**SCRUB LANDS BILL 1872**

**House of Assembly, 2 May 1872, pages734-51**

Second reading.

**The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS (Hon. T. Reynolds**) moved that this Bill be read a second time. He said hon. members were aware that this Bill was a companion measure to the Waste Lands Bill now before Committee, and was intended to deal with another class of lands. Its object was to enable parties to take up land for other than agricultural purposes—for dairy and grazing purposes—and thus increase their holdings. There had been a considerable outcry that although the Legislature had given to parties the opportunity of taking up a square mile of land, it was not sufficient for dairy or grazing purposes, which, in order to make agriculture profitable, it was necessary to combine with it. The Bill, he was sorry to say, dealt with many millions of acres which were not fit for agricultural purposes, but which could be turned to account for grazing or dairy purposes. A good deal of this land was comparatively valueless, in many cases rendered very little return to the Government, and in some instances was a burden to the District Councils. (Hear, hear.) To render them a source of revenue, to reduce the burden on the District Councils, and to give a greater chance to a certain class of persons to make their occupation more profitable, was now the object of the Government. Outside the agricultural areas which they had declared there was a considerable amount of sandy, scrubby, and rocky land, and not only in these places, but between Willunga and Cape Jervis there was a large extent of it. The class of men living there, who had not been able to get rid of their holdings, and had not sufficient land to make them profitable, would be disposed to take up one to three square miles of inferior land, which was all that could be had in that part, if it could be taken up at a low rate of interest, or purchased at a reduced price. The Scrub Lands Act, which was introduced by the Government in consequence of a motion made by him on the other side of the House in 1856, was certainly comparatively liberal, inasmuch as it allowed a 21 years’ lease, with the right of purchase at the end of the term; but it provided that one- twentieth of the land should be cleared annually. Certainly the rate of interest was not very large, but still to have to clear one-twentieth annually was a very serious burden, and it had occurred to the Government that instead of amending the Scrub Lands Act it would be better for them to introduce a Bill dealing with the inferior land separately from the ordinary waste lands of the Crown. It was proposed in this Bill to deal with the inferior lands to the south of what was called ‘‘Goyder’s Rainfall.” It was impossible for the Government to describe it more definitely than they had done in the schedule, and he thought they had taken every precaution to guard against any undue or improper advantage being taken of the Bill by providing that before any of these lands were thrown open for selection they should be surveyed and the plans laid on the table of the House, so that Parliament should have an opportunity of expressing an opinion as to whether the lands should come under the operation of the Bill or not, and of directing the Commissioner of Crown Lands so that there should be no trifling with the public lands. It was intended that mineral lands and gold country—and he was happy to say they had some profitable gold country —should come under the operation of this Bill. At the same time if any better plan occurred to hon. members to prevent any smuggling going on in dealing with these lands, the Government would give it every consideration with a view to make the Bill even more restrictive than it was. This Bill repealed the Scrub Lands Act; and he thought those who came under the operation of the Bill would find an advantage which they did not possess under that Act. They did not insist upon occupation or residence, nor even upon fencing, cultivation, or dealing; but they did insist, in order to prevent the taking up of land for the mere sake of the timber, that if the trees were cut down the roots should be grubbed out. If minerals were discovered during the currency of the lease the land could be immediately resumed; but of course it was quite competent for the lessee to buy it. Even a Moonta or rich gold reef might be discovered, but that was a contingency the Government could not provide against. Even if a dozen Moontas were discovered, although it might deprive the Government of a little rental, he did not think it would be any great calamity. It was provided that no person should hold more than three square miles on credit. If he wanted more he must pay cash for it. There was a principle in the Bill a little different to that contained in the Waste Lands Bill, which was that where there were simultaneous applications for the same blocks the land should be put up at auction. There was a special reason for it in this case—one man who already had land adjoining might apply for a certain block, and another who did not reside in close proximity to it might also apply, and he thought the former should have an opportunity of securing it by public competition. To decide which should have it by lot he did not think would be right. (Hear, hear.) If application was made for any block, and the Government had any doubts as to its containing minerals, of course the Commissioner could refuse to grant it; but on its being approved, the land might be leased for 21 years at a rental of not less than threepence per acre during the currency of the lessee might purchase it at 10s. per acre at any time during the currency of his lease. When he had said no commonage was allowed under the Bill, he thought he had stilted all the points connected with it of any moment, and he would now move the second reading.

The Hon. J. HART did not think the Bill any great improvement on the present law, but that if the Scrub Lands Act was somewhat extended as to the area people could take up, it would be more liberal than the Bill. In the first place he would say that scrub land which was not cleared was not of much use for dairy or grazing purposes—(Hear, hear)—in fact he thought of no value whatever for such purpose. The only way in which scrub lands could be made available was by cutting down the timber, and he would call attention to the fact that some of the best lands which were at present in the occupation of wheat-growers were formerly scrub lands. Between this and Riverton there was a very large amount of scrub lands which had been reclaimed by cutting down the timber and grubbing, brought under cultivation. There was a very extraordinary provision in this Bill which he would call the Commissioner’s attention to, which would certainly not be workable in practice. Supposing, as was very frequently the case, scrub lands were found to contain minerals, and the Government retained the right of reserving minerals, according to clause 5, for the purpose of leasing the land to other parties, on looking at clause 4 he saw that the original lessee had the power of purchasing the fee-simple of the land for 10s. an acre at any time during the currency of his lease—(Hear, hear)— and therefore to reserve the minerals was nonsense. If the lessee could take it up on those terms no doubt he would do it as soon as he discovered any minerals which were worth other people leasing the land for the purpose of mining. It appeared to him that three square miles were altogether more than was requisite to allow to be leased. No one could use scrub lands for dairy purposes, but only for purposes of cultivation, and to take three square miles for that would be an absurdity, and no one would dream of doing such a thing. A great many people would take up three square miles at the low rental which was to be charged with the object of seeing what might turn up in course of time. The timber itself might be of value to them. It appeared to him that the Bill had not been so well considered as it might have been, and he for one considered it no improvement on the Act which now obtained, but that a small alteration of that would be more liberal.

Mr. BRIGHT could not look upon this Bill as presenting any very liberal provisions or offering very great concessions. To be suitable for dairying purposes, as had been suggested, it must be close to farms. Now, a large portion of the scrub lands of the colony were distant from farm holdings, which could be turned to account, but not lor agricultural purposes, from which a rental might be obtained. But to call this a Scrub Lands Bill, and then charge at a rate which would bring the rent for the three miles up to £24 per annum, seemed scarcely consistent, especially in view of the fact that the lands leased to pastoral tenants of the Crown were not nearly at so high a rate. He regarded this point in the Bill as less satisfactory than that in the existing Scrub Lands Act. He believed that under the present Act a much larger portion of scrub lands would have been taken up if, as originally intended, they were offered at not less than 10s. a section per annum, which section was intended to have been a mile in extent. But the surveys had not been carried out in accordance with the original proposal; and as a consequence, the inducement to take up scrub lands had been insufficient. Threepence per acre rental amounted to £8 per mile per annum - much more than persons taking up such lands could afford to pay. He quite agreed with the view that it was desirable to raise a rent from the scrub lands of the colony; but it must be with less stringent restrictions than those embodied in the present Act. He agreed with the hon. member for the Burra (Mr. Hart) that it was useless to reserve the minerals on the land when there was such an easy method by which persons could make the land their own; but he objected to letting the lands be sold under £1 per acre. He believed a very large portion of the scrub lands of this colony would be taken up under agreement giving right of purchase at 10s per acre if the rent was made at the rate of 10s. per mile per year. He thought that rate would be the more just, because the House was now proposing to deal with those lands of the colony which were confessedly the worst—scrubs without water— whilst pastoral lessees paying only 10s. had land that in the majority of cases had water. The Bill professed to be liberal, but its provisions were really hard, and he thought the Government had better withdraw it, and remove the objectionable features to which he had drawn attention. The principles of the existing Scrub Lands Act could be carried out with advantage to the colony if the stringency of the requirements was relaxed, and settlers were not expected to clear so much of the land, and had the power to take up larger holdings, say three to five miles, at an upset price of 10s. per mile per annum. He feared that if this Bill were passed large tracts of land would be sold under it at 10s. per acre, and the colony would by that means lose a large revenue which these lands would otherwise produce.

Mr. KRICHAUFF agreed with some of the remarks of the previous speaker, but he did not consider it desirable to reduce the quantity of land to be cleared under the existing Scrub Lands Act. One advantage derived from the letting of scrub lands was getting it cleared. (No.) He held that opinion, for he had seen some very good land which was covered with Murray scrub cleared and brought into cultivation. If the land was taken up for corn-growing there was no alternative it must be cleared. The Bill dealt not only with scrub land that might be made fit for pastoral purposes, but also better land suitable for cultivation when cleared. If used for the former purpose only there was of course no necessity for its being cleared. He regarded the Bill favourably, but thought it capable of amendment. He saw that in the 1st clause it did not repeal the Scrub Lands Amendment Act, No. 25. of 1870-71. With regard to the 4th clause, where it said that the amount to be paid for the fee-simple should be 10s., he might say that when the last amendments in the Act were made in 1870 and 1871 he had had letters upon the question from a number of farmers, in which he had been requested to do what he could to have the upset price reduced to that amount. At that time his application would not be listened to neither by the Ministry nor by the House. He had then considered that the reduction would have been of great advantage to the farmers, but whether it would in this Bill be the same was to him quite another question. He thought it would only be of advantage to those who were possessed of sufficient cash to purchase at once. The rent would be considerably raised—he believed that was in order to allow persons to select the land at once—and that would doubtless be an advantage to the farmer, though he could have the same advantage at a lower rental. The amount of 25s. for a hundred acres was very much more than was paid by persons at present. At least, if such a price was paid it would be by persons who made up a very few exceptions, and they had selected out of the first lot some exceedingly good lands, which could not be properly called scrub lands. The schedule to the Bill pointed out that the scrub lands should be pointed out by the Survey Department ; that they should be surveyed, and then that a list of them should be laid before Parliament for 14 days; and that immediately thereafter the lands might be opened for selection. They might be pretty sure that any lands on which scrub was not to be found would not be dealt with in the Bill. But, then, he believed that the price was too high. It was better, in his opinion, for the Government to say we want 15s. or £1*,* and reduce the rent to a minimum. It would then be rendered possible for persons to make their homes upon the land. He found it difficult to understand the way in which blocks were to be disposed of for which more than one person was applying. He wished to know from the Government if the auction would take place on the same date as the application would be made, or on a subsequent day. He found fault with the words “supposed to contain gold” being inserted in the 8th clause, as to the reservation of land by the Government, as he considered if any land was to be reserved on a mere supposition the effect would be altogether too general. It would, he thought, be better if the words “supposed to contain” were struck out. There was another point in the Bill which he was surprised to see not referred to by the hon. member for Stanley and others who had spoken. It was in the 11th clause, which stated that no tenant of waste lands in any hundred should be entitled to any commonage rights or to depasture cattle on the waste lands. He could not see how that could be prevented in the districts, although it might be prevented in the hundreds. He objected to the word “fairly” being inserted in the schedule, and considered that the lands referred to should be described as within Goyder’s line of rainfall instead of a reference being made to the schedule of another Act. It was in his opinion an advantage to have the Scrub Lands Acts repealed, and to have all scrub and inferior lands placed under the provisions of one Act; and there was a further advantage to be derived from the Bill, that a person might be able to get a single scrubby section in any part of a hundred, which could not now be done. There were many in the old hundreds which could not before be taken up, and he believed the Bill was the best that could be got. He would vote for the second reading, and reserve to himself the right to make an amendment in regard to the land reservation,

Mr. WEST said he did not think on the subject of the scrub lands that too much liberality could be shown, except in the area of land to be given. He considered three miles of land was too much to give to the class of persons for whom they were now legislating. He knew what the Murray scrub lands were—he was the owner of some himself— and he knew that the soil was in many instances very good for wheat-growing, and the reason why it was not more used was because of the want of water, and not because of the inferiority of the soil. He did not think taking the present Act and amending it would have met the case. He was glad the Government had introduced the present measure; but there were one or two defects in it which he would take leave to point out. The absolute alienation of the land was provided for in the measure, and he did not approve of the permanent alienation of the land from the Crown. (hear, hear.) In the district he had the honour of representing (Mount Barker) there had been a great deal of inferior land reserved for gold mining purposes. He thought much of it might be let in large blocks, on which persons might make homes. He was aware already persons had taken up their residence on the land, but he understood they were there only on sufferance. He would give legal right, and thus induce the settlement of population, of course reserving to the Government minerals and right of entry. The terms should be of the most liberal character. There was now an immense population settling in the hills, and these persons when they had gained a little money, having no inducement to settle, made their way into Victoria, where they invested their earnings. This Bill should provide for miners taking up small holdings.

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS (Hon. T. Reynolds)—That is provided for.

Mr. WEST was not aware of it, but it would prove a most useful provision. With labour at its present price he thought Government should lower the clearing regulation under the existing Act, and in that and any future legislation on the subject, considering the cost of clearing, the full value should be allowed for it under the head of improvements. This Bill was clearly not intended to apply exclusively to scrub lands, but also inferior open lands, and he would point out that under its operation much of the heathy land in the neighbourhood of Willunga would probably be let for dairying purposes. In the South-East, too, there were millions of acres which would come under the provisions of this Bill, fit for dairying purposes, but not for agriculture.

Mr. DUNCAN hoped the Government would not adopt the ideas of the hon. member for Stanley (Mr. Bright), as this Bill was an improvement on the existing Act, and he hoped it would be carried by the House. The present Scrub Lands Act had not worked, as any one practically acquainted with the country districts would know. He knew of scores and hundreds of miles of country which would not be taken up unless more liberal terms were offered by the Government than now existed. Before the land was reduced to 10s. per acre the Government should endeavour to get it taken up on right of purchase at 20s., and he believed a considerable quantity would be taken up under such terms. He was acquainted with many farmers in the Hundreds of Blyth and Hall who would take up land under such terms for the sake of firewood and pasturage for their cattle; but he believed with the hon. member Mr. Bright that £8 per mile per annum was too high a rent. It might be reduced by one-half or one-third, and would still produce considerable revenue, besides leading to the occupation of land now altogether useless, and only the hotbed for noxious weeds, which gave District Councils endless and ineffectual trouble. He quite agreed with other hon. members that the clearing clauses of the present Act were too stringent. The hon. member Mr. Bright had alluded to the quantity of land taken up under the existing Scrub Lands Act. He (Mr. Duncan) would like to know how much it was, for in all the districts he was acquainted with the quantity had been very little, and since the present Act had been such a failure the Government could not do better than proceed with a new measure. He would like to know how they intended to deal with the strips of good country which were sometimes found in the midst of scrub lands, and which could not be made agricultural areas, but which the farmers would perhaps be very willing to take up. He presumed that in the case of agricultural areas, the farmers would be enabled to take up these scrub lands simultaneously with their other selections. In this colony we were now arriving at the conclusion that pastoral and agricultural pursuits must now be combined in order to success. Even in Scotland, with its rich lands, this was found necessary, and certainly it was even more neces sary in dealing with the poorer soils of this colony. He had pleasure in supporting the Government on this measure. He trusted they would give attention to the suggestion which had been made in reference to mineral lands; but he did not suppose they would follow the advice of the hon. member for Mount Barker (Mr. West) in granting leases of 999 years, which he presumed were intended to be at the same rent as that now proposed for the 21 years’ term.

Mr. BUNDEY thought this Act was founded upon a wrong principle. It was regarded as desirable to obtain as much settlement upon the land as possible; but this Bill was not framed to that end. The principle of personal residence on the land was ignored. They had before the House a large scheme for giving away large quantities of land for an undertaking of doubtful benefit.

The SPEAKER—The hon. member was not in order in referring to a matter not under discussion.

Mr. BUNDEY—This Bill did not propose to increase settlement, but to give to those who already possessed land an advantage in obtaining more than they did not now possess. That very week some of his constituents who, in virtue of occupying scrub lands, were called "scrubbers’’— (Oh, oh, and laughter)—had told him the provisions of the present Act were too stringent. He concurred with the suggestion of the hon. member Mr. West that the land should not be absolutely sold, but let on perpetual leases; but he observed that principle did not meet with much approval in that House, but was rather treated with ridicule. (No, no.) Ridicule was no argument. But passing from that he would merely say that this Bill was started on a wrong principle. Some of the land proposed to be dealt with was fit for agriculture, and indeed the finest wheat South Australia had produced this year was grown in land cleared in the Murray Scrub. He would make personal residence a *sine qua non* in this measure, and he fully agreed that the keeping up the land to 20s. per acre was a fallacy. It would reverse the order of things. They would not give for an inferior article the same price that they would say for a superior one. The £1 an acre was a fallacy, as was also the existing Scrub Lands Act, under which many persons who had taken up lands had been obliged to throw them up.

Mr. ANGAS—The object of this Bill in so far as it attempted to provide farmers with runs for stock was laudable and worthy the approval of the House. But the question presented itself whether they were not at the same time depriving those persons who had bought land for the purpose of securing commonage of their vested interests. If the Government decided that it was right to take away that commonage, then there could be no objection to the provisions of the proposed Bill. They all knew that stocking the land tended to improve it; but if the land was cultivated or deprived of timber, it soon became worth a great deal less than when it was in its natural state. They had heard that the iron manufacturing industry was to be established in the colony, and it might lead to lands being taken up solely on account of the timber upon them. Some hon. member, as well as himself, held that the process of denudation should be avoided, and that forests should be conserved and new ones planted, and on this subject the hon. member Mr.Krichauff had taken considerable trouble. It had been suggested as likely that minerals would be discovered in some of these lands, and indeed it was more frequently seen that mines occurred in barren districts than in more fertile ones. Care should be taken upon that point as well as in relation to timber. He had known of land being taken up in large blocks for the mere purpose of getting timber for railway sleepers. When the timber was destroyed the value of the property was lessened. He saw no good reason for reducing the price of the land below 20s. per acre. The taking of it with a right of purchase, was not a contract to buy, but it was optional with the farmer, and he would still maintain the upset price at 20s. per acre. Under the present Act occupiers of scrub lands were compelled to clear and grub. He regarded that as of questionable advantage to the Crown. These persons would clear if they found it of advantage to themselves whether there was a regulation to that effect or not; and if a man could get two or three square miles of land in the neighbourhood of a mine, he would make a good thing of clearing the land, whilst he would pay but a small rent. He believed the Government had not given sufficient consideration to these matters, and when the Bill was in Committee he had no doubt amendments would be made in accordance with the suggestions which had been offered. Before that time he considered the Government could with advantage modify the measure with a view to the protection of useful timber and obtaining a good rental for lands suitable for cultivation.

Mr. MANN would vote against the second reading of the Bill. He felt sure hon. members did not see the full scope of its provisions or they would more earnestly oppose it. The Bill was nothing more nor less than a scheme to make a quantity of land, which the Surveyor-General might say was inferior and ought to be sold at 10s. per acre-

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS (Hon. T. Reynolds)—No.

Mr. MANN—That was the principle which he objected to in this measure. The Bill assumed to lease land for a term of 21 years, and that the lessee would keep it 21 years; but really it provided that he might the very next day after he got his lease purchase the land at 10s. per acre, and there was nothing to prevent him then taking up another lease to deal with it in the same way. There was nothing to prevent men becoming thus possessed of thousands of acres of land at 10s. per acre. That was a principle which he protested against, and he would divide the House upon it, even though he might stand alone. It was obvious the Bill had not received sufficient consideration ere it was introduced, and the several clauses did not hang together. He did not suppose that the Government intended the measure to operate in the way he had shown it would, but that would be the effect of the Bill. Then clause 5 preserved minerals during the currency of the case. Thus persons might go on mining on a piece of land, and directly they made a valuable discovery the lessee would go to the Land Office, purchase the land at 10s. an acre, and drive the miners of it, thus getting possession of a mine. But his principal objection to the Bill was founded on the schedule, which would allow the Survey Department to decide what lands should come under the denomination of scrub and inferior lands. He held that such an arrangement was monstrous. He did not say that the Survey Office would act improperly, or be biased by improper influences; but it had undoubtedly made blunders, and might do so again. The Survey Department had surveyed as good agricultural land that which did not answer the description, and had passed by good land as unfit for agriculture. If the power was given to the Surveyor-General which the Bill proposed, the House would abrogate a function which should not be granted to any individual. It was probable that the Government would refer him to clause 3 of the measure, which stated that the scheduled lands must be submitted to Parliament; but they all knew what that would amount to, and that it was probable that hon. members would never see the list or notice its introduction. He was willing to give every facility for the taking up the scrub and inferior lands and making them useful, but he would not consent that the Bill should pass with such provisions. He considered the regulations on this point which existed in the present Scrub Lands Act far more satisfactory, as it prevented any improper action and allowed plenty of time for objection if a wrong course was pursued. Even, with all precaution, good lands had been wrongly included at times, and how much more likely under the present measure would this mistake be when there was an entire absence of safeguards. He had no doubt the Commissioner of Crown Lands would have every desire to carry out the intention of the Bill in a bona fide manner; but residing in Adelaide, and having no means himself of knowing what the land really was, he would be bound by the report of the Surveyor-General, and that gentleman in his turn would for the most part be guided by the report of his deputies. It was a pernicious principle to hand this power to the Surveyor-General, and the safeguard provided by clause 3 was no safeguard at all. This Bill was clearly a step in the wrong direction, and he hoped its principle would not be affirmed by the passing of the motion for the second reading. Hon. members must remember that in Committee was not the time to alter the principle of a measure, and if the House did not approve of the point he had mentioned the present was the time to deal with it. There were other objections to the measure, and some of its clauses conflicted with each other. Under any circumstances he should oppose the lowering the price of land below 20s. per acre until the land had been open for a certain number of years, and under this Bill land which would fetch that price might never be submitted to the test of its real value. The true criterion whether land was worth 20s. an acre was to leave it open to selection at that price for a certain length of time. He objected to reduce it at the dictum of the Survey Office. His principal objection was to the schedule and the delegation of power by the Parliament to the Surveyor-General which it involved he should vote against the second reading of the Bill.

Mr.CONNER said it was quite evident there were not too many lawyers in the House, and he felt they were greatly indebted to the hon. member for the Burra (Mr. Mann) for directing attention to the peculiar clauses of the Bill. He felt the same strong objection that that hon. member had to giving to the Survey Office the functions to determine whether land was good or not, and to fix the price. They saw enough in the existing state of things, and the position of much of the surveyed and unsold lands at the present time, to show them such a course was undesirable. The effect of the measure would be to give up the lands of the colony to those who by interest and influence could work the department. He said this with all due respect to the hon. member who at present fulfilled the duties of Commissioner of Crown Lands; but it was well known that the department had been worked and good land sealed up whilst inferior land was opened up. He thought the hon. member for Barossa had taken an erroneous view of the clearing clause in the existing Act. The occupier was only bound to grub and clear the timber which he had cut down. He thought that the hon. member was right in what he had said about commonage rights. It seemed hard that those who had made a bargain with the Government already should be deprived of any right. He trusted the House would oppose the principle of giving to the Survey Department the power proposed to be conferred. He knew instances which would illustrate the difficulties which would be found in deciding which was good agricultural land, and which only fit to come under the scrub land category. Thus, in the Hundred of Lochaber a great deal of good land had been left out, and a great deal of scrub land came down into the area, he did not think there was at the present time any call for the Bill, except to put a large quantity of land into the market and money into the Treasury. He should divide with the hon. member Mr. Mann in this matter, as he believed the Bill would have the effect of creating a great deal of dissatisfaction.

The TREASURER (Hon. J. H. Barrow) wished to say a few words as to the measures before the House. He would begin with the schedule. Mr. Mann objected to the Bill because the inferior lands proposed by the Bill were not defined in the schedule. He certainly wished the Government to do an impossibility—(Hear, hear)—as the lands were almost all unsurveyed, and it was impossible to define them. If the House was with Mr. Mann that the lands should be distinctly defined they should say so at once, and then there would be an end of the matter, because the Government could not give a definition of unsurveyed land. But the Government saw the difficulty, although they were powerless to provide a remedy, as they were dealing with surveyed and unsurveyed lands—principally unsurveyed—and therefore Mr. Conner would see that if the Government were to deal with this class of lands at all they must be excused from giving a precise schedule. But to guard against any danger or abuse of power the Government had provided a clause, stating that no land should be offered under this Act until Parliament had had an opportunity of expressing an opinion. There were many Acts providing that rules, regulations, or proclamations should be laid on the table if Parliament was sitting, and the Government could act if Parliament was not in session, but in this Bill the Government had shut themselves out of power when Parliament was not sitting. If the period of 14 days, which was proposed as the term for the proclamation to be laid before Parliament before it should take effect, was too short, by all means let it be extended. (Hear, hear.) The Government had no objection to make it 28 days, or three months if they were to have select Committees visiting the lands. (Oh. and laughter; and Mr. Ward—“Hear, hear.”) That was a question for the House—the Government did not propose it. The Government were not exacting any powers in reference to those inferior lands without the direct sanction of the House and they proposed that no lands should be offered except when Parliament was sitting; so that there would be a check upon the Government and the Survey Department both. With regard to the price, he had been rather puzzled how to account for the rather contradictory arguments of hon. members, because while it was said on one side that 10s. an acre was too low a price for purchase, it was stated on the other that 3d. per acre was too high for rent. Now 3d. per acre was only 2 ½ per cent, upon the purchase-money, and he did not think it would be thought excessive. As to the question of the quality of the lands, the Government did not suppose there would be no parts of them available for agricultural purposes; but taking them altogether, they did not consider them as agricultural lands. If they were all such they should deal with them as agricultural lands, but they looked upon them as suited for grazing and dairy purposes, but not for the plough; and therefore they should never get £1 an acre for them. It was said that some of the best land was reclaimed land. He did not know whether it would last—whether there was the heart in it that there was in superior ground; but a person could not take scrub land, and make it fit for wheat-growing, without a large amount of labour; and if he had to spend a large amount upon it, he did not begrudge him the most he could make from it. He hoped that such land would turn out good crops, because it would cost a large amount in clearing and reclaiming. It had been asked whether a farmer, who had taken up land under the Waste Lands Act, might also take up land under this. He thought he could. They need not be too fearful of giving to the farmer too much advantage, for he had suffered from bad seasons and losses; and if there was land adjoining his which he could take up for grazing purposes he did not see why he should not add it to his farm. It would do harm to no one, and do him good. As to minerals he would not say anything, but the Attorney-General would look at that clause. As regarded commonage, he did not think they could look upon that as a vested right, but he looked at it as the use from year to year of land that was not required for other purposes; but when it could be put to better use the commonage rights must merge into the more valuable rights that succeeded. He only wanted the land to be taken under those circumstances. The hon. and learned member for Onkaparinga (Mr. Bundey) had again brought on his idea of 99 or 999 years’ lease—he did not remember which. (Mr. Townsend—“999 years, with renewal.” Laughter.) The hon. member said he met with some derision. He had not heard any derisive remarks as to the scheme in the House. There might have been at the Club. He thought the hon. member might have confounded remarks made at the Adelaide Club with remarks made in the House, and he thought hon. members had far too much respect for his arguments to treat them at all in a derisive or jeering manner. The object of the Government in this Bill was to utilize lands that were now perfectly useless. The Scrub Lands Act had been declared by some to have been a failure, and by some to have been successful. He believed that it had been successful in a limited degree. He believed that some blocks had been reclaimed, and that the persons were well satisfied with the result—(Hear, hear)—but it remained an undisputed fact that there was a large amount of inferior lands, not scrub lands merely, but sandy ridges, rocky ground, and stony rises which they could not call first-class or second-class farming lands, but which might be turned to useful account if let on easier terms than the Government felt justified in giving for better country. Much of this inferior land was in contiguity to better land, and it seemed a pity that the farmer who took up good land should be precluded from using the inferior country because he could not afford to pay so much for it as for the good. In Committee the Government would be happy to adopt any suggestions to make the Bill more workable, or give better effect to what they wished.

Mr. ROGERS had heard several hon. members make the remark that the Bill before them was not an improvement on the present Scrub Lands Act. But he regarded it as a considerable improvement that the price of scrub land had been reduced one-half. Personally he was of opinion that even this was too high for a good deal of it. He would like to see a sliding scale, according to which the price should come down for some land, after remaining for stated times at the intermediate price, from 7s. 6d. to 2s. 6d. There were hundreds of thousands of acres which had never been sold, and which would hardly be sold even at that. If such land were to be turned to account, it was necessary that every inducement should be offered for it to be taken up. It had lain useless as long as they had been a colony, and it would lay useless as long as they remained one unless they were much more liberal in their regulations about it. He would like those hon. members who thought such provisions were too liberal to take a tour with him through some parts of the land, and he was sure they would be convinced of the reverse. Some members had expressed the fear that minerals might be found on some of the lands dealt with. But they would notice that the Government reserved such rights until the land was purchased, and if anyone was fortunate to discover minerals on lands they might buy he thought they should not begrudge any the advantage of their discovery. It would do good to the colony, and hence was a thing to be satisfied with. There was no doubt that by liberalizing the scrub lands they would be doing a great benefit to those who wished to take up lands adjoining their own. There were plenty of settlers near the scrub lands who would utilize them if they could take them up on liberal terms, although he did not believe they would make good dairy farms, except with a good deal of expense. Hon. members said that the best wheat had been grown upon reclaimed scrub lands. So much the better; and the man who grew it would deserve the reward for his labour. If the land was given him he would deserve it. They had a great quantity of these lands in all parts of the colony, and it would be a good thing if they could induce people to take them up, for instead of there being any revenue from them it was the other way. There was a time when it was thought that the District Councils would be able to raise a revenue from them; but it was the reverse—they had been found a burden. Then the House had the safety-valve in their own hands, as the land would not be sold till the proclamation had been before them for 14 days. The rent should, he thought, go towards the purchase-money. He did not think they could be too liberal in dealing with scrub lands. He was glad the 4th clause provided for purchasing, because if a man discovered minerals he should have the advantage. The Bill did not exclude a man from former commonage. Mr. Mann took exception to the schedule. It was no doubt rather vague, but he looked upon the measure as repealing the Scrub Lands Act, and dealing more liberally with the lands. He should support the second reading.

Mr. PICKERING should not have got up to speak upon this scrubby question but for the remarks of some members, at which he was rather surprised. He did not think the Scrub Lands Act had been a failure, but large blocks of land had been taken up under the regulations. He passed some country not long ago where a gentleman had taken up a large block, and he was getting a colonial grubber for clearing the land which had been made by a friend of his (Mr. Pickering’s). He had since heard that the machine answered very well. He thought, however, it was only necessary to liberalize the Scrub Lands Act, and he was surprised at members saying that the Bill was too liberal. The hon. member Mr. Bright, who complained of the want of liberality, immediately objected to the price of 10s. an acre, and said it ought to be 20s. He could not understand that. Then he was rather surprised at the statement made by Mr. Mann—with his logic and clearheadedness he had expected something better— that a man could take up a succession of three square miles of land, which made Mr. Duncan say he would be a scrubby man indeed. He had no doubt that in many instances there would be useful timber upon the land, which would be almost as valuable as minerals. No good land which was worth 30s. would be sold at 10s., and he did not think there was any reasonable objection to the Bill. He did not think the Government could have brought in a better measure, and he should have great pleasure in showing that he was a consistent land reformer by voting for the second reading.

Mr. DERRINGTON would not trouble the House long, and would not review the previous legislation on the subject, but he would say that the Bill would be a very useful one to meet the wants of the district be represented, the wants of which he understood (No, and laughter). Well, he professed to do so. The only objection which had been strongly urged in the debate was the provision for bringing the land down to 10s. He thought it would be well for the Government to see to that, and prevent the alienation of a large quantity of land that might be useful in other ways. But he thought the rent of 3d. per acre would be in many cases too high. The land might be classified. Near agricultural districts the price might be considerable ; but in far-away places the land would not be worth nearly so much. There was good reason for asking the Government to consider the question of letting the land for less, because the Crown Lands Department had had it in contemplation to let land at a much smaller rate—say halfpenny per acre—on condition that it should be cleared of thistles. (Hear, hear.) He thought that if the Scrub Lands Act at present in existence had proved to be successful, the Government would have had no reason to bring in this Bill; it would be a work of supererogation of which he would have hardly thought them capable. He wished the Government to consider these points—the classification of land, making it higher or iower than the proposed price where desirable—and the conservation of useful timber in certain places. That would not be necessary in the South-East, where they had a little too much, but in some parts of the colony it would be desirable not only to conserve the timber, but to promote the cultivation of forest trees.

Mr. BOUCAUT remarked that the Treasurer said there was no sneering at Mr. Bundey in the House. He did not believe there was, and he thought the idea of the hon. member was well worthy of discussion; and although it was the fashion to laugh at it, if the theory could be carried into practice it would be a fine thing for this colony and for many other countries. The theory was splendid, but he feared the difficulty would be in carrying it out into practice. He would be glad, and he was sure the House would be glad, to have the opinions of the hon. member in discussing this matter. He thought it so well worthy of consideration at one time that he thought of bringing it before the Legislature; but he found, although there was so much about it, there was so little practice that he did not like to do so. He should be glad, however, to listen to the hon. member, and would go with him if he could. The Treasurer said that although sneers had not been made in the House, they might have been made at the Adelaide Club. Was the Treasurer a member of the Club? He was sure he did not wish them to be influenced by the Adelaide Club. It was the first time he had heard any reference to what the Club said, and the less perhaps the better. The hon. member for Light (Mr. Conner) said one thing which amused him very considerably. He defended the lawyers. It was wondrously refreshing to hear them defended — (laughter)— especially by the hon. member for Light; but if they did not get a much better defence than that it would not be much. Mr. Conner said it showed the necessity of having several lawyers. The more the merrier, said he. (Laughter.) The hon. member said the advantage was shown in the hon. member for the Burra (Mr. Mann); but singularly enough it was because that member had spotted a point which he immediately said he had marked himself. (Laughter.) He agreed with him in the judgment that it was exceedingly necessary to lave several lawyers in the House; but he did not agree with him in his reasons for coming to that decision. He would remind him of the advice of the Lord Chancellor to an ignorant lawyer who was going as a Justice to the West Indies—"Give your judgment, but never give your reasons.” As Mr. Mann had pointed out, the schedule could not stand, and he believed that the Government did not intend it to. There was not only the defect pointed out, but it was imperfect in itself. It referred to another Bill—the proposed Waste Lands Alienation Act —and the Speaker would interfere if they referred from one Bill to the other. He could agree with Mr. Mann that the Bill was badly drafted. He was certain the Attorney-General could draft Bills very well when he liked to settle down to it and had time; but he would point out to him that if he intended to take his share of the debates and work with the Government in the House and in the Cabinet Council, and govern his office, he would find that quite enough to do, however much a gormandizer of work—he would not use the word glutton— he might he. He would not be able to do the country, the House, or himself justice if he put his name to these Bills, and they would be as much criticised. He would recommend him to have them drafted by a draftsman. He could not draft Bills in addition to his other duties, and if he tried he would make a mess of it. He would ask the hon. member what the schedule was for. A schedule generally consisted of what could not be put in the Bill; but it was not worth while to have a schedule for what might be more conveniently described in a clause. If the Government would notice the remarks which had been made by several hon. members they would see that the Survey Department could not be allowed the control that this Bill would give them. It was not even the Surveyor-General or the Commissioner of Crown Lands. He did not say he should object if the Commissioner or the Executive Council had the power, because in that case someone would be responsible; but as proposed there would be no onus thrown on the Commissioner, who would properly excuse himself from responsibility, as the House gave the power to the Survey Department. Neither would the Surveyor- General be responsible. Who was the “Survey Department” while he was in England, or when the Deputy Surveyor-General was in the North with Mr. Ulrich? He was sure the House would not pass the provision; but the proper way would be to say, “Such lands as the Governor may proclaim after the proclaimation being before Parliament”—not 14 days, but the time should be a month or six weeks. He apprehended that there would be then no objection. There was another thing he would draw attention to. The 3rd clause provided that lands should be open for selection after a plan had been laid before Parliament 14 days, “ unless order shall be made by Parliament to the contrary.” Parliament had no power to make an order. It could pass an Act, which would have to be assented to by both Houses. He supposed that that expression was a slip. With regard to the price of 10s. an acre, they would have to discuss that very carefully in Committee, and also the reservation alluded to by Mr. Mann. It did not appear to him, from the wording of the 4th and 5th clauses, whether the Government meant that the reservation of minerals should be during the lease or perpetually. If it was to be perpetually, it should be stated. It was worth considering whether there should be a right to minerals on land granted at such a low price. If the Government did not mean that, they were open to the criticism of the hon. member Mr. Mann in stating that if there was a valuable mine discovered on a holding the lessee could come down and buy the land notwithstanding the reservation. Undoubtedly that hon. member’s construction was the right one, and the Government would have to bring their attention to that matter. Then there was no doubt that a man could get a large quantity of land under this Bill. He could get a lease, buy the land at 10s. an acre, and get another lease next day. He did not know whether there was any objection to that if they were inferior lands, but the Government would have to consider whether, under the circumstances, there should not be some reservation, and whether the land should not be put up to auction before such large rights were given. Most probably he should in Committee go with hon. members who wished to effect that, or perhaps he should move an amendment himself; for if people wanted to pay £1 an acre there was no reason why they should have it for less. He hoped the Government would pay attention to that in Committee. He was not going to set himself to work out the arithmetical problem the Treasurer had set down as to the relative values of large quantities of land at a rent of 3d. per acre, or 10s. as purchase-money. He should support the Bill most cordially, although it was rather hurriedly drafted.

The Hon. A. BLYTH believed that the intentions of the Bill were very good indeed, but wished to say a few words upon the subject of what the effects of the measure would be if it were passed in the form in which it had been brought forward. The schedule to the Bill, to which frequent reference had been made, he could only denominate as rather peculiar in its character; and as to the Bill, he thought those who had lived in the colony for any length of time could imagine the serious evils which such a measure would produce. Much land which was now valuable would have been held by the Survey Department as in their opinion within the category of inferior lands. Some very valuable land of a stony character might, for instance, have been described in such a way—land such as that of the Burra and the Moonta Mines might have been considered as inferior. And thus, instead of the benefit going to the poor man, as was said to be the case when the minerals were first discovered, he considered the Bill would be the means of placing very valuable land in the hands of quite another class. He hoped that hon. members would not take the advice of the hon. member who had preceded him, as he thought if they did that very few Bills would be passed during the session. The Bill seemed generally to be considered as badly drawn. The hon. member for Encounter Bay (Hon. Commissioner of Crown Lands) had in his district some very stony land that was not saleable, and some others good water bottoms were also there, and he had no doubt some of the hon. gentleman’s constituents had asked him to make some provision by which they could have the use of the land. That would be all very well if the Bill stopped at giving what were really scrub lands into the hands of persons willing to make use of them; but the operation of the Bill would not be bound to stop there. As he had said, twenty years ago the Moonta Mine would have been described as inferior land, and he might even go further and say that the land between Adelaide and Gawler Town would have come under the same designation. They had been told that the period of 14 days set apart by the Bill for the Surveyor’s notices of lands open for sale to lie upon the table of the House before selection was too short, and the Treasurer had made as a joke, he supposed, about it being impossible to find time to visit the lands which were open. If the visit of inspection would be anything like a visit of inspection lately paid to the South-East, he sincerely hoped they should not see one. The hon. member for West Torrens had made some allusion to the Adelaide Club; but he really did not know why, though he had looked over at him (the Hon. A. Blyth), he had said he could make some very severe remarks about it if he liked. (Mr. Boucaut—“No.”) He did not know that the hon. member had had any ill-treatment to complain of on the part of the Adelaide Club—(Mr. Boucaut—“No”)—but if he had even he did not think it was proper to introduce it into the debate. (Mr. Boucaut—“No.”) He was sorry that allusions should be made in a debate of this kind to institutions which were very beneficial in their way, and which tended to the promotion of good feeling. From what hon. members had said, he thought the Government, when it went into Committee upon the Bill, would find it necessary to alter the 10s. as upset price for the scrub lands to 20s. an acre; they would have to very materially alter clauses 4 and 5; and, with other alterations which appeared likely to be made, he did not know that he should object to support the third reading, as it would probably have a new schedule, some new clauses, and perhaps a new preamble. He did not, in fact, know what he would do. If all the good intentions in regard to the Bill were carried out, he would support the third reading heartily; but, as it at present stood, it would be a measure which would give much more benefit to rich than to poor men. As all of them had known times when the law would be so dealt with as to result in the acquirement of immense tracts of valuable colonial land at the reduced price of 10s. per acre by wealthy men. He objected to the words “supposed to contain gold.” which was proposed in one of the clauses of the Bill, as he did not know of any lands in the colony that might not be designated as land supposed to contain gold, and be held over in reservation. With the alterations which had been pointed out as necessary, he would support the Bill.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. G. Stevenson) said when the state of things which the hon. member for Gumeracha had alluded to came to pass, and all the clauses except two were taken away from it, he should admit that the Bill had been badly drawn, but not till then. (Hear, hear.) With regard to the advice tendered him by the hon. member for West Torrens (Mr. Boucaut), he admitted that his name appeared as draftsman of the Bill. He had drafted the Bill, and so long as he had the honour to hold the position of Attorney-General he should spare no exertion in doing whatever he could to save the colony expense in drafting Bills. (Hear, hear.) He had had a little experience as a Parliamentary Draftsman, but perhaps not so much as some other hon. members. And if evils were found in the Bill, he could not help that, as he had done his best for the colony to save it expense. (Hear, hear.) In regard to the schedule, he might say that he did not think that making it refer to the land comprised within the limits of the schedule of the Waste Lands Act made it necessary to refer to the Bill itself, which was before Parliament. It might be said that the safeguard in the Bill, that in all cases of lands taken up in clause 3 a plan of the land so to be taken up should be allowed to lie upon the table for 14 days before selection, was no proper safeguard, because no member would look at papers on the table; but to that he would say that in a case of so great importance no hon. member should so far forget the duty he owed to his constituents as to neglect to look at the plans. And if that was not the case, at least there would be ample security that the Government should not be able to take action for the sale of lands till Parliament had an opportunity of making a contrary order, which he was sure would never be disregarded, especially as the term of 14 days, if considered too short, would be altered to a longer period. There was also another safeguard in the regulations that he had not heard noticed particularly by any hon. member. It was that the regulations under the Act made by the Governor in Council should be laid before Parliament within 14 days of the time of their being made, or within 14 days of the opening of the Parliamentary sitting. And he trusted that Parliament would at all times see that proper regulations were made. As to the price at which the land should be taken up, he would leave that to hon. members; but he only wished to point out that the last clause of which he had spoken provided that the lands should not be dealt with without the knowledge and consent of Parliament. He could have wished that the hon. member for Gumeracha, when he alluded to the Bill as being badly drawn, had been a little more definite than he had been.

The Hon. A. BLYTH had only said that it was generally stated that the Bill was badly drawn.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. G. Stevenson) would not say anything more upon the principles of the Bill, but would leave those matters to be dealt with by his hon. colleague the Commissioner of Crown Lands in reply. But he had thought it well to say what he had, to show that he had not done the work of drafting the Bill hastily or in a careless manner.

Mr. BRAY said it was his intention to support the second reading of the Bill with some amendments. He thought all were agreed upon the desirability of framing a Bill which would be the means of placing the scrub and inferior lands in the hands of persons who would turn them to good account, but he was afraid the Bill in its present form would not do so. There was no doubt that the clause relating to that subject was so drawn that the reservation of minerals could not be carried out. If the right of terminating a lease at any time were reserved, he thought that difficulty would be got over. It was intended by the Bill that when minerals were discovered, the discoverer should take out a mineral licence: but the lessee would purchase as soon as minerals had been discovered. He thought that the period for plans to lie before Parliament before the selection of land was too short, and considered that in addition to the period being lengthened, the notices of the land being ready for selection should be published in the *Gazette,* besides the plans being placed before Parliament, as in cases when hon. members would not know the lands referred to their constituents could then see for themselves, and by communication with them prevent sales which should not take place in consequence of the land not being inferior. He thought that the price should not be allowed to be so low as 10s. per acre, and thought it should be kept up to £1 per acre, for if people were found to give £1 per acre the colony would not be the loser by it. The Bill set forth that rent was to be not less than 3d. per acre, and he wished to know if that was retained who would decide in cases of the price being fixed at prices above 3d. It could be imagined that the Commissioner of Crown Lands might fix a rental different in amount for one man from that which he might fix for another. He thought, therefore, that at the time the proclamation was put in the *Gazette* the price should be fixed. It could of course be easily fixed at that time. As soon as the Bill was in Committee he should, with other members, join in assisting to carry out the required amendments, as he saw that the Government evidently intended well in the measure brought forward.

Mr. WARD said he should not adopt the course with reference to the Bill which had been suggested by the hon. member for the Burra (Mr. Mann), but would follow the suggestion which that hon. member had thrown out with reference to what had been called the kindred measure. He should vote for the second reading, and in Committee do what he could to amend it so as to make it more conformable with his views. The preamble to the Bill he did not think that any hon. member could object to, citing as it did that it was desirable to make better provision for dealing with the scrub and inferior waste lands of the Crown. He did not intend to vote for some of the clauses of the Bill, as he feared the danger that had been pointed out by the hon. member for the Burra (Mr. Mann) of persons being able to proceed with taking up large areas so quickly as to secure them before objection could be made. They could select and pay 3d. per acre, and then it would be possible for them on the next day to pay 10s. an acre and purchase it over and out. Then they could again select immediately, and so on. He considered that in the first instance the Bill should be made to apply to lands that had passed the hammer for a certain number of years. He thought if that were done there were lands in the colony now lying idle in many parts that could be turned to useful purposes. And he was opposed to the price being fixed at 10s., but thought it might be taken at 15s. at first, and then if the land was not taken up and lay unoccupied for a certain time it could be selected at 10s. That would be quite different from bringing certain parts under the denomination of scrub lands to be sold at a particular price.- There were many cases of these scrub lands being valuable, as for instance on the Murray Flats, where very good soil for wheat-growing was to be found, and he should be sorry to see them offered for sale on terms provided in the Bill. He should endeavour to amend the Bill in that respect in Committee. He was in favour of the price being made to decrease gradually, and if that were agreed to the danger which the non, member Mr. Mann had pointed out would, he thought, be obviated, and he thought that under those provisions a very large amount of land might be brought into use. A large quantity in the South-East District which was wet and worthless now would come under the Act. That could not be called scrub lands; but at the same time it was well if it could be disposed of, even at a low price. He considered that the provision in the 3rd clause of the Bill that plans of lands open for selection should be laid before Parliament was objectionable, in so far as the period was insufficient. He was in favour of extending the period to three months. He pointed out that it was not every member of the House who had the opportunity of travelling through the country districts and seeing for himself the nature of the lands to be taken up, and in that matter they would be obliged to depend upon the representations of their constituents. He was satisfied if sufficient time were allowed to elapse between the date of the land being declared open and the time in which it could be selected. If any lands were improperly placed in the category of inferior lands, representations could be made to the Government by members of the House, and other action taken to prevent wrong being done. If anything less than three months was fixed, it would be impossible that that action could be taken. He believed that if they were to discriminate between the lands which were considered inferior and those which were fit for agricultural purposes, they must leave the Survey Department to make the classification. He did not at all sympathize with the objection which had been made that the price of land should not be reduced below 20s. per acre. There was far too great a tendency in the colony to keep up the price of land, and this not only had an injurious effect on persons belonging to South Australia who wished to purchase, but the knowledge of it had also a very powerful effect in keeping away persona who might otherwise come here from other countries. He thought the idea was especially objectionable, inasmuch as a large quantity of the land of South Australia was not worth either £1 or 10s. an acre. There were certain scrub and sandy lands which could not be said to be worth anything like 10s. an acre, and yet if a person liked to take up that land there was a means of improving it. If it, for instance, was sown it would unquestionably harden the soil, and render it more capable of production. He knew a case where an enterprising farmer in Wellington had greatly improved his land by running a heavy harrow broadcast over it, and then sowing it with a little rye. If these lands were capable of improvement, let them by all means be improved, and let the price of them be so reduced as to cause persons to take them up and use them to some advantage. He therefore hoped that in the Bill they should strike a blow at the absurd idea of preserving the price of land at £1 an acre, and hoping that that would be done he would support the second reading. In another provision he was glad to see that the Government had adopted the auction system as a means of deciding between persons who wished to have the same land instead of deciding by lot, and he hoped to see the principle extended to another Act in which it did not at present appear. He did not think that there was any great fault to be found with the schedule if they could adopt the principle of discriminating between inferior lands and those fit for agriculture; but he was not altogether sure that the land which he had referred to in the South-East would be included, and if that was not so the schedule should be amended so as to include it.

Mr. SMITH was rather surprised to hear hon. members state their intention not to vote for the second reading of this Bill, inasmuch as no two of them had agreed as to the provisions which it should contain, and he could hardly see how the Government could bring in a perfect measure which would have their united support. Although he thought the Ministry would succeed in carrying the measure, he considered that several suggestions that had been thrown out ought to be considered by them, especially those put forward by Mr. Mann. He thought that the evil pointed out would be remedied by allowing one individual to take up only one block of land. He could not agree with the remarks of Mr. Angas in regard to the vested interest which those who held land now and for some years past had as to commonage, as it was known that those rights must cease within twelve months after notice being given. Therefore he did not think they had any right to complain. With regard to the timber which the hon. member had spoken of, he was at a loss to know on what land it was to be found suitable for railway-sleepers or purposes of that description. He thought such lands would be difficult to find in the South-East. He could not agree that the lands of the colony should all remain at the upset price of £1 an acre, for in many instances 10s. was as much as it was worth. He thought the rent of 3d. per acre was low. It was, as the Treasurer had put it, 2 ½ per cent, interest on the rate of purchase, and he thought no person could object to make such a payment. He should be ready to assist the Ministry and other members in framing a suitable Act.

Mr. TOWNSEND was sure the Ministry would be obliged to the hon. member for West Torrens for the advice which he had tendered to the Attorney-General. He supposed his reason for giving it was because he objected to the Minister’s name being down as draftsman and the costs being set down as nil. As a member of the profession, which he said was one from which he would like to see more members in the House, he did not like to see a Bill that had not been paid for. However, he (Mr. Townsend) could say that the Bill was quite as well drawn as some which had been paid heavily for. He had seen Bills produced from the draftsmen in which whole paragraphs from English Acts had been passed, and that was at the time when the hon. member was Attorney- General. With regard to the 3rd clause, he did not think that the Commissioner of Crown Lands would say that the period of 14 days for plans to be laid before Parliament previous to lands being open for selection was long enough; and he agreed with Mr. Bray that the information should be gazetted. A longer period was necessary, as it was well known that persons who were interested to obtain land had before brought pressure to bear upon the department, and time was required to prevent them being able to become improperly possessed of the land. He denied that hon. members were in the habit of reading all the documents that were presented to Parliament, but by placing the notices in the *Gazette* their constituents would be able to look after their interests in the first instance. With regard to the price of land, he thought it might be fixed at not less than 10s., and the Commissioner of Crown Lands could then decide the prices above that point. He did not go so far as the hon. member who had said that the Bill would require the preamble altered and several clauses struck out; but he considered that a number of amendments would be required. He thought there was too much of a tendency to object to persons making money out of purchases of land, as the wealth of an individual was likely to be beneficially indirectly to the colony generally. He hoped a workable measure would be agreed to.

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS (Hon. T. Reynolds) thought it was clear from the tenor of the remarks made by hon. members that the Government in framing the measure had caught the feeling of the House and of the country generally. It was quite possible that there were matters of detail, however, which were capable of improvement. For instance his hon. friend —(laughter and Hear, hear)—yes, he would say his hon. friend the member for the Burra (Mr. Mann) had raised the objection that there was a want of care in the preparation and drafting of the Bill. Now, he was willing to admit that the Bill was not of the stereotyped form generally found in measures introduced into that House. But he must add that he had seen Bills drafted by that hon. member which had shown great marks of haste, and had been capable of very great improvement. This had occurred, too, when Mr. Mann was in the Government. But by another hon. friend—the member for Gumeracha (Mr. Blyth) the Bill had been called a curious Bill. (Hon. A. Blyth—“No, no.”) Well, he understood him to say “as curious a Bill as some of his home-made wine.” (Laughter, and Hon. A. your Blyth—“I meant wine.”) any rate the point of objection was that in some respects it was not so good a Bill as it was possible to make. He admitted at once that the Bill was capable of improvement; and, moreover, he hoped where it could be made better to see it amended. However perfectly a Bill might be prepared, there were always points which escaped notice at the time which needed afterwards to be altered. When the House went into Committee the Government would ask all the hon. members to help them to make the measure as perfect as possible. As regarded the schedule, he had felt that under some circumstances it might work injuriously, and he would ask the House to assist them to prevent it. But he had had schedules as long as his arm, and still there were difficulties, and he would submit that it was impossible to define clearly the lands that would be treated by this Bill, when there were 6,000,000 acres of land south of Goyder’s Rainfall which would come under the operation of the Bill. The Government were not so wedded to red-tapeism as to hold that good and bad land must always be treated the same. They were rather disposed to take a commercial view of the matter, and as good land was to be sold at 20s., sell the bad for less. (Hear, hear.) But some hon. members would say to the farmers, “You shall have good agricultural land for £1 an acre, but the poor worthless land you shall not have for 10s., nor for a penny less than the good.” Such was the view of the hon. member for Stanley (Mr. Bright). This land proposed to be dealt with had been open to selection for years. (No, no.) Why, persons could hardly be got to take it up for grazing purposes. And now the Government proposed rendering that land profitable by saying to the people—“If it does not pay you to buy this land at £1 an acre, take it on a lease of 21 years at a low rental of 3d. an acre, with the right of purchase at the end of that time at 10s.” As to that price being too low, hon. members ought to explain the contradiction that while they said this, they objected to 3d. an acre rental as too high, when it was only 2 ½ per cent, on the cost. But the principle for the House to affirm, however details might be altered, was the utilization of the large extent of inferior land at present useless. If the schedule could be amended so as to define the lands more clearly, if the 14 days’ notice was not long enough and needed extension, by all means let these things be altered. Let them have as many checks as possible to prevent any unfair working under the Bill. In reference to timber, he did not think there was any large extent of it on the lands that would come under this Bill. But if there were any spots of fine timber the Government would feel it their duty, in harmony with Mr. Go Angas’s remarks, to keep such as forest reserves. It was not the intention of the Government that the Act should serve as a timber licence, hence the provision that if the trees were cut down the roots must be grubbed. Many hon, gentlemen had expressed the fear that under the working of this Act mineral property might be obtained. It might be so, for the keenest mineralogist might be mistaken as to whether land did or did not contain minerals. Thus it had happened that on lands taken up at £1 an acre mines had been discovered. But of course lands supposed to contain minerals would be reserved. He did not know whether sufficient care had been taken in the clause; that, however, would be a point for legal opinion, and the House could deal with it afterwards. The intention of the Government in the clause was that while the land was leased mineral rights should be reserved; and if minerals were discovered, and it was wished to take the land under a mining lease, every facility should be given to a person to do so. He thanked the House for the way in which they had helped the Government in their consideration of the Bill. (Hear, hear.)

The motion was carried, and the Bill read a second time.