry

Hall, Edward Marshall

Platt-Higgins, Frederick

Bond, Edward

Halsey, Thomas Frederick

Plummer, Walter R.

Boscawen, Arthur Griffith

Hamilton, Rt. Hn Lord G. (Mid'x

Powell, Sir Francis Sharp

Boulnois, Edmund

Hamilton, Marq. of (L'dnderry)

Purvis, Robert

Bowles, Capt H. F. (Middlesex

Hanbury, Rt. Hon. Robert W.

Pym, C. Guy

Brassey, Albert

Harris, Frederick Leverton

Randles, John S.

Brodrick, Rt. Hon. St. John

Haslam, Sir Alfred S.

Rasch, Major Fredk. Carne

Brookfield, Colonel Montagu

Hay, Hon. Claude George

Remnant, James Farquharson

Brown, Alex. H. (Shropshire)

Heath, Arthur Howard (Hanley

Renshaw, Charles Bine

Brymer, William Ernest
Heath, Jas. (Staffords, N. W.
Rentoul, James Alexander
Bull, William James
Heaton, John Henniker
Richards, Henry Charles
Bullard, Sir Harry
Henderson, Alexander
Ridley, Hon. M. W. (Stalybr.)
Butcher, John George
Hickman, Sir Alfred
Ridley, S. Forde (Bethnal Green
Carson, Rt. Hon. Sir Edw. H.
Higginbottom, S. W.
Robertson, Herbert (Hackney)
Cavendish, V. C. W. (Derbysh.
Hoare, Edw Brodie (Hampstead
Robinson, Brooke
Cecil, Evelyn (Aston Manor)
Hoare, Sir Samuel (Norwich)
Ropner, Colonel Robert
Cecil, Lord Hugh (Greenwich)
Hobhouse, Henry (Somerset, E.
Round, James
Chamberlain, Rt. Hn. J. (Birm.
Hudson, George Bickersteth
Royds, Clement Molyneux
Chamberlain, J. Austen (W'rc'r
Jebb, Sir Richard Claverhouse
Rutherford, John
Chapman, Edward
Jessel, Capt. Herb. Merton
Sackville, Col. S. G. Stopford-
Churchill, Winston Spencer
Johnston, William (Belfast)
Sadler, Col. Saml. Alexander
Cochrane, Hon. Thos. H. A. E.
Kenyon, Hon. Geo. T. (Denbigh
Samuel, Harry S. (Limehouse
Coddington, Sir William
Keswick, William
Sandys, Lieut.-Col. Thos Myles
Cohen, Benjamin Louis
Kimber, Henry
Sassoon, Sir Edward Albert
Collings, Rt. Hon. Jesse

King, Sir Henry Seymour
Sharpe, William Edward T.
Colomb, Sir John Charles R.
Law, Andrew Bonar
Shaw-Stewart, M. H. (Renfrew)
Colston, Chas. Edw. H. Athole
Lawrence, Joseph (Moumouth
Simeon, Sir Barrington
Compton, Lord Alwyne
Lawrence, Wm. F. (Liverpool)
Smith, Abel H. (Hertford, E.)
Cook, Sir Frederick Lucas
Lawson, John Grant
Smith, H C (North'mb Tyneside
Corbett, T. L. (Down, North)
Lecky, Rt. Hn. Wm. Edw. H.
Smith, James Parker (Lanarks)
Cripps, Charles Alfred
Lee, A. H. (Hants, Fareham)
Spear, John Ward
Cross, Alexander (Glasgow)
Legge, Col. Hon. Heneage
Stanley, Hn. Arthur (Ormskirk
Cross, Herb. Shepherd (Bolton)
Leveson-Gower, Fredk. N. S.
Stanley, Edward Jas (Somerset
Crossley, Sir Savile
Loder, Gerald Walter Erskine
Stanley, Lord (Lancs.)
Cust, Henry John C.
Long, Col. Chas. W. (Evesham)
Stewart, Sir Mark J. M'Taggart
Dalkeith, Earl of
Long, Rt. Hn. Walter (Bristol, S
Stroyan, John
Dairymple, Sir Charles
Lonsdale, John Brownlee
Sturt, Hon. Humphry Napier
Denny, Colonel
Lowther, C. (Cumb., Eskdale)
Talbot, Rt. Hn. J. G. (Oxf'd Uni.
Dimsdale, Sir Joseph Cockfield
Loyd, Archie Kirkman
Thornton, Percy M.
Dorington, Sir John Edward
Lucas, Col. Francis (Lowestoft)

Tomlinson, Wm. Edw. Murray
Douglas, Rt. Hon. A. Akers-
Macartney, Rt. Hn. W. G. E.
Tuke, Sir John Batty
Doxford, Sir Wm. Theodore
Maconochie, A. W.
Valentia, Viscount
Duke, Henry Edward
M'Arthur, Charles (Liverpool)
Walker, Col. William Hall
Dyke, Rt. Hon. Sir Wm. H.
M'Killop, James (Stirlingshire)
Walrond, Rt. Hn. Sir William H.
Faber, George Denison
Manners, Lord Cecil
Warde, Col. C. E.
Fardell, Sir T. George
Maple, Sir John Blundell
Wason, John C. (Orkney)
Fellowes, Hn. Ailwyn Edward
Martin, Richard Biddulph
Wentworth, Bruce C. Vernon-
Fergusson, Rt. Hn. Sir J. (Manc'r
Massey-Mainwaring, Hn. W. F
Wharton, Rt. Hon. John Lloyd
Finlay, Sir Robt. Bannatyne
Maxwell, Rt. Hn Sir H. E (Wigt'n
Whiteley, H (Ashtonund. Lyne
Fisher, William Hayes
Maxwell, W. J. H. (Dumfries.)
Willoughby de Eresby, Lord
Fison, Frederick William
Meysey-Thompson, Sir H. M.
Wilson, A. Stanley (York, E. R.)
Fitz Gerald, Sir Robert Penrose-
Milton, Viscount
Wilson, John (Glasgow)
Fitzroy, Hn. Edward Algernon
Milward, Col. Victor
Wilson-Todd, Wm. H. (Yorks.)
Fletcher, Sir Henry
Molesworth, Sir Lewis
Wodehouse, Rt. Hn. E. R. (Bath
Flower, Ernest
Montagu, G. (Huntingdon)
Wolff, Gustav Wilhelm

Forster, Henry William
Montagu, Hon. J. S. (Hants.)
Wortley, Rt. Hon. C. B. Stuart-
Fuller, J. M. F.
Moore, William (Antrim, N.)
Wrightson, Sir Thomas
Garfit, William
Morrell, George Herbert
Wyndham, Rt. Hon. George
Gibbs, Hn A. G. H. (City of Lond.
Morrison, James Archibald
Young, Commander (Berks, E.)
Gordon, Hn J. E. (Elgin & Nairn
Morton, A. H. A. (Deptford)
Younger, William
Gordon, J. (Londonderry, S.)
Mount, William Arthur
Gorst, Rt. Hon. Sir J. Eldon
Mowbray, Sir Robert Gray C.
TELLERS FOR THE NOES; Mr. Banbury and Mr. Malcolm.
Goulding, Edward Alfred
Murray, Rt. Hn. A. G. (Bute)
Graham, Henry Robert
Myers, William Henry
Greene, Sir E W (B'ry S Edm'nds
Newdigate, Francis Alexander
Adjourned at a quarter before Six of the clock.