**CROWN LANDS ACT FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL 1914**

**House of Assembly, 4 November 1914, pages 1391-1400**

Second reading

**The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS (Hon. F. W. Young**)—I had hoped to introduce a consolidating Crown Lands Bill similar to the consolidating measures we have introduced in connection with other matters in order to place the law relating to Crown lands within two covers. However, almost every day we learn that some alterations were required, and we have had brought before us many matters which invited further consideration by this House, so we thought it desirable to once more bring in an amending Bill with a view of having the legislation consolidated early next session. In the Bill I am submitting, we have endeavored to amend the existing law in every conceivable direction owing to the exigencies of land settlement in this State, and also to improve a few minor matters in drafting, so that next year we might feel disposed to proceed with the consolidation of the measures and have a fairly complete Act on land legislation. I wish to show clearly what this Bill aims at, and will therefore proceed to deal with the clauses seriatim, with such explanations as I can give for the information and consideration of hon. members. Clause 3 of the Bill will affect land settled in comparatively recent times, chiefly in the mallee areas, where the price was fixed, and which, after subsequent experience was found to be rather high, and where the lessees concerned had no assistance as regards special terms during the earlier years of their leases. The land which I had in mind in the first instance requiring legislation such as this was that in the hundred of Wirrega, in the South-East, where we have a splendid class of men on the land, and where the land at one time was considered to be rather above the average. As regards the mallee country, owing not only to the appearance of the soil, but taking into consideration the rainfall in that locality, the land was considered good, and much of the country in that hundred was valued at £1 per acre. A number of settlers took it up, and in most instances these consisted in the main of young men, some of whom were agricultural students from Roseworthy. These young men have undoubtedly been genuine settlers in every sense of the word, and have done their best, but the land has been very disappointing. In this wet country the mallee is found more tenacious than in the drier country, and it appears to be a fight between the wheat plant and the young mallee shoots, and no amount of cultivation seems to improve the position to any extent as the settlers do not appear to be able to crop sufficient wheat to enable them to get a decent *“* burn in their fight against the mallee shoot.”

Mr. Bodey—They have also to fight the broom-bush.

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS—Yes, that usually accompanies the mallee in the wet districts and seems to defy the efforts of many settlers. The land on the whole looked reasonably good, and I believe that everyone concerned, including the Land Board, was misled by its appearance and, I do not consider that anyone is to blame in the matter. The settlers in the district interviewed me and intimated their desire to go on fighting, as they were willing to give their time and money and such financial assistance as was supplied by their parents to continue their work, provided the Government were prepared to give them some concession in the way of rent or purchase money. Their circumstances to some extent are similar to settlers in one or two hundreds on the Brown’s Well line. When the land there was first settled there was a big land boom in the Pinnaroo district, with the result that the Land Board were blamed for not having put enough value on the Pinnaroo land, and higher values were proposed in the hundreds of Ettrick and Hooper. Experiences proved that the values put on the land there were rather high, and in some places lessees are denied the boon of underground water, and in addition have to fight the bush fire. Under the present law they have to pay full interest money during the first year, and in many cases it means money expended without any coming in. There may be one or two other centres where the difficulties are similar, and we wish to help these people to remain on the land because we realise the danger to this State having land abandoned. The desire of the Government is to keep genuine settlers on the land if we can, because it is another thing to get a prospective settler to take up a deserted block. We therefore propose in clause 3 to allow settlers under the circumstances enumerated to apply to the board to have their land revalued and have a new rental and purchase-money fixed, and when that has been fixed the purchaser or the lessee may surrender his agreement or lease in exchange for an agreement or lease under section 6 of this Bill. We propose on the acceptance of their surrender to issue a new lease or agreement, to date from the original date of his first lease, giving him comparatively long periods of easy payments, and setting off against these payments all moneys paid in the past. They will be practically in the position of new settlers, and can devote the whole of their capital and time to their work without the Government asking for rent or purchase-money.

Mr. Angus—Does that apply to all Crown lands ?

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS —No; only to such as the Commissioner shall direct.

Mr. Miller—Will it apply to the land in the North-East ?

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS—We have other provisions for dealing with that, as we cannot give a man a new lease when he has been on the land for, say, 21 years.

Mr. Moseley—Will it apply to a man who has been on the land 12 years ?

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS—It will not go back that far, as persons who purchased land 12 years ago obtained it before the boom, and many are not paying more than one- sixteenth of a penny per acre per annum rent. This Bill is intended to benefit the man paying 6d. per acre in the mallee country.

Mr. Miller—Will it apply to cases where a lease has expired?

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS—It does not apply in any way to leases expired. The people we want to help particularly are those who have taken up land in the newer country, and under section 3 there is power to surrender the existing agreement or lease for an agreement or lease under section 25 of the 1912 Act. The settlers in the hundreds of Pygery, McLachlan, Wannamana, Wudinna, and Yaninee have been particularly unfortunate. That land was allotted some time ago by the Land Board, and I thought at the time the value placed upon it by the Land Board was too high. When challenged they naturally fell back upon the glowing opinions expressed in so many directions concerning the land along the Minippa line of railway, and they particularly referred to the expressions supposed to have emanated from the Royal Commission which recommended the construction of that line, and suggested that land there was worth up to £2 per acre. Some of the land was sold at 27s. 6d. per acre, but I have pointed out more than once that although the land may be good there are many difficulties, and especially the water difficulty, which can hardly be measured. A man taking up that land can grow wheat and practically nothing else, because of the limited water supply. Another great drawback to a settler is his isolation from the capital, and the difficulty in transit to market. To some extent they have to depend upon the outports, and they have to buy in Adelaide. These are all items that make the life expensive, and in view of all the facts, I have always thought the price of land has been too high, though, of course, it includes the cost of sheds and tanks. But even deducting these improvements the unimproved value of the land is high compared with the values on the eastern side of the Murray, where the settlers have many advantages which are not enjoyed by the settlers on the Minippa line. The board did not admit that their values were too high, but they accepted a direction from Cabinet that the land should be revalued for the purpose of inducing settlement, for, at present we have not been successful in attracting a great number of people to that part of the country. The great aim in any country should be settlement, rather than the price of the land, and the Board will now go ahead under Cabinet’s instructions with a view to bringing about more settlement. We propose under section 4 to cancel existing allotments in certain hundreds, and to make agreements on leases in other terms. Under section 5 there is power to deal with a case to which Mr. Miller referred, and in which other members are interested, namely, the power to reduce purchase money or rent under existing agreements and leases, except in regard to repurchased land. We find that part of our country is subject to periodical drought, and even if a man has been fairly prosperous for a number of years, one drought like the present will rob him of all his profits, and leave him further behind than ever. Realising that this is the case, we have much to be thankful for that people still continue to live on some of this country. We cannot blame any Government, in view of the recent prosperous years, for slightly increasing the interest of rent in connection with the right of purchase leases when they fell due.

Mr. Moseley—In some cases they increased them more than 300 per cent.

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS—That is hardly a fair way of putting it. The price of the land was 5s. per acre, and the rent in many cases was only about 1/4d., and the occupier had it on those terms for 21 years. When the term expired many of them were glad enough to exercise their right of purchase, and to make the land freehold, but when it came to renewing other cases the Land Board thought that the man who was renewing should be prepared to pay at least 2 1/2 per cent, to 4 per cent, on the price of the land, because even then he would be in a better position than the man who would have to find the gold, because in many cases the latter would have to borrow the money for which he paid from 4 per cent, to 6 per cent. Moreover, at that time, we were constantly having transfers, showing that a considerable premium was being paid for these leases, in some cases hundreds of pounds, and in others up to thousands of pounds. When it came to a question of renewal I put it to the Board that they were not justified in increasing the purchase money for the reason that the lessee who could borrow money and complete the purchase would have an unfair advantage over the man who might not be able to raise the money from outside, and therefore I laid it down that they might look upon the second period as a renewal of the purchase money, and be prepared to pay us for the accommodation for the next 21 years at a reasonable rate of interest on the purchase money. The result of this policy was a falling off in the completion of the purchases, which dropped from over £400,000 in one year to less than half that amount, because we were offering more favorable terms of renewal. As. a matter of fact, we find that the trouble is not the rate of interest charged, but that the purchase money is not right, and that a great deal of the country, particularly in the northern parts, has no capital value, and is not worth as much as the improvements which have been put upon it. The same remarks apply to some of the Murray Flats country. I heard of several instances at Hawker when last I was there, and I had a conversation with a man who found that he had been complaining about the wrong thing, and that it was not the rate of interest that was troubling him so much as the amount of purchase money. I put it to him that it was his duty to himself and his neighbors to apply for a reduc­tion on purchase money on the revalua­tion. He was able to satisfy me that in his own case the land was not worth in the market as much as the improve­ments he had put upon it. Many of the cases have been fixed up during recent years on the basis of the old purchase money. Under clause 5 we propose to allow these people to apply to have their purchase money or rent reduced, as the case may be, and the Land Board will have the matter referred to them, and the Commissioner will be empowered to make reductions to meet the circumstances of the case. At the end of 21 years there must be a revaluation of the land, and the Land Board can come down in their prices. I am not prepared in regard to this matter to go in for a wholesale reduction of rents, but I am seeking, in clause 5, to help those people who are living in outside countries, on the land which, in the main, is almost entirely useful for pastoral purposes only, and where, if a man puts in a crop, he may turn his stock into it, because there is not likely to be any other return from it. Clause 6 has reference mostly to mallee country, and the new settlements are mostly in that direction. Two years ago we sought to make easy terms for the earlier years of the lease, and to allow the man to hold the land without paying the rent for four years, and then to pay 2 per cent, interest on the purchase money for two years, and then 4 per cent, on the original pur­chase money. Experience now suggests some longer terms, and the longer we have experience of this mallee country, and the area subject to only partial rainfall, the more we have to realise the difficulties of the settlers, which do not consist of only the ordi­nary trouble of settlers, but many of them, in fact a great percentage of them, are affected by fires. We have now a greater view of these difficulties than we ever had before. In clause 6 the Government propose to lengthen the terms of easy payments. We propose still to charge no rent or interest during the first four years, but instead of charging 2 per cent, for two years only, we propose to charge 2 per cent, for six years, making the total period of easy terms 10 years instead of six, and we think that at the end of 10 years the settlers should have sufficiently developed their land to enable them to pay the very moderate rent he has to pay.

Mr. Angus—Will that apply to all leases^

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS—We cannot keep on making Acts of Parliament retrospective, but this clause will apply to all new leases. There is a lot of country on the West Coast where the difficulties are greater than those on the Brown’s Well line. The purport of section 6 will be clear to honorable members who can recollect what we did two years ago, and they will realise that it is in the same direction, but to a greater extent, in favor of new settlers. Section 7 is one of rather minor importance. Under the existing law by the construction of the Act only those who hold perpetual leases and right of purchase leases are able to surrender for leases of any other tenure, and there was no provision made to enable men who had covenants to purchase to surrender for perpetual leases. Some settlers in the pastoral country who have covenants to purchase leases are finding that it is better to have a perpetual lease at a low rent. Under the clause their lands will be revalued and the purchase-money that they have paid will be deducted, and the rent of the perpetual lease will be based on the balance, and the result will be that these people will be able to enjoy the benefits which were conferred upon other lessees. Section 8 deals with existing closer settle­ment leases. As regards closer settlement estates generally, we have to realise that quite a number of them were in the first place purchased in rather unsuitable localities for agriculture, and in other cases they were bought absolutely at the top of the market, and at the extreme extent of their producing value. I refer especially to some of the estates in the North. And when a man has to put improvements on the top of £11 per acre, and then rely upon growing wheat, he will find that he will have great trouble in proving that the land is worth the value placed upon it. We realise in connection with closer settlement that generally speaking the policy was to enable people of moderate means to get on the land, but these moderate means are very soon swallowed in the necessary improvements, and with the half-yearly instalment these men are hard pressed in working their blocks. We proposed to help them in two ways. Instead of asking them to pay off their purchase-money in 35 years, that is, five years free of interest, and 30 years in which they have to pay principle and interest, we propose to extend in cases in which the Minister directs the terms of the lease to a period not exceeding 64 years, and to divide it into periods as the board think fit, and regulate the instalment during these periods so that rent will not be heavy during the first years, but become greater during the latter part of the term when the man is more established. We further provide in subsection 2 of clause 3 to enable any arrears to be capitalised and added to the purchase money, because it is no use asking a lessee at present to pay up his arrears, because they have been struck by the bad years, and we are expecting to help quite a considerable number of these people under the Drought Relief Bill, and it is no use helping them under one Act on the one hand and charging them arrears under another. Therefore they will have the remainder of 64 years to pay off the arrears, plus the balance of the purchase money. The principle in clause 8 is not new; it is exactly the same principle under which we have settled a number of difficulties of our South- Eastern closer settlement lessees. I refer chiefly to the estates round about Hynam where we have given extended terms, and have reduced their half-yearly payments and capitalised their arrears. The result has been that the great bulk of these lessees feel in a more comfortable position than before. Section 9 has reference to the future leases of closer settlement land. We propose to issue them with a currency of 64 years, and we suggest that during the first eight years, or the first 16 instalments, the rates shall be £1 11s. 5d. per centum. It means a total annual payment of £2 2s. 10d., which is less than a charge of 4 per cent, for that period, and during the remaining portion to charge half-yearly instalments of £2 8s. 4d., which means an annual payment of £4 16s. 8d. per centum. That represents a considerable reduction, because under existing leases the yearly per centum amounts to £5 12s. 6d., and by spreading the payments over 64 years we get our purchase money back, plus 4 per cent. Clause 10 is only a technical alteration, and repeals clause 18 of the Crown Lands Act of 1913 which is not necessary in view of the provisions of clause 9. The 1913 Act enabled us to deal with unallotted land under the conditions set out in clause 9. Clause 12 provides that reference to vermin under the Crown Lands Act will not clash with the provisions of the Wild Animals Protection Act. The Bill also provides for an alteration in the constitution of the Land Board. At present our Land Board consists of three members, two of whom must be Civil servants, and we are proposing to provide for the appointment of a Land Board to consist of, not less than three, nor more than four members, and that there shall be no restrictions as to who shall serve. Per­sonally I believe that an enlarged Land Board would be more beneficial, as there are many matters upon which a Minister requires a great deal of assistance, which he cannot expect from ordinary officers of the department who may be excellent in their particular branch of the work, but who have not had the practical and widespread knowledge of the conditions of the settlers.m I feel that if we had three or four men in the Land Department with a practical knowledge of the country, these men would be of considerable assistance to the Minister in dealing with distressed settlers, and matters coming before him could be dealt with more promptly, and difficulties arising amongst landholders would be more effectively settled. If we had such a board, two of its members could devote their time to transfers and such work, and we would have two officers who could visit the different parts of the State for the purpose of making practical recommendations to the Minister. Such men would be more useful than officers on the Survey staff whom we have to consult, who, although very excellent men for the work they have been accustomed to, cannot be expected to have an intimate knowledge of outside matters. Practically the whole of the work of assisting the Minister at the present time falls upon the Surveyor- General, although I say unhesitatingly that he is one officer amongst thousands, and the extent of his experience and service to the department over a period of 50 years have been of great value. The present Surveyor- General, however, will not be with us always, and he is reaching a time of life when he will look for a period of leisure, to which he is very justly entitled. If we can have a board in the direction I suggest, it will be the means of relieving the Surveyor- General, who at present has too much to do.

Mr. James—Do you suggest a permanent Board?

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS—It is a permanent Board today.

Mr. James—Is not this an additional Board?

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS—It is the same Board, with a different personnel. Land settlement has extended tremendously during recent years, and the time of the officers is fully devoted to other matters, and consequently the Minister cannot get that assistance that is necessary.

Mr. Moseley—Would a new Board come into existence after the passage of this Act?

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS—This does not supersede the old Board.

Mr. Moseley—But they will arise, like Phoenix, out of the ashes.

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS — The Surveyor-General at present undoubtedly has too much to do, and I have suggested that Mr. Jones, the Deputy Surveyor-General, should assist the Surveyor-General as much as possible, in order to lighten the burden of the latter, because we wish that when his time comes to retire, he will be in good health, and at the same time we wish to provide for his successor to be conversant with the work. We have taken Mr. Jones from valuation work, so that he can devote more of his time to the Survey Department.

Mr. Angas Parsons—Who is valuating on behalf of the Government?

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS—Mr. Fraser, the secretary of the Land Board, who has been working under him for some time, has been appointed to the position, and will make a good successor in time. It is an occupation which requires a good deal of experience, and Mr. Jones will gradually relinquish his duties in connection with valuing. The other two members of the Land Board will, as far as I know, remain, but with the necessary addition of one or two, under the provisions of this Bill. This provision is not mandatory, as it says the Board will consist of three, and not more than four, and the present Board fits in with that. The matter which gave rise to the consideration of this question, and brought it to an acute point, was the purchase of the land near Rendelsham, in the South-East, over which our friends opposite proclaimed “Hallelujah.” We on this side regret that any public money should have been lost. When we see that mistakes have been made we are prepared to admit it; but at the same time, although we feel the responsibility, we are perfectly justified in pointing out where the mistake occurred, and not accept the blame entirely. As regards the purchase of closer settlement estates. Parliament has been careful to exclude political influence, and it has laid down certain rules to be carried out as regards the purchase of estates, and has thrown the responsibility of valuing the land on the Land Bpard and the Surveyor-General.m I have taken the attitude right through that I will not go and attempt to value an estate as against the officers appointed by Parliament. In most instances the agitation is in favor of buying such estates, and that is where the Minister would be involved in political influence, and for that reason I have taken no active part in the purchase of such properties. In the first place, I would not like to set myself up as an authority upon land values in South Australia, and although I have been associated with land for a very long time, I do not claim to be a land valuer. The position as regards the estate is this, that, in the first instance a block of 1,800 acres was offered, and the Surveyor-General, who was not favorable to small purchases, advised the Government against it, saying that he did not think it was suitable for closer settlement, and on that advice it was turned down. I believe some time afterwards the owner of the estate appealed to the Commissioner of Public Works for certain public expenditure in the South- East, and he got the rather obvious retort that it was no good spending public money there as long as the land was held in large estates. That being so, the gentleman concerned said:—“I am prepared to show you my bona fides, so I will offer you the land.” The Commissioner of Public Works sent over this challenge to my office, and I referred the matter to the Surveyor- General. At that time we had the offer of the Morambro Estate, which is not far distant from this property, and as the Land Board and the Surveyor- General were down there they took the opportunity of having a look at this block, which had come under our notice for a second time. They came back with a valuation, and in view of the fact that the Surveyor-General had previously expressed a doubt about the property, and was now favorable. I questioned him on the subject. Mr. Smith was very emphatic about his change of opinion, and said that he thought the land was worth the price, and was also surprised at the owner being willing to take that price for it because, in his opinion, it was the cheapest purchase the Government had made down there. As Morambro is acknowledged to be a splendid purchase so far as price is concerned, the price for the Hallelujah property, I took it, was particularly cheap, especially as Mr. Smith seemed to be more than ordinarily gra­tified at the offer.

Mr. Goode—Did Mr. Smith’s statement refer to the Hallelujah or Morambro property.

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS—He referred to the Hallelujah property.

Mr. Vaughan—Do you know what the owner of Hallelujah made out of it ?

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS—In reply to that I would ask him does he know that Mr. Browne made £150,000 out of the Booborowie Estate? And does the honorable member know what profit was made on North Bundaleer?

Mr. Vaughan—I am not insinuating anything, I am only saying it is a pity the Government did not purchase Morambro when it was first offered to them.

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS—The honorable member might not insinuate anything, but to those who do not know the facts he leaves the impression that in this purchase we had tossed money into other people’s pockets. As a matter of fact, the estimated loss over Hallelujah will be between four and five thousand pounds, but I am not going to compare it with other purchases, although I might well be able to do so. It was suggested the other night in the debate that a subtle suggestion had proceeded from the Minister to his officers inviting them to change their opinion with regard to the purchase of this land, but I am satisfied that my character in this com­munity is such that I need not make too many protests and thus invite suspicion. That suggestion to which I refer does not hit me only. It hits other officers connected with the Department, including the Surveyor-General and the Land Board, by implying that they are amenable to suggestions from the Minister which may not be in the interests of the general taxpayer. Honorable members will agree with me that it is absolutely disgraceful to make any insinuations of this character.

Mr. Angas Parsons—Who made that suggestion *?*

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS—It came from the hon. member for Stanley, Mr. Goode. As a matter of fact I know nothing about this particular estate, and the purchase was made strictly in accordance with the Act. The astonishing thing is that the Surveyor-General and the Land Board are still of the opinion that the land is worth the money, and will not admit that they made a mistake. Now what has been the atti­tude of the Government over this matter? We have faced the position squarely, and have not tried to cover it up by relying upon the reiterated opinion of the Land Board that the land is worth the money. We sought independent valuations from two men who were recommended as having special knowledge of the South-East, and on that independent recommendation, plus the knowledge of the locality gained from local residents, I expressed the view that the Land Board made a mistake, and I have passed that opinion on to the Land Board in no uncertain terms. In order to guard against a similar mistake in the future the Government propose to alter the constitution of the Land Board so as to enable them to place upon it a member who would have practical knowledge of South-Eastern conditions.

Mr. Goode—Then you are adopting the policy of the Labor Party again.

THE COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS—No, the honorable member knows quite well that the policy of the Labor Party is for the constitution of local boards. Generally speaking, the Land Board’s recommendations have been very successful, and it is unfair to make too much out of this mistake which in reality only represents about two per cent, of the total purchase money. As regards the South-East the Surveyor-General was always conservative in his ideas and the trouble was to get him to interest himself in estates there because of the difficulty which arose out of a purchase half a dozen years ago. He was rather afraid to touch the position, and I know he went down absolutely prejudiced against the Hallelujah Estate and also Morambro, so I felt more than ordinarily safe in accepting his altered view of the position. This estate involves only about £10,000, and against that we are invited to compare the results of the purchase of Booborowie by the late Commissioner of Crown Lands, a transaction which amounted to £200,000. Mr. Goode the other night said that this was purchased for 3s. 6d. per acre less than the recommendation of the Land Board, the inference being that the Leader of the Opposition, in addition to being an expert in every question that comes before this House, is also an expert land valuer.

Mr. Vaughan—Oh, no; I relied to some extent upon the advice kindly rendered by the Commissioner of Public Works, and also by the honorable member for Stanley.

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS-—The honorable member for Stanley in this case is wise after the event. He suggests, however, that the Land Board did not report, but simply concurred in the report of the Surveyor- General. He says, therefore, that the Land Board did not report as required by the Act. On the same line of reasoning we may say that Mr. Justice Barton has never delivered a judgment in the High Court, because he concurs in the judgment of that court. I hope the honorable member will not repeat the stupid statement that the Land Board did not give a report. I suppose he would like to see the report written four times and signed by the respective officers. It shows what a little bit of meat there is when they seize hold of such a little substance. We have faced the position, and I am endeavoring to do something to avoid the same trouble in the future, because we realise that a great deal of the closer settlement operations must take place in the South-East in connection with large areas of land to be drained and served by railway. Realising the trouble that has arisen out of this and other purchases, we are seeking to constitute a Land Board that will be able to advise the Government upon the purchases in the particular localities. I will not deal with the whispers that have been heard outside the House that this purchase was made to help the Premier and Mr. Bodey. I believe it was said that Mr. Bodey and I went down to inspect the land, and we were blamed for doing so; and now we are blamed for not doing it. I believe Mr. Bodey has never seen the block. It was said it was done to strengthen the Premier, but I do not see how it can help his position at all. The other whispers about myself I am going to ignore. Clause 13 will enable some work which now necessarily falls upon His Excellency the Governor as regards the signing of forfeitures to be done by the Minister. The Minister actually forfeits the leases, and in some cases he has to sign the documents, but in other cases he has to send them on to the Chief Secretary, who forwards them to the Governor. It is now proposed to enable the Minister to deal with all forfeitures. Section 14 has reference to rather a difficult matter. At present when a lessee is in default for rent or for a breach of covenant, the only remedy is to forfeit his block, but honorable members know that it is impossible to forfeit a block upon which a man may have spent hundreds of pounds for a small arrear of rent or a breach of covenant. The forfeiture never takes place; but there should be some penalty against the men who constantly evade their obligations to the State, and entail considerable trouble on the officers of the Department. We propose, under section 14, that in such cases, instead of forfeiture the Land Board may consider the circumstances and impose a penalty. And we believe that this mode of punishment will prove effective. Clause 15 has reference to the power to sell a lease for default, and we have provided that the lessees may redeem their leases on payment of the upset price, plus the penalty imposed to cover the costs which have been incurred. Clause 16 provides that where land is held under section 17 the successor under the title shall be liable for all the covenant under the lease from the time of his purchase. That is not provided in existing legislation. Clause 17 is a reference to closer settlement. Under section 166 of the present Act the Surveyor-General is not allowed to let closer settlement land go into arrears for a longer period than nine months. That is the rule, and under the circumstances such as exist to-day it is a rule that will fall hardly upon the settlers, and at the same time it is asking a great deal of the Surveyor-General that he should override an Act of Parliament, and not make a call for the payment of rent. We have struck that out, and given the Surveyor- General a discretion. Clause 18 makes the drafting in relation to cases of deceased estates of small value, and the transfer of the lease much clearer. We are not altering the law, but are making the meaning clearer with a view to future consolidation. Clause 19 is another instance of better drafting to make the meaning clearer. Clause 20 deals with a printing error in the existing legislation, where a wrong number was inserted. Clause 21 relieves the Governor of certain perfunctory duties as regards signing leases. At present the Commissioner has to sign some, and others are signed by the Governor, but there is no difference between them as regards importance. We will save a lot of red tape by the alteration. Clause 22 has reference to certain miscellaneous leases in the Tumby Bay township. The holders of these leases are finding great difficulty in im­proving and financing them, and we propose to give them the same facilities as other township proprietors have, and to enable them to get a grant of their holding, but that grant will be subjected to the conditions of the Act of 1912, which restricts the transfer of them within six years, and makes it necessary to have the approval of the Commissioner of Crown Lands.

Mr. GOODE secured the adjournment of the debate until Thursday, November 5.