**WASTE LANDS AMENDMENT BILL 1873**

**House of Assembly, 27 November 1873, pages 1221-35**

Second reading

**The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. C. Mann)** said the House would recollect that after a recent discussion the Government promised to bring in a Bill to amend clause 18 of the Waste Lands Act. He hoped the House would assist the Government in strenuously resisting any attempt to alter the Bill, or to import into it any further general amendments upon the law for the alienation of waste lands of the Crown. The Bill was very short, consisting only of one clause, and was designed to rectify the abuses which had crept in under the clause providing for limited auction, by which persons could run land up to a fictitious price, and then throw it up. The Government proposed to remedy that by providing that the person to whom the land was knocked down should not be able to throw it up. That would no doubt remedy the abuse, and was the most effectual way of doing so. Abuses had at one time existed in the administration of the law, and when reports were made to the Surveyor-General they were remedied, but still they were liable to recurrence. The amendment was very simple, and would commend itself to the minds of hon, members without his saying any more; but Mr. Ward had publicly announced his intention to move to incorporate those amendments which he previously brought forward to reduce the upset price of the land to £1 an acre, to extend the time for credit selections, and to remit the interest. Mr. Rees had also intimated to him that he was anxious to move an amendment with a view of including within the operation of the Act lands which at present were not within it; and other members had intimated that they intended to move amendments. He anticipated that some members, at any rate, wished to raise a discussion upon the whole policy and the general question. The Government would oppose with all the power they had any alteration in the law, because this was not the time to do it. It might be said that he at any rate ought not to resist the amendments to be proposed. (Hear, hear.) He agreed, and always had agreed, with some of the amendments Mr. Ward wished to introduce, and fought perhaps as hard as any member to have them made the law of the land; but the Parliament having devoted two or three sessions to the consideration of this matter, and having last session passed an Act which, as far as he had been able to gather, was working very well, it was very undesirable and inexpedient to be continually altering the law. It gave rise to uncertainty as to what the law really was or what it might be, and the longer it remained the same, unless grave abuses were detected, the better. It was undesirable that there should be a new Land Bill every session. No sooner were the people familiarized with the Act than it was altered, and no sooner were the officers familiarized with the routine than there was a new Act, and they had to make a fresh start. As far as he had been able to gather the Land Act at present existing was working very well indeed. (Hear, hear, and Mr. Ward—“No.”) It afforded an opportunity to people who wished to get land for cultivation to get it at a moderate price— (Messrs. Krichauff and Ward—“No”)—and there was no demand outside the House for any alteration. Means had been taken by some members to get up an agitation, but the farmers had not responded with any amount of cordiality to the wishes of their friends. He believed Mr. Rees would introduce an amendment to include lands to the east of the Burra. He would express no opinion as to whether they were fit or not, and perhaps he should offend a considerable number of his constituents. (Hear, hear.) But he could not help it; he was doing his duty and would resist any alteration, because having passed an Act last session it was only proper to give it a fair trial and see whether it worked well. He did not hesitate to say that two or three months would be occupied in the discussion of the questions it was wished to introduce. It was too late in the session to bring them forward. He believed a majority of members wished to have the business concluded before Christmas. (Hear, hear.) The House would sit in April, and if they discussed these matters there was no probability of the session closing till March, and the effect would be that they would be in session all the year round. He would ask members whatever their opinions to strengthen the hands of the Government in resisting any alterations in this Bill, which was introduced under particular circumstances with the understanding that it would be confined to this one point. The House had expressed its opinion that it was not expedient to deal with all these questions by carrying the previous question against Mr. Ward's proposition.

Mr. WARD said of course he would vote for the second reading of the Bill on the principle that “half a loaf is better than no bread” —not that he admitted that the Bill even satisfactorily amended the clause. It was an absurd and inefficient amendment, and in the form proposed would have no effect whatever. He denied altogether that there was any implied understanding that no amendments should be introduced during the present session. When the question was discussed the Government did not dare to take a division, but sheltered themselves by the previous question, and it was absurd to talk of an understanding that they should not alter the Bill in any respect. They had by the experience of the session ample means of knowing that the Government would resist any attempt to make the land laws as they should be, and he was perfectly assured that the Attorney-General would use every effort to resist the adoption of those principles, to the profession of which he owed his seat in the House and the opportunity of becoming the Attorney General of the country. The excuse that this was too late in the session was one that should not come from the Ministry, because the Notices of Motion which led to the introduction of the Bill were given nearly two months ago, and the Government might have introduced the Bill six weeks ago and had it through both Houses; so it was not in their mouths to talk about its being too late in the session. As to there being no time, why could they not make time? Their time was their own, and they could sit there as long as they liked, and as many days as they liked. (No.) If the Government, were sincere: they would be willing to sit there. These were the only grounds on which the Attorney-General was going to resist any further amendments. He did not venture for one moment to say he had changed his opinions, although he was acting contrary to his opinions; he had not told them the land ought not to be cheaper, and that other lands should not be included under the operation of the Act, or that the time for credit sales should not be extended; but his paltry plea was that it was too late in the session. He Intended to ask the House to amend clause 1. The manner in which the existing clause had been deliberately worked was this: — Persons had come into town to compete for certain land. If they got it well and good. If they did not they ran up the land, and it had been sometimes run up as far as £12. He knew of men who had said they were determined to have the land, and they did not care how long they stayed in town, because they could afford to do it. It came to this, that the man with limited means, who could not afford the expense of staying in Adelaide week after week and leaving his work, could not get the land, and those who had means drove others off. He did not know how lawyers would argue upon the clause introduced by the Attorney-General, but it seemed possible that there was a nice question as to whether it did not remove the condition of clause 18 and leave it without the limitation. It might be read both ways. It would afford one of those quibbles on which lawyers might argue either one side or the other, and there might be a decision of the Supreme Court stating that the amendment took away the condition of the clause, and left it to its unlimited operation/ It did not explicitly express what was the intention of the House, and he thought the House would assent to strike out the words, and insert an amendment which he should propose, stating that 5 per cent, of the purchase-money should be paid on the fall of the hammer, and that the deposit should be forfeited in case the land were not taken up. (Hear, hear.) If it were put in this way there would be no doubt as to the intention of the clause, and the intention of the House would be carried out. He would also ask the House to assent to the introduction of a clause, extending the time of credit selection to two years. That had been advocated over and over again, and the Attorney-General had contended strenuously that two years was little enough. Could any one say that it was too much trouble for the Committee to assent to such a clause as that? He would also seek to introduce a clause, stating that the upset price of country lands should not exceed £1 per acre. Upon that question if necessary he could speak for an hour, bringing forward arguments which it was for the absolute good of South Australia, and those who had vested interests-(Hear, hear)—certainly of those who had paid *£5* an acre for their land— that they should adopt it. It had been proved by experience that there was no colony in this Australasian Empire, if he might use the term, in which the land laws were so absolutely discouraging to settlement as in South Australia. (Hear, hear.) There was no colony in which there was so little inducement to people who did not know ifs advantages in many respects to settle as in South Australia, and it was a discredit to the colony that it should remain so. He would mention the experience of a gentleman who had recently returned from England, and had authorized him to use his name. Mr. P. C. Greayer. who was well known as an intelligent man of business, stated that while in England he had an opportunity of studying the immigration question, and he endeavoured to ascertain why so few people thought of turning their attention to South Australia, and he distinctly told him that unless we could offer land on as liberal terms as the other colonies we could not get people to come here. (Hear, hear.) He thought that was an opinion that justified him in the view that he had frequently expressed in the House. In seeking to introduce these amendments he was not only doing that for which the Attorney-General had been one of the most strenuous advocates, but that which a majority of the people of South Australia desired to have done. Except in the districts held for pastoral purposes the people were almost unanimously in favour of his proposals, and since the last general election there had been elections which made a difference of six votes on the question, and if the Chief Secretary, Attorney-General and the Commissioner of Public Works would vote as they have previously done there would be an absolute majority. He need only mention the Districts of Victoria and the Burra to show that in place of three members who opposed these alterations they had three who were in favour of them. That made an absolute difference of six votes, and as the hostile majority was two they would certainly have had a majority now, and that was why he felt so strongly the refusal of the Government to prosecute reform this year.

Mr. STOW said Mr. Ward always spoke well, and he spoke with particular force upon this question ; but all the arguments, except that in reference to the information given by Mr. Greayer, had been used over and over again in the discussions on the Land Bill. (Mr. Ward Hear, hear.”) There were arguments—perhaps not many of them were so forcible as those of the hon. member—and the result was after an immense deal of discussion and one or two sessions had been spent almost exclusively upon this subject, embodied in the Bill which was now the law of the land. He was of opinion that it was not wise, where an important measure affecting a very large number of people had upon due deliberation been passed into law, that there should be discussions as to the principles of the BiII with a view of radical change, and therefore he would oppose any radical changes in the land laws during this session. With regard to the land being fixed at *£*1 an acre, the results of the introduction of the present land system had been that an immense area of country was occupied, and he did not know that such results as the hon. member predicted would flow from the reduction of the upset price to £1*.*  With regard to the language of the clause in the Bill, it was possible that that might be altered. It was practically the law that the land should be kept open for two years, because there was power by resolution of the House to compel the Government to keep it open for that time, aid it had been exercised when necessary. Rather than have any discussion he would ask the Government to accept the amendment, although he would rather go with them in refusing any discussion of the land question during the present session. As regarded the suggestion of the hon. member that land should be sold at an upset price of £1 an acre, he must during the present session oppose it. He did not know what magic there was in a pound an acre. (Hear, hear.). The hon. member laid as much stress upon it as if it were a new discovery. Why should it not be any other sum? The question had been discussed time after time, and it was decided that the price should be £2 per acre, and he saw no reason why it should be altered. He did not agree with the hon. member in his attacks upon the Attorney-General and Chief Secretary. (Hear, hear.) They fought manfully for their principles when the Bill was under discussion. The hon. member raised a false issue by stating they had abandoned them when they said that this was not the time to bring them forward. (Hear, hear.) The hon. member seemed to think that no one but himself had a right to refrain from expressing his views and giving effect to them at any time when it was inconvenient. The hon. member was strongly in favour of personal residence. Would he vote for that now? (Mr. Ward—“Yes.”) Why did he not bring it forward? They had as much right to say that because he was in favour of personal residence and did not bring it forward, that he was a renegade, as the hon. member had to make such charges against the Chief Secretary and the Attorney-General. The hon. member knew the House and the country were against him, and so he did not bring the question forward, and yet he held the hon. Gentlemen up to public scorn as persons who had abandoned their principles. He did not think they had. A man was right to say, “Although I hold particular opinions this is not a convenient time to bring them forward, and I will not do so.” That was the view taken by Mr. Ward upon one fundamental question of reform, and he thought the hon. member might exercise his forbearance—not that that was needed - and not make these constant attacks, when he knew he was open to similar criticism if he did not carry out his own views. The reason he did not support the hon, member’s amendment of £1 an acre was that he did not consider this a proper time to discuss the question, and he for one should require to have more experience of last session before he would go for any fundamental change. When there was an evil that had given rise to as much discussion as this that had caused the introduction of the Bill he would support its amendment: but he would go no further when the whole matter had been discussed and settled so recently.

Mr. KRICHAUFF said if the hon. member had been in the House last session, or had experienced the working of the Land Act during the last 15 months, he would not say that nothing new was to be advanced in reference to it. From Paper No. 153 he would find some information which was important, seventeen hundred and five applications had been made for land only open for selection since October 20,1872, and of these 717 only had been granted. As many as 988 had been refused simply because there had been simultaneous applications for the same land. Of the small number of applications granted 355 were at prices over £1 and 179 were at prices above £2, which in many cases was likely to ruin the persons who had made themselves liable. Did hon. members say from that information that we were allowing the farmers to get upon the lands at the cheap rate. He did not think so. Justice had not been done to the farmers. In 1870 the Government had spoken of throwing open a million acres for selection, but a very small amount in comparison had been thrown open. Another column showed that the land opened on the 2lst of August, 1872, at £1 per acre, which had passed the hammer, or had been open for selection under former Acts, had been largely availed of by the farmers, and out of 603 applications only 16 had not been granted. Dummyism in his opinion, should not be guarded against by raising the price of the land; but it should be put down in other ways, and the farmer should not have his last shilling screwed out of him. The Ministry might object to the amendment of the land law at this late period of the session, but still he thought if they met the views of those who wished to see the reform effected there would be no difficulty or waste of time in carrying the measure. He did not think that Ministers should act upon the principle of expediency, but that they should act upon their convictions at all times. (Hear, hear.) Mr. Ward deserved credit on this occasion, and although he did not like to hear Mr. Ward’s attacks upon the Ministry, he considered that they deserved them. (Laughter.) Where there were radical changes required he considered that they should not be delayed. The matter pointed out by Mr. Ward was not the only point that required reform. He alleged that the land law could not be understood, except the Scrub Lands Act, which was clear. He was now engaged on a pamphlet to place the land question before the people of Germany, but he found very great difficulty in stating its points and giving an explanation of it. At this late period the Government had not cared to go with Mr. Ward for a general amendment of the Act, but he thought if they looked at the paper which he had read they would come now to a different conclusion. If the House passed the one amendment of Mr. Ward it would be something, but he would also like to see the Government open up 1,000.000 acres of land, so that the farmers might be able to get upon it. (Hear, hear.) Although he would vote as a matter of course for the second reading, he hoped they would not only alter section 18, but make other alterations in the Land Act of 1872.

Mr. LAKE did not think with Mr. Stow that there was nothing new to be said upon this question, but looked upon it that there were new things to be said, and that according to the returns Mr. Krichauff had quoted there was new information before the House. When the House was divided upon the point he thought it was time to consider the amendment of the bill, which was the principal measure in South Australian legislation. Though the land might be taken up freely at £2 an acre by persons in the colony, that was not a price to induce people to come here from other countries. He would assist Mr. Ward as much as he could to reduce the price. He had heard an hon. member say that 5s. per acre would not do it, but he thought it would. There was, however, no harm in trying. The two principal points looked to by immigrants were the price of land and the climate, and he thought that with the price of land favourable that the colony could compete with any other colony. He would support Mr. Ward.

Mr. CAVENAGH would like to ask the Attorney- General to state in his reply the effect of this clause. As far as he could understand it it made thee land law worse than it was at the present time, but he might be wrong. In the present law if a person put in an application and did not get as much land as he applied for, he could decline to take the other sections; but under the amendment it appeared that the man who applied for land was obliged to keep the amount allotted, though not so much as he had applied for.

Mr. PEARCE wished to know what was the effect of the proposition of Mr. Boucaut. It would, he thought, protect the Government, but be very hard upon the purchasers. He was of opinion that much harm had been done by the Government not setting apart more land for selection, and thought that the time was favourable for the amendment of the land laws. He would give his adherence to the amendment of Mr. Ward, which he preferred to that of the Government, and thought credit was due to the hon. member for attempting to work the reform, and now that he had dropped personalities he thought he might succeed in carrying his motion. The circumstances of the colony were so altered that he thought the one year during which lands were reserved from sale could be changed to two years. When the Bill was passed the country was poor, and it was feared if the land was so long set aside revenue for roads would have to be raised by direct taxation; but the land was now prosperous, and he would vote for extending the tune to two years, as votes had often to change according to circumstances, and from that cause his votes on this question had been on both sides. He believed, and thought the majority in the House and the country also believed that to put up the lands at £1 per acre and give some rational means of competing for it above that price would be an improvement upon the present system. If these amendments were not agreed to he would content himself with at present so amending the law as to throw open a larger area for selection, and allow farmers to get farms without the inconveniences under which they now laboured. Many of the persons who had taken up land at £2 an acre could never pay for it, and in some instances did not intend to, contenting themselves with occupying it for a time in preference to purchasing inferior land. He mentioned cases in which higher prices than £2 would be given by persons who fancied certain land, but it would be to their loss to do so. He thought that with the prosperity of last year as a commencement the colony would be very materially improved if the price of land were reduced, but at the same time he considered that high prices on land did not pay the State, as the farmer was ruined, and the State was ultimately the loser. The present system engendered an unhealthy competition for certain lands, and that being the case he wished to see it altered.

Mr. TOWSEND would support the second reading, and heartily endorsed what had fallen from Mr. Stow in regard to Mr. Ward’s attacks on the Attorney-General and Chief Secretary, given Mr. Carr would admit that those gentlemen had worked hard last session to have the Act made as they thought it should be, and it was not generous that Mr. Ward should accuse them of not standing to their colours because they did not care to disturb what had so lately been passed. He thought that Mr. Ward should act upon the principle that it was only some important reason which should make a member attack a colleague, as the action was calculated to weaken the influence of his district in the House, while endorsing the language of Mr. Stow, he did not think that the amendment of the Attorney-General would carry out his views, and he thought on the larger principle that the House might safely adopt some of the amendments which had been pro­mised. Mr. Cavenagh had said that 5s. an acre would not bring a population here, but he had reason to think the hon. member was wrong. The Norwegian Consul had been with him on a matter of business, and had said that if land was cheaper here many Norwegians would be sent here in preference to being sent to New Zealand. He complimented the Germans on the means they were taking to have the land question of this colony explained to their countrymen, and especially for the agreement they had come to to do what they could when the immigrants came here to get them something to do. He could understand that Mr. Krichauff in his pamphlet had difficulty in drawing a comparison between the land system of South Australia and those of other colonies. The mere upset price of land sunk into insignificance when compared with the advantage of having to be populates. Would anyone who had seen the agricultural areas when they were sheep-runs and seen them now say there was any comparison? With regard to dummies he should like to see any man who by education and knowledge of the law sought to take hold of a poor man and make a dummy of him for his benefit made liable to the penalties of the law. The poor man who picked your pocket in the street was called a felon, and why should not also the man who sought to rob Government? Whilst they were trying to make laws which should assist in developing the resources of the colony, persons—many of them Justices of the Peace and squatters— who by their position, education, and, above all, means, ought to assist the Government, were trying to defraud them. Turning from this subject he would say he thought that when agricultural areas were declared the Government too hastily declared townships and sold allotments. He had known cases in which £6, £7, or £8 had been paid for such land which a few months after­wards was sold for £400 or £500. The Government ought to wait and see where population settled and survey accordingly. (Hear, hear.) With regard to the other amendments which had been suggested, he would discuss them as they arose; but he thought it too late to attempt a general alteration of the law. There was one defect in it, which was that people would go and pay a price for land and then abandon it, and he thought the law should be altered so as to make part of the principal paid every year. (Hear, hear.) With regard to the quantity of land, would the Chief Secretary say that there was sufficient offered for selection for the wants of the colony at the present time ? If it was not increased, they should have people going for free selection without survey. He believed it would be impossible to do this session all that was desirable, but he believed the Chief Secretary and the Attorney-General would give their best attention to the matter. He could not say so much for the Treasurer, who he knew abhorred land reform more than anything except one thing, which he would tell him in private—(laughter and "Name”)—but he thought associated as he was he might receive a little impression—(Mr. Ward—“No”)—and if he went into recess, which he supposed he would do, he entreated him to take a little bit of advice, and go round and see the agricultural areas—(the Treasurer —“I will”)—which he believed would convince him of their advantage, and he would tender the same advice to the Commissioner of Crown Lands, who entertained the same views.

Mr. BRAY said Mr. Townsend had certainly made a very interesting speech; but he thought he might defy anyone who listened to it to credit the fact that they were discussing a Bill to amend the 18th section of the Waste Lands Act, for if there was anything he avoided mentioning it was that. (Laughter.) He agreed with the Attorney-General that this Bill was brought in under exceptional circumstances, and he should go with the Government in confining the Bill as far as possible to this amendment. He thought by the proposed clause they should be placing the selector in an unfair position, because he was bound to take up one or two sections which might be allotted to him, though they did not comprise all he wanted, or forfeit his deposit, or 10 per cent, of his purchase-money. Mr. Ward only met that half way, by suggesting that he should forfeit 5 per cent.; but he did not see when a man wanted bona fide to purchase a certain number of sections, and could only obtain portion which would be of no use to him, why he should forfeit anything at all. He quite believed it was possible to suggest many other amendments to the Land Act, but being brought forward at this late period of the session with a view of remedying one particular defect, he thought they should confine the Bill to that, and with that view he supported it.

Mr. BOUCAUT had no intention to have joined in the discussion but for the speech of Mr. Townsend. Any stranger to have heard the hon. member’s tear’em and scratch’em speech would have thought he meant war to the knife with the capitalists; but if there was any visitor from Victoria under the Gallery, as there sometimes was. he would tell him that the hon. gentleman was not so dangerous as he seemed, not even to a Justice of the Peace or a squatter, for there was no man more than his hon. friend who loved a lord or more delighted in the company of a squatter. (Laughter.) If the hon. member really meant what he said with regard to the squatters, follow a consistent course, and assist those who wanted to see dummyism put down. (Mr Ward—“Hear, hear.’ ) Why did he not turn out, instead of winking at, a Ministry which he said were day by day breaking the law—(Hear)-he did not say the present Ministry because he had not taken their measure yet. (Laughter.) He did not hear Mr. Stow’s speech, but he regretted that. Mr. Townsend had said he agreed with the hon. member’s remarks concerning the Chief Secretary’s criticism of the hon. member for Gumeracha. Mr. Ward had at any rate been consistent in his action on this subject, and he believed the farmers of South Australia, and those who were interested in the liberalization of the land laws, had relied upon the hon. member to struggle against that class, against which Mr. Townsend had made such a dead set that day. They knew that no man was more Conservative in his heart than the Chief Secretary, unless, perhaps, the Treasurer and the Commissioner of Crown Lands, who were *mi generis,* not to be equalled in the colony for red-hot conservatism, and it was unfair for Mr. Townsend, who aspired to be a leader of the Liberal party, to join the hon. member for Light and the Chief Secretary in attacking Mr. Ward. If they were to have land laws, let them insist on their being honestly carried out; but ever since 1865 he had said that he did not believe that the land laws were honestly administered in the Land Office. (Mr. Ward—“Hear, hear”) People with peculiar advantages got information from the Land Office which others did not. He did not say that there was any bribery or corruption, but there was a sort of instinct which led the Land Office, in laying down agricultural areas and putting up sections to auction, to do all they could contrary to the wish of the Legislature, and therefore it was inconsistent for Mr. Townsend to be eloquent in denouncing a state of things which he did not try to prevent being carried out. i Hear, hear.)

The CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. A. Blyth) was sorry to hear the hon. member say that the law was not honestly administered in the Land Office, for the statement had no foundation in fact. A statement of that kind ought only to be made when an hon. member was prepared to give the names of persons who were not honestly administering the law. He was quite certain the land laws had never been more honestly administered than at the present time. Even his hon. colleague, who was supposed to be such a champion of land reform, only yesterday asked him whether the Government were going to take steps for bringing certain lands into the market, and they had already done so. The efforts made to meet the demands of the farmer since the present Commissioner of Crown Lands had been in office would compare with those of any Commissioner who had preceded him. He had said already how totally he differed from his hon. colleague in regard to this question. He looked upon this session as not one for land reform. They had it session after session until the patience of hon members was quite worn out, and should they without a single petition having been presented to either House of Parliament be called upon to reopen the subject? And if they did, what would be the good? He would repeat that his views on all material points were unaltered, and when the proper time came he would give expression to those views. This was not the proper time. His hon. colleague had referred to certain elections which had taken place for that House. He thought three members had been returned who were not in Parliament when the land discussion was on but in their election was any prominence given to the land question? Where they asked any questions on the subject ? T he hon. member Mr. Stow was asked one question—(Mr. Ward—“Several”)-and on that particular point, which was dealt with in the Bill before the House, Mr. Laurie was returned unopposed. He was not asked any question about land reform, and the other hon. member for Victoria was returned without going down to the district at all. Where was all the dissatisfaction about the land laws? (Mr. Ward—"Everywhere.” Messrs. Lindsay and Krichauff—" All over the country.”) Then how was it there was not a single petition on the table of either House? Did any hon. member imagine that by opening up the land question, they should do any good? The only thing was that certain persons with “Hansard” under their arms might point out that on a certain occasion, should he say the Hon. Member for Gumeracha, voted that the upset price should be £1 per acre, and that in November, 1872, he was found voting against the insertion of such a clause. The Government were asked to amend an injustice, by which not honesty, but some other quality crept into the conduct of business, and recognizing the necessity they proposed aclause to remedy the defect. If the words were not sufficiently definite they could be altered in Committee, some hon. members seemed to use the word " conservative,” as if it was something to be ashamed of. Were any of them ashamed of being considered conservative of what was good ? He was not at any rate. When the time came to reconsider their land laws and make them as liberal as those of the other colonies—(Mr. Ward—“It has come.”) His hon. colleague strove in every possible way to interrupt him when speaking . He knew the object of the hon. member, and was perfectly resigned to it; but he did not believe he deserved the treatment he had received, and he must beg his bon. colleague, through the Speaker, not to interrupt him. The object of this Bill was to deal with the one evil which it was felt should be done at once. With that view he was perfectly consistent in voting against any other proposition, although it might be inaccord with his own convictions, because he said without fear ofcontradiction this was not the time to deal with the land laws of the country.

Mr, WEST-KRSKINE should support the second reading of the Bill. Very many farmers had spoken to him of the evil which this Bill was to remedy. There was one other point that might easily be met at the same time—that was the provision that land should be open for two years instead of one. (Hear, hear.) The Chief Secretary very fairly said there was no harm in being conservative. He was one, but still not bigoted. and he liked to see real progress. He thought this Bill a step in the right direction.

Mr. BUNDEY was sorry the wider question of land law had been opened. It was too late in the session to go into the whole question. If that was done he should have a radical change to bring forward. He did not believe any system that was operating in any of the colonies was sufficient to induce people to come here instead of to the United States. In reference to the remark of Mr. Townsend, he would observe that dummyism was a much more seriousoffence than it appeared to him. In order to become a dummy it was necessary that a man should commit perjury—an offence both against the law and morality. He did not see what magic there was in £1, that that should be fixedas the upset price **of** land. The value of land was what people would give for it, and ifland fetched £7 an acre, what did it matter whether the upset price was £1 or £2*?* They could not legislate for such exceptional cases as that mentioned by Mr. Pearce where the young man said-''I mean to have this piece of land and nothing else.” If people had no brains the Legislature could not give them to them. He would point out, however, with regard to the Bill itself what appeared to him would be its result. A person made application in acertain area for 640 acres. He obtained one section out of the several for which he applied, but could not claim any of the others, or wasoutbid, the land perhaps being purchased at £1 an acre more than he thought its value. Then the position he was placed in was this. Either he was obliged to take the one section which he could not live on or lose his deposit. He should be glad to hear what the Attorney-General had to say to that.

Mr. LINDSAY said that was an objection which appeared to him to be valid. He for one would be willing to reopen the whole question, in order to bring back the land laws to as good a condition as they were in under Strangways’ Act. He had voted against the third reading of two Bills, and he thought both of them were preferable to that which was passed and was now in force. It was asserted over and over again by the Chief Secretary that as soon as the new Act was passed the country would be one agricultural area. He regarded that as just a high-blown sound at the time. Of course whatever name was given to the new batches of sections, they were to all intents and purposes agricultural areas thrown open at the time. The fact as shown by return—that so many applications for land had been made and so few granted—showed that the quantity had been very much inferior to the demand. He did not understand the assertion when a reform was wanted that it was not time to make it. Any time was the tune to remedy a deflect. He should support any hon. member who endeavoured to make a further amendment in the law, even to the extent of remodeling almost every clause.

Mr. PICKEKING. **as** one of those who called upon the Government to make this amendment, thought they acted very judiciously. He promised his constituents he would vote for the most liberal land law he could get. But he did not feel called upon to go into the whole question now. (Hear, hear.) They had been in session a long time, and he did not see how they could finish before Christmas. (Hear, hear.) That was his humble opinion, and he did not think it was right to enter into other questions beyond the Bill.

Mr. WATTS should vote for the second reading of the Bill. He hoped the Attorney-General would alter the wording, so as to make it perfectly clear. He should certainly oppose both the clauses proposed by the hon. member for Gumeracha. All those matters were fully argued in previous sessions, and this was not the time to go into general alterations.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. C. Mann) said there was no doubt the construction put upon the clauses by Mr. Bundey was correct, and he proposed to add these words—“ Unless the Governor in Council shall so order within 14 days upon good cause being shown to his satisfaction.” The position then would be that if a man was declared the purchaser at auction he would be compelled to forfeit the deposit or complete his purchase, unless he could show that it would inflict a real hardship upon him to do so: and he could only say that any such bona fide case of hardship would be favourably considered by the Government. He regretted the speech of Mr. Boucaut very much, and wished to say emphatically that he believed his statement about the dishonest way in which the Survey Department was conducted was without the slightest foundation. He wished to protest in the strongest manner against members of Parliament making such statements, and enabling them to appear in print with all the authority which the prestige of their position gave them. The hon. member Mr. Pearce said the Land Act wanted amending so that more land should be put in the market. All he could say was that since the present Commissioner of Crown Lands had been in office every available man on the staff had been employed surveying. The dearth was no fault of the present administration. He did not know what the circumstances were-no doubt there were circumstances which influenced the preceding Commissioner of Crown Lands—but it was a fact that when the present Ministry took office there was a very insufficient quantity of land in the market. Every effort had been made by his hon, colleagues to remedy that evil, and he hoped to a great extent it bad been remedied. Mr. Ward had, as he anticipated, made an attack upon himself and the Chief Secretary. That had been replied to by the hon. member for Light in a way that must carry conviction to any mind, so he would say no more but that he believed the hon. member had no other object than that he might be able to go to Gumeracha and say:—‘‘Mr. Blyth told you he would vote for £1 an acre and two years’ reservation, and see what he did.” On which he would produce the Votes and Proceedings, carefully abstaining from mentioning what was the reason. He believed that was the only object. (Mr. Ward — “No.”) That was his opinion, because the hon. member did not. believe he would carry any of these amendments. Then another instance of his unfairness was the statement that he, because he was Attorney-General, was not carrying out the principles he professed. In that he complained of disingenuousness, because Mr. Ward knew that long before this session opened he (Mr. Mann) told him most distinctly that in his opinion land legislation should be let rest till the experiment was tried how the present law worked. Therefore he ought to have had the manliness to state that. (Mr. Ward—“Hear, hear.”) There would, he apprehended, be no division on the second reading, and he hoped the House would assist the Government in resisting; any attempt to foist other amendments into the Bill.

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