Legislative Council.

Thursday, 29th November, 1906.

THE PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4·30 o'clock p.m.

PRAYERS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the COLONIAL SECRETARY: Railway Maps showing routes of proposed lines, Coolgardie to Norseman, Donnybrook to Upper Blackwood, Greenhills to Quairading, Hopetoun to Ravensthorpe.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by the Hon. W. T. LOTON, leave of absence for one fortnight granted to the Hon. C. E. Dempster, on the ground of ill-health.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

Contractors and Workmen's Lien, received from the Legislative Assembly.

Employment Brokers Act Amendment, received from the Legislative Assembly.

LAND ACT AMENDMENT.

IN COMMITTEE.

The HONORARY MINISTER (Mr. C. A. Piesse) in charge of the Bill.

A select committee having considered the Bill and recommended numerous amendments to be made; these were now dealt with.

Clause 1—Short Title:

HON. J. M. DREW, as chairman of the select committee, moved that the following be inserted at the end of the clause:—

But nothing herein contained shall affect any right, interest, or liability already created, existing, or incurred, or anything lawfully done or suffered under any enactment, land regulation, or other regulation hereby repealed.

The Bill contained some objectionable retrospective features. There were provisions in the Bill which interfered with contracts entered into many years ago. The select committee had removed, so far as they could, the retrospective features, but in case there might remain any such feature in any portion of the Bill, it was decided to introduce a saving clause which appeared in the Land Act of 1898.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: This amendment was on the Notice Paper prior to the recommendation by the select committee.

Amendment passed; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Governor may acquire land, etc., by purchase or exchange:

HON. J. M. DREW moved an amendment—

That after "person," in line 4, the words "with his consent" be inserted.

There was some doubt whether the clause as it stood did not mean compulsory purchase. The object of the amendment was to make it clear that no land could be acquired except with the consent of the owner. Then afterwards, before the Government decided to purchase, the question could be referred to the lands board with the object of discovering whether the land was of the value the owner thought it was.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: This amendment also was put by him on the Notice Paper prior to the appointment of the select committee. The Government thought there was a doubt as to what the words in the Act really meant, and they took every step to put the matter right. It was never intended to take such lands from any person without his consent.

Amendment passed; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 4—Power to resume land from pastoral leases for agricultural settlement:

HON. J. M. DREW moved an amendment—

That the last paragraph be struck out.

This clause was intended to give the Governor larger powers in connection with the resumption of pastoral leases

than now existed. Those powers would not only affect future pastoral leases, but pastoral leases granted as far back as 19 years ago. The sole object of the amendment was to remove the retrospective features of this clause.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: This was a clause he had also put on the Notice Paper. Having seen the serious difficulty that might arise, he took steps to have the matter put right; therefore he was present to indorse the action of the select committee, as they in turn indorsed his. It was thought by the Government that the time had arrived when pastoral leases in various parts of the State should be used for purposes other than purely pastoral purposes, and the efforts they made with that object led to this rather regrettable clause. On finding out how objectionable it might be, they took every step to effect a remedy.

Amendment passed; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 5—agreed to.

Clause 6—Amendment of Sections 17 and 18:

HON. J. M. DREW had given notice of an amendment that this clause be struck out and other words inserted in its place; but it was mentioned that the words proposed to be substituted could be subsequently dealt with as a new clause to be inserted. The new clause would simply convey what the Government intended, only it did so more clearly. If the present clause stood, a selector would have to hunt through the Land Acts of 1898 and 1900 to discover what the law was; but if the new clause were inserted, all he would have to do would be to look at that clause.

Clause struck out.

Clauses 7 to 12—agreed to.

Clause 13—Powers of Board:

HON. J. M. DREW moved an amendment—

That after the word "and" the following be inserted, "shall forthwith report the same to the Minister;" also that the rest of the clause be struck out.

At present the Minister had no power to impose fines or forfeitures; only the Executive Council had power to do that; yet this Bill not only proposed to give the Minister such powers, but also to give them to district land boards. The select committee could not recommend an extension of such powers to district land boards. In accordance with their recommendation he moved the amendment so that the only power given to these land boards in this connection would be the power to report to the Minister.

Amendment passed; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 14—amended verbally.

Clause 15—Discretion to refuse applications—amended verbally.

Clauses 16, 17—agreed to.

Clause 18—Amendment of Section 30:

HON. J. M. DREW moved—

That the clause be struck out.

The clause gave the Minister a power he did not at present possess in regard to granting applications for extensions of time in which to carry out improvements on C.P. lands. At present the Minister could only make recommendations in this regard, which had to be submitted to Cabinet; and in the opinion of the select committee that system should continue.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: No doubt the clause gave the Minister great power; but the Cabinet had not an opportunity of going into the details of recommendations made, and the Minister was responsible for such recommendations, which were invariably approved. The alteration would obviate delay in dealing with applications of this nature. If, however, the Committee favoured a continuance of the present practice, the Government would not object.

HON. J. M. DREW was surprised to learn that these matters were not considered by the Cabinet, as it was the intention of the Legislature they should be. During his term as Minister, these applications always received careful consideration by Cabinet.

HON. E. McLARTY: The details of such small matters would require the

Cabinet to sit continuously if considered in detail.

Hon. W. T. LOTON: The Bill proposed to give the Minister a power which he now exercised subject to the approval of the Governor. These matters should be considered in Cabinet. In the case of lands held under poison lease, although an honest attempt might have been made to comply with the conditions, an extension of time in which to complete the improvements might be reasonably necessary in some cases, and the decision should not be left to the Minister. Many past transactions might be referred to in which Ministers had permitted certain things which should not have been approved, and would not have been approved had they gone to Cabinet for consideration.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: The only alteration made in the existing law was the deletion of the words "with the approval of the Governor." He had inadvertently mentioned "Cabinet," but such matters were not dealt with in Cabinet: he had meant to refer to the Executive Council. The object of the alteration was to obviate the reference to the Executive Council, which was a purely formal matter.

Clause struck out.

Clauses 19, 20—agreed to.

Clause 21—Power to waive forfeiture—amended by striking out the word "Minister" and inserting "Governor" in lieu.

Clause 22—agreed to.

Clause 23—Amendment of Section 35—a clerical error, amended by striking out "seventy-eight" and inserting "eighty-eight" in lieu.

Clauses 24, 25—agreed to.

Clause 26—Divisees, etc.—amended by striking out the words "twelve months" and inserting "two years" in lieu, as recommended by the select committee.

Amendment passed; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clauses 27, 28—agreed to.

Clause 29—Amendment of Section 55:

The HONORARY MINISTER moved an amendment, that after the words "fence in" the following be inserted, "at least one-half of the land within the first five years of his lease, and"— This was recommended by the select committee, and the only objection was that it would take from the selector some money that might be used for more useful improvements. The object was to compel a C.P. holder to complete the fencing of half his holding within five years.

Amendment passed; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 30—Amendment of Section 56:

The HONORARY MINISTER moved an amendment to strike out of the clause all words after "required," with a view to inserting "on improvements shall be a sum equal to the full purchase money, with 50 per cent. added thereto." Several amendments to the same section of the Act were recommended by the select committee, but this amendment would answer the purpose better and make the meaning clearer.

HON. R. F. SHOLL: The clause in the principal Act dealt with improvements in lieu of residence, and stipulated that these should amount to double the expenditure required on a residence block; and this amendment proposed to reduce the extra expenditure on improvements by 50 per cent. It was not clearly stated in the clause of the Bill whether the 50 per cent. was in addition to the present requirement of double improvements, and was more clearly stated in the Minister's amendment.

Amendment passed; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 32—Amendment of Section 57—amended by striking out the words "prior to the commencement of this Act," and striking out "as amended by this Act."

Clause 33.—Amendment of Section 60—amended as in the previous clause.

Clause 34—agreed to.

Clause 35—Amendment of Section 62:

THE HONORARY MINISTER moved an amendment that the word "two" be struck out and "three" inserted in lieu (namely "three thousand acres").

The amendment was recommended by the select committee; but the Government was not in complete accord with it. The object was to enable leaseholders to select as freehold a maximum of 3,000 acres instead of 2,000 as proposed in the Bill, out of their pastoral leases. While the Government did not desire to harass such leaseholders, the increase to 3,000 acres would entail the recommittal of the Bill for consequentially amending Clause 24, which fixed the maximum at 2,000 acres of first-class cultivable land. The representations made to him appeared to demonstrate that the claims of leaseholders in the North to have the maximum increased by 1,000 acres were reasonable, and accordingly he placed the matter before the Government.

HON. F. CONNOR: A distinct injustice would be done to leaseholders if the amendment were not agreed to. He would have preferred to see the maximum raised to 4,000 acres.

Amendment passed; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 36—Repeal of Section 63—amended on recommendation of the select committee, by striking out the word "repealed," and inserting "amended by striking out the words 'Kimberley, North-West, Western, Eastern, and Eucla Divisions,' and inserting in place thereof 'Kimberley or North-West Divisions comprised in any pastoral lease granted before the commencement of this Act;'" also striking out all the words after "Act" in line 8 to the end of the section.

Clauses 37 to 39—agreed to.

Clause 40—Repeal of Sections 70, 71, 72—amended consequentially by adding after "Minister" the words "with the approval of the Governor."

Clause 41—agreed to.

Clause 42—Amendment of Section 75—amended verbally.

Clauses—43, 44—agreed to.

Clause 45—Repeal of Section 78:

THE HONORARY MINISTER moved an amendment as recommended by the select committee, that in Subclause 2, line 1, all the words after "fence in" be struck out, to insert in lieu "at least one-half of the land during the first five years of the term, and the whole thereof during the first seven years." The object was to place the holder of a homestead block on the same footing in regard to fencing as the holder of conditional purchase land.

Amendment passed; and the clause as amended agreed to.

Clauses 46 to 52—agreed to.

AS TO RENTS OF FUTURE LEASES.

Clause 53—Repeal of Section 97:

HON. F. CONNOR moved—

That the clause be struck out.

The alteration in rental proposed in the clause was a serious matter, and was so regarded by those affected. Already cattle were being shifted across the Kimberley border into the Northern Territory of South Australia, where equally good land was to be had at a much lower rental. The effect of raising the rent for new pastoral leases in the Far North, if passed, would be that persons already holding land would cross the border and select there when additional land became necessary in consequence of increase in their herds. In this State the longest tenure was 26 years, while in South Australia it was 42 years; and to now raise the rents would mean handing over this industry to South Australia. The company with which he was connected had been compelled to protect themselves by taking up an area on the Daly River in the Northern Territory, and other leaseholders in that district had taken similar action. The object of Parliament should be to so develop the pastoral industry that this State might supply the meat markets of the outside world; but to raise the rents at this time would not assist that object. It would be in the interests of the State to reduce the rents.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: The amendment would not affect existing rights in any way, as Mr. Connor appeared to infer. The Government were of opinion that the rents charged in the North were too low.

HON. F. CONNOR: They were now six times higher than in South Australia.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: The Government were spending considerable sums in providing stock routes, jetties

and so forth in the North, and were entitled to some increased revenue. The additional impost would not be felt, especially if we had a continuance of the good seasons experienced in the North during the past few years, and he saw no reason why they should not continue. The amendment of the section would not affect existing rights, as the increased rental would only be chargeable in respect of future applications. Even under the higher rental, lessees were asked to pay only the same as pastoral lessees in the South-West Division.

HON. W. T. LOTON had been under the impression that the desire of the Government was to utilise the lands of the State, and if so there must be occupiers; and it was only for pastoral purposes that the lands of the North-West and the Kimberleys could be utilised. Could the Minister say there had been a rush of applications for the waste lands in those districts? How many applications for pastoral leases had to be refused during the past few years through inability to meet the demands? If there had been no such rush, was it likely that by doubling the rental the Government would increase the area under selection? It would be better to have the waste lands used for pastoral purposes, even if no rental was charged, so that they might be stocked and thus in an indirect way give some return to the State. The Ministry lacked practical men experienced in land settlement: hence the crude suggestions put forward from time to time. Not a single Minister knew anything of pastoral leases, and none of them had ever been to the North.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: The Government had advisory officers who visited the North.

Hon. W. T. LOTON: All the land near the coast worth selecting had been taken up, and future selectors would have to go 200 to 300 miles inland to get suitable country. Taking one season with another he ventured the assertion that as much money had been lost during the past 35 years in the pastoral industry in the North as had been made. No valid reason for raising the rents in these districts had been adduced.

Hon. R. F. SHOLL, quoting from the report of the select committee, said it put the case fairly. The effect of this clause would be to enhance the value of the present holdings; and while this applied to his own case, it would be unwise in the public interest to make the suggested alteration in rents. While future selectors would have to go inland hundreds of miles to obtain suitable country in the North, it was proposed to make the rental equivalent to that for which areas of 3,000 acres could be taken up in the South-West with the advantages of adjacent markets and favourable climatic conditions. The Under Secretary for Lands in his annual report stated that there had been again a falling off in pastoral lease selections during the past year, and ascribed it to the fact that selectors had to go farther inland or to accept inferior land near the coast. If the rents for new holdings were raised, the only persons to select in the future would be "duffers," whom the adjoining lessees would have to buy out so to get rid of bad neighbours.

HON. E. McLARTY indorsed the views expressed by preceding speakers. As to the facilities provided for the Far North, he gave credit for what the Government had done, and he believed the providing of those facilities would prove to be amongst the best investments made for the State. The revenue derived from Robb's Jetty and the stockyards would surprise members; and this applied equally to the facilities provided at Derby and other North-West ports.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The North-West Division had been referred to as being the Far North of the State, whereas it was merely a long narrow strip of country extending south to within a few hundred miles of Perth, and inland no farther that Yalgoo and Mt. Magnet. Even if by increasing the rents as proposed the value of the present holdings would be enhanced, there was no objection to that. If a man took up land in those districts in the early days he was certainly entitled to the enhanced value the leases obtained. It was argued that because the land had not been taken up in the past it was not good and was not worth more than 10s. per thousand acres; but the reason why people had not been tumbling over one another to get this land was that it took considerable capital to embark in the pastoral industry, to

utilise the land in the proper way. In dealing with this matter we should also take into consideration the great coast, line of the North-West, and the proximity of the North-West Division to Perth. The Government were spending money in the extension of stock routes and jetties, and it was intended to spend £30,000 on lights along the coast. These lights would have considerable bearing on the pastoral industry, because, by rendering shipping safer, cheaper freights would be brought about. The increase in rents proposed in the Bill was justified.

HON. R. F. SHOLL was perfectly indifferent, but would vote for the select committee's recommendation.

HON. W. T. LOTON: Members had the advice of practical people, some of whom had been living in the district, others having assisted in a financial way persons living in the district, and those people were satisfied that the rents should not be raised. His desire was to see the waste land taken up.

HON. F. CONNOR: The rent proposed in the Bill would be six times that charged in the Northern Territory of South Australia for the same class of country, except that the Kimberley country was not so well watered. In the Northern Territory the tenure was 40 years, and there was no suggestion of a land tax there. If we raised the rents, where would there be encouragement for the development of the pastoral industry? All things being considered, it would be a mistake to raise the rent. We should rather give the land to people for some time and subsidise people to go into these areas. It was against his personal interests to oppose the clause because the land held by the company in which he was interested would be enhanced in value if an adjoining lease were taken up at an increased rental, but it was his desire to point out to the Committee that it would be a calamity to carry out the course suggested in the clause, and a mistake which the Government would be sorry for afterwards. Governments in Western Australia for many years past had done very little for the North, but credit was due to the present Government for their intentions to assist the North. When the money was spent members would have great pleasure in supporting the Government as they would support any Government assisting the North.

HON. J. T. GLOWREY: This was an important amendment. Members probably desired to give an intelligent vote on the matter. With all due respect to the select committee he suggested that the clause be postponed.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: We should not postpone the clause. It was a simple matter, and could be dealt with straight away. Mr. Connor evidently was talking of the Kimberley Division and not of the North-Western Division. The responsible officers of the Government who were acquainted with the country supplied the Government with information, and it was thought right that rents should be raised.

Motion (to postpone the clause) put and negatived.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: The arguments advanced by those who knew the country were sufficiently strong to convince members to support the continuation of the old rents. Probably it would be better to give the land rent free for some years to come in order to lead to the introduction of capital. It was always within the province of a Government to tax land after it was improved. Encouragement should be given to people to go on the land and improve it.

Question put, the clause struck out.

Clause 54—agreed to.

Clause 55—struck out consequentially.

Clause 56—agreed to.

Clause 57—amendment of Section 101—amended by striking out the words "granted before or after the commencement of this Act."

Clauses 58, 59—agreed to.

Clause 60—Amendment of Section 104:

HON. R. F. SHOLL moved an amendment:

That after "granted," in line 1, the words "after the commencement of this Act" be inserted.

This was another objectionable feature in the Bill, being retrospective legislation. Under the principal Act persons had a right to come under the 1898 Act; but under this clause if passed, persons not having done so through oversight or neglect, or any other reason, would be

precluded from coming under the 1898 Act after the 21st day of August, 1906. The opinion had been expressed generally in regard to this Bill that the Government had no right—in fact it was absolutely dishonest legislation—to bring in any retrospective legislation to bar people from exercising a right which they had under the existing Act. That was the view the select committee took of the question, that the legislation was unfair and immoral.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: Mr. Sholl used the word "immoral." There was no need to use ugly words of this kind. There was no need to use any harsh words with regard to the clause. The Government sought to prevent those who took up land in 1887, and who had not taken advantage of the opportunities given them in the 1898 Act, from taking such advantage at this late period. The 1898 Act gave holders who had taken land up under the 1887 Act an opportunity of bringing their leases under certain conditions which were easier for them. If they had chosen to sleep on this right all these years without exercising it, they ought to be punished. He did not look on this clause as interfering with existing rights. The Government had agreed to accept the amendment of the select committee, but he trusted we had heard the last of these strong words.

HON. R. F. SHOLL would withdraw the words referred to.

THE HONORARY MINISTER was glad to hear it; it was only right the hon. member should do so.

Amendment put and passed; the clause farther amended by striking out the words "after the twenty-first day of August one thousand nine hundred and six," also the words "from the commencement of this Act."

Clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 61—Amendment of Section 109—struck out, as recommended by the select committee.

Clause 62—agreed to.

Clause 63—Amendment of Section 140:

THE HONORARY MINISTER: The section in the Act permitted those who had mortgages over conditional purchases to sell by public auction after giving notice in the local newspaper; but if they did not effect a sale on the first occasion, they had to again try to sell the property by public auction. The Government in another place sought to insert the words "or private sale." These words were agreed to and they appeared in the amended form before the House; but it was felt by the select committee that they gave the mortgagee the opportunity of selling by private sale without first having tried to sell by public auction; therefore the committee sought to amend the clause so that mortgagees could sell by private sale only after failing to sell by public auction. He moved an amendment that the words "or private sale" be struck out.

Amendment passed; the clause further amended by inserting the following words to stand as Subsection 3, "or after failure to sell by public auction sell by private sale."

Clause as amended agreed to.

At 6·29, the CHAIRMAN left the Chair.
At 7·30, Chair resumed.

Clauses 64 to 70—agreed to.

Clause 71—Residential Lease may be converted into working-man's block:

HON. J. T. GLOWREY moved an amendment to add at the end of the first paragraph the following:—

Provided that at any time after two years from the commencement of the lease, if all the conditions of residence, fencing, and improvements have been complied with, and if the same have been maintained and the full purchase money and prescribed fee have been paid, the Governor may issue a Crown grant in respect of the land comprised in such lease.

The provision in the principal Act for acquiring residential leases, which were convertible after two years' residence thereon into working-men's blocks, had been largely availed of on the goldfields, and the object of this amendment was to enable residence for two years on these residential leases to entitle the holder to a Crown grant on completion of the prescribed improvements. From time to time the Government had attempted to shift those persons who were camped on mining leases; but even if that were done there was nowhere for these people to go except the unoccupied Crown lands, and they would then be in illegal possession. The system of acquiring working-

men's blocks had thus far proved satisfactory, and this amendment, if carried, would be beneficial, for the men now on mining leases would then remove their camps and acquire homestead blocks, from which the Government would derive revenue in rents and the sale of water. The residence conditions attaching to these blocks—nine months' residence on the land in each year—would prevent their being taken up for speculative purposes. This amendment of the law had been long promised; and goldfields residents would have the same right as others to acquire a freehold block. To show that the privilege would be availed of, one Cabinet Minister in a former Government had a working-man's block converted into a freehold by some arrangement.

HON. R. D. McKENZIE supported the amendment, the object being to enable the holder of a residential lease to obtain the freehold to his land. A previous Administration had seen fit to set aside areas as residential leases which could never become freehold, and this caused considerable dissatisfaction. It was the unanimous wish of people on the goldfields that a man should be enabled to get the parchment deed of his land.

HON. J. W. WRIGHT: What about the Labour platform?

HON. R. D. McKENZIE: Even a believer in the Labour platform, it had been proved, was glad enough to get his freehold. Goldfields residents should be treated as were the residents of other parts of the State, and permitted to own land on which to make a home.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE had expected the Attorney-General would see that this provision was put in the Bill.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: This was not the Attorney-General's Bill. It was introduced by the Minister for Lands.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE took it that Ministers conferred with each other on such matters. Numerous applications had been made to various Governments to have these leaseholds converted into freeholds. Under the present title a man who held a residential lease and desired to leave the country was not permitted to transfer his lease. If this amendment were adopted, such person would have a right to apply to obtain a title to the land, which he could then dispose of to the best advantage.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The Government had no objection to the amendment; indeed, it had been omitted from the Bill merely through an oversight. A promise had been made by previous Governments that, if desired, holders should have the opportunity of converting residential areas into freeholds, but the clause in the Bill only gave the right of conversion into working-men's blocks, as already provided for in Section 87 of the principal Act. The leasehold system as tried by a previous Government had proved unworkable, giving insufficient security of tenure, the result being that difficulty was experienced in endeavouring to sell the blocks.

HON. F. CONNOR: It had been urged that we should extend to goldfields residents the privileges enjoyed by people in other parts of the State. If the hon. member would support him in the direction of giving the same facilities to the agriculturists, he (Mr. Connor) would support the proposition put forward by the hon. member. There should be no class legislation. The agriculturist should be put on the same footing as the holder of a residential lease, and should be able to get his title in two years. At present it was necessary to be five years on the land and to comply with certain conditions before the title could be obtained.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: Was the hon. member referring to pastoralists?

HON. F. CONNOR: No; to conditional purchase holders.

HON. J. T. GLOWREY could not understand what Mr. Connor desired, but assured him that he had as much sympathy with the farmers and the agricultural community as the hon. member or any member, and would like to see laws relating to agriculturists as liberal as those pertaining to any section of the community.

HON. F. CONNOR: Could the Bill be recommitted to bring Clause 55 relating to conditional purchase holdings into line with the amendment proposed by Mr. Glowrey if it were passed? At any rate, could the clause be brought before the Committee for consideration?

THE HONORARY MINISTER would not consent to the recommittal of the

Bill with the object of amending the Act in the manner suggested by Mr. Connor. Conditional purchase holdings and residential leases were not on all-fours. The object of making the conditional purchase holder stay on the land for five years and comply with certain conditions was to keep as many people on the land as possible. It should be remembered that the residential leaseholder could not secure more than one block—[HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: About a quarter of an acre]—whereas the conditional purchase holder could secure other holdings, so that if the residential conditions on conditional purchase holdings were waived we would have large estates built up.

HON. H. BRIGGS: Residential leases were not confined to the goldfields. There was a piece of ground east of Fremantle which was at one time known as Canvastown, and became a disgrace to Fremantle; but since it was thrown open for occupation as residential leases, people had taken up the blocks and built houses, and now the place was a little beauty-spot. He supported Mr. Glowrey's amendment.

HON. W. PATRICK was in entire sympathy with the amendment. In his district recently a number of freehold blocks were put up for auction, and at the same time a number of residential leases were offered; but whereas the whole of the freehold blocks were taken up, only a small proportion of the residential areas were taken up. The land hunger was a human instinct, and particularly distinct amongst English people. It was rather strange that those who held strong views on the nonalienation of land tried to secure a freehold when it became a personal matter. It was hard to understand what Mr. Connor was driving at. There was no comparison between holding a quarter of an acre and two or three thousand acres. No doubt inducements should be held out to get the country settled, but the conditions were already very liberal.

HON. F. CONNOR: The Minister was not in favour of the principle he (Mr. Connor) suggested.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: Not under five years.

HON. F. CONNOR: Did the Minister know Section 57 of the Act?

THE HONORARY MINISTER: Yes; it permitted outright purchase.

HON. F. CONNOR: We permitted outright purchase, but the Minister would not give a man the right of purchase as soon as he could pay for his land. We should provide that as soon as a man carried out the conditions of improvement prescribed by the regulations, he should be able to get his parchment.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: The conditional holder could do so now.

HON. F. CONNOR: Not until after five years. There was a whine from the Government that there was no money, and that we must have land taxation; but here was a source of revenue that would be of benefit to the settlers.

THE COL. SECRETARY: It would build up large estates. That was what the Government desired to avoid.

HON. F. CONNOR would not put it past the hon. member, if he had the chance, to build up a large estate. One appreciated the high moral political tone the hon. member took. However, it was just as well not to discuss that subject any farther. The Minister was not in favour of his (Mr. Connor's) suggestion, and yet he knew that land could be taken up under Section 57 of the Act of 1898. The hon. gentleman should change his mind. The majority of the House would be in favour of what he (Mr. Connor) was advocating. Should the Minister not allow the Bill to be recommitted for a small amendment like this, considering that we were giving way in some degree to what was brought in for placating the goldfields community?

THE HONORARY MINISTER: In regard to Section 57, he did not say he was in favour of it, but he was glad the hon. member had drawn attention to it. The section provided that any persons who wished to make an outright purchase could do so; persons could take up a thousand acres and pay cash within twelve months. Under the old Act they were to pay 5s. per acre on improvements for seven years, and if they chose to do the improvements earlier they got their title. The amending Bill made an alteration so that they should pay 10s. per acre on improvements and 10s. cash, but the area was limited to 1,000 acres.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE did not think there was anything in the Land

Act to prevent a man from buying a section of land if he had fulfilled the improvement conditions.

HON. F. CONNOR: Let the hon. member read Sections 55 and 56 of the original Act.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE hoped Mr. Connor would support the amendment. On the goldfields they felt it very necessary. In regard to land settlement generally members for goldfields had never acted adversely to the interests of the farming districts. We all recognised —he knew he did—that the farming industry of the country was to be thoroughly protected and assisted in every possible way.

HON. W. PATRICK: There was nothing in the clause to prevent one from getting a title in less than two years. Subsection 6 of Section 57 of the Act said that at the expiration of the license, or at any time during the continuance of the license, provided all the conditions of fencing and improvements had been complied with, and such fencing and improvements maintained, also that the whole purchase money and fee had been paid, a Crown grant of the land should issue.

HON. F. CONNOR: That did not apply to conditional leases.

HON. W. PATRICK: That was a conditional purchase lease. Section 55 referred to conditional purchase with residence, and 20 years were allowed under certain conditions to pay for the land. Section 56 related to conditional purchase without residence, where the conditions were more onerous. Section 57 was more liberal, so far as getting the title was concerned, than the proposed amendment by Mr. Glowrey.

HON. F. CONNOR wished people to have right of transfer under Section 57.

HON. W. PATRICK: That was a new departure.

HON. F. CONNOR: By the time persons had spent perhaps a year on the land and had made all the improvements, they might be able to find the money sufficient to secure the title. If Sections 55, 56, and 57 were brought under the 57 regulation, after the necessary improvements had been made, that would satisfy him.

Amendment put and passed; the clause also amended verbally; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clauses 72 to 76—agreed to.

Clause 77—Power to throw open land for special selection:

The select committee had recommended that the clause be struck out.

Question put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	...	...	2
Noes	...	...	9
Majority against		...	7

AYES.	NOES.
Hon. J. D. Connolly	Hon. H. Briggs
Hon. C. A. Piesse (*Teller*).	Hon. T. F. O. Brimage
	Hon. E. M. Clarke
	Hon. F. Connor
	Hon. J. T. Glowrey
	Hon. R. D. McKenzie
	Hon. E. McLarty
	Hon. W. Patrick
	Hon. W. Wright (*Teller*)

Clause struck out.

Clauses 77 to end—agreed to.

Schedule—agreed to.

[Postponed clauses and new clauses to be considered later.]

Progress reported, and leave given to sit again.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 8·20 o'clock, until the next Tuesday.