

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL. Wednesday, 14th August, 1901. Third Reading-Education

Reserves-Invercargill Reserve Leasing Bill-Laud for Settlements Bill. The Hon. the SPEAKER took the chair at half past two o'clock. PRAYERS. THIRD READING. Woodville County Bill. EDUCATION

RESERVES. On the motion of the Hon. Mr. T. KELLY, it was resolved, That this Council approves of

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for primary education, as specified in Paper No. 65, of 1901, being permanently set aside as endowments for primary education. INVERCARGILL RESERVE LEASING BILL. The Hon. Mr. FELDWICK, in moving the second reading of this Bill, said it had for its purpose the utilisation of a piece of land that was now lying absolutely useless. As would be seen from the preamble, the land had been vested in the Mayor, Councillors, and Burgesses of Invercargill by an Order in Council for the purposes of a public pound. How it came to be so vested was somewhat of a mystery, seeing that the borough already possessed a pound on a suitable site elsewhere, and this site was utterly useless for the purpose. It would be much better for the town if the land was utilised in the manner indicated. The Bill had gone through the Local Bills Committee, and every- thing connected with it was in order. The Hon. Mr. BOWEN would like the honourable gentleman to say in what way it was proposed to utilise this land. He knew there was a tendency on the part of munici- palities to lease lands for the sake of getting revenue out of them, although open spaces became more necessary as towns grew larger. His honourable friend had referred to this reserve as low, swampy land, and, if so, that was not the place for dwellinghouses. Of course, he himself knew nothing about it, but he desired to know whether it was proposed that the land should be leased for dwelling- houses or for business purposes, or if it could be utilised as a public garden. A very beautiful garden might be made out of low swampy land by drainage. Of course, he was speaking in ignorance of the exact locality, but thought the honourable gentleman would see that it was advisable to let the Council know exactly what the circumstances were. He spoke with some little feeling, not about this case, but because he knew of so many cases in which open spaces provided in the early days as reserves for the benefit of a future population had been sacrificed. These spaces might now be of very great value for recreation purposes. It was to get information on these points that he raised the question. The Hon. Mr. FELDWICK, in reply, stated that as regards lungs the Town of Invercargill was more favourably situated than any other town in the colony. It had a park, and it had reserves, not merely a 2-chain street, such as there was in Christchurch, but a belt of re- serves, ranging from 5 to 7 chains in width, right round the town, and also through its centre. There was no need whatever for any more recreation-ground there, and if more were added they could not have justice done to them for a great many years, as it would be beyond the means of the borough to utilise them pro- perly. It was intended, as would be seen from the Bill, to add this particular piece of land to the endowment of the Town of Invercargill. There was no part of Invercargill that could not be rendered fit to build upon, and he had other parts of the town endowment, on " Glas- gow leases." The land was perfectly useless as it was-of no use either to the borough or the neighbourhood, and by no means could it become of any use to the Government. Bill read the second time. LAND FOR SETTLEMENTS BILL. The Hon. Mr. W. C. WALKER .- Sir, in moving the committal of this Bill, I do not think I need say more than is needful to explain simply what has been done in the Select Committee. The Bill has not been altered in any shape or form as regards its intention ; but on the third page honourable gentlemen will notice that clause 8 now contains what was in the former reprint covered also by clause 9. The intention is exactly the same, though the wording has been altered so as to make perfectly plain what is intended ; and I think the Council will find

that its intention is not only quite plain, but also the operation will be as specific as is desirable always in Bills of this kind. The object of this clause is to eliminate as far as possible the element of chance from dealings in these sections of estates which have been acquired for closer settlement. The element of chance, which now prevails to a very large extent, has been the cause of disappointment and delay to intending settlers, and it is desirable to take away that element from these dealings, because, unfortunately, the minds of many people are so affected by the fact of there being a mere element of chance in any matter that they come to regard it as if it were an ordinary lottery ; and in that way many persons go in for these transactions who perhaps are not properly qualified. But the hardship to the bond fide settler - the hardship to the man who desires to get a home for himself and his family-is, that he is handicapped at the present time by the law as it operates, because there are, of course, differences between section and section, as some sections are more desirable than others, and the larger number of names go down for the best sections, and there is undue competition for some of them. The proposal in this Bill to minimise the evil as far as possible, is that the sections of land should be grouped in classes, and that in the first instance no applicant shall put his name down for more than one section in that group of sections. But he can apply in more than one group if he likes ; so that the chances are really just as wide as they ought to be ; but instead of having to select his section the proposal now is that the applicant should select his group, and the subsequent balloting will decide which section he gets. I trust the Council will approve of the proposals, and will consider that the Bill is a Bill which is to remove a real evil, and to place the settlement of the land on a more satisfactory basis than perhaps it has been under this principle in the past. As regards the amendment of the Bill in Committee, I do not consider there is any difference to which I need refer. It might appear that a change has taken place as regards clause 8. There is some difference-

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but I can assure the Council that the Committee has done no more than adopt the wording which will bring about the object desired. There is no important change in the clause, so far as I can see, since it went to the Committee. The Hon. Mr. BOWEN .- Do I understand that the honourable gentleman proposes to go on with the Bill in Committee ? The Hon. Mr. W. C. WALKER .- Yes. The Hon. Mr. BOWEN .- It has not been distributed yet, as reported on by the Waste Lands Committee. The Hon. Mr. W. C. WALKER .- Oh, yes. The Hon. Mr. BOWEN .- When ? The Hon. Mr. W. C. WALKER .- Yesterday, I think. An Hon. MEMBER .- No, not until just now. The Hon. Mr. BOWEN .- Well, Sir, I dare say that a great many of the amendments in the Bill before us will be useful in the working of the Act, but I cannot let this Bill pass, or, indeed, any Bill connected with land settlement, without expressing my regret that the Government have not seen fit, in an amending Bill, to remedy what I consider to be the real blot upon the whole of this land-settlement legislation. I am not now speaking of the policy of taking land for settlement compulsorily. That is a matter upon which there may be differences of opinion. I have known myself that any amount of land could have been secured by Government without any compulsion whatever ; and it is evident that this is still the case, as the Government are now asking for power to purchase land by auction. But the blot on this legislation, which I think absolutely unjustifiable, is the power given to an individual Minister to take possession of any person's property. I remember when the original Land for Settlements Bill was before the Council, I said, on the part not only of myself but of many others, that we would agree to the Bill if a schedule of the properties that were to be taken was laid on the table of Parliament, and Parliament itself decided on the subject. No doubt Parliament has a right to take private property if such a course is proved to be necessary for the public welfare. But I say that a new principle-and one that is an absolute outrage upon all our ideas of right and wrong-was initiated in the original Bill, which puts the rights and properties of private citizens in a free country under the bidding and at the mercy of any individual Minister. I say that this is a wrong principle, and this power should not

be given to any Government. I admit, as I said before, that Parliament has a right, for the benefit of the public, to interfere with any individual property if such a course is shown to be necessary. But Parliament alone has that right, and cannot constitutionally delegate it to any individual, whether Minister or official. There is plenty of land in the market, as the Government has found by experience. And no private owner should be coerced into giving up his property or his home unless the representatives of the people declare the necessity of such action. This is, to my mind, such a fundamental principle that Hon. Mr. W. C. Walker against an amending Bill on this subject being brought before Parliament without clauses repealing a provision which puts the property of individuals at the mercy of any man, whatever his judgment or ability may be. The Hon. Mr. JONES .- Sir, the honourable gentleman who has just sat down has made remarks in regard to this measure and the principles embodied in it which, of course, from his point of view are quite justified. But, Sir, this principle of taking land compulsorily has been in existence for several years, and I think that the great majority of the people of this colony will say the result has justified the means that have been used. The Hon. Mr. BOWEN .- The honourable gentleman must understand I am not now raising the question of the taking of land, but that it should be taken by Parliament, and not by the Minister. The Hon. Mr. JONES .- Well, Sir, that objection has been answered in my expression of approval of the principles embodied in this measure: the result has been nothing but satisfactory. It has been so satisfactory, indeed, that from every part of the colony there is an outcry that more land should be taken. The Hon. Mr. BOWEN .- How many properties have been taken ? The Hon. Mr. JONES .- I have not the record of the number before me, but I know that in the Waitaki district, in North Otago, and in South Canterbury a large number have been taken. An Hon. MEMBER .- Not compulsorily. The Hon. Mr. JONES .- No, not compulsorily; but you want the compulsory principle in order to maintain your position, and help you to carry out this idea to perfection. Wherever a property has been taken by compulsion no hardship has occurred. I have never heard complaints from any landed proprietor that his land has been taken from him without his having been given fair remuneration. Sir, if the Minister, or the department, to which this duty of taking land has been intrusted does not do what is right, then, I take it, that Parliament can call either Minister or department to book for his or its action. That is quite sufficient. Those who are intrusted with the duty of administering the Land for Settlements Act know what they are about. They know where the land is. They know what it is worth, or presumably they do, and they act accordingly, and if anybody, either a member of Parliament or a member of the general public, has any objection to what is done he can call those who are responsible to account for their action. Sir, this Bill professes to deal with what has been termed "dummyism," or what I would term "speculation," but I do not think the suggested amendment would have the desired effect. I am not prepared to say what would be effective, because I believe that where the mania for speculation exists it is almost impossible to meet it, whether it is in dealing with land or, in fact, anything else. The suggestion is, that the number of applicants shall

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that are available, and those who are left will then get a section each. But let us suppose there are one hundred applicants for some ten sections. The process of balloting down would not necessarily eliminate the speculators who desire to get sections in order that they might sell again at a profit, as has been done over and over again. The principle of balloting down might, indeed, have the effect of shutting out all the legitimate applicants, and leaving nobody but the speculators, who would, of course, get the land. There is only one expedient which I think might put a check on speculation in regard to these sections, and that is the steadfast refusal to allow any transfers. Unfortunately, my eyesight has been so bad recently that I have not been able to read, and I am therefore not so well posted up in the measure as I would like to be. An amended Amendment Bill is a thing one cannot understand when read to him; one must read it himself and compare notes. It seems to me, however, that it would be best to say that there shall be no transfers, and that if any settler desires to abandon his section it should go back to the Government and

be dealt with afresh. I know it is hard to detect dummyism ; but if I had my way I would take care that the man who was detected in dummyism should be severely dealt with. He should be dealt with by imprisonment, without the option of a fine. That, I think, would put a stop to dummyism. But I have no doubt that this measure is an honest attempt to get over difficulties which have been detected in the working of the land-settlement system in the past, and, as it seems to be the best possible suggestion we can get at the present moment, I shall give it my support. The Hon. Mr. SHRIMSKI .- Sir, my friend is wrong in the remarks he has made with regard to dummyism. Clause 10 says,- "Every applicant who obtains an allotment under this Act shall reside continuously there- on." And clause 11 says,- "It shall not be lawful for a lessee under this Act to transfer the land comprised in the lease within the period of five years from the date of such lease." I think that is quite enough protection. There will be no dummyism after those clauses are passed, because if a man has to pay five years' rent, and has to reside on his land and improve it, it is not easy to act as a dummy. Taking the Bill as a whole, I agree with the Hon. Mr. Bowen that it proposes to give the Minister rather too much power, and that it would have been better if the acquirement of these freeholds were laid before both Houses of Parliament before being carried into effect, so that members of both Houses might decide the matter. I think it is stretching the point too far to leave unlimited power in the hands of one individual. I must say I believe the present honourable gentleman who occupies the position of Minister of Lands is thoroughly honest. I have known him for many years, and it is my belief that he would not do anything that was possible, however, that a person may have a feeling against an individual, and that he might exercise that feeling to the disadvantage of the person from whom he takes land. I therefore think that that power should not be given into the hands of one individual. The Hon. Mr. T. KELLY .- Sir, I cannot understand that a Minister of the Crown would have a vindictive feeling against any one who may apply for an allotment of land under the Land for Settlements Act. I think it is ridiculous to suppose that such might be the case. Any man who would be called on to fill such an honourable position would scorn such an act. When his judgment was called into operation he would act to the best of his ability in dealing with matters of this importance. I have looked carefully through this Bill-it was before the Waste Lands Committee-and I find that it deals with a most difficult subject. The policy of the land-laws with regard to taking land compulsorily has been settled for years back, and there is no occasion to go into that question now. The occasion for the Land for Settlements Act was, in the first instance, to supplement the Land Act of 1892. Under that Act, which dealt with Crown lands, there are any amount of provisions to deal with the settlement of the people on the land ; but it was soon found by those in authority that something was required in addition to that Act. In some districts, where there were no Crown lands, or where they were locked up, it was necessary, if possible, to buy land from private owners for the young people who were growing up, and who could not possibly get land in their own district. The intention of that Act was really to provide land for the landless. There is a great distinction between this Act and the Land Act of 1892, but people generally do not carry in their minds the difference that exists between the two Acts. This Bill and the principal Act provides that land shall be purchased by the Land Commissioners. When it is purchased and cut up and offered for sale it passes over to the Waste Lands Board to administer, and they administer it under the provisions of the Act of 1892 and under the provisions of this Bill. It is difficult for any person who is not accustomed to these matters to fairly grasp the position. One must also read the Act of 1892 and the amending Act, and the regulations made by the Governor in Council. This amending Bill really does not alter the position very much. It is an attempt to give fair-play to all the parties concerned, and gives the Boards very large powers-unnecessarily large-the object being to give the landless an opportunity of getting land. A good settler, who is a holder of land, may apply for these lands, and another may apply who has no land at all. The Board, under this Bill, may decide that the man who has no land shall have the first chance, and I say that to do that fairly and well is a most difficult thing. Of course, when you once depart from the principle

of selling land by public auction you get into all sorts of difficulties, and I myself know, as a member of

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resorted to to avoid the conditions imposed on the lessee, especially with regard to residence. Under the principal Act of 1900 the lessee may mortgage, sublet, or transfer his lease, with the consent of the Land Board and the Minister. This Bill limits still further the power of mortgage. It eliminates the Land Board and leaves it almost entirely with the Minister, under It restricts the power of a certain conditions. lessee to transfer his lease unless he has occupied it for five years. I know this to be a desirable thing in the interests of the landless, because under it, if he mortgages and cannot pay his way, the land falls into the hands of the mortgagee. Taking the Act as a whole it is an improvement, and does not depart from the original principle nor make any radical change ; it only provides for those who are landless, and gives them a chance against those who have land now, but who may be successful in the ballot and thus cut out the landless applicant. The Hon. Mr. A. LEE SMITH. - In the few remarks I am going to make I shall confine myself to observations in respect to what the Hon. Mr. Bowen said in regard to compulsory purchase, and the taking of land by the Minister alone. I should have thought if there was one thing more clear than anything else it is that once Parliament has decided it to be necessary in the interests of the colony that land should be taken compulsorily, the purchase of any particular portion to be taken should be removed from the arena of Parliament. What would take place after the Board had recommended the purchase of an estate? How long would it be before Parliament decided as to whether that estate should be taken or not ? The consequence would be that the people in the district, who might very likely have been looking forward to the opportunity of acquiring land, and the owner of the land who may have been considering with doubt as to how long he would have it in his hands, would suffer ; and the time which would no doubt be occupied in deciding whether the land should be taken or not would act very prejudicially on the interests of all concerned. But the honourable gentleman made some remarks as to this being, in his opinion, an iniquitous proceeding-I do not remember whether those were his exact words, but that was what it amounted to. Let us look at Home: what is taking place in Ireland? Whenever I think about land legislation, I always carry my mind back to Ireland, because I have for many years taken every opportunity of reading all I could as to the position in that country. Some years ago an Act was brought forward for the voluntary purchase of land from landowners-that is, by mutual agreement between the owner and the tenant. What has been the result? You go into some districts and find an estate sold, and the tenants get it on the purchase-system, whereby a certain rental and a certain annual amount towards the gradual extinction of the purchase-price are paid annually ; whilst alongside it a tenant may be paying very much more in the shape of rent alone than the Hon. Mr. T. Kelly purchase-money towards the first cost of the land, simply because his landlord will not agree to sell. So much has this been noticed, and so much dissatisfaction has it given, that a gentleman named T. W. Russell, late a subordinate member of the present Government, broke himself away from his Government connection, seeing, as he thought, the wrongs that were being done to the small tenants in Ireland- broke away from the Unionist party, and started an agitation in Ireland on behalf of making the purchase of land compulsorily universal. And he has been supported not only by the Nationalist party, which, as honourable members know, represents more than three-quarters of the whole parliamentary representation of Ireland, but what is far more, with the exception of a very few members of the Unionist party of the representatives of Ireland, he has gained the adherence of members of Parliament, a large number of landowners and others, who agree that it would be best in the interests not only of the south and west of Ireland, but also of Ulster itself. The consequence is it is gaining hold not only of the people of Ireland, but of the Parliament of Great Britain ; he is always gathering fresh recruits to his standard. If the honourable gentleman had followed the matter as closely as I have he would see that within five or six years- The Hon. Mr. BOWEN .- I have reason to know a good deal about it. It is the question of how it

is taken. The Hon. Mr. A. LEE SMITH .- I am quite sure that if purchase were left to voluntary agreement you would have the whole of Ireland gridironed with sections under voluntary and under compulsory sale, resulting in continuous dissatisfaction and friction between the two. There is only one principle : if Parliament has given its assent to the principle that you must have land for the people, and the people are waiting for it, you must deal with the matter in the way provided for in this Bill. It has been shown that every time a block has been thrown open there is a rush for it, and, as the honourable gentleman behind me stated, that has justified the principle. Granted that is so, you must place the working of the measure in the hands of an independent Board, so that the Minister can do nothing on his own initiative ; it has to be recommended by the Board as to whether the land should be taken and as to the price that should be given; the Minister is merely an agent, as the representative of the Government and of Parliament. If you do not in this way give opportunities to the constantly increasing number of young men in the country who require land, you will emasculate the Act and entirely destroy the advantages to be otherwise gained by the principle of compulsory purchase. The Hon. Colonel PITT .- The Hon. Mr. Bowen in his remarks did not find fault with the Bill under discussion, but he took advantage of the opportunity to reiterate an objection which he says he had formerly made against the principle contained in the land for settlements policy. I think he is rather late to

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mitted success that policy has been throughout the colony. So far as compulsory taking of land is concerned, I suppose there are very few instances in the colony where land has been taken compulsorily. Possibly the Hatuma Estate may be mentioned as one ; and nobody doubts the principle the honourable gentleman maintained, that private estates and private rights must be subservient to the public good ; of course always being conceded that proper and reasonable compensation is paid for the private rights which are thus interfered with. Now the honourable gentleman contends that the proposed acquisition of private estates should be submitted to Parliament, and that it should decide the question, and not the Minister. Well that would lead to endless inconvenience. It has been pointed out by other honourable gentlemen that private rights are safeguarded by the Land Purchase Board ; the Minister acts only, or to a very great extent, on their recommendation; and the principal Act provides that, within twenty days of each session of Parliament opening, the Minister has to give an account of what has been done in reference to the purchase of land for settlement-a return has to be laid before Parliament. Now, the honourable gentleman altogether forgets, for the moment at all events, that this principle which he so much condemns is contained in other Acts of Parliament, and is in operation in many ways. The same right for the Minister to take land compulsorily is conferred under the Public Works Act; and lands have been taken upon many occasions for public purposes, and private rights interfered with in the same way as they can be interfered with under this Bill, and the parties are sent to the properly constituted authorities to have their damages assessed ; and no one says, or can be heard to say, that that principle which has been sanctioned is anything but a proper one. Now, I fail to see any difference in that principle and in the principle laid down in the Land for Settlements Bill. The Hon. Mr. Jones says that one object of the Bill is to prevent dummyism, and that that is a reason why a man who acquires land under this Act is not to be allowed to dispose of it under a period of five years. Well, that may be a very proper and necessary provision for the purpose of preventing dummyism, but I am not altogether sure that it is a wise provision ; you may be protecting the system at the expense of the individual-at the expense of the selector. One can very well imagine a man taking up land under this Act who has not very much capital. He is perhaps able to take up the land and to stock it, but perhaps not able to build a house upon it. Well, this provision would prevent him borrowing any money, it would prevent him mortgaging in any way, and it is a matter for consideration whether that is a wise provision or not. That, perhaps, is a Committee objection, or, at any rate, a matter that probably should be considered in Committee. The Hon. the

Minister, in reply, or in Committee, may tell us why the Govern- why a man should be prevented from borrow- ing a reasonable amount of money upon his property, for the purpose of enabling him to. develop it. That is the only matter I wish to call attention to in the Bill. As to the general principle of the Bill, of course, that has been settled by Parliament long since. This is merely a Bill to deal with difficulties which have arisen, I suppose, in the administration of the principal Act, and we can discuss this very well when we go into Committee. The Hon. Mr. JENNINGS .- Sir, it appears. to me that the principle of the compulsory taking of land has not been assailed by any one in the Council. As far as I gathered, the objection urged was that the whole power should not be left in the hands of one particular Minister. Now, there is some valid reason for that ob- jection, and it will, I think, be more apparent to honourable members who have read the report of the meeting of the Bank of New Zealand, which appeared in the New Zealand Times of Saturday last. From that report it will be seen that where too much power is given to one or two individuals to dispose of land, a loss may result. I will read what was said by Mr. Kennedy :- " Mr. Kennedy went on to mention estates in the South which were advertised for public sale. but which on the day before the day fixed for the sale were sold by the Board to the Govern- ment for a sum fully £20,000 less than the general manager had reason to believe he would have realised. The Board, consisting of the chairman, a representative of the bank, and the Premier, along with the Minister of Lands (the late Sir John Mckenzie) met, and the estates. were sold at their valuation, whereas the general manager declared that they would have realised \$20,000 more if they had been allowed to go to auction. It was for this reason that he (Mr. Kennedy) said they must be patient and allow the management to deal with the estates he had referred to, and not press them to be wound up hastily." The Hon. Mr. LEE SMITH .- That is only the assertion of an individual. The Hon. Mr. JENNINGS .- It is the asser- tion of a gentleman whose opinion is of equal weight to that of the Hon. Mr. Lee Smith. But I read that extract simply to point out to honourable members that if you leave things in the hands of a few individuals, harm, or at any rate loss, may accrue. Now, with the general amendments of this Bill I am perfectly and strongly in accord. I have, during the past fifteen months, been living in a district where the earth-hunger has been very great, and I have heard, in connection with the balloting for lands, of great attempts to revive dummy- ism, of the stuffing of ballot-boxes by people who were rushing to get land that they had no idea of settling on at all, but were simply applying on the off-chance of being successful. and if so, they would sell almost immediately, and make a profit out of the transaction. That is not bona fide land-settlement ; and this Bill is going in the direction of stopping such prac-

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honourable gentlemen. An Hon. MEMBER .- This Bill does not deal with that at all. The Hon. Mr. JENNINGS .- I beg pardon, what does clause 8 mean ? Does it not deal with the applications, and balloting for land ? The whole of the subclauses also deal with the mode of procedure when there are more than one applicant for allotments suitable for farm- ing purposes. Let the honourable member read carefully clause 8, and particularly sub- clause (5). An Hon. MEMBER .- This deals with land for settlements. The Hon. Mr. JENNINGS .- I can draw the distinction between the two as well as the honour- able member. It appears to me that too much power is given to the Board under subsection (4) of clause 8: "The Board shall make in- quiry, as provided by the principal Act, as to each applicant's bona fides and suitability." The Hon. Mr. Kelly has stated that the Land Board would make inquiries as to whether an applicant had land or not. If the person who put in the application was found by the Board to have land, they probably would give it to the landless applicant. Now, that seems all very well, and very nice; but I ask my honourable friend, who is a farmer, how many instances could he relate of the failure of many who were put on the various settlements, and who were totally unacquainted with the working of land, or the care that should be given to stock. My contention is that it is better to let those people get the land who can utilise it and work it to the best advantage, than to give it to people who will make failures in their

attempts at settlement. I know of a great number of instances of failure, which resulted from putting people on land who were ignorant of agricultural work. The amendments in the Bill are in the direction of making the land for settlements policy that has been adopted by Parliament more effective, and to tend more to bona fide settlement than heretofore, and therefore I approve of them. The Hon. Mr. TWOMEY .- Sir, the Bill was only circulated just when I sat down here, and consequently I have not studied it very closely, nor have I been able to compare it with the principal Act ; but there is one thing I wish to say, and it is this : that I think the discussion this afternoon is extremely satisfactory. After all that has been said about this question of land for settlements, all the objections are narrowed down to one small one now, and that is, whether the schedule of the land taken by compulsion shall be submitted to Parliament, or whether the land shall continue to be taken under the present system. Now, I think that, after all has been said concerning land-settlement, it is extremely satisfactory that the question is now narrowed down to that one point ; and, for my part, I think that this objection might as well be thrown overboard with the rest, so that we should all accept unanimously the fact that this land-for-settlements scheme is proving extremely beneficial. Hon. Mr. Jennings the system of submitting to Parliament a schedule of the lands to be taken, what would be the result ? Honourable gentlemen have heard that too many cooks spoil the broth, and that is exactly what would happen if you had these schedules submitted year after year to Parliament. It would be a sort of referendum with which you would never do any good at all, and never get any land for settlements at all. It is not necessary to discuss the compulsory phase of the question now, for even the Hon. Mr. Bowen admits that it is correct ; consequently it is not necessary to point out why it was expedient to adopt it. I will simply say, before the compulsory clauses were put in the Land Act land could not be bought for these settlement purposes. The Minister found that there must be a compulsory power placed in his hands. And here now the honourable gentleman makes a great virtue of the fact that very few estates have been taken by compulsion. But what does it mean ? It means this : that this power which the Minister has had has been used very sparingly and with the greatest caution. That is the meaning of it. And seeing this, where is the reason for being afraid ? This taking by compulsion is only an administrative act; and is every administrative act to be first submitted to Parliament before the Minister can act ? I do not like to use any harsh words by which to characterize such a suggestion. Some honourable gentleman said that the present Minister is to be trusted because he is honest. That is not the question at all. You should not consider the honesty or dishonesty of a Minister. That is not the question. Although you have an honest Minister to-day, such a thing as a dishonest Minister may crop up to-morrow. Consequently, we must not rely on the honesty of Ministers individually or collectively. What we want to know is: Are our laws such that dishonest men cannot do dishonest things ? Is our law honest ? I say our law is honest, and I say our law is such that it is impossible for any Minister, no matter how dishonest he may be, to do a dishonest thing under the Land for Settlements law. In the first place, when the negotiations come on, there is the Land Purchase Board. If they fail in their negotiations, then the case comes publicly before the Court, and then it is handed over for administrative purposes to the Waste Lands Board. Then it is disposed of by means of the ballot, and, under the circumstances, how can a Minister or any man living use a system like that for favouritism ? It is impossible. The law has been made so that every man must be honest under it, and consequently there is no necessity at all to raise this question of submitting the schedules of lands to be purchased to Parliament. The Hon. Mr. BOWEN. - It is not the question of valuation ; this is the question of the necessity of taking. The Hon. Mr. TWOMEY .- The very idea I have dealt with. It is not necessary to go over the same ground again. As I said before,

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that objection may as well go overboard with the rest. It is narrowed down to that; and it is acknowledged that the system is right. That is all I got up to say ; just because I felt so satisfied with the tribute that has been paid to the system, and paid even by those who were opposed to the lands-for-settlement system, I

thought it was desirable to accentuate it, so that we could feel confident that the system is right. The Hon. Mr. BOLT .- Sir, perhaps it is just as well that we should be asked to turn our attention from this Bill, which merely deals with details, to the general principle which underlies this question of the purchasing of private estates. It is some time ago, as honourable members are aware, since this principle was embodied in an Act, and I think it will be wise for us, seeing that this question has been raised, to consider under what circumstances it was introduced, and what were the evils that were supposed to be remedied by it. Every one will remember that at the time it was introduced it had been found that enormous tracts in this country had been purchased by, or had entered into the possession of, a very few men, and that it was practically impossible to bring these lands into the hands of the cultivator, as they were being held for speculative purposes, and it was found that the interests of the colony generally were suffering from this want of land for the cultivating of classes. What was done ? The Land for Settlements Act was passed, and under the Act the Minister was empowered under certain circumstances to purchase estates for public purposes. Now, Sir, we all know what has been the result. The result has been that large tracts of this land have been brought under cultivation, and the settlement of the country has progressed immensely. What would have been the case providing that on every occasion when it was found necessary to purchase land for settlement the proposals had to be submitted to Parliament in order that it should fight over the question ? I would ask honourable members to think whether we would have settled our people on the land, providing that on every occasion the question was introduced to Parliament, and a special Act had to be passed to decide whether this particular estate or the other should be purchased and brought into cultivation. I venture to say that the principle of always appealing to Parliament has been the impediment to truly beneficial legislation in all past ages, and it would have been the same in this case. We should simply have people's minds diverted from the main issue, and we should be involved in a parliamentary squabble over this question on every occasion it was deemed desirable to purchase land. I do not think the benefit which has accrued to the colony would have been attained under such circumstances. The exceptionally proper and judicious way in which the Act has been administered should have prevented any discussion of this fundamental principle being raised now. No kind of complaint can lie against the principle underlying the Act, or its administration. Those from whom lands have been taken have been well compensated. I am not sure if in some cases they have not got too much, and possibly that is the worst that can be said against the measure. So far as the statement made by Mr. Martin Kennedy at the meeting of the bank is concerned, I can only regret that he was in the position on that bank--not that I have any ill-will towards him--to make any such statement. I regret that any one should be in a position connected with that bank outside the State ; and if the State had had that bank, and cleared off the shareholders and disposed of the estates, I think it would have been an infinitely better thing for the colony. I hope that will be done at no distant time. I can hardly imagine how any one could have, I may say, the assurance to raise a question as to the beneficial effects of the Land for Settlements Act. I say those benefits would have been curtailed immensely--indeed, the provisions of the Act would have been almost nugatory--if it had not been put into the power of the Minister to deal with land in the way he has done. The Hon. Mr. W. C. WALKER .- Sir, I do not think I need to say much in reply. Certainly, one gentleman questioned the policy of the principal Act, but every speaker who succeeded him, with perhaps one exception, has emphasized the fact that the policy of the principal Act has been a complete success, and that no one has any right to throw any doubts on the bona fides of its administration. At all events, I can assure the Council that it is quite a delusion to suppose that Parliament is not supreme in the matter now. Of course, when " Minister " is used in the Act it means in a collective sense, and that a Minister does not take these steps without consulting his colleagues in the Cabinet ; and if any mistakes have been made in the past, or are made in the future, Parliament is perfectly well able to express its opinion in a very emphatic manner. The whole procedure has been

carefully calculated. So many steps have to be taken that it is quite impossible for even the most arbitrary --. I will not say dis- honest, because I do not think the term applies -- Minister to make mistakes, because there are so many checks-and so many periods allowed for reconsideration-that it is almost impossible for mistakes or errors or omissions to occur. I am pleased indeed to find that this is the only fault to be found in a policy which, when it was first introduced, was bitterly attacked. The Bill is to improve the machinery of the present Act. It introduces no new principle, but simply en- deavours to improve the machinery and make it still more satisfactory in its intention to place bona fide settlers on the land. As to the power of the settler to get advances on his land. I think the position is not altered from the way in which we find it at the present time. The Minister may permit such advances to be made, as they are made now, so far as the improve- ments go. Sir, I beg to move, That you do now leave the chair. Bill committed, and reported with amend- ments. The Council adjourned at five minutes past four o'clock p.m.

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Wednesday, 14th August, 1901. First Reading-Oats for South Africa -- Timaru Har' bour Board District and Harbour Board Bill- Birth Registrations-Auckland Government Arch - Uniform Set of School-books-Makohine Via- duct - Education Boards Elections - Bishop's Reserve and other Native Lands, Masterton- Stoats and Weasels in the North - Land taken for Drainage Purposes - Waihi Swamp - Im- ported Stud Horses - Advances to Settlers Office -Duty on Gold-saving Fabrics-Makohine Via- duet - Conciliation Boards-Woodville County Bill-Shops and Shop-assistants Bill. Mr. SPEAKER took the chair at half-past two o'clock. PRAYERS. FIRST READING. Local Bodies' Goldfields, Public Works, and Loan Bill. OATS FOR SOUTH AFRICA. On the motion of Mr. MASSEY (Franklin), it was ordered, That there be laid before this House a return showing the names of the persons or firms who received the orders for the 50,000 tons of oats referred to by the Premier when re- plying to a deputation on the 7th instant, the dates on which the orders were received, and the prices per bushel (either f.o.b. or c.i.f.) at which such orders were placed. TIMARU HARBOUR BOARD DISTRICT AND HARBOUR BOARD BILL. On the question that leave be given to in- troduce this Bill, Major STEWARD (Waitaki) said he did not rise for the purpose of asking the House to refuse leave to introduce this Bill, but to present a petition against the passing of the Bill, which he should presently move that it be referred to the Local Bills Committee, which would have to deal with the Bill. The petition was from the Mayor and Councillors and 806 other burgesses and residents of Waimate and the immediate neighbourhood, praying the House not to pass a Bill to include the Borough of Waimate in the Timaru Harbour Board Rating District. He moved that the petition be read. Motion agreed to, and petition read by the CLERK. Mr. HALL-JONES (Minister of Marine) said he could not compliment the honourable gentle- man upon the course he had taken that after- noon. As an old member of the House, and as one who had occupied the position of Speaker, he ought to know that the proper course was to allow honourable members an opportunity of perusing the Bill. The present position was that there was no Bill before the House, and the honourable member should have known that the proper time to present a petition was on the motion for the second reading of the Bill, when the honourable gentleman would have just the same oppor- tunity as he had that afternoon. The reading of the petition had taken a considerable time, of the House had listened to the reading of it. Those who had listened would have gathered that there was an intention to force part of the district the honourable member represents into the Timaru Harbour District. That was not so ; and honourable members when they saw the Bill would see what its actual purport was. On the present occasion he only wished to say this : that the petition as read bristled with gross and misleading inaccuracies. He would further refer to this when dealing with the Bill itself ; and he hoped the honourable member, when he received, as he understood the honourable member would receive, a petition from his own constituents in favour of this Bill, would take the same course in having that petition read as he had taken on the present occasion. Leave given to introduce the Bill. On the question, "That the Bill be now read a first time," Major

STEWART (Waitaki) wished to say two or three words in reply to the honourable member who introduced the Bill. The honourable gentleman had accused him of taking an improper course, and said that, as an ex-Speaker of this House, he should have known the proper time to present a petition was on the second reading of a Bill. Now, he was aware, as an old member of the House, that the proper time, if one wanted a petition to go before the Local Bills Committee, was to present it at the time of the first reading, because the Local Bills Committee's report would have come down before the second reading; and it would be something like locking the stable door after the steed was stolen if he presented the petition without having it referred to the Local Bills Committee. Now, with regard to the statement of the honourable member that the allegations in the petition were not correct, all he had to say was that these allegations were put forward on the testimony of his Worship the Mayor, the Councillors, and all the leading citizens of Waimate, and he left the matter there. He believed there would be witnesses from Waimate who would be prepared to substantiate the allegations of the petition before the Local Bills Committee, and it was for the reason that he wished them to have an opportunity of being heard, as he was sure the House did, that he had taken this course with the petition. The honourable member said he would have a petition to present in favour of the Bill. He had no such petition at present. He had heard that by a majority -- he thought of two -- the Waimate County Council had passed a resolution in favour of the Timaru Bill; but the County Council did not represent the burgesses of Waimate, who were the persons interested. Further, it would be seen, if any petition in favour of the Bill did come up, that he would move that it be received, and also that it be referred to the same Committee. It would be seen that the weight of the petition for the Bill was very little as against the weight of the petition against it. He would not for a moment attempt to refuse any honourable member, or

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ber, the courtesy of leave to introduce a Bill. He therefore did not oppose the introduction of the Bill at all; but when it came down from the Local Bills Committee it would be his duty as member for the district to do his very utmost to persuade the House not to pass it into law. Mr. HALL-JONES said he had informed the honourable member that he would not press the Bill before the Local Bills Committee until the honourable member had an opportunity of producing any witnesses he desired to bring before that Committee. Witnesses could produce evidence regarding any statements made in the petition, and for that reason there was no necessity for the petition itself being referred to the Local Bills Committee. The honourable member said the statements contained in the petition had been drafted on the authority of the Mayor of Waimate, and, if that was so, all he could say was that he was sorry for the Mayor. Bill read a first time. BIRTH REGISTRATIONS. Mr. GUINNESS (Grey) asked the Colonial Secretary, Whether the Government will this session bring in a Bill to amend the law so that parents may register the births of those children whose registration has not been effected within the statutory period through neglect or inadvertence? This question was one that was periodically brought under the notice of the Government. Through inadvertence or forgetfulness, or not knowing the law, persons were in the habit of neglecting to register their children within the time required. In 1882, and again in 1892, amending Acts were passed allowing persons, by giving special proof of the date of birth and by paying a special fee for that purpose, to come in and register their children. He hoped the Government would see their way now to pass this short measure giving relief in the manner indicated in his question. Sir J. G. WARD (Colonial Secretary) said there was a good deal of force in what the honourable gentleman represented, and as from time to time we were in the habit of introducing a short Bill, so as to give an opportunity to those who desired to register in the way the honourable gentleman indicated, to do so -- usually every ten years -- it appeared to him desirable to again amend the Act in that direction. He would go into the matter to see what could be done. AUCKLAND GOVERNMENT ARCH. Mr. PALMER (Ohinemuri) asked the Government, As the Government arch in Queen Street, Auckland, not only impedes the traffic, but has become very unsightly

since all the paint has been washed off, will they take immediate steps to have it removed ? He would point out that if there was any expense incurred in removing this arch it would have to be paid later on if not now. The arch was very unsightly now that the paint had been washed off, although its removal was as that it was really blocking the traffic. Mr. HALL - JONES (Minister for Public Works) said that when recently in Auckland he was asked that this arch should be given to one of the local bodies, so that it might be removed and erected at some other spot. He had no objection to that course being followed ; but he understood there was a difficulty in the arch being removed as a whole, and that it would have been necessary to have taken it to pieces before it could have been removed. That the local body could not see their way to do. Instructions had, however, now been given to have the arch removed.

UNIFORM SET OF SCHOOL-BOOKS. Mr. MONK (Waitemata) asked the Minister of Education, If he will cause instructions to be issued to the Boards of Education throughout the colony to introduce one uniform set of books, such instructions to take effect on and He had been after the 31st March next ? requested to ask this question by those interested in education matters and who were associated with the administration of regulations. At present, if a family removed from one education district to another, it was often necessary for the parents to purchase a new set of school-books, because those used in the previous school were not in use in the new district to which they had removed. This was felt to inflict needless cost and to be oppressive. Mr. HALL - JONES (Minister for Public Works) said that some time ago in the House the Government were charged with trying to supersede the functions of the Education Boards, and if they were to adopt the suggestion of the honourable member it would lend colour to that. He might say that nothing the Government had done had been done with a view of taking away the work of the Education Boards. The honourable member was well acquainted with educational matters and with education opinion, and, for the purpose of placing on record, he would read a circular issued by the Minister of Education on the 4th July, 1899, concerning this very matter :- " Education Department, Wellington, 4th July, 1899. "Circular to Education Boards. "The question of uniformity of school-books has been brought under the attention of the Minister of Education. "The Minister deems it unlikely that the want of uniformity in school-books would often create serious inconvenience through removal of children from one education district to another ; on the other hand, he thinks that hardship might frequently be caused thereby through the removal of pupils from one school to another within the same education district ; and he wishes to point out that this matter would be set right if every Education Board would see that the chief books, especially the Readers, were the same in all schools under its jurisdiction. " Under the regulations just issued the number of series of Readers authorised has been

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siders that there is still ample choice to enable Boards to suit the wants of their respective districts ; and he desires me to call the attention of the Boards to the obligation imposed by the regulations, of confining their choice of books to those contained in the list of authorised school-books. "] might suggest that the hardship that sometimes ensues when pupils are moved from one education district to another would largely disappear if Boards would adopt some such plan as that of buying from pupils second-hand books in good condition, the books so bought being either sold again or kept to be used as supplementary Readers when the Readers in use were changed. " GEORGE HOG BEN, Secretary for Education." That had drawn the attention of Education Boards to this matter, and he thought they might rely upon the Boards, who were so well and ably represented in the House, to do something. Members might bring it under the notice of Boards, and arrange for one common form of school-book throughout the colony. He would much rather see that course adopted, and would suggest to members of Boards in the House that it might be brought up at any conference, so that we might have uniformity. # MAKOHINE VIADUCT. Mr. LAWRY (Parnell) asked the Minister for Public Works,-(1) Who recommended the construction of the Makohine Viaduct : (2) what Government was in power when the recommendation

was acceded to : and (3) if subsequent investigations have not proved that the costly work of the construction of the said viaduct could have been obviated ? He was not in the House at the time the construction of this viaduct was authorised, and his object in asking the question was to bring before the notice of the Minister for Public Works whether it would not be desirable to abandon at the present time the construction of this costly work and put in a concrete culvert to carry the water, which was not of great magnitude, and thus do away with the great danger of crossing this viaduct. His impression, from a knowledge of the country and what he had been told by experts, was that in the end it would be much more economical to abandon the construction of the viaduct, and carry on the work in the direction he had indicated. As to whether there was any object, or whether it would be any advantage to find out who was responsible for the construction of this white elephant, that was a matter at the present time of no great importance. Mr. HALL- JONES (Minister for Public Works) said it was unfortunate for the House that the honourable member came into Parliament the year after the decision was arrived at to erect this viaduct. After a number of trial lines had been run to find out which was the most suitable, a final decision was arrived at in December, 1886, to carry the line by the Mr. Hail-Jones time was Mr. Blackett. The decision was reconsidered in November, 1890, but no departure was made from the decision arrived at in 1886. He thought it was the Stout-Vogel Government who were in office in 1886, and the Atkinson Government were in office when the matter was again brought under review in 1890, when it was decided to adhere to the decision of 1886. As he had said, a number of trial lines. had been run, and this was found to be the most suitable. Various engineers had reported on the different routes, and there had been a suggestion made to lay the line lower down the terrace, which would not have required so high or so long a viaduct : but it would have meant very expensive works, and would have led to awkward grades ; and this proposal was condemned by Mr. Blackett, and also by the engineer who surveyed that part of the work. There had since been a question raised to substitute an embankment for the viaduct, but at that time all the cuttings had been completed, and it would have required all the material to be excavated for making the embankment. No doubt large quantities of material in the first instance could have been supplied from the large cuttings. He might say that expert engineers said the material was of such a peculiar nature that the bank would not stand-that it was soft, and would run. The member for Rangitikei knew something about the formation there, and no doubt has a good idea of what might happen. His own idea was that there might be some means of keeping it from slipping : but at that time the work was too far advanced. With an embankment it was a difficult matter to provide for the drainage of the area embraced by the country in the Mako- hine Valley. It comprised some thirty - six square miles of country, which had to be provided for. and even though culverts were made they would be very expensive in construction. Honourable members could understand that an embankment such as was suggested by the honourable member, 240 ft. high, would require an enormous base, and, as the tunnel would have to be a long one, the work would be very costly. There was no question that to now make an embankment of a deviation would be unwise. He was sorry the House in 1886 had not the honourable member's experience as an engineer. EDUCATION BOARDS ELECTIONS. Mr. FOWLDS (Auckland City) asked the Government, If they propose to take any steps this session to provide for the secrecy of the ballot at Board of Education elections? It seemed to him that in these elections there was just as much reason for secrecy of the ballot being maintained as in any other. It was not an infrequent occurrence that defeated candidates were found tackling members of School Committees a day or two after the election as to why they did not vote in a certain direction. After the recent Board of Education election, a conference of School Committees was held in the Auckland District, and unanimously passed a

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resolution in favour of something being done in this direction. Mr. HALL-JONES (Minister for Public Works) said a similar question had appeared on the Order Paper the previous day under the name of the

honourable member for Waihemo. This was the first he had heard of an objection being raised by those interested as to the method of voting. It must be borne in mind that this was the first election held under the new Act, and it seemed to him it would be better to give the present system a fair trial before making any alteration. Under the old system, where members voted as a committee, there was no secrecy. It could then be ascertained who any member of a School Committee voted for, and the new Act was drafted on the same lines. He did not think members of School Committees would be likely to be influenced by any person outside as to the vote they should give. If there was any feeling against the present system, the better course would be for the School Committees to send any resolution passed on the subject to the department. It could then be ascertained what was the general desire, and whether a change was desirable.

BISHOP'S RESERVE AND OTHER NATIVE LANDS, MASTERTON. Mr. HOGG (Masterton) asked the Government, Whether they propose to take any steps to have the Bishop's Reserve at Masterton, and the other Native lands in the Masterton electorate, administered and properly settled in the interests of both Natives and Europeans ? There were several blocks of Native land in his district that were producing nothing to the owners. The block known as the Bishop's Reserve was of comparatively small area, but it could be turned to useful account if taken over by the Government. It was almost alongside the Masterton Railway-station, and would be most suitable for work-men's homes or residence-sites. The revenues that for years had been derived from that reserve, instead of going to the Native owners, had gone into the hands of the Church. He did not suppose any Church was capable of obtaining money by false pretences, but while this reserve was originally intended to provide for a Native college, the revenue from it, which now amounted to some thousands of pounds, had never been devoted to that purpose. Lately, however, it appears that it has been decided by the Supreme Court that the money could now be devoted to the purposes of a college or school, and, consequently, he wished to know whether any steps could be taken to turn the land to the best advantage both for Europeans and the Natives. There was a couple of other blocks-one, of about a thousand acres, near the Village of Hastwell, and the other, containing about four thousand acres, at Hamua, near Eketahuna. The land was well adapted for dairy farms. Sawmillers had been through both blocks, and the Native owners were anxious that the lands should be administered in such a way as to return them some revenue. The reserves were surrounded by creameries ; VOL. CXVII .- 23. and, as the sons and daughters of the farmers in the district were growing up, he would like to see these lands made of some service to the community. Mr. CARROLL (Native Minister) said the Bishop's Reserve to which the honourable gentleman referred was, unfortunately, in such a position that it was outside the control of the Government. It was true the title was the same as that of the Porirua Reserve, which had been the subject recently of Supreme Court proceedings; but it was not affected by the judgment in that particular case, because it was not joined in the action. He agreed that it was undesirable that these reserves should be allowed to lie in an unproductive state, and if they could be devoted to the purposes of settlement, well and good. If the revenue could be increased in some way so as to enable the owners to get the benefit of it, and have it applied to the purpose originally intended, he thought the interests of the Natives would be amply served. However, this was a large question. The reserves could not be dealt with individually, but as a whole. He was inclined to the opinion that the State should have control of all these old education endowments which had been vested in mission societies, so that practical effect could be given in the direction intended by those who gave those lands under the trusts so declared. What the Government desired was to see the best use made of these reserves in the interests of the beneficiaries and the public good. As to the lands mentioned by the honourable gentleman as lying waste, that might be the case in a few special instances, but not generally; the honourable gentleman must bear in mind that these lands he referred to were set apart for the use and occupation of the Native owners, and, though they may not be using those lands at the present time as they should do, they should still hope for the opportunity of

inducing them to take up land for settlement side by side with Europeans. If they were to dispose of all their reserve lands for the purpose of European settlement, where would they be when the time came round when they wanted to go on to their reserves to farm and otherwise settle ? Why, we would have no land to give them. In this matter the best thing to do would be to get all the facts in reference to those reserves gathered together, and ascertain the wishes of the owners. If they had sufficient land at present for their use and maintenance, and there were areas lying waste, then such areas should be given over for settlement by Europeans. **STOATS AND WEASELS IN THE NORTH.** Mr. MONK (Waitemata) asked the Government, If, on account of the rapid increase of stoats and weasels in the North of Auckland, they will put a sum on the estimates to subsidise the efforts of the settlers for their destruction ? He had been requested by an important agricultural association in the North to put the question. The manner in which those vermin were taking possession of the country was be-

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from his own personal knowledge. He was surprised at the number of districts in which these animals were becoming numerous. He had received complaints from the owners of homesteads at the inroads they were making. The request made by the association was that he should ask the Minister to put a sum on the estimates to assist the settlers in exterminating these pests. The soil in the North of Auckland was too hard for rabbits to burrow in, and they were, consequently, not troubled with them to any very great extent. There certainly were rabbits there, but they were not in such numbers, excepting in a few localities, as to necessitate assistance from stoats and weasels being given to exterminate them, as in other parts of the colony. Owing to the increase of stoats and weasels it was becoming difficult to keep fowls, and even young lambs. Some time ago he had a note from a gentleman, who did not live near the place where the present complaint came from, stating that they were actually attacking the young sheep. It seemed to him that there was very good reason for the Government taking the matter in hand. He was afraid that this pest would become one of the most difficult to keep under, because there was so much cover in the forests and broken country in the North. It was not like the South, where they were to be found in mountainous districts. Unless something was done it would become next to impossible to keep fowls and small animals, unless they were surrounded by wire fences and were kept in rat-proof enclosures. Mr. DUNCAN (Minister for Agriculture) said he had not had one single letter of complaint from the North of Auckland about stoats and weasels. Mr. MONK said he could give the Minister the letter referred to. Mr. DUNCAN said it would be the first that he had had from that quarter on this subject. He was not aware that the Government had ever put stoats and weasels in that part of the country. Mr. MONK .- But the Government had introduced them here, and they had found their way to the North. Mr. DUNCAN did not see how they could very well run from the South Island to the North Cape. Mr. MONK had come across them seventy miles north of Auckland. Mr. DUNCAN was of opinion that they had been carried there in people's pockets. He was not sure that stoats and weasels would do the damage that was feared. For the past seven years they had been close to his fowl-yard, and he had not had one of his poultry interfered with. Nobody was complaining about them. Ferrets were, in his opinion, much worse than they were. Stoats and weasels went more for small birds and rabbits, but a ferret would attack a full-grown fowl. It was going rather far to ask the Government to put a sum on the estimates Mr. Monk never put there by the Government. Mr. MONK said they were getting on the North Cape. Mr. DUNCAN was of opinion that they had been carried there. They could not have found their own way there from the Wairarapa or the South Island. He did not see his way to put anything on the estimates until he saw there was more necessity for it than at present. Mr. MONK said they had been placed in the Wairarapa, and somehow they were persistently travelling northwards and increasing to a dangerous extent. Particularly little children were being bitten by them, and, as an instance, some of the brutes had taken up their abode under his son's house, and it was difficult to get rid of them. Mr. DUNCAN could inform the honourable

member that the Government never placed any in the North Island. The honourable member would have to read his history. Mr. MONK said the Government sanctioned their being introduced there. Mr. DUNCAN .- The Government gave no special sanction, and those that were crying out about this pest were likely the very people who introduced them, and they should be responsible. LAND TAKEN FOR DRAINAGE PURPOSES. Mr. J. ALLEN (Bruce) asked the Government, If they will provide some means whereby land taken for drainage purposes by a local body could be transferred more cheaply than at present ? The local bodies were very desirous to have some method by which land taken for drainage purposes might be transferred more cheaply than at present. Especially was this necessary in the case of small pieces of land. Mr. DUNCAN (Minister of Lands) said this question appeared to relate to land taken compulsorily by Proclamation under " The Public Works Act, 1894." The expense which a local body was put to thereunder was : First, for a survey and plans of the land to be taken ; secondly, for twice advertising notice of intention to take the land ; and, thirdly, for advertising the effect of the Proclamation once. The survey was the principal cost, and, as the title must be issued under the Land Transfer Act, the survey could not generally be done without, whether the land be taken by Proclamation or by ordinary conveyance. The advertising was necessary to give persons interested in the land proper notice, and, as no registration or transfer fees were charged, it was not easily seen how the cost could be cheapened. It was possible that in a few instances, where a small piece of land was required, it was cheaper to obtain it by conveyance, if the owner was willing to sell ; but where much land was required a Proclamation was very much cheaper. Some local bodies employed lawyers to prepare the declaration and memorial to the Governor to issue the Proclamation and carry out the procedure laid down in the Act. This was quite unnecessary,

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department, and the Act was very plain as to what was required. So that if people understood the Act thoroughly they need not be put to so heavy expense as at present. Mr. J. ALLEN said it was a small piece of land. Mr. DUNCAN knew that. If people went about the matter in the right way, anything that the Government could do would not cheapen it, as nearly all the heavy outlay was made up by lawyers' fees. # WAIHI SWAMP. Mr. HERRIES (Bay of Plenty) asked the Minister of Lands, Whether he will place a sum on the estimates sufficient to drain and road the valuable Waihi Swamp, situated between Ponakawa and Maketu? This question had been asked several times, and, although it had been brought up every session, nothing seemed to have been done. Two sessions ago the Hon. Mr. Hall-Jones, who was then Acting Minister of Lands, suggested that a sum might be placed on the estimates as a preliminary expense, to see whether the work was worth going on with. If the present Minister of Lands did not see fit to do any more, he might adopt that course. It was a very important thing that this work should be carried out, and he thought it would be a really good thing if the Government drained this swamp. There was a similar swamp situated nearer Tauranga, which had proved to be a satisfactory investment to those who had drained it. A drain through the swamp might be made at a cost of \$2, or less, a chain, which would mean an expenditure of 2500 to make a drain for a mile and a half of road, which was all that was required. If that was so, it seemed to him that some expense should be gone to in order to carry out this work, as the area of the swamp was, he believed, 7,000 acres. Besides that, the road would open up several hundred thousand acres of Crown land. The Minister promised last session to inspect the swamp, but he did not fulfil his promise. Mr. DUNCAN .-- I visited the district, but I did not visit the swamp. Mr. HERRIES hoped the Minister would at least put a sum down for preliminary expenses, in order to test whether this swamp was good enough for draining. He (Mr. Herries) was satisfied it was. The settlers were of opinion that something ought to be done to open up this land. Mr. DUNCAN (Minister of Lands) might state generally that peaty swamps involved much more trouble than was often expected. If this had been a silt swamp it would probably have been safe to promise that something should be done, and that

right away; but it appeared that this was a six-foot peat swamp. Mr. HERRIES .- No. Mr. DUNCAN said that was the information supplied to him by the department. The department reported,- "The Waihi Swamp contains about 3,000 acres, and is situated between the Pongakawa Stream and the Kaikokopu Stream. It is com- silt. If it was drained, cultivated, and exposed for some years it might be worth about \$1 per acre." He questioned whether it would, because if you drained a peaty swamp it would very likely take fire before the next summer was over, and you could not stop it. The report went on, -- " The cost of draining about half of the best of it would amount to about \$700. The Ponga- kawa Stream is very slow, but the Kaikokopu Stream is more rapid, running at the rate of about three miles an hour. The waters of the Kaikokopu Stream are, at ordinary water- level, from 1 ft. to 2 ft. below the banks. The Pongakawa flows level with its banks. In time of flood the stream brings down large quantities of pumice from the hills, and this pumice gets deposited in the slack water of the bends, and the river overflows the whole of the swamp. The same thing would probably happen to the drains, and they would consequently be a con- tinual source of expense to keep open. There is also considerable doubt as to whether the banks of the drains, which would probably have to be 6 ft. deep, would stand even at a very great batter. An experimental drain of about 100 chains in length might be made, and it would probably make about 500 acres dry, at a cost of about £60. If such a sum was provided on the estimates the experiment might be tried." From what he had seen of these swamps he was very doubtful whether the work would be a success. He was very sorry he did not see this swamp. It was the Tauranga people who put him from seeing this swamp. They desired him to go by another route, in order that he might see what they said was the best route to have their produce taken to market. So that it was not altogether his fault that he did not see the swamp. He was very dubious about these peaty swamps-he had known so many of them which had been failures. They had cost a lot. of money. He therefore hesitated to put any large sum down to have this place properly examined. Mr. HERRIES asked if the Minister would put down a sum to make the experimental drain. Mr. DUNCAN .- No. IMPORTED STUD HORSES. Mr. BENNET (Tuapeka) asked the Minister for Agriculture, If he will have one of the light imported stud horses stationed in the Crookston and Tapanui districts, and one in the Tuapeka district ? The farmers in these districts were very anxious to have one of the light imported stud horses stationed in their districts. The settlers in the districts referred to had a good class of horses, and were anxious to improve their stock, so that they could supply remounts for South Africa or to the Imperial army. He hoped the Minister would be able to comply with the request. Mr. DUNCAN (Minister for Agriculture) was very sorry there were so few horses to distribute in the country districts. Two horses were

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Zealand. He might state that one of these horses was being sent to a convenient place in Southland, below the Clutha, so that any one having suitable mares might send them to that horse. The horse would be contiguous to the railway, and in a fixed place. He wished to do what was best and fair in this matter to all districts in the colony. The trouble was they had not enough horses for all districts in the colony.

ADVANCES TO SETTLERS OFFICE. Mr. BARCLAY (Dunedin City) asked the Minister in charge of Advances to Settlers, If he will cause steps to be taken which will ob- viate the difficulty of borrowers from the Ad- vances to Settlers Office being obliged to finance for a period before they receive their deeds, when paying off their mortgages upon a sale of the land, or borrowing from a new lender ? This question had been put under circum- stances which he had already explained to the Minister, and had dealt with at some length on another occasion in the House during this session, on the second reading of the Advances to Settlers Extension Act. The difficulty was that the Advances to Settlers Office, when re- leasing a mortgage, before they would sign the release, required the actual cash to be placed in their hands. This was a course which was quite unusual, and gave rise to great incon- venience, because the purchasers of a property would not hand over the purchase-money until they saw the necessary legal

documents and the release of the mortgage executed. Mr. MILLS ; Minister in charge of Advances to Settlers) said that it was the custom of the office to have the money paid in before the Board signed a release of a mortgage, and for this reason : that on one occasion the Board signed the release, but the mortgagor was unable to fulfil his part of the contract, and therefore the deeds had simply to remain in the safe, and it was not considered wise to do that any more. The Board was very willing and anxious to offer every facility to mortgagors, and the interest was only charged on "instalment " loans up to the date of repayment, which was a great concession, because, of course, in most cases the private investor required six months' notice or the payment of six months' interest to release a mortgage, except at due date of maturity. Only two objections had been raised by two solicitors in the whole colony regarding this matter. He had explained why the Board considered it necessary to use every safeguard until the money was actually paid into the Advances to Settlers Office, or into some post-office ; but to facilitate matters, any man who did borrow was not compelled to repay the principal in Wellington, as payment was accepted by the Superintendent at any money-order post-office ; and there need not be any serious delay, as directly he was advised of the money being paid in, the business was brought before the Board at its first meeting, or, if necessary, the Superintendent called the Board to- Mr. Duncan little time was lost by doing this. Again, the office did not insist on the interest on a loan being repaid at Wellington, as it could be paid into any post-office in the colony. This was another concession to those who wished to borrow from the office; and the Superintendent advised him that their method of doing business had been found to work most satisfactorily for the time the Board had been in existence ; but he also considered that if the Board had to meet and sign these deeds, and then the mortgagor did not fulfil his part of the bargain, it would not leave the securities in the position they ought to be in. He thought the honourable gentleman would realise from this explanation that the Board was willing to meet and oblige applicants in every reasonable way. Mr. BARCLAY said that, arising out of the Minister's reply, he would like to ask the honourable gentleman if he was aware that the system adopted by the Board in question was not adopted by any other department in the Government service. It was not adopted by any private lender, person, company, or individual in the colony; that the system in question was absolutely and entirely unique, and, so far from being found to work satisfactorily, it had been found to work very unsatisfactorily. He would also like to ask the Minister if he was aware that the release signed by the Board had no value whatever until it was handed over and registered ; and also if he was aware that if the release be signed, and the date not inserted until the money was actually paid over, the deed could be held in the safe, and no possible harm or danger could arise. Mr. MILLS thought he had already answered all that the honourable gentleman had asked him the second time. He had explained that the office thought it advisable in the public interest not to sign the deeds until they knew for certain that the money would be found, and this could be done in a very simple way by the man who had the money paying it into the post-office in any part of the colony, and wiring to the Superintendent that he had done so. The office were not asking any man to trust them more than they were prepared to trust him ; so that he still thought, under all the circumstances, although the private lenders might not adopt that system, it was advisable in the interests of "safe lending " to continue it. Mr. BARCLAY asked why other Government departments did not do it.

DUTY ON GOLD-SAVING FABRICS. Mr. GUINNESS (Grey) asked the Government, If they will favourably consider the advisability of repealing the present duty on plush and other textile fabrics used for gold-saving ? He might inform the honourable gentleman that a large quantity of this material was in demand, and was required for the purpose of saving the fine gold from the large slicing claims and dredges ; and it was a fabric which could not be manufactured in the colony, and it was on precisely the same footing as the

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gold-mining machinery and chemicals used in gold-saving, which were allowed to come in duty - free. The

plushes and gold-saving cloths he referred to were manufactured in a particular manner especially for the gold-mining industry, and therefore were not suitable for dress or other purposes. The first cost could not be said to be much, but when you added to the value a percentage on importation, and the 20 per cent. duty, it came very expensive—especially when you remembered also that such a large quantity was used in saving gold, and the difference between profit and loss in saving fine gold was now cut so fine that this duty made just the difference in many cases between the claim paying or not. He hoped the honourable gentleman would give this matter his careful consideration, so that he should be able to communicate, not only to his own constituents, but to all those engaged in the gold-mining industry throughout New Zealand, a favourable answer to this question. Mr. MILLS (Commissioner of Customs) said there was always a great difficulty in ascertaining that the articles the honourable member for the Grey referred to would only be used for the purposes he specified. The articles could be used in many other ways. That was the light in which the department viewed the question. Of course, the honourable gentleman had indicated by his question that it could not be done without some alteration in the tariff, as the article was clearly specified, and the amount of duty to be collected upon it. All that he could promise the honourable gentleman was this : that if at any time there should be a revision of the tariff he would bring this request before Cabinet for their consideration.

MAKOHINE VIADUCT. Mr. MASSEY (Franklin) moved, That there be laid before this House a return showing the expenditure incurred in connection with the construction of the Makohine Viaduct up to the 30th June last ; also the estimated cost of the viaduct when complete, and the date on which the Public Works Department expect it to be open for traffic. He would like to know if there was any objection to this, because, if not, he would move it formally. Mr. HALL-JONES (Minister for Public Works) said he would have preferred the honourable member to have waited until the viaduct was completed. In regard to the latter part of the motion, he had already told the House that he not only hoped to have the viaduct completed this summer, but he hoped to have the trains running to Mangaweka. They were very near to the completion of this work. With some alterations, he did not object to the motion. For instance, the department had to buy a plant for the manufacture of the ironwork, which would also be used in connection with some of the bridges ahead, and therefore it should not be charged against this one work. Then, he would like to point out that there were additions to the work, as carried out, that were not contemplated when tenders were invited. For instance, the tenders provided for sinking the concrete foundations to a certain depth, but it was found in carrying out the work that it was necessary to go several yards deeper to get a solid foundation. What the honourable gentleman wanted to get at was a comparison between the cost of the work as done and the amount of the lowest tender received. He was quite prepared to give that if the honourable member would agree to these additions to his motion, namely : After the words "30th June last," to add "allowing a fair proportion of the cost of machinery for the manufacture of ironwork, et cetera; also for extra work beyond that specified and provided for when tenders were invited ; the lowest tender received ; and." Mr. MASSEY said he had no objection to the addition of these words to his motion. Mr. J. ALLEN (Bruce) said he hoped the Minister would give that proportion of the cost which referred to the special plant separately from the total cost of the viaduct to date, because he thought we ought to know the cost of that proportion of the plant. If the cost was all lumped together it would be of no use. Mr. HALL-JONES said he would see that the return was so clear that every member could understand it. Mr. J. ALLEN asked, Would the Minister show that cost separately ? Mr. HALL-JONES said he had already stated that he would see that the return was quite clear. If the honourable member did not want to accept his assurance he need not. Mr. J. ALLEN said he had no doubt the return would be so clear that honourable members would understand it. He wanted to understand what the proportion of cost of the special plant was, and also the cost of the work apart from this plant; and he rose to ask the Minister if the cost of the viaduct would be shown apart altogether from the cost of the plant. He desired, equally with the Minister, to see a return of the fair cost

of the work. Mr. HALL-JONES said it would be pre- sented, and also the cost of the special plant. Mr. J. ALLEN asked, Would it be shown separately ? Mr. HALL-JONES said it would be shown. Mr. R. MCKENZIE (Motueka) pointed out that in its present form the motion conveyed no information at all. What was wanted was a return showing the cost of the foundations, the cost of concrete in the viaduct, and the cost of all the material separately, so that they might be able to compare it with other works through- out the country, and also so that they might see whether reasonable progress had been made. The return the honourable member had moved for would give them no information. He would like very much to have it amended, or, failing that, to move for a separate return. Mr. HALL-JONES said the mover of the return was quite satisfied he would get what he wanted. He would get the cost of the work, and a certain proportion would be de- ducted for the cost of the machinery. That would give exactly what Mr. Allen was asking

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for, but that honourable member was so very suspicious that he (Mr. Hall-Jones) would not agree to put the return in the form that he desired to stipulate it should be. From the return that would be presented any member "could make a comparison between the amount that the work was tendered for and the cost of the work as done. Mr. J. ALLEN said the return they wanted was a very valuable one, and one that they should have. The work ought to have been started five years ago by tender, and, according to the contract, the work would have been com- pleted in two years and a half. He did not say whether the work could or could not have been done in that time, but the men accepted such conditions when tendering. Double the time had been occupied already that the contractor would have taken. What they wanted, and what he claimed the country had a right to have, was a comparison as between the cost of this viaduct erected as it had been under Go- vernment control, and by a particular class of labour, and the probable cost of the viaduct to the colony if it had been erected by contract. This return which was now proposed to be laid on the table would give them no infor mation at all that would be of any value in making that comparison ; and the fact that the Minister refused time after time to answer a plain question he put to him regarding the way the return was to be placed on the table was evidence to him that it was done delibe- rately. He hoped the Minister would recede from that position, and let them know the full particulars. There was no harm in the colony knowing the cost of the viaduct apart alto- gether from the cost of the plant. If the Minis- ter desired to place a proportion of the cost of the plant against the cost of the construc- tion, let him put it in a separate item. He would not gainsay that, and no one would object to it ; but he maintained that the two things should be shown separately. In the Minister's own interests, he ought not to put the whole cost in one lump sum, because that would make it appear to the outside world that this viaduct had cost a great deal more than it actually had cost. Mr. HALL-JONES. - I will give a return that will satisfy the honourable member for Franklin. Mr. J. ALLEN said Mr. Massey appeared to him to be very easily satisfied in this matter. If the return was put in as amended, and if, in addition to the cost of the work, a proportion of the cost of the plant was added, it would show a much larger sum expended on this viaduct than was necessary. He had no objection to a proportion of the cost of the plant being shown, but separately. They only wanted a plain statement of plain facts, and he did not know why the Minister did not want to give it to them. Evidently his desire was to so concoct the return that it would not give the information that some members of the House thought that they and the country ought to have. He did not wish to block the return or waste time, but the return as pro- Mr Hall-Jones posed to be laid on the table would be of little service to them. Mr. WARD (Minister for Railways) said it appeared to him to be very difficult to please the honourable member. The Minister in charge had stated that he would have a return prepared to place the matter fairly before the House, so that every member could understand it. The honourable member for Franklin had accepted the assurance of the Minister that the return would be of such a nature as to satisfy him; and yet the honourable member for Bruce, in his

fastidious exactitude about the return the Minister proposed to place before the House, found fault with the Government for not having accepted the original tender. The reason it was declined was that it was too high, and the honourable member on that built up a theory that it was going to take five years to do the work, as against two years and a half, the time originally fixed for the contract. Nothing of the kind. From the date of the commencement of the manufacture, the Makohine Viaduct was not going to take more than three years and a half from the beginning to the end of the whole business. Honourable members, after hearing the criticisms of the honourable member for Bruce, would allow him, on behalf of the Government, to say that after the Government decided that the original tenders were too high, and had made up their minds to build the viaduct under the Public Works Department - after that, there was a British engineering strike, and material went up considerably. It was all very well for honourable members to say what would have been done had the original tender been accepted. There was a well-known saying on the English Stock Exchange that it was the easiest thing in the world to job backwards ; and that was what the honourable member was trying to do. With the knowledge of after-events, which neither he nor any one else could foresee, he wished them to believe that it would have been very much easier for the Government to have done the work as originally proposed. The honourable member was one who doubtless could make water run uphill. He had found fault with the return actually before it had been laid upon the table of the House. Surely the proper course would be to await the production of the return, and then, if the information contained therein was considered insufficient, it would be for any honourable member to ask for an extension of the return, containing such further information as was desired. Honourable members knew that great efforts were being made to push on the North Island Trunk Railway and bring it to a finish ; and, as the completion of the Makohine Viaduct was essential before the line could be utilised, he thought to complete the viaduct within three years and a half of its start by the Public Works Department was highly creditable ; and when a return was offered by the Minister for Public Works, and assented to by the honourable member for Franklin-the mover for the return - upon the lines indicated, it was a great pity that such remarks should have been made

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intended to discredit the construction of the Makohine Viaduct, which, unfortunately, some persons had been trying to discount most unfairly for some time past. It would be found that there was nothing in what the honourable member had stated, and that the Public Works Department was doing all it could to push the work on, and have it completed in sufficient time to be utilised for general traffic. Mr. FISHER (Wellington City) did not understand the honourable member for Bruce: he never could. His difficulty was to ascertain what the honourable member was driving at. He had heard the question asked, - Why has not man a microscopic eye ? For this plain reason : man is not a fly. Evidently the honourable gentleman had a fly's eye, and saw in this motion what it was impossible for other honourable members to see. What did the motion ask for ? This : "That there be laid before this House a return showing the expenditure incurred in connection with the construction of the Makohine Viaduct up to the 30th June last." To persons of average comprehension that was surely sufficiently expressive. It asked, further, for " the estimated cost of the viaduct when complete and the date on which the Public Works Department expect it to be open for traffic." That expressed everything that could possibly be desired in connection with public expenditure upon the Makohine Viaduct. Then, as if the motion was not sufficiently expressive, the mover and the Minister for Public Works afterwards consulted, and agreed upon certain amendments, which were quite satisfactory to the honourable member for Franklin, who moved the motion. Then, they were told by the honourable member for Bruce that the honourable member for Franklin acceded to the amendment suggested by the Hon. the Minister for Public Works because of his innocence of parliamentary wiles. This was the very first time he had ever heard it stated that the member for Franklin was so innocent as to fall into the traps laid for him by the Minister for Public Works. Surely it could not be

said there was anything underhand in what those two honourable gentlemen had done. They had all seen them walk to the table of the House and consult as to the amendments to be inserted which would give effect to the views which they both held. More than that : the Minister for Public Works had promised the House that he would put the terms of the motion in such a form as to make it understandable even to that member of the House who might be possessed of the meanest comprehension of them all. If the member for Bruce had his microscope about him he wished the honourable member would lend it to him, so that he might be able to see what the honourable gentleman was driving at. When the honourable member for Franklin replied, he (Mr. Fisher) hoped he would say what interpretation he placed upon the speech of the honourable member for Bruce. And, as to his being imposed upon by the Minister for Public Works, it should be remembered that the honourable position amongst those gentlemen who sat in that cold region on that far-off side of the House. He (Mr. Fisher) thought the member for Franklin was able to take care of himself without the assistance of the member for Bruce. It must be evident to the member for Franklin that the member for Bruce had his interests somewhat too closely at heart. He hoped the House would agree to the motion in its amended form. Mr. MILLS (Commissioner of Customs) had heard the motion read, and had understood it very clearly. The honourable member for Franklin was perfectly satisfied with the explanation given by the Minister for Public Works, and agreed to accept the return asked for with some slight alteration. If the honourable member for Bruce wished to have any further information than that expressed in this motion he could give notice of it. That would be a very simple matter, and one that could be dealt with in the usual course. But what he had risen for principally was to deny the statement that the Minister for Public Works had any idea of doing what the honourable member for Bruce said-namely, to concoct a return. He objected to those words being used, because he thought they were unfair, and they naturally tended to cause unpleasantness and lead to a protracted discussion. He was quite satisfied that when the return asked for was produced it would satisfy honourable members, including even the honourable member for Bruce. Mr. PIRANI (Palmerston) said there was one objection to the motion as amended by the Minister- Mr. FISHER .- I thought so. Mr. PIRANI said he thought that, if the Minister put the value of the machinery when the work was completed, there might be something in it, because some of the machinery would undoubtedly be of very little further use, and a deduction ought to be made to that effect. Otherwise he did not see how the motion could be improved. As it was, the Minister would give only what he thought fit. It would therefore be of advantage to get him to furnish a return giving some information about the matter. In the discussions that had taken place it had been stated that the work had cost a great deal more through being carried out by the Government than if it had been done under the contract system. To his mind, it was far more important to know whether the work was being carried out expeditiously than what the cost would be, for the reason that the longer the work took the longer would they have to pay interest on the cost of the rest of the line that was being completed. Independent of the cost altogether, he would like to have some indication given as to the probable date on which the work would be finished. Mr. HALL - JONES (Minister for Public Works) said, a short time ago he replied to a question put by the honourable member for Franklin. He claimed that he had not spoken to the motion. He had no wish whatever to prevent the motion being put to the House,

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honourable member for Bruce if it did not come on. As amended, the motion was fair, and he had not the slightest objection to give every item as he had intimated. He believed the honourable member for Franklin was satisfied, but the honourable member for Bruce - suspicion was familiar to him-wanted to make out that something was underlying it all. Some six or eight months ago the statement had been made that the Makohine Viaduct had then cost \$43,000 more than the lowest tender that had been received. He had no hesitation in saying that a man who could make a statement such as that was only fit for one place, and that place was a lunatic asylum. He would give honourable members the in-

formation as desired by the honourable member for Franklin, and it would be information that would satisfy every member, with the exception of one, and that one member was the member for Bruce - no man on these benches could give information that would satisfy him. If he gave the exact information he would be satisfied, but if the return showed something wrong he had no doubt the honourable member would get such a return as he desired. He could assure him and other honourable members that he would be pleased to give all the information that had been asked for, to show that the absurd rumours concerning that particular work had no foundation whatever. As to the question of the honourable member for Palmerston, he did not care how the matter was put. What he said before he would repeat : If the honourable member for Bruce were to provide an engine and rolling-stock to take coal from a coal-mine, he would not charge the cost of that engine and rolling-stock against a certain quantity of coal carried, but would distribute the cost over a certain period. There was no doubt that some of the machinery used at the viaduct would be almost as good as when it was first purchased, and would be used to manufacture a quantity of ironwork for other bridges. He maintained that it would be grossly unfair to charge the whole cost against that one work, when it was to be used for other purposes. That was why he asked the honourable member for Franklin to agree to a fair proportion of the cost of the machinery being charged against this viaduct. He did not object to the suggestion to have the machinery valued on the completion of the work, and to make that a set-off against the work. As to the time that had been taken over the erection of this viaduct, he did not think it was excessive when compared with other works. It was true they had sent Home for the machinery some time in 1898, but the last of it did not arrive in the colony until June, 1898 ; and without that machinery they could not start manufacturing the iron-work. On the 14th September, 1898, that work was begun, and his colleague had stated he desired to have trains running over the viaduct within three years and a half from that time. It was not an unusual thing for contractors to be behind time in completing their work. The Commissioner of Customs could Mr. Hall. Jones other members could do the same. The member for Waitemata had not forgotten the contract for a certain tunnel that was going on in his district which was finished three years after contract time. To show the difference between the contract and the system adopted in that case, he would say that the contractors for that tunnel, on the recommendation of a Committee of the House, were paid something like \$3,500 in settlement of their claims; and in a Dunedin case the contractor was two years over his contract time. It was not done by the Public Works Department ; but it was the result of insufficient experience on the part of the contractors, for they did not make themselves acquainted with the nature of the country they had to pierce through, and they were not experienced in tunnel-making ; they came across a class of country most difficult to deal with. However, they were doing very well at Makohine, and honourable members must not think the time engaged in the work was excessive. When honourable members got the return they would be satisfied, and would see that the work has not eight months ago cost \$43,000 more than the lowest tender. He hoped the honourable member for Bruce would be more cautious in the future, and, as one of our rising statesmen, he should show more faith in human nature. When the return was laid on the table he hoped the honourable member for Bruce would apologize for what he had said. Mr. HASELDEN (Patea) said the member for Bruce only asked for a plain answer to a plain question, and had the Minister given a plain answer it would have saved considerable time. Mr. HALL-JONES .- That is what I did. Mr. MASSEY (Franklin) did not think there was very much that he had to reply to. He should have preferred to get the return in the form in which it was originally moved, but if he could not get that he was willing to take what he could get. The return was asked for under three headings, namely : "That there be laid before this House a return showing the expenditure incurred in connection with the construction of the Makohine Viaduct up to the 30th June last." The Minister offered to give the whole return if he would consent to amend the first part of it in this way : "allowing a fair proportion of the cost of machinery for the manufacture of ironwork." He understood that

certain machinery had been purchased for the construction of the Makohine Viaduct, but it would also be used in the construction of other viaducts. He (Mr. Massey) thought that a fair proportion of the cost of such machinery should be charged to other viaducts—that was to say, that only a part should be charged to the Makohine Viaduct. He thought the suggestion of the honourable gentleman was not unreasonable, and on that account he agreed to it. The other parts of the return were not interfered with. We were to have the estimated cost of the viaduct when complete; the date upon which it was expected

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further heading that was not included in the original return—namely, the lowest tender received for the construction of the work. So that the return would include four headings instead of three. He hoped, at all events, that the discussion that afternoon would have the effect of hurrying on the Public Works Department, so that trains would be running over the line at the earliest possible date. Motion, as amended, agreed to. # CONCILIATION BOARDS. Mr. GRAHAM (Nelson City). - I beg to move, That there be laid before this House a return, in continuation of H. 17, 1900, showing,—(1) The number of Conciliation Boards elected or appointed in the colony since March, 1900, and the present total number of such Boards; (2) the total cost of all such elections; (3) the number of disputes referred to Conciliation Boards, and the trades and industries involved; (4) the number of persons cited to appear as parties in such disputes; (5) the number of disputes in which the awards were agreed to by such parties to such disputes; (6) the number of disputes in which the parties failed to agree to such awards; (7) the scale of fees paid to Chairmen and members of Conciliation Boards for their services, and the total sum of such payments; (8) the scale of payments for travelling and other expenses, and the total sum of such payments; (9) the number of persons to whom such payments have been made; (10) the total cost to date of administering the Act, as far as Conciliation Boards are concerned; and (11) the number of days each Board has sat during each year since the passing of "The Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, 1894." This, Sir, is simply a continuation of an almost identical return that was asked for and granted without discussion last year. The only difference is that in the return now asked for the number of persons cited to appear as parties in disputes before Conciliation Boards is required to be given, and the number of days each Board has sat in each year since the passing of the original Act. The return, which will be useful and instructive, will be neither lengthy nor difficult to furnish, as shown by the return granted last year, and, as I have no doubt the Minister will be prepared to agree to the motion, I shall refrain from provoking discussion and simply move the motion. Mr. SEDDON (Premier). - It is perhaps opportune on this motion to place on record the position, and I think it is scarcely just or fair that there should be that wholesale condemnation that at the present time has been made. For instance, it is sought to make a discrimination as between the various workings of the several Conciliation Boards. Mr. Dunedin City (Mr. Millar) naturally desired to know, and may possibly question the Minister of Labour in the House, as to whether something that I said applied to the Conciliation Board at Dunedin. I do not know that he is justified in asking the question, and I might the time I made the statement—and I have nothing to withdraw—in Auckland, there were four hundred people cited in connection with the carters' dispute, and the question naturally arose in my mind, What necessity was there for four hundred persons being cited to appear before the Conciliation Board to deal with a simple question as to whether the wages paid for carting was fair or otherwise. I subsequently received a telegram from the secretary of one of the unions, and he said it was not the union that did it; but that after the union had cited the number they thought fair and sufficient, the cited parties insisted upon a large number of others being brought into the fold, and it was they who were responsible for the situation. This is not the only case; and where you find that interested parties, with a view to discrediting the legislation and of causing friction, take an action of that kind, then I say we ought to put the blame upon the right shoulders, and say to the persons who do that that they must take the responsibility. Coming back to the Conciliation

Boards, I have no hesitation in saying that, to my mind, in some respects the conduct of their business is unbusinesslike. An Hon. MEMBER .- A guinea a day. Mr. SEDDON .- No; I do not think we should attribute to men intrusted with such responsibilities that they are acting from sordid or selfish motives. I think we ought to be fair and generous, and give them full credit, because their position at the best is a most unpleasant one. We should not forget that one side is elected by the unionists and the other by the employers ; and it is the same as the Arbitration Court : as a rule, each one goes there to do his best for the particular party or section that he represents. I say that the construction of the Board, under these circumstances, is open to question, and that we should not therefore blame those who have been intrusted with this responsibility. It may be that they are lacking in experience, and I think they are somewhat blamable. Witnesses come forward, and it is easily known if their evidence is simply a repetition. Take the evidence of Smith, Brown, Jones, Robinson, Williams, and others : their evidence may be similar to that previously given by Roberts. It is only when a witness has something fresh to say, or can throw new light on a subject, that his evidence should be taken. I have read in the papers time after time - and I have carefully noted what is going on -- that many witnesses are heard who simply repeat, parrot-like, what has been already said by others. I say, in such cases the Board has a duty to perform, the same as a Magistrate or a Judge. In such cases I say the Boards have something to answer for. An Hon. MEMBER .- That would have the effect of reducing the number of sittings. An Hon. MEMBER .- And the number of guineas they get by it. Mr. SEDDON .- It would facilitate business. An Hon. MEMBER .- And facilitate reducing the cost.

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generous ; because you do not know what you may come to yourself. The senior member for Wellington City is laughing ; he is the first man, I believe, who would be selected as a member of a Board. Proceeding now with the constitution of the Boards, I want to say that, in my opinion, the manner in which the Boards are now selected is defective. You place practically two partisans on the Board in our manner of election, and experience has proved that this does not lead to conciliation. Then, what has been the remedy suggested? One is that there should be a permanent Chairman, and that in respect to each subject coming under dispute you should call in two experts, who shall assist the Chairman in coming to a conclusion. I see the same difficulty again there, when you bring in these experts .- An Hon. MEMBER .- Not if they have got billets. Mr. SEDDON .- You have to pay them when they sit. An Hon. MEMBER .- Let their own people pay them. Mr. SEDDON .- At present I think the working-men have enough to pay, and it would be an impost they could not bear. That would be the answer to that suggestion. I say the State is the right party to pay. But you would have partisanship in the selection of the experts. Who is going to select them ? The Chairman would select them; and he would select a worker who is an expert, and by so doing please the working section ; and he would then select an employer, and you would have the same trouble with your Board so constituted. What, in my opinion, would be an improvement, and that I think would lead to greater facility and more conciliation and greater convenience, would be to have one or two men with legal training, with experience in taking evidence, and who are beyond and above party, and whose only object could be to endeavour to carry out their duty, and conciliate and give such an award as would meet the case in accordance with the evidence. Mr. HUTCHESON .- It is a question of the right men. Mr. SEDDON .- " It is a question of the right men." Well, I believe some of our oldest and best-trained Magistrates would be the best men to undertake the work. An Hon. MEMBER .- The best for Chairman, anyhow. Mr. SEDDON .- Yes ; that is the view I hold. We have had cases where there has been no trouble at all. But what I ask at present is that there should not be wholesale condemnation or judgment on those persons holding the positions. If there is a defect in the law, Parliament is responsible, and not those who are called upon to administer the law as they find it. The other question is this : It does appear at the present time-and has for some time past-that you cannot take up your newspaper without

seeing column after column taken up with some dispute before the Conciliation Board. Who is re- is. And why ? Because of late years we have extended the application of the Act. Under the interpretation of " Industries," the Arbitration Court held that two - thirds of the workers were not included under the Act, not being engaged in industry, and, the interpretation being so held, we had then to widen the law to embrace these workers. Now, those industries that came in under the extended jurisdiction of the Boards have never had any award at all. An Hon. MEMBER .- They are not creating the trouble now. Mr. SEDDON .- I say now is the first opportunity they have had to come before the Board 1 preparatory to going before the Arbitration Court, and I would say this: With this fact before members, and the people and Press of the colony, we should give time to these industries which came in under the extension of the Act-we should give them opportunity to get their awards; and then, in my opinion, there ought to be a lull-a cessation from what appears to be at present an incessant strife between the employers and the employed. It is scarcely fair to have these adverse criticisms. Then, when you turn over your newspaper, you get the Conciliation Board in one column and the Arbitration Court in another. Why is this? Owing to circumstances over which neither the Government nor Parliament have any control, the work of the Arbitration Court has got behind. In some cases men have been nearly two years without getting their disputes finally settled. We have it now from the President of the Court, that after a short time every dispute will be settled, and the awards will be made, and I am looking forward to the beginning of next year to find that there are no disputes at all between employer and employed. It is fair to give the return, but in giving it there should be this explanation ; otherwise it might appear by the return as if by comparison disputes were being promoted, and, judging from the return, there would be evidence to support that view. It is not fair to come to such a conclusion, and it should be understood that by the widening of the law and the enlargement of the scope of its application you have the number of disputes increased, and there has been no opportunity yet of awards being given. When the Court is cleared off I anticipate you will have, to a certain extent, industrial peace. I make these remarks because there has been a certain amount of feeling engendered in respect to the matter. I say to those who are fanning the flame, be careful. There has been trouble before on this matter, and this manner of adjusting the disputes is, I should say, very much more satisfactory than the way in which these disputes used to be settled ; and to cause a difference of opinion, and ill-feeling, as between the workers in the towns and the workers in the country is, in my opinion, unpatriotic. And not only that, but it would be almost impossible then to settle the disputes. What is being aimed at by this agitation, I am sorry to say, is an endeavour to create feeling as between the

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workers in the towns and the farmers in the ; this House, say - neither have I seen them country, and the object underlying it is put forward as the benefit of the workers. How can it prove beneficial to the farmers? My answer is No. I say the welfare of the farmer is inseparably bound up with the welfare and well-being of the worker in the towns. An Hon. MEMBER .- It is the other way about. Mr. SEDDON .- I say that you cannot separate the interests of the two, and the best market for the farmer and the nearest for his produce is within New Zealand itself. If he supplies the towns of New Zealand with his produce he has no middleman to pay ; he has no shipping freights to pay; and therefore I again say that his home market, which is his nearest, is his best. And the more you enlarge that market, and the more you improve the condition of the consumers of the colony, the more you will benefit the colony and its producers, and those who strive to do that are public benefactors, and are engaged in a patriotic work. But as to those who, on the other hand, try to create strife and to foster ill-feeling as between town and country, they are traitors to the country they live in, and wrong-doers. An Hon. MEMBER .- Have you not done it ? Mr. SEDDON .- No, Sir, I have never approved of it. I hold broad views upon every question, and I am not one of those narrow-minded individuals who to suit their own purposes abandon the principles that they

hold, because they think it might benefit them politically. I say that the man who takes a broad view of this question, and works out the problem accordingly, is the man in whom in course of time all parties will have confidence, and not those who are endeavouring for the time being-as I know they are -to set the country districts 'and producers against the towns. I must say that, as far as the towns are concerned, and the representatives of the towns. they are not doing that. It is coming from the one side ; and why? I will prove to you very easily what is underlying the whole matter. The present Liberal party has now an almost universal town and country support. There was a time when the party received the larger portion of its support from the towns, and when it was closely identified with labour and labour questions. But of late years the country districts have sent supporters to the Liberal party in this House, and the result has been to the profit of the country districts, and of the farmers and the producers of the country; and I have no hesitation in saying that at the present time, with a view, possibly, to altering this condition, our friends opposite are doing all they can to show that the farmers are not receiving justice, and are trying to make out that those in the towns are endeavouring to obtain for themselves that which they would deny to their fellow-men in the country. My answer to that is that there is no foundation for it. I have never heard a working-man in any town in this colony, or any body of workmen, or their representatives in do-anything which would militate against the prosperity and well-being of the country. Now, here is another question : People are being told time after time that the Workers' Compensation for Accidents Act was intended to apply to the farmers, and that it was to be used for the purpose of crushing the farmers -- that if an accident happens to a farmer's employé such accident means the ruin of the unfortunate farmer. Now, I say again that those people who are making such statements are doing wrong, and that that law does not apply to the farmers. I say that when this matter was before the House we were all under the impression that it did not apply to the farming community. How, then, can it now be said that there was any attempt made by Parliament, or by any party, to use this legislation- initiated by the people in the towns-for the detriment of the people in the country? If that is the assumption upon which this legislation was passed, I go further, and say that there is no Act that is perfect when passed. But we have our Courts of law; and I say that it will be quite time enough when any Court of law decides that the intention of Parliament has not been given effect to in the legislation it passed - that this Workers' Compensation for Accidents Act does apply to the farmers and those engaged upon the farms-to alter the law. I say that as soon as we get an interpretation from the Court to that effect it will be our duty to alter the law and make it consistent with what we intended. An Hon. MEMBER .- Will you do it ? Mr. SEDDON .- I will, certainly. As soon as there is sufficient evidence to the effect that the Act has an application we never intended, it will be my duty to give effect to the intention of the Legislature. But in the meantime we must stand by the law. Then, again, I will give another answer : It was stated on the floor of this House, by gentlemen who were themselves engaged in agricultural or pastoral pursuits, that they were insuring their employés under the Employers' Liability Act before the Workers' Compensation for Accidents Act was passed at all. I say that such was the case. The late member for Wairarapa was one of the members who stated this, and I know that there were hundreds of employers who did the same. They actually claimed that they were safer, under the Workers' 5.0. Compensation for Accidents Act that we passed, than they were under the indefinite legislation of the Employers' Liability Acts -that there was an indefinite obligation without any limit whatever, and generally with litigation that was almost ruinous. I therefore say that they forget now that the very ones who are arguing against the application of the Workers' Compensation for Accidents Act to the country districts are those who were asking for an amendment of the law to remove the disabilities under which they laboured under the Employers' Liability Act. I say, let there be a test case, and let the Court give its decision before they say that this

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Act does apply to them, or that it means ruin | to the farmers. Mr. FLATMAN. - Why not make it plain

before any one is ruined. Mr. SEDDON .- If you are always going to legislate for everything that has never been interpreted by a Court where are you going to stop? To my mind the law is perfectly clear at present : and even supposing the law we passed, although not intended, did apply to the farmers, it is safer, more economical, and better for the farmers than the old Employers' Liability Act. That is my reply to that. However, Sir, I only rose, in respect to this motion, to do justice as far as I could to those who at the present time and under adverse circumstances are administering our laws. I say that a great deal of the blame that attaches to them should never be laid at their door, because we have widened the scope of the legislation-we have brought in a large number of trades and workers that the law previously did not apply to ; and, that being the case, we ought to give a fair time to the Boards and to the Court to do their work, and then after that I believe there will be a general consensus of opinion that we have done the right thing. Sir, I shall give the return, but I say its application will not be fair if given now, because of the extra work thrown on these bodies. I hope, Sir, that the information I give to the House will be accepted in the spirit in which it is given, and that it is done with a view to doing what is right to all parties concerned.

Mr. MONK (Waitemata). - I would like to correct the impression which I think the Premier has that the Workers' Compensation for Accidents Act does not apply to the homesteads of farmers. How is it, then, that it is being interpreted so by the legal fraternity, who are insisting now, in mortgages lent upon country lands, upon the insertion of a clause compelling the borrower to pay for a policy, so that the Workers' Compensation for Accidents Act, shall not interfere with their security ? Mr. SEDDON. - They may have some shares in this Oceanic Company. Mr. MONK .- I think that is very unfair. The Premier does not seem to desire knowledge ; he only desires to baffle. Now, there is certainly a feeling throughout the country districts-and I say it with good reason-that the Premier is neglectful of the interests of the country people, and is simply conserving, as far as he possibly can, the interests of the city unions. When I put the question to him, asking if he would expand the workings of the Conciliation Boards and Arbitration Court, so as to enable them to operate in the interests of farmers, he would allow them no relief ; but they now show a disposition to help themselves. What was more equitable than my suggestion that the Conciliation Boards and Arbitration Court should be applied to matters relating to the country districts ? But he would not make this concession ; and I say, where was the concern he now professes for farmers, when he made all their local bodies subject to the decisions of the Conciliation Boards and unions in Mr. Seddon the cities, to their inconvenience? For, as I pointed out last session, the country people are receiving grants of money, and endeavouring to make them as productive as possible in the interests of roadmaking ; but they are not allowed to do so. It is in this way : In the winter time the country people are willing, in their own interests, to take jobs and to improve roads at a lower rate of wages than the city people rightly expect to receive; but they are prohibited from doing so, and must pay a certain rate of wage, although the farmers themselves are willing to employ their men and teams during the slack periods of the year at a lower rate of wages than would be accepted during the busy season. What was more inequitable than that a freedom of that kind should be taken away, and thereby the amount of improvement which these local bodies can secure out of their grants is limited ? Then, again, the Premier the other day said to a deputation which met him that the dairy and meat industries are receiving subsidies equal to \$20,000 a year. Let me declare that the country people are getting no advantage from the regulations of the Government, but those for which they pay a price brings a profit to the Government. To commence with the sheep-tax. Does it not bring in a considerable revenue to the Government over and above the cost of inspection, and the cost of that department ? What about the valuation of country lands by men who are travelling continually all over the country, and some of whom are, as the honourable member for Marsden said, simply ne'er-do-wells, and cost the people, mostly the farmers, \$26,000 a year? Can the Premier point to one single department, professedly operating in the interests of the country people, upon which he is not in some form or other making a handsome profit ?

Why, I believe that the Belfast meat-freezing establishment in Canterbury, as soon as the Slaughtering and Inspection Act is brought into operation, will have to pay a sum of not less than \$853 a year, reckoning as a basis the number of animals killed last year, and upon that there will be a clear profit to the Government of over \$400. Then, look at the price which the country people have been receiving for their oats down South. Now, the Premier took great credit to himself because orders had been received for 50,000 tons of oats-by the returns I see it is getting on to 800,000 bushels for the year. We are all very thankful that these oats have been sent away, but the producers of these oats have been receiving next door to starvation prices. I am informed that they have received 1s. to 1s. 2d., and in a few cases as much as 1s. 3d., a bushel, while the prices received by the middle-men have been 1s. 7d. to 1s. 9d. Who got the profit there? Not the farmer. Mr. SEDDON .- They will have to pay the freight, and the cost of rebagging. Mr. MONK .- We know that ; the prices I have mentioned has not covered that. An Hon. MEMBER .- What has this to do with Mr. Graham's return? Mr. MONK .- It has to do with the return,

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have to make an assertion on behalf of the country people that the labour legislation of the last few years has been continuously regardless of their interests, and the Premier is conscious of it, and is seeking to confuse the position. The country people do not wish to be in opposition to the city folks, nor in mere opposition to the unions of the city, they simply desire to have the privilege of forming themselves into a union for the management of their own interests, and nothing can be more just and equitable. I should like the House to take notice of this : If unions are right in one class of the community, can it be wrong that similar privileges should be allowed to others? And that is all the farmers are asking. And if the farmers form themselves into associations and into unions they will not come to the Ministry for help ; they will simply take their own business into their hands, and they will regulate freights, appoint their agents, and manipulate all produce in the Old Country. They will not be a plague to the Government, but rather a moderate, though powerful, organization to instruct and guide them. Mr. MORRISON .- It is time these things were changed. They have been in the habit of coming to the Government for everything they could get. Mr. MONK .- It is all very well for the honourable gentleman to make assertions, but assertions are not facts. Mr. MORRISON .- I will prove it. Mr. MONK .- I do not think the honourable gentleman can prove it, when they have supplied over eleven out of the thirteen millions of our last year's exports. When the estimates come down it will be easy to point out to the House the large amount that has been paid by the country people. As an instance of hardship, have the Government forgotten the valuation-rolls, for which the local bodies are charged one-third ? And I do not think the Premier could furnish a single instance in which that return was satisfactory and could be used by the local body until they themselves had corrected it. And, Sir, so audacious were the charges made by the Valuation Department that the Government, for very shame's sake, were compelled to make large reductions. Mr. SEDDON .- The impression is that the Valuation Department is improving every day. Mr. MONK .- How can the department possibly improve when men put in responsible positions in it are inept at the work they have to do? There is a gentleman at the head of a department in the South --- I will not mention names-and the Government know that not only in that case, but in many others, instances of which members bring before the House, the men whom they have put in these positions are, some of them, known as failures, though they are, I admit, men who are very assiduous in their duties. Mr. PIRANI (Palmerston). - Sir, I wish to say one word in reply to the Premier about Conciliation Boards. I am very glad indeed to find that the Premier has at last initiated a Unfortunately, he has chosen a time when we can only conceive his idea is to block this motion, though I do not think his remarks about Conciliation Boards ought to be allowed to pass without some comment. It is satisfactory to find he is not so enamoured of his political partisans on those Conciliation Boards as he used to be, because nearly all the trouble on the Conciliation Boards is caused by men who are his ardent political partisans-men who are

not working for their living. Mr. SEDDON .- They are elected by the unions. Mr. PIRANI .--- The Premier knows why they are elected. He knows how the game is carried out, and the canvassing that goes on. He need only look at the personnel of the Boards, and he will see how the elections are worked. Sir, I say this: It would be well to allow the Conciliation Boards to deal only with disputes in which the employers and the employés agree to a reference to the Boards, and in cases in which one party or the other did not agree the case should go to the Arbitration Court. Mr. R. MCKENZIE .- Abolish the Conciliation Boards. Mr. PIRANI .- Yes, it is a question whether they should be abolished ; but, at any rate, I am satisfied there should be some alteration in the present system. What is the practice now ? If both parties are not satisfied they must go to the Arbitration Court ; and I would like to ask, who could be satisfied with the decision of a Conciliation Board constituted such as, for instance, the Wellington Conciliation Board is ? The Wellington Conciliation Board has never yet settled one dispute in the whole course of its existence. Every dispute that has come before it has gone on to the Arbitration Court. I have been told that the other day one member of a Board abused several members of a union because, as he said, they were taking a guinea a day out of the mouths of his wife and family. Hon. MEMBERS .- Oh ! Mr. PIRANI .- That is so. I can give you another instance-it happened in Christchurch -in which a question was put by a tanner as to how it would be possible for tanners to carry on their business if they gave the rate of wages asked for, and the answer was, " Well, reduce the price you give to the farmers for their woolskins." Sir, it would be better, in the interests of arbitration, and also in the interests of conciliation, if the whole system were altered by which the temptation to these political partisans to live on conciliation were removed altogether. In the first place, let the fee be reduced to 10s. a day instead of a guinea. The Premier said the other day that 10s. a day was sufficient for a member of a Land Board ; and I am sure, if he only gave 10s. a day to members of Conciliation Boards, and at the same time allowed the parties to a dispute to elect their own representatives, and allowed them the option of going to the Arbitration Court direct, he would do away with a great deal of the objection to the system. I hope the House will

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sider it is one of the most useful that could be laid before Parliament. Mr. TANNER (Avon) .- Sir, I have no objection to the return being furnished which is the subject of discussion, but I think it is somewhat unusual, on the question of the ordering of a return, for the House to discuss at large the whole matter of labour legislation in the way honourable members have done this afternoon. Above all things, I deplore the fact that there is revealed in the House a spirit of covert hostility to the machinery this House a few years ago set up to solve labour disputes. I still further deplore the fact that this hostility is apparently shared by men who assisted to put the Act I refer to on the statute-book. Honourable gentlemen must have voted either mechanically or without thought of what they were doing in 1894, when they passed the Act under which the various tribunals were first set up, which have been so much criticized and so much traduced this afternoon. That Act was distinctly intitled " An Act to encourage the Formation of Industrial Unions and Associations, and to facilitate the Settlement of Industrial Disputes by Conciliation and Arbitration," and members must have been aware of the fact, unless they voted for the Bill without reading the title. The Act had the effect it was intended it should have. It did encourage the formation of labour and industrial unions and associations. At the time the Act was passed there were not more than about thirty-eight or forty organized bodies in the colony that were registered under the old Trade Union Act of 1878; but the means provided by this House in its wisdom, and to its credit, to solve the continual disputes that were arising in the industrial world, were such that from that time to the present more than ninety other organizations have come into existence. They have come into existence expressly for the purpose of having their difficulties solved in a simple, expeditious, and easy manner. No doubt the result has been that the Courts which have been set up have been crowded with work. It is possible, Sir, that the Conciliation Boards and the Court have in some cases been manned by men who had had little

experience in such matters ; but where, I ask, were we to look for men with experience in the colony, seeing that no such machinery, no such Boards, and no such institution ever existed in the colony previously ? The legislation was an experiment. We were bound to take the men who were considered most suitable for the new work, as the Government does in creating a new department and making appointments thereto. As time goes on we shall find whether our anticipations as to the fitness of the instruments selected are correct or otherwise. But to speak of the way in which the Courts are flooded with applications does not necessarily mean that the entire labour world throughout the colony is in the state of ferment that so many honourable gentlemen are anxious to make others believe, but do not themselves believe. They know very well that the bulk of these Mr. Pirani their lives before had a judicial decision with regard to industrial matters, and who are patiently waiting till their turn comes to go before the Board or Court, as the case may be. When the case has been heard by the Conciliation Board - often, unfortunately, without success - they have the same right to carry the matter to the appellate Court, and that privilege belongs also to the employers. And let me say, that not all the cases of appeal to the decision of the Arbitration Court have been made by workmen. We had a case in Christchurch only a few weeks ago in which a gentleman ! at the head of the Employers' Association, whose name is known all over the colony in this connection, and who has been president of the Industrial Corporation of New Zealand, stated distinctly that, whatever decision was come to by the Conciliation Board, the matter would be carried to the Court. How, under those circumstances, is it possible to cast the covert blame which is sought to be cast in this House on organized bodies of labour people because so much time is occupied by the Boards ? They are not in all cases the men who are continually appealing to the Arbitration Court. The employers are doing the same thing -- and, by the way, both parties have equal rights so to do, and I would be sorry to see either party deprived of them. No doubt we get at times decisions perhaps extraordinary and unusual ; but you will get them under every judicial system. We get them from the Supreme Court and from every Magisterial Court in the colony, and in these instances they come from trained men, not from tiroes with two or three years' experience of dealing with cases of such difficulty that the House hesitated before setting up the machinery for the purpose. I regret the course the debate has taken, and I vigorously protest against the aspersions that have been cast on the men manning the Boards, many of whom are trying honourably and honestly to do their duty, as well as those in the Arbitration Court. Perhaps we cannot all share the same high opinion of these men, but I think this House ought to refrain from casting blame on the gentlemen who have been appointed under legislation, and with the sanction of the House, for this specific task they perform, or strive to perform - the most difficult functions that could be assigned to any men. We ought to give the Act reasonable opportunity of being worked, and watch its operation, before any further criticism is made. Continual disparagement, or tinkering with the Act, is not likely to bring any beneficial result. One word more before I sit down. Honourable gentlemen on that side or on this side of the House can say what they like, or try to put in motion any inimical agitation they choose, but this is the plain fact : We passed the Act under the pressure of the labour people of this colony, and this House will not attempt to retrace what has been done. That Act is on the statute-book, and will have to remain there. If any attempt is made for its removal there are nineteen thousand people who are members of these

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reason why. Mr. G. J. SMITH (Christchurch City) .- I think, Sir, that the honourable member for Avon has gone a little wide of the mark. I only came in from the library when the debate had made some progress, but from the remarks that have been made since I came into the House there have been no aspersions on the Act itself. As far as the Act is concerned, I was a member of the House when it was passed. I knew what I was doing, and I believed then, as I believe now, that the method proposed was the best way to settle industrial strife. So far as the question of Conciliation Boards is concerned, I join issue at once

with the honourable member for Avon. I say, if we are going to have industrial disputes, the sooner we get them settled the better in the interests of all parties ; and I infinitely prefer that the disputes should be taken direct to the Arbitration Court. The honourable member for Avon referred to the question of the Conciliation Boards. Well, I will take him back to a case in Canterbury in a recent dispute. One of the woollen-mills - the Kaiapoi Woollen-mill - was cited before the Board. The Conciliation Board settled the conditions of labour in, I think, thirty eight departments, visited the mill at Kaiapoi, and did it in two days. The Board did not give themselves the time necessary to go into the various questions of the case before them. They are handicapped to this extent : they are not experts, and you cannot get experts in every case. An Hon. MEMBER .- The Board is charged with having wasted time. Mr. G. J. SMITH .- I do not think they take enough time. They should take time to consider matters, with a genuine desire to settle them. I regret that this question has come before the House on this particular motion, but, as I know Mr. Graham, the member for Nelson City, is anxious to have his motion passed, I will say no more at the present time. Mr. ARNOLD (Dunedin City) .- I have only two or three minutes, but I want to say a good deal in that time. In the first place, I want to say that the member for Palmerston was not correct in stating that the Wellington Conciliation Board has not settled any disputes that have been brought before it. If members will look at return No. 7-laid on the table of the Legislative Council -for last year they will find that some cases, at any rate, were settled by the Wellington Board. In addition to those settled, one was partly settled : and one was settled apart from the Board altogether. Mr. PIRANI .- Well, I withdraw the statement, and admit that one case was settled. Mr. ARNOLD .- That is not correct either. There was more than one. With regard to these Conciliation Boards, it has been suggested -- and I want to lay emphasis on this one fact -that, while the present Boards are not doing the work that they might be doing, a better system could not be provided by simply providing that a certain number of employers or employes might be elected at the commencement of separate disputes occurred the representatives from that trade should deal with it. Let me say this ; that such a plan as that cannot now and never will be acceptable to the Labour party. Simply for this reason : that it has been found over and over again in this colony that the employes cannot meet in conference in the manner suggested with their employers ; and the only manner in which they possibly can have these disputes dealt with fairly is by meeting with those who are not interested in their own callings. Not only do I repeat the statement that was made - The hour of half-past five having arrived, Mr. SPEAKER left the chair. WOODVILLE COUNTY BILL. Mr. SPEAKER resumed the chair at half-past seven o'clock. A message was received from the Legislative Council stating that this Bill had been passed, with an amendment, consisting of a new clause, which was as follows :- "2A. The Woodville, Kumeroa, and Maungatua Road Districts are hereby abolished, and shall be deemed to be merged in the Woodville County constituted by this Act, and the provisions of section fifty-seven of ' The Counties Act, 1886,' shall apply to these local bodies." Mr. O'MEARA (Pahiatua) moved, That the amendment be agreed to. The alteration in the Bill was the amendment suggested by the honourable member for Palmerston, and that suggestion was now given effect to. In accordance with his promise this clause had been inserted in the Bill in the Legislative Council. Captain RUSSELL (Hawke's Bay) said he did not understand the position, and therefore would not presume to say it was not a wise amendment ; but he knew there was a strong feeling in some parts of the country in favour of retaining the Road Board system, and this entire abolition of three Road Boards seemed to be a very serious alteration to be made by the Council, and brought down to and adopted by the House, probably before the people interested knew anything about it. He was not personally interested in this matter : it was not his constituency ; but the position seemed an awkward one they were getting into. Mr. PIRANI (Palmerston) said this amendment had been suggested in the House, and the honourable member in charge of the Bill, to facilitate its passage, had promised to endeavour to get it inserted in the other Chamber. The question had really been dealt with in 1894, when it had been decided that in all Counties

Bills, where small counties were concerned. Parliament would insist upon the other local bodies in the district being merged into the county. Otherwise the passing of these Counties Bills would be almost useless. He felt sure the people in the district would be better satisfied with the Bill in its present state, and that it would be better for them than if there were three Road Boards in the county as well as the County Council, all in operation, which would be the case but for this clause. He

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clause. Mr. O'MEARA (Pahiatua) desired to explain to the honourable member for Hawke's Bay that when the Bill was in Committee he had stated that resolutions had been passed by the three Road Boards agreeing to be merged into the county. Public meetings had also been held in the district, and it had been unanimously agreed by the people that the district should be formed into a county ; so that they had been consulted by the promoters of the Bill in every way possible. Motion agreed to. SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS BILL. IN COMMITTEE. Clause 2 .- "Subsection (a) of section seven and subsection (a) of section eight of ' The Shops and Shop-assistants Act Amendment Act, 1895,' are hereby repealed ; and chemists' shops shall be included in the operation of section three of 'The Shops and Shop-assistants Act, 1894.' " Mr. McNAB (Mataura) moved to strike out all words down to " operation of." Mr. HUTCHESON (Wellington City) moved, That progress be reported. Motion to report progress negatived. Mr. McNab's amendment agreed to. Mr. McNAB (Mataura) moved, That the following words be added to the clause : "and section seven of 'The Shops and Shop-assistants Act Amendment Act, 1895,' are hereby repealed, and the following enacted in lieu thereof : 'All shops in city, borough, or town district, except those wherein is carried on exclusively one or more of the businesses of a fishmonger, fruiterer, confectioner, coffee-house keeper, or eating-house keeper, or the keeper of a book-stall on a railway platform, shall be closed in each week on the afternoon of one working-day at the hour of one o'clock. Whenever a public holiday or half-holiday occurs in any week it shall be sufficient compliance with this Act if the shopkeeper closes his shop on such holiday or half-holiday instead of on the closing-day under this Act.'" Amendment agreed to, and clause as amended agreed to. Clause 3 .-- " Subsections (two) and (three) of section four of ' The Shops and Shop-assistants Act, 1894,' are hereby re-enacted." Mr. BARCLAY (Dunedin City) moved, that the clause be struck out, with the view of inserting, as a new clause, the words of the section sought to be re-enacted by this section. Motion agreed to, and clause struck out. Clause 4 .- Domestic servants to have weekly half-holiday. Mr. HALL (Waipawa) moved, That progress be reported. The Committee divided. AYES, 23. Fraser, A. L. D. Colvin Bennet Bollard Graham Duncan Field Carneross Haselden Collins Flatman Hutcheson Mr. Pirani Lethbridge Russell, W. R. Tellers. Meredith Smith, G. J. Hall O'Meara Stevens Massey. NOES, 20 Allen, E. G. Russell, G. W. Lawry Arnold McGowan Tanner McKenzie, R. Atkinson Ward McNab Willis. Barclay Carroll Mills Tellers. Hall-Jones Palmer Fisher Pirani Hornsby Millar. PAIR. For. Against. Gilfedder. Hanan. Majority for, 3. Motion to report progress agreed to, and progress reported. The House adjourned at twenty-five minutes to one o'clock a.m. #