Monday,
2nd March, 1885

ABSTRACT OF THE PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

Council of the Governor General of India,

LAWS AND REGULATIONS

Vol. XXIV

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Council of the Governor General of India,

ASSEMBLED FOR THE PURPOSE OF MAKING

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Abstract of the Proceedings of the Council of the Governor General of India, assembled for the purpose of making Laws and Regulations under the provisions of the Act of Parliament 24 & 25 Vic., cap. 67.

The Council met at Government House on Monday, the 2nd March, 1885.

PRESENT:

His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor General of India, K.P., G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.M.S.I., G.M.I.E., P.C., *presiding.*
His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, K.C.S.I., C.I.E.
His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, G.C.B., C.I.E.
The Hon'ble J. Gibbs, C.S.I., C.I.E.
Lieutenant-General the Hon'ble T. F. Wilson, C.B., C.I.E.
The Hon'ble C. P. Ilbert, C.I.E.
The Hon'ble Sir S. C. Bayley, K.C.S.I., C.I.E.
The Hon'ble T. C. Hope, C.S.I., C.I.E.
The Hon'ble T. M. Gibbon, C.I.E.
The Hon'ble R. Miller.
The Hon'ble Amír Alí.
The Hon'ble W. W. Hunter, LL.D., C.S.I., C.I.E.
The Hon'ble H. J. Reynolds.
The Hon'ble Rao Saheb Vishvanath Narayan Mandlik, C.S.I.
The Hon'ble Peári Mohan Mukerji.
The Hon'ble H. St. A. Goodrich.
The Hon'ble G. H. P. Evans.
The Hon'ble Mahárájá Luchmessur Singh, Bahádur, of Durbhunga.
The Hon'ble J. W. Quinton.

BENGAL TENANCY BILL.

The adjourned debate on the Hon'ble SIR STUART BAYLEY'S Motion that the Reports of Select Committee on the Bill be taken into consideration was resumed this day.

The Hon'ble MR. GOODRICH said:—"It is right that I should, however briefly, express my opinion on the two questions to which each member of the Council must presently reply in the affirmative or negative.

"In the first place, the necessity of immediate regulation by law of the relations between landlord and tenant seems proved. In the second place, the Bill in

question will limit the landlord's rights no further than the public interest demands.

"My assent to the second proposition is, like the adhesion to the report of most of the members of the Select Committee, given subject to some reservations which I will briefly indicate.

"In the first place, the public interests will suffer if an improving landlord be not permitted to bar for a term of 30 years his tenants on land which he has reclaimed from beginning to acquire occupancy-rights therein. Mr. Hunter's amendment will meet this case, and will increase the chance of capital being applied to land.

"Under this Bill the enhancement of rent seems not permissible, on the ground that land let to a raiyat as *rural* land may have become *suburban* by the rise of a centre of commerce or industry, such as a new railway-junction, port, coal-mine or factory. Such cases will arise, and the landlord ought to be able to enhance on lands which, when let, were far from any market, but which have acquired a fancy value as accommodation-land by proximity to a new centre of population.

"The partial denial of the tenant's competency to contract must affect interests in various ways, not all perhaps now foreseen; but a practical consequence of the denial of the right to agree to an enhancement of more than two annas, excepting by suit, will be the infliction of the costs of a great mass of litigation upon the raiyats. I speak as one who has been Settlement-officer or Collector for the last 14 years, and can assure the Council that if the condition of the estate of zamíndárs resembles that of Government estates and of zamíndári estates in the Northern Districts of Madras, enquiry, such as Government, when landlord, everywhere asserts its right to conduct, will bring to light instances of lands fraudulently under-rated in almost every village.

"These questions will no doubt be fully discussed when the amendments to section 30 of the Bill are under consideration.

"I do not see any complaint from landlords on the score of the want of provisions empowering them to expropriate on terms assessed by a panchayat occupancy-raiyats holding lands which the landlord needs for the execution of improvements, or for the erection of buildings or extension of premises which may be needed for the industrial development of his estate, or for neces-

sary use in the working of mines or quarries. I think a prudent landlord would desire to possess this power. The State where it is landlord enjoys it, and it is for the public interest that it should be given to the landlord under due safeguard. Whether the landlord should be allowed to do as the State is doing, and take up land needed for fuel and timber reserves, paying of course compensation to evicted tenants, is a somewhat larger question; if it has been raised in the course of the Committee's enquiry, I have missed it.

"Permit me, my Lord, to add that the value of the patient and well-directed labours of the Committee have been fully recognized in *Southern* India."

The Hon'ble BÁBÚ PEÁRI MOHAN MUKERJI said:—"After the very gratifying testimony which the hon'ble member in charge of the Bill has borne to the value of my humble labours in the Select Committee, it would be ungracious in me to view with indifference the impatience expressed by the hon'ble member in the concluding part of his speech with any proposal for a postponement of the immediate passing of the Bill. But I should be lacking in the duty which I owe as a responsible member of Your Lordship's Legislative Council, and the duty which I owe to my countrymen, if I hesitated to beg Your Excellency and this hon'ble Council to pause before taking up the amended Bill for consideration for the purpose of passing it. Reserving to myself therefore the right of making a substantive motion on the subject, if necessary, I submit in the interests of all concerned that the amended Tenancy Bill should not be taken up for consideration by this hon'ble Council on the present motion of the hon'ble member in charge of the Bill. It is necessary to allow sufficient time to hon'ble members for studying the Bill, and the voluminous literature on the subject, before the Council might be expected to give to a discussion of its different provisions that intelligent consideration which its importance deserves, and also sufficient time to the public and to the parties interested for submitting their views and criticisms on the measure. The Bill has undergone considerable modifications since the Preliminary Report of the Select Committee was submitted last year; so many as 45 sections have been expunged, 13 new sections have been added, 21 sections have been thoroughly re-cast, and large modifications, both verbal and material, have been made in a number of other sections. The changes made in the Bill affect questions of paramount importance, and it cannot be expected that hon'ble members have been able in barely a fortnight's time to master the details of the revised Bill, and to judge of the justice and expediency of the various additions, omissions and modifications, considered by themselves and with reference to their bear-

ings on the general scheme of legislation. This fact must have forcibly pressed itself upon Your Lordship's attention at the last sitting of the Council, when an hon'ble member, himself an eminent lawyer and the ornament of his profession, entertained serious doubts as to the correct meaning of the provision about enhancements of rent by registered contract, and put upon it a meaning contrary to that given to it by the hon'ble member in charge of the Bill. The time usually given to the gestation and maturation of important legislative measures is never thrown away. Considering that a much less important measure, the Transfer of Property Act, was before this hon'ble Council for full five years before it was passed in 1882, that there are even now three Bills, one to amend the law relating to Court-fees, the other to amend the law relating to Civil Courts, and the third to declare the extent of testamentary powers of Hindus and Bhuddists, which have been before the Council since 1881, I feel confident that hon'ble members will not grudge the time required to bring to a satisfactory termination a measure which immeasureably exceeds in importance any of these other measures, and which will, for weal or for woe, affect the destinies of more than 50 millions of the people of these provinces. The necessity of giving hon'ble members and the public further time for the consideration of the revised Bill is the greater as it proceeds on lines very different to those on which the Bill was modified and presented to the public last year; and nothing shows this more clearly than the Report of the Select Committee and the Dissents recorded by a large majority of the hon'ble members who sat on that Committee. Exception has been taken to the revised Bill on the ground that the rights it confers on non-occupancy-raiyats would practically convert them into occupancy-raiyats, that the restrictions it imposes on enhancement of rent would virtually make enhancement of rent more visionary than real, and that the power it gives the Local Government to order wholesale reductions of rent on grounds other than those mentioned in the Bill was opposed to the assurance given by Government when the Bill was introduced in Council that the *status quo* was not to be disturbed; while, on the other hand, it has been alleged that the Select Committee have omitted or materially modified several provisions which formed the keystone of the original scheme, and that the present outcome is scarcely a settlement of the many important questions relating to the law of landlord and tenant. In the face of such radical alterations in the Bill, it is due to those whose interests would be so greatly affected by the measure that they should be allowed an opportunity of examining the Bill in its present form, and of submitting to your Excellency in Council their views regarding it. It is for the observance of no technical form of procedure that I presume to make this proposal. The re-

commendation made by the Select Committee, that the revised Bill should not be re-published—a recommendation, by the way, which is wholly incompatible with the Report itself—amounts to a virtual denial to the people of a privilege which they have enjoyed since 1862—the privilege, namely, of being allowed an opportunity of submitting to Government their views and wishes regarding a legislative measure which vitally affects their interests. The question engaged the attention of Your Lordship's illustrious predecessor, and His Lordship, in communicating his views to the Government of Bengal through the Secretary in the Legislative Department, observed: 'He (the Governor General) is, on the contrary, fully sensible that it is the duty of the Government to give the largest practicable amount of publicity to legislative proceedings, and to afford the public every opportunity of examining them and expressing an opinion upon them, and he is satisfied that more can be done in this respect than is done at present.' But only a very limited publicity will have been given to it if the revised Bill be not translated in the different vernacular languages and published in the local Gazettes. Although the present measure is unquestionably the most important scheme of legislation that has come before this hon'ble Council since its establishment, a vast majority of the landholders and the whole body of raiyats will have no opportunity given them of examining the provisions of the revised Bill and offering their opinions upon them. In the face of the provisions contained in Bill No. II, the changes made in the sections regarding tenures and registration of transfers of tenures, the new limitations imposed upon enhancement of rent in Court and out of Court, the additional protection given to subletting, the power given to the Local Government to order a reduction of existing rents in certain cases on grounds other than those recognised by law, the new section regarding contracts and a number of other provisions would come as a surprise upon most landholders if the Bill be not re-published; while the raiyats would discover with disappointment that the long-promised provisions for attaching to land a legal status independent of the length of possession of the holder, for a free sale and mortgage of occupancy-holdings and for village tables-of-rates defining the maximum limits beyond which there could be no enhancement of rent, find no place therein. Your Lordship is well aware that the progress of the Bill is watched with the greatest anxiety and interest by all classes connected with the land in these provinces. Memorials adopted in crowded meetings of raiyats have poured in from different parts of the country, expressing their greatest consternation at the provisions for survey and record-of-rights and other sections of the Bill. They have even made bold to submit that, although actuated by the best intentions, the legislature, in its ignorance of their actual condition

and relations with their landlords, will cause their ruin by the measure which it purposes to give them. Petitions have likewise poured in from landholders assembled at meetings in different parts of these provinces, submitting that there is no necessity whatever for substantive changes in the law on the lines on which the Bill has been drafted, that the Bill makes inroads upon vested rights of property guaranteed by law, and respected by preceding Administrations for nearly a century, that most of them have come to the possession of estates by purchase for large and valuable considerations, and that the proposed measure would, therefore, impose upon them, to use the words of John Stuart Mill, 'a penalty for having worked harder and saved more than their neighbours.' The landholders have repeatedly implored Your Lordship and Your Lordship's illustrious predecessor, with a persistency which has its apology only in the strength and sincerity of their convictions, to satisfy yourselves by the strictest enquiry that they have used with the greatest moderation their powers of eviction and settlement of rent, and that the condition of the raiyats in these provinces is one of growing prosperity. They have gone farther. At a meeting held at the Town Hall on the 29th of December, 1883, perhaps the largest, certainly the most influential, ever held in this city, they unanimously carried a resolution which I shall read to your Lordship: 'That if the deprivation of the landholders of their just rights, inherited from generation to generation, confirmed by the Permanent Settlement, and consecrated by a century of British rule, be deemed essential to the welfare of the tenantry, the Government be solicited to consider the justice of allowing the zamíndárs to surrender their estates on receiving such compensation in money as will, when invested in Government securities, produce a permanent return equal to their present income.' In compliance with that resolution they submitted a memorial to the Government of India. Could anything indicate more strongly their sense of the injustice involved in the measure and their feelings towards it? Your Lordship will be pleased to see that the landholders of Bengal and Behar, numbering among them those whose manorial possessions date from days long anterior to the date of the Muhammadan conquest, have come forward in a body with a memorial declaring their readiness to forego the allurements of their position and social consideration, and to forego all hopes of future profit, and praying the Government of India to be allowed to surrender their estates in return for such security in money which would bring them their present income. It is not, however, the parties interested in the measure who alone consider the proposed changes in the present land law wholly unnecessary and altogether unsuited to the country. The hon'ble the Chief Justice of Bengal has, with the authority due to his eminent position, declared that he sees no 'such necessity as

justifies the Government of Bengal in depriving the landlords of Bengal of their rights and privileges in the manner proposed by the new Rent Bill.' And, again :—'It seems to me inconsistent with the good faith of the British nation, which the Native community have hitherto had reason to respect, to deprive the zamíndárs of the rights and position which they have acquired under the Permanent Settlement.' No less defined is the opinion of the hon'ble Justice Field, who by his masterly Digest of the Rent Law, the prominent part he took in the labours of the Rent Commission, and the pre-Raphaelite minuteness with which he has delineated the land systems of different countries in his admirable work, has established a claim to speak with the highest authority on the subject. He says :—'I think we ought not to interfere with existing rights which have been the creation of our own administration operating upon the natural progress of the country. I think that no case has been made out for disturbing the landmarks of property. It must be borne in mind, as I have more than once pointed out, that a large proportion of the present proprietors are *bonâ fide* purchasers for valuable consideration, men who have paid their money for property sold at revenue sales, and in execution of the decrees of the Civil Courts, upon the faith of the existing state of things and the rights created by our laws and by our own action or inaction.' Other high officers of State have also denied the necessity of the measure now before this hon'ble Council. When the very necessity of the measure is denied by trusted and responsible officers of Government, the desirability of re-publishing the Bill with a view of giving the public and the parties interested an opportunity of examining the material modifications made in it by the Select Committee becomes imperative. The only argument that has been advanced by the Government of Bengal and by the hon'ble Member in charge of the Bill in favour of hurrying it forward through the Council is one based on the desirability of setting at rest the unsettled condition of the public mind on this question, and of preventing the further growth of expectations in the minds of raiyats which are not destined to be realised. But where is the urgency of passing a measure which, to use His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor's own words contained in his dissent, 'inadequately meets the necessities of the case which called for legislation,' and which is scarcely 'a final settlement of the many important principles connected with a Tenancy Bill in the Lower Provinces of Bengal.' The cause of this unsatisfactory termination of the labours of the Select Committee is not far to seek. Government have undertaken to make extensive amendments in the land laws of the country without having at their disposal facts and figures which alone could have shown whether they are necessary. I cannot more graphically describe the ignorance which prevails on the subject

than in His Honour's own words. Speaking from his presidential chair at a meeting of the Bengal Council on the necessity of a patwarí law, His Honour is reported to have said:—'The object of the Bill is to get at the facts connected with the agricultural economy of the country. For the last ninety years we have been endeavouring without any success to arrive at these facts. Everybody complains; those who have been discussing the Rent Bill for the last six or seven years complain; gentlemen who come to India to make enquiries about it complain; the zamíndárs themselves, and the raiyats, if they could speak, also admit that neither the Government nor the zamíndár nor the raiyats have any positive knowledge of the facts which exist in regard to their relations to one another as regards their own property.' The argument based on what are called the necessities of the case falls, therefore, to the ground. Is then the present law so very defective as to call for immediate action on the part of this hon'ble Council, notwithstanding the numerous modifications made by the Select Committee? I shall answer the question by reading to Your Lordship a statement from the despatch of the Government of India to Her Majesty's Secretary of State.: 'A great part of the evils we describe,' they said, 'is unquestionably due to defects in administration rather than to defects in the law.' I lay the greatest stress on this statement as one which conclusively shows that there is no necessity whatever for passing the amended Bill without giving it due publicity beforehand.

"I would beg Your Lordship to view the question in another light. The Bill, as amended by the Select Committee, differs widely from the scheme of legislation submitted to Her Majesty's Secretary of State for India by the Government of India, and from the scheme which received the sanction of His Lordship. The scheme of the Government of India was summarised in 13 proposals mentioned in paragraph 108 of their despatch, which, with Your Lordship's permission, I shall examine shortly *seriatim*. The first was—'To restore the great body of the raiyats of Bengal to the position which they held under the ancient land law and custom of the country.' But, far from giving the raiyats the benefits of the ancient land laws, the Bill contemplates the repeal of the very sections of Regulation VIII of 1793 which define the relative rights of landholders and raiyats under the Permanent Settlement, and as regards customs no attempt whatever has been made to ascertain their nature and scope, or to formulate them into statutory provisions. The second proposal was—'To effect this restoration by declaring that the occupancy-right, carrying with it the privilege of a legal rent, shall attach to all raiyati land, and shall be enjoyed

by all settled raiyats, nomad raiyats and under-raiyats being excluded.' The section of the Bill which contained this provision has been expunged, evidently in deference to the opinion of Her Majesty's Secretary of State. The third proposal was—'To accept the proposals of the Lieutenant-Governor for the re-establishment, rectification and enforcement of the parganá rates, subject to certain modifications, of which the chief relate to the framing of principles of assessment, to the securing the benefit of improvements to those who make them, to avoiding class restrictions in respect to the enhancement of rent, and to permitting applications in certain cases for a complete settlement of estates.' The Bill contains no provision whatever for the re-establishment of parganá rates, and the provisions permitting application for settlement of estates form part of the chapter on survey and record-of-rights. The 4th proposal was 'To empower the Local Government to maintain the Collector's tables of rates for periods extending from 10 to 30 years.' The provisions embodying this proposal have been expunged from the Bill. The 5th proposal was—'To declare that no contract shall debar a raiyat from acquiring a right of occupancy in raiyati land.' But, instead of restricting freedom of contract in one particular, the Bill provides for such restrictions in 13 different particulars. The 6th proposal was—'To render the occupancy-right transferable, not, indeed, by summary sale without decree, but by sale in execution of decree and by private sale.' This has been abandoned, and the matter left to custom as at present. The 7th proposal was—'Except as above, to impose no restriction on the mortgage of the right.' This also has been abandoned. The 8th proposal was—'To secure to occupancy and other raiyats due compensation for their improvements." This I find is the first proposal to which due effect has been given in the Bill. The 9th proposal was—'To reserve to the Government the fullest power of interposition to prevent the growth of a pauperised cottier class.' This refers to the evils which might be brought about by the transfer of raiyati holdings by sale or mortgage to landjobbers or moneylenders, and is therefore a mere corollary of the proposal regarding transfer of occupancy-holdings which has been abandoned. The 10th proposal was—'To discourage subletting by certain expedients, of which the most important is a limitation of the amount of rent recoverable from under-raiyats.' The provisions of the amended Bill, on the contrary, would encourage subletting and give great protection to sub-lessees. The 11th proposal was 'To provide for the more speedy realization of arrears of rent, when the rates are undisputed, by a modified method of distraint and an abbreviated procedure, as recommended by the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal.' No summary procedure whatever for the speedy realization of rent has been given, and the institution of distraint

has been virtually abolished. Instead of giving facilities for the recovery of rent, the Bill will immensely add to the difficulties of the landholders in this respect. It provides for meddling with the simplest transactions between the landlord and tenant, and makes a reference to the Courts and Revenue-officers obligatory for the ultimate regulation of every bargain relating to land; and whereas the present law provides for the aid of executive officers for only a single purpose, namely, measurement of land, there are more than 50 sections in the amended Bill which provide for executive interference on the part either of the Local Government or of their Revenue-officers. The inevitable effect of such provisions would be to annihilate the landholder's prestige in his estate, and thereby throw insuperable obstacles in the way of his recovering his rents. I shall read to Your Lordship in this connection the statements made before the Parliamentary Committee in 1832 by one who has denounced the wisdom of the Permanent Settlement in no measured terms—I mean James Mill. He says—'To draw from the raiyats the duties or contributions which they owe is well known to be a business of great detail and difficulty, requiring the strictest vigilance and most minute and persevering applications. Anything which strikes at the credit of the zamíndár, farmer or other functionary by which this duty is performed immediately increases the difficulty by encouraging the raiyat in the hope of defeating the demand by evasions, cunning, obstinacy or delay.' The 12th proposal was 'To authorise remissions or suspensions of rent where there has been a remission or suspension of land-revenue.' The Bill contains no such provision. The 13th and last proposal was 'To take up the question of introducing throughout Bengal the system of village records and field surveys, commencing with the Patna Division.' And this is the second out of 13 proposals which has been fully embodied in the amended Bill, although it was one the difficulties attending the carrying out of which were clearly pointed out by Her Majesty's Secretary of State. The amended Bill, therefore, is in many important particulars at variance with the proposals which, with modifications in only one material point, received the sanction of Her Majesty's Secretary of State. Whether under such circumstances Your Lordship would consider it desirable to submit the amended Bill for the consideration of Her Majesty's Secretary of State for India is a question which it is for Your Lordship alone to decide, but I beg leave to submit that that question acquires additional importance from the fact that the landholders of Bengal and Behar took express exception to the correctness of the statements of fact and law contained in the despatch of the Government of India on which the sanction of Her Majesty's Secretary of State to the introduction of the Bill in Council was based. That despatch assumed that 'the right of Government to fix at its own dis-

cretion the amounts of the rents upon the lands of the zamíndárs had never been denied or disputed,' whereas such a right is not only disputed, but it was distinctly disproved by the researches of Sir John Shore and disclaimed by the authors of the Permanent Settlement. The despatch declared that the rights of raiyats were not ascertained and defined at the time of the Permanent Settlement, whereas it is well known that those rights formed the subject of a searching enquiry for 20 years before the settlement was made, and that they were clearly defined in Regulation VIII of 1793. It gave extracts from the evidence of Holt Mackenzie before the Parliamentary Committee of 1832, showing the desirability of legislation on the subject of tenant-rights, but it ignored the important statement made by him that 'if done without their (zamíndárs') consent, we must, I apprehend, interfere by a new law, and be prepared to give the zamíndárs compensation or allow a reduction of revenue.' It declared that before 1859 the zamíndárs had no right to enhance rents on the grounds of rise in price of produce, and that the institution of distraint was an offshoot of the Regulations—statements which require no formal refutation. These and other statements formed the subject of a memorial, dated the 17th of November, 1883, by the landholders of Bengal and Behar to Her Majesty's Secretary of State; and His Lordship was pleased to observe, with reference thereto, that he 'can find nothing therein which would justify his assenting to its prayer that further legislative proceedings in connexion with the Bill should be stayed in order to enable him to re-consider the principles on which the Bill has been framed.' His Lordship adds that 'the most careful attention be given to the arguments of the memorialists when he receives *the Bill as finally settled.*' Your Lordship is well aware that as soon as a Bill has been passed by this hon'ble Council and has received the assent of Your Lordship, it ceases to be a Bill, and becomes, to use the language of the Indian Councils' Act, 'a Law or Regulation' notwithstanding the power of disallowance vested in Her Majesty's Secretary of State. The concluding portion, therefore, of His Lordship's remarks has raised a hope in the minds of the landholders that, before the Bill is taken up by this hon'ble Council for the purpose of passing, it would be sent to Her Majesty's Secretary of State for his consideration. Whatever foundation there might be for such a hope, I earnestly entreat Your Lordship and this Honourable Council to order a rerpublication of the Bill before it is taken up for consideration, and that Your Lordship will not press forward, without further and due publicity, a measure which is at utter variance with the scheme which was sent up to Her Majesty's Secretary of State and with the instructions contained in the despatch of the Secretary of State, which the landholders look upon as a measure which in the absence of any

necessity makes serious inroads upon vested rights of property, which the raiyats themselves regard with great consternation, and which landholders and raiyats alike, and not a few of the responsible officers of State, regard as a measure possessing a much greater claim than any other measure that could be devised to the title of 'A Bill for the promotion of litigation in Bengal and Behar.'"

The Hon'ble RAO SAHEB VISHVANATHA NARAYAN MANDLIK said:—"My Lord, in this matter I propose to follow a moderate course, as I think it will be the best under the circumstances; for this I have my reasons, which I now propose to give. The Bill, together with the Select Committee's Report, as well as the dissents, have now been before us for two weeks, and a comparative study thereof, along with the Bill in its previous stages, has been a task of very great difficulty to me. The cause of this may be partly seen from the review that has been just submitted by the Hon'ble Sir Steuart Bayley. The hon'ble members who have followed him have had, with one exception, the advantage of being on the Select Committee for more than a year. If my remarks appear, therefore, somewhat cursory and disconnected, that circumstance arises from the necessities of the case. The mass of district papers, unindexed, has to be looked into each time from a differently placed standpoint. This is, however, not my only difficulty. Questions of principle have been introduced into the discussion in the Committee, and by different members of the Committee in their dissents; and they also arise in the papers circulated to the members of this Council and in the speeches of my hon'ble colleagues who have preceded me. In justice, therefore to myself, and to the Government of India, whom I am bound to help with such little light as I may be able to throw on the subject, and to their officers, who have worked hard to give their opinions as well as a variety of information about their respective districts, I must dwell for a few moments on the whole matter now before us.

"The legislature of India can only follow a safe and sound course. The question now before us directly affects 58 out of 217, or more than a fourth, of the revenue or judicial districts of British India, and indirectly about twice as many more. The Permanent Settlement is not in question now, and cannot be. I know, my Lord, I am here treading on delicate ground. But I have my views on the subject, and the Government of India has now finally approved of the principle. The Permanent Settlement is the sheet-anchor of the Government and the people, and we hope that when all the conditions are fulfilled (be it two, or be it three, conditions), it will be introduced in its own time throughout the empire as the best political and economical measure that can be devised. Neither party to this present contest refer to it, except as

a means of getting rid of their own difficulties. I allude to it now, because it has been introduced into the discussions both here and outside, and because these discussions have caused unrest for which I see no sufficient cause and which ought not to be lightly indulged in.

"The brief history of the present Bill may be thus given. In 1859 the Occupancy Act was passed, recognising heritable but untransferable occupancy-right under certain circumstances. This was repealed in 1869 by a Bengal Council Act. Still the rent difficulty was not overcome. Zamíndárs could not recover rents. This was admitted by the Government of Bengal and by the Government of India in 1877-78. How is this got over? This is what the Divisional Commissioners say. The Commissioner for the Presidency Division says the zamíndárs had 'a good right to expect a very much more substantial relief' in regard to the recovery of rents. He holds that the Bill, if passed into law, is not likely to end in a satisfactory solution of the questions at issue. The Burdwan Commissioner is opposed in a manner more pronounced; so are those of Dacca and Chittagong; the latter would urge the non-extension of the measure to his district. The Commissioner of the Rajshahye Division is altogether opposed to the Bill, and thinks that while the raiyats of Bengal have been the stronger, and the Lieutenant-Governor in 1877 thought that a Bill for the proper recovery of rents was required, something else which was not then considered necessary has taken the place of the Rent Bill. He shows that rent-suits have increased by the grant of occupancy-rights, presumably to improvident people. This he shows by extracts from the report of the Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling, formerly District Judge, &c., in the Sonthal Parganás.*

* Mr. Oldham estimates that about 80 per cent. of the civil suits in the Sonthal Parganás are instituted by money-lenders to recover advances made to raiyats, a large majority of whom have occupancy-rights, and the following figures for the year 1883 compare litigation in the three districts just mentioned:—

District.	Population.	Number of civil suits instituted.	Number of civil executions of decree instituted.
Sonthal Parganás . .	1,568,093	7,351	4,253
Dinagepore . . .	1,514,346	5,188	2,518
Rajshahye . . .	1,338,638	2,674	1,930

Further on, he observes—

"I have no figures showing the number of civil suits in the Sonthal Parganás before such provisions as those in the Bill were introduced, but Mr. Oldham's statement that they greatly increase litigation seems sufficient.

'Lastly, Messrs. Livesay, Newbery, Ruddock, Dalton and Tute, and I would point to the following figures for 1883 as showing that litigation for the recovery of rent has not been decreased by the provisions of the Bill, though Mr. Oldham here again thinks that without transferability there would not be nearly so many rent-suits, as fewer money-lenders who quarrel with the zamíndárs would become occupancy-raiyats:—

District.	Number of rent-suits instituted.	Number of rent executions instituted.
Sonthal Parganás . .	3,892	2,805
Dinagepore . . .	3,902	1,620
Rajshahye . . .	1,978	853"

"Again, the Board of Revenue consider that the rents are lower than what they were in the beginning of the last century. And this would rather indicate that we must look chiefly to a good rent-recovery law, abolition of illegal levies, and the partition of all partible properties for our help.

"In face of these facts, it is hard to say that the present Bill does provide additional facilities for the recovery of rents on which the payment of the *jamá* depends, and which was asked for and promised. After having studied the matter, I must say that to me the natural solution of rent difficulties appears to be the amendment of Act X of 1859 and not its repeal. We ought to have had complete statistics placed before us. I do not now advocate taking additional evidence. The reasons for this will be seen from my subsequent remarks. I know the Government of Bengal complain (letter dated 27th September, 1883) 'it is a misfortune that Bengal is so absolutely destitute of a record-of-rights.' And the hope is there expressed that when such record is established disputes will be impossible.' I regret I cannot join in the expression of the latter hope. Disputes do not depend on the mere character of public records. Their causes are deeper and varied, and I may say that the greater the complexity of legislation, the pressure of population on the means of subsistence, and, in some measure, the advance of modern civilisation itself, the larger will be the quantity of litigation. Historical experience completely supports me in this position. But my present complaint is of a more practical character, and relates to matters like eviction, distraint and others which we shall soon have to consider when going into detail. And the complaint is based upon the existence of the present law beginning from Regulation VIII of 1800 and coming up to Bengal Act VII of 1876. These laws were passed for securing some such statistics; and we ought to have máuzawár or village registers, and parganáwár or district registers, prepared under them. They would have given a large quantity of information about all the lands in each district, their situations, dimensions, holders and other particulars. From these, valuable information about the state of the people could have been gathered. I extract a specimen from the papers handed up by the Commissioner of the Patna Division, which show that within the last 80 years in the Gya district each estate has been split up into six and even more portions, and the number of proprietors has increased from 18 to 24-fold.[b]

[b] *Extract from enclosure of Commissioner's Report No. 484 R., dated 7th July, 1883, page 11 (note).*

"In the 24-Parganás, which are now comprised in the district of Gya, the total number of estates in 1789 was 744, and the number of proprietors 1,160; in 1871 the number of estates was 4,411 and the number of registered proprietors 20,453. In 80 years, therefore, each estate has, on a average, been split up into six, and,

"This is one example in regard to the case of the proprietors as the one I gave before is in regard to occupancy-tenants. As a very considerable number of these are said to exist in Bengal, such information would have cleared up many difficulties in regard to recovery of rent and other matters. None of the dissents, so far as I can see, supplies any help in this direction. All zamíndárs could supply statistics, and ought, I think, to have been called upon to do so.

"Turning, therefore, necessarily to the divisional reports, the state of matters is not quite reassuring. Some officers would rather work the present law more strictly and stop the illegal ábwábs. Others think the new law not at all necessary, and have proposed a provision empowering the Local Government to introduce it into any locality at its discretion.

"As far as I have been able to gather, the Commissioners oppose the Bill, first, as unnecessary, and as going beyond the necessities of the case; and secondly, because it will not produce the results anticipated, but will injure vast interests without any compensating public good, and end in injurious litigation to the detriment of all parties. Some Collectors would have a moderate Bill. Such being the state of matters, I am sorry I am not able to follow the line taken up by those hon'ble colleagues who complain of the present Bill as not conceding all they claim for the tenants. The evidence of the District Officers is quite the other way, and I think it should not be set aside except on very strong grounds sufficient to override their weighty representations. His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has a fourfold complaint against the Bill. The Hon'ble Mr. Reynolds thinks that, if anything, this is a law which cannot last long. The Hon'ble Mr. Amír Alí is also dissatisfied for the non-extension of occupancy-rights to classes who the district authorities think are not generally entitled to them; while the Hon'ble Mr. Gibbon thinks that complete transferability ought to have been enacted instead of its being left to Courts and custom. Again, I see a demand made in some quarters for what is

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where there was formerly one proprietor, there are now 18 (Statistical Reporter, Volume XII, page 126). In 1790, there were 1,232 separate estates on the rent-roll of the Patna district, as then constituted, held by 1,280 registered proprietors. Including a net total of 777 new estates obtained by transfer from the Gya district, the number of estates on the rent-roll of the district amounted in 1870-71 to 6,075. The number of registered proprietors had increased to 37,800. Allowing for the increase in the size of the district by the addition of the Behar sub-division, the number of estates under the Patna collectorate had quadrupled since the original assessment in 1790; and where there was formerly one proprietor, there are now probably 20 (Statistical Reporter, Volume XI, page 187). In the district of Tirhoot the figures are more marked. In 1790 there were 1,321 estates held by 1,9 9 registered proprietors. In 1871 the number of estates was 11,500 and the number of registered proprietors 73,416 (Statistical Reporter, Volume XIII, page 168). So long ago as 1789 Mr. Shore remarked on the insignificant size of the Behar estates and the poverty of their owners. If subdivision has gone on thus rapidly with estates, it is hard to expect a different state of things in case of transferable occupancy-holdings."

called spirited legislation. To persons who ask for such legislation I again refer to the valuable reports of our district authorities. These are entirely opposed to such a course. Indeed, it seems to me that those who advocate such a course are hardly aware of the gravity of the occasion or the seriousness of results. Social and economic changes, to be stable, must be slow, and must come from within. Does the evidence before us warrant such a proceeding? I am bound to say no. I would rather that the energy wasted on such attempts at seeking spirited legislation were more usefully employed in training cultivators, say, over given areas, to be more hard-working, self-reliant, truthful, God-fearing men. Their example would be more efficacious than a cart-load of invectives against vested interest of any kind, and will certainly produce a moral revolution which the Government above all others would be the first to recognize.

"The Government of India, in the Irrigation papers published in October, 1871, lay down a well-known caution in regard to the evils produced by periodic settlements. The principles which underlie those observations (*vide* Minute of Lord Mayo and other papers) appear to be that frequent interference in the private affairs of the people must produce evil. Here, on the contrary, the call upon the Government seems to be not to desist, but to come and interfere on almost every conceivable occasion, either through the Revenue or the Judicial Department. Nothing is to be settled, it would seem, out of Court and by private agency. I am sorry to see the unqalified assertion of such a principle. The Hon'ble Mr. Evans has already drawn attention to it, and I hope some substantial improvement may yet be made in this matter during the progress of the Bill.

"Again, the divisional authorities speak of considerable increase of establishments as one of the inevitable results of this legislation. Thus, in regard to Division Chittagong, the Commissioner says that litigation has increased since the last Act, and the tenants are evidently no better (see tables previously quoted). Evidently more complicated provisions will necessitate new establishments. In Rajshahye the new provision as to deposit of rents will require new establishments. In the Dacca Division, the demarcation of khámár lands (which is considered objectionable there and elsewhere), will require heavy establishments. Dacca, my Lord, is in East Bengal, of the character of whose people the Hon'ble Mr. Evans has told us at the last meeting, and you may usefully consult the records.

"Taking yet another view of the case, our colleagues, the Hon'ble the Maháráját of Durbhunga and the Hon'ble Peári Mohan Mukerji, are both dissatisfied with the whole work, and I believe it is now clear that the measure is not

suited to the circumstances of Behar. Will it benefit Bengal? I fear the evidence before me does not permit of my giving an unqualified answer in the affirmative. As I have said before, the Local Government has not supplied us with such statistics as the present laws enjoin the keeping of. Were it feasible and useful at this stage, I should have agreed to receive further evidence. But we are not now experimenting on inert matter which obeys certain natural laws, and with which you can repeat your experiments almost regardless of time. Such a method of experiment is not applicable to the subject before us. The state of the parties affected is, no doubt, undergoing some change; and yet it cannot be said that it has gone on so long as to have produced new combinations which the district officers have not already reported upon. And there is a certain subordinate official agency to which I would not now refer for further reports. I shall briefly explain what I mean by this observation. Thus a subordinate officer in Bengal submits a report which to me is quite a curiosity. He allows two days only to respectable gentlemen in his subdivision to submit their opinions. His own report is simply ludicrous. He has gone through the Bill, which, he says, provides necessary safeguards against the zamíndárs; he ventures to remark that more than sufficient privileges have been granted to the tenants; he would rather have seen a simple speedy mode of recovery of arrears and protection of tenants from illegal exactions and harrassing enhancements. When saying this he forgets that he has already considered the Bill sufficient in these respects. As if, however, thinking he had been doing too much, he again condemns the Bill as tending to create multiplicity of intermediate tenures detrimental to actual cultivators of the soil, and as likely to prove of doubtful expediency and productive of litigation. Then comes the final touch. He says:—'*The Bill is a very complete one, and I am unable to offer any suggestion.*' The fact seems to be that the writer has no confidence in himself; how can he expect that others should confide in him?

"I am unable, my Lord, to say how the multiplication of such evidence will be of any value, and there are some more specimens of it on both sides. In fact, some raiyati petitioners in Orissa have already picked up a kind of phraseology which is scarcely parliamentary. I would, therefore, not be a party to ask for further evidence on this occasion. We cannot artificially isolate the subjects of our inquiry; and there have been no violent social or economic changes which can have altered the social and economical institutions of Bengal or the character of its people since the last district reports were framed within one year. If there were any such changes, the Local Government would doubtless have sent up all the materials to this Council.

"Pursuing the same subject and working at it from another point of view, we must see what we have really to do. The legislation of 1859, as amended in 1869, the proceedings of the Commission of 1881, and the discussions that have been now going on for three years, are all before us. And it seems to me the point that is being lost sight of is this. Are we now going to construe for the first time the Regulations of 1793, or those Regulations along with all amendments up to this date as viewed by the conduct of all the parties concerned, namely, the Government, the landed proprietors and the tenants? A good deal has been said on both sides in regard to customs, but I take it, as a rule sanctioned by high authority, that a custom cannot be acknowledged as a basis of legislative action unless it has been consciously acted upon by the people as a rule of their conduct in the practices of every-day life. Unless it is so, I fail to see on what foundation it is to stand, and unless it has a foundation I should be chary of accepting it as a guide. Mr. Longfield, in his paper on 'The Revenue of Land in Ireland,' printed in the collection of essays published under the sanction of the Cobden Club, gives the following criterion for judging of property in land, and this I think may be safely taken as a guide in this discussion. He says:—

'The rights of the present owners do not depend upon the truth of any theory respecting the origin of proprietorial rights. It is a rule of natural justice that says that, if I encourage a stranger to buy from a wrongful owner property that is really mine, I cannot justly press my own claims against the purchaser. This is the case with land in every settled country. The present owners either themselves purchased the land or derived their rights under those who purchased it with the sanction of the community represented by the authority of the State. In many cases the State itself received part of the purchase-money from stamp-duties on the purchase-deeds.'

"Again, a high authority has laid down (Kent on American Law) that to complete the right to property the right to the thing and the possession of the thing must be united.

"What, then, are we now to do? I have tried to give a brief view of the Bill of 1883 taken by some of the leading officers who are in the same position as I am now, but who have the actual work of the administration on their hands, but I fear I have not done them justice for want of time. If we examine the Bill, we have to see what mischiefs it will suppress, and what remedies will be advanced by it. Viewed in this light, it seems to me that the *khudkásht* raiyat should have been allowed to remain undisturbed. *Khudkásht* is a well-known term, and, if necessary, its equivalent might have been simultaneously given, but neither the 'settled raiyat' nor the 'resident raiyat'

supplies its place. *Khudkásht* contains its own definition, and its attributes have a well-known history of their own.

"In respect to another subject I have a few words for this occasion. Though the present is not, strictly speaking, a revenue law, it will indirectly affect the revenue administration of the country, and it occurs to me that now that the subject has been exhausted threadbare, there ought to be no artificial restrictions on the quantity of zamíndári or raiyatwári holdings. If nine-tenths of Bengal are now under cultivation, and the remaining tenth is waste, it cannot affect any tenant if the proprietors of that waste land were allowed to work it, or to sell it or to contract with lease-hold tenants so as to reduce it into cultivation. That they have allowed it to remain uncultivated is a circumstance that has contributed to their own loss. That it has not been put on their rent-roll is, I conceive, because no rent has been derived by letting it, either by *batai* or cash rates. It therefore could not appear as cultivated land, either in their own or the Government registers, but why should there be a legislative prohibition to the proprietor making it his *khás* land, which it substantially is, and still more why its reclamation should be clogged with unnecessary restrictions is what I cannot see. When this and such like arguments are urged, one is referred by the Bengal Government to customs of former Governments for power to do so. On proper occasion, nobody advocates the non-exercise of superintending powers by our own Government within constitutional limits. But I am supported by high authority in protesting against an improper application of such examples. A constitutional and well-administered Government like our own can hardly set up the effete administration of Bengal in the 18th century as a model before us to copy. The provisions which are themselves cited in another part of the paper in connection with a similar example were repealed as being *obsolete* so long ago as 1876. The process of comparison is therefore, I must say with great deference, logically vicious.

"If there was any fair scheme applicable to both sides allowing such land to be converted into raiyatwári holdings on a graduated scale to be agreed to on both sides, I should have been prepared to take such improvement as a good start and some tangible good might have been attempted. This portion of the Bill is not favourably reported upon in the district papers before us.

"In regard to homestead lands, I think, unless such lands are connected with the raiyat's agricultural land of the village, mere outsiders should not be allowed to hold them. This is, I believe, the customary law, and as the native community is situated, it is, I think, a salutary provision. Neither the land-

lord nor the cultivating raiyat should be permitted to dissociate the one from the other. Neighbours' quarrels in matters of adjoining lands are the worst in any country, but when to other difficulties social and religious ones are added, the cup overflows to the detriment of the whole village community. I trust, therefore, that this subject, along with others, will be duly considered. The papers referring to Behar on this subject are important and deserve careful consideration.

"Another subject on which I am bound to express my opinion in this place is the restriction on the freedom of contracts generally. Over a wide country, containing 68 millions of inhabitants, the Government of India has doubtless had before it cases of localities or of a class or classes from which this liberty may, on due cause being shown, be sometimes withdrawn; and when we remember that under the infancy of the land law (and in several parts of the country the law as it stands now), does not permit of transfer of occupancy-holdings by contract, I may accept the present measure as a tentative solution of the difficulty so far as the tenants are concerned. But, on the other hand, with regard to waste lands on which nobody has settled, I should prefer all contracts being left free as heretofore, subject to the equitable jurisdiction of Courts of law. This view is also supported by the evidence of the district authorities. It occurs to me that while one side to this controversy would deny anything which will affect their rent-roll, the other cannot make up their minds to distinguish what is well known throughout India as *swámitwa* or right of dominion and tenancy. I am bound to say here at once that I agree with neither. The Bengal Revenue-officers do not support such a contention. Why is the legislature to attempt to square the zamíndár to fit into some new imaginary official circle?

"There are some other matters of which proper notice may be taken when they come up for discussion. While the Bill enacts several new provisions of law of questionable utility, and which will increase not only the work of district officers, but introduce a larger interference of State agency into the private affairs of the people than is either necessary or desirable, no positive provision, as its seems to me, has been made for relieving large classes both of tenants and landholders, who I think ought to be relieved. It appears clear from the papers before us that sub-letting is the standing evil to which a large amount of the sufferings of the Bengal raiyat may fairly be attributed. This may be seen particularly by referring to paragraphs 14 to 17 of Mr. Cotton's memorandum, prepared for the President of the Select Committee on the Tenancy Bill, which,

according to His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, merits every attention, Mr. Cotton says :—

'In one respect, however, the cultivators of the soil undeniably are placed at a disadvantage by the practice of sub-letting, for it is a peculiarity of the system, although these tenures and under-tenures often comprise defined tracts of land, a common custom is to sublet certain aliquot shares of the whole superior tenure, and in consequence the tenants in any particular village of an estate are often required to pay their rents to two, or more than two, and often to many different, landlords.'

"Although, as Mr. Cotton remarks, following the historian Hallam, that such a result is by no means unnatural, still that it is not a necessary result may I think be safely inferred from the papers before us. Thus the report of the Officiating Collector of Shahabad in regard to *guzáshta* holdings is in this connection valuable as showing that in places like Bhojpur those who cultivate their own lands on these tenures are very well off. I know that it is not correct to generalise from limited data, because property both acts and is acted upon by those who hold it; but if it is intended, on proper occasions, to help the creation of small properties with distinct responsibilities and with provisions for actual sub-divisions amongst the sharers, I think opportunity may now be taken to enact some provisions which would be an improvement on the present state of things.

"As regards our present course I would have voted for temporary relief being given to places like Mymensingh and Dacca by passing special measures to meet their cases. There is enough of material before us to support such a course. But this I fear would now be impracticable. It is now nearly six or seven years that the subject has been before either the Government of Bengal or the Government of India, including the deliberations of this Council, and we are given to understand that it will not conduce to the cause of good government if the matter be left in this state till the Council meets again here in December next. The Bengal Government as represented in this Council does not ask for delay in the minutes now before us, although those minutes do not accept the present Bill as a final settlement. The proprietory interest, as represented by the Hon'ble the Mahárájá of Durbhunga and Hon'ble Bábú Peárí Mohan, request re-publication, and if this were not a virtual postponement for a whole year I should have voted for that course. As it is, any extension of time which can conveniently be allowed to them may, I think, be granted; but if that cannot be, then I hope the Council will consider and discuss all that has to be said *pro* and *con.* for all the interests concerned are equal objects of conservation to the British Government. While I have given my reasons for the course

I am going to adopt, I regret I am not disposed to concur in the remarks either here or outside in regard to the opposition of our zamíndár colleagues. The case of the Maháráját of Durbhunga is as good as proved. If it were not, I still think both he and the Hon'ble Bábú Peári Mohan are bound to state all their objections. The district authorities show what they will suffer, and it is quite natural they should feel it; and if they do, I think we ought to be glad to hear them. They are representatives of a very large and important class. I do not think that it will be just to tax the present landed proprietors of Bengal with the shortcomings, if any, of their predecessors, because I think the progress of legislation as well as the papers now before us make it pretty clear that on the whole they have done their work well. But now comes another agency into greater prominence, and with the light which is thrown on their condition from both sides, it is clear that neither has arrived at its goal.

"What then are we to do? The Bengal Government calls for immediate action. This is supported by the hon'ble member in charge, who I feel sure will not rush into any extreme course. A few of the district papers move on the same lines. Though not inclined in favour of the Bill of 1883, they counsel legislation under some of the heads laid down in the Bill on which they favour us with their remarks. My duty therefore is clear; that is to make the most of what we have and not to postpone for another year.

"My Lord, I have already taken more time than I had proposed to myself. I am quite sensible of the imperfections which there may be in my work, but I can assure Your Lordship and my colleagues that I have devoted more hours to it than one is usually credited with doing in this climate. If there are any sides of the question on which light can be thrown, nobody would be more glad to learn than myself, but I have a right to say that I have done my best under the circumstances, and having made these remarks I beg to say that I shall vote with the hon'ble member in charge for the further consideration of the Bill in detail."

The Hon'ble MR. REYNOLDS said:—"I desire to support the motion that the Council should now proceed to take this Bill into consideration. I do not mean by this to express my approval of all the provisions of the Bill. The dissent which I have recorded from the Report of the Select Committee is sufficient to show that in some particulars of great importance the Bill seems to me to fall far short of being an adequate or a satisfactory measure. But, in my opinion, the faults of the Bill lie mainly on the side of defect. It fails to supply any sufficient check on the improper exercise of the extensive powers

which it puts into the hands of the landlords. It must be supplemented by further legislation for the protection and security of the tenant, and I have little doubt that the experience of a few years will show the necessity for such legislation to be imperative. Till that protection is afforded, I can only regard the Bill as a well-intended, but incomplete, measure; a measure to be praised rather for what it aims at, than for what it effects; a measure marking, it may be, a stage upon the journey, but leaving the country still a long distance from the desired goal. Holding these views, I still think that I can consistently vote in favour of the motion before the Council. If the principles which the Bill as originally introduced was intended to establish had been repudiated, or its objects had been formally abandoned, I should look upon the question in a very different light. In that case, instead of voting to take the Bill into consideration, I might have been more disposed to vote for dropping it altogether. But the difference between myself and the hon'ble member in charge of the Bill is not of this serious character. It is a difference of degree, not a difference of kind. I do not understand that the hon'ble member has, in any way, receded from the position which he took up in his speech on the 13th of March, 1883, when the Bill was referred to the Select Committee. He apparently believes that the Bill in its present form redeems the pledges which were given when it was introduced, or at least that it goes as far in that direction as is justified by the evidence laid before the Select Committee. In this belief I do not agree, but this need not prevent my consenting to discuss the details of the Bill as an instalment of the legislation necessary to a final settlement of the question. An affirmative vote on this motion seems to me to imply that it is desirable to legislate upon the subject, and that the provisions of the amended Bill do not go beyond the limits of the power of interference which the Government reserved to itself at the settlement of 1793; and further, that the general lines upon which the Bill is drawn, and the objects at which it aims, are just and reasonable, and in accordance with the wants of the country. It seems to me that the Bill, insufficient as I consider it to be, does satisfy these conditions, and I am, therefore, prepared to assent to its being taken into consideration by the Council.

"I willingly and thankfully acknowledge that the Bill contains many valuable improvements upon the present law. It lays down principles to guide the Courts in determining whether a tenant is a tenure-holder or a raiyat: it provides a simple procedure for the registration of the transfer of tenures: it does something towards strengthening the position of the occupany-raiyat: it simplifies and facilitates suits for the enhancement of rent: it establishes an

admirable system for the commutation of rents payable in kind: it prescribes excellent rules for instalments, receipts and interest on arrears: it encourages improvements: and it protects the interests, both of the parties and the general public, in cases of disputes between co-sharers. The chapter on the preparation of a record-of-rights contains provisions which will be equally useful to landlords and to tenants. The sections on the record of private lands will put a stop to that illegal misappropriation of village lands as khámár which has been too often practised in Behar. The rules for the protection of sub-tenants when the interest of the superior holder is relinquished or transferred, the restrictions upon such contracts as are opposed to the objects of the law, the power given to apply for a judicial determination of the incidents of a tenancy—all these are, in my opinion, points in which the Bill applies useful and equitable remedies to evils for which the existing law does not adequately provide.

"It is therefore the more to be regretted that a measure which contains so much that is good should be marred by defects which not merely detract from its usefulness, but which may result in aggravating the mischief which the Bill is intended to counteract, and in turning what should be the raiyat's protecting shield into an instrument of exaction and oppression. The opportunity has again been afforded us which was neglected in 1793 and misused in 1859, the opportunity of placing the relations of landlord and tenant on a secure and permanent basis; of defining the rights and obligations of each; of ensuring, in accordance with immemorial usage, fixity of tenure at fair rents to all cultivators of the village lands; and of facilitating the landlord's recovery of his dues so long as he restricts his demands upon the tenant within equitable limits. It is to be feared that, once more, the opportunity will be suffered to pass by. This Bill, by confining the right of occupancy to the village in which the tenant has held land for 12 continuous years, fails to give the occupancy-raiyat that fixity of tenure to which he is justly entitled. The sections relating to the enhancement of an occupancy-raiyat's rent give the landlords a sure and speedy means of enhancing rents, without providing any sufficient check on the levy of further enhancements in those areas in which rents are already as high as the land can properly bear.

"If the protection given to the occupancy-raiyat is thus insufficient, the defects of the Bill, as regards the non-occupancy-raiyat, are still more conspicuous, and are likely to lead to results still more deplorable. The non-occupancy-raiyat is entitled to full consideration at our hands, for he is really the offspring of our own legislation. We have been told time after time, by the

landlords and their advocates, that the occupancy-raiyat is the creature of Act X of 1859. Never was a statement more inaccurate, or indeed more directly opposed to the fact. The occupancy-raiyat dates from a time whereof the memory of man runneth not to the contrary. But never till 1859 was it the law in Bengal, that a resident raiyat cultivating village lands to which he had been duly admitted, which he had held for ten or eleven years, and for which he was willing to pay the established rent, could be ejected from his holding at the pleasure of his landlord by a mere notice to quit. It is the non-occupancy-raiyat who is really the creature of Act X of 1859.

"The Bill not only does practically nothing for this class of tenants, but in some respects it puts them in a worse position than they occupy now. It was left to the Courts to deduce from Act X of 1859 the doctrine of the landlord's power to eject, and the deduction seems to have been made for the first time in 1874, but it is now proposed to embody in the Statute-book a distinct recognition of this power. Under the present law, the zamíndár can prevent the accrual of the right of occupancy by merely shifting the raiyat from one field to another: under the Bill, he will be tempted to evict him from the village altogether. A tenant so completely at the mercy of his landlord, must evidently submit to any demand of rent which the latter may think fit to make. Even if he is allowed to acquire a right of occupancy, he will only be permitted to do so on payment of an excessive rental: and, under the operation of the rule regarding the prevailing rate, this excessive rental will be used as a lever to raise the rents of all occupancy-raiyats in the village. The evil consequences of leaving the class of non-occupancy-raiyats unprotected were clearly foreseen and forcibly pointed out by the Government of India in its despatch of the 17th October, 1882, to the Secretary of State: and it is, therefore, a matter for surprise as well as for regret that the amended Bill leaves such raiyats practically without any protection either as to the amount of their rent or as to the security of their tenure of the land. The established principle referred to by the Court of Directors in 1792, as the maxim alike of the Moghul and of the British Governments, that 'the cultivator of the soil duly paying his rent should not be dispossessed of the land he occupies,' seems to have been lost sight of. In a previous passage of the same letter, the Court of Directors had plainly declared that the object of legislative interference by the Government between landlord and tenant should be 'to prevent the raiyats being improperly disturbed in their possession, or loaded with unwarrantable exactions.' But this Bill allows the raiyat to be ejected at the mere caprice of his landlord and it gives him no adequate security against the most exorbitant demands of rent.

The extension of the right of occupancy to the great mass of settled cultivators has been put forward, time after time, by successive authorities as one of the principal objects at which legislation on the rent-question should aim. The Famine Commission and the Government of Bengal have urged, in language as strong as it is possible to use the great importance of this extension: the Rent Commission proposed to give a qualified right after only three years' occupation: the Government of India, in 1882, went even further than this, and recommended that the right of occupancy should be declared inherent in the status of every cultivator of raiyati land. The hon'ble member in charge of the Bill is still prepared, I imagine, to maintain the principles laid down in that despatch to the Secretary of State. But I would ask him to consider what extension of the right of occupancy is to be looked for from a measure which leaves the landlords the fullest power to prevent its accrual over all lands in which it has not already been acquired, and over lands in which it now exists, but which may hereafter revert to the landlords by purchase, by death without heirs, or by abandonment by the occupancy-tenant. I would ask him to ponder the serious warning with which the 8th paragraph of that despatch concludes, that 'the old series of litigation, enhancement, and ejection will recommence; and in the course of another generation the percentage of land thus acquired will be sufficient to render necessary a re-opening of the whole question, and will inevitably involve fresh interference on the part of Government.' I would ask him to reflect that out of 67,578 occupancy-holdings transferred by private sale during the past year, no less than 16,500, or about 25 per cent., were purchased by zamíndárs or traders: and then to say whether the warning conveyed in that paragraph is not likely to be more than justified by the working of this Bill.

"These, then, are the faults I find in the Bill: first, that though it puts the occupancy-raiyat in a stronger position than he now holds, it does not give him complete security of tenure: secondly, that it greatly increases the facilities for the enhancement of his rent, without laying down any ultimate limit beyond which enhancement is in no case to go: and thirdly, that the protection it gives the non-occupancy-raiyat is altogether inadequate. The hon'ble member in charge of the Bill, to whom I listened with the greatest admiration, and whose speech was equally distinguished by the lucidity of its statements and the fairness of its arguments, will not deny that in all these three particulars the Bill in its present form is a far weaker measure than the Bill which was referred to the Select Committee. He has contended, it is true, that the Bill is a much better measure than I have represented it to

be. He noticed, in particular, the points of the settled raiyat, the prevailing rate, the gross-produce limit, and the position of the non-occupancy-raiyat; and on all these points I am willing to admit that he adduced reasons of considerable force in favour of those conclusions of the Select Committee which are embodied in the Bill. As the motion actually before us is merely the preliminary motion that the Bill should be taken into consideration, I do not desire to discuss these questions in detail on the present occasion. Each of them will come before the Council in connexion with amendments, of which notice has already been given. I will only say now that, whatever may be urged in support of the Select Committee's decision upon each of these points, what the Council has to look at is the effect of the Bill as a whole. There may have been unanswerable reasons for maintaining the prevailing rate, or for striking out the gross-produce limit, but the general result of the rejection of the proposals of the Bengal Government on these and other cognate matters has been, in my opinion, to leave the raiyat without adequate protection for his rights. And when the hon'ble member quotes me as an authority for the abandonment of the provisions for compensation for disturbance, I think it only fair to myself to point out that I objected to those provisions, because I thought compensation for disturbance an insufficient check. I thought it probable that the raiyat would not take his compensation and go, but would submit to the enhancement and remain. My objections are not disposed of by the removal of the check, without the substitution of anything more effective in its place. On the whole, I am not prepared to withdraw the opinion I have already expressed in my recorded dissent, that the Bill gives the landlords a power which is not sufficiently controlled or limited, and that the exercise of this power will naturally lead to results inconsistent with those rights of the tenants which the Bill was designed to maintain, and disastrous to the agricultural interests of the country.

"The nature of the further legislation, which will be necessary to supplement and complete this Bill, is a point upon which I do not propose to touch to-day. I shall have an opportunity of noticing it hereafter, when the motion for the passing of the Bill is submitted to the Council. At present, I desire only to make it clear that my assent to the proposal to take the Bill into consideration does not imply my acceptance of the Bill as containing any measure of completeness or finality. With this understanding, I am prepared to vote for the motion, and I would add that I see no advantage in the proposal that the discussion should be deferred, or the Bill re-published. The Bill, as published 12 months ago, is substantially the same measure as that which comes

before the Council to-day. It has been subjected to the fullest criticism, and those who think it goes too far, equally with those who think it does not go far enough, are not in the least likely to modify their views by putting off the debate for a few weeks or months. Experience alone will show how the measure will work, and in what direction its amendment will be necessary. To the results of that experience I am content to appeal. No one, indeed, would rejoice more than myself if my apprehensions should prove to be unfounded. But it is my earnest conviction that this Bill will not prove a final or a satisfactory measure; and, as the Select Committee have not consented to introduce the safeguards which I believe essential to its success, I think it better for the country that the question should not remain in its present state of debate and suspense, but that the measure which commends itself to the majority of the Council should come into early operation, and should be tried by the logic of facts and by the test of results."

The Hon'ble MR. HUNTER said:—"My Lord, I am one of the members of the Select Committee who have not been able to give an unqualified support to this measure. On the second reading of the Bill, two years ago, I felt it my duty to take exception to three of its main proposals. I objected, in the first place, to interfering by statute with the landlord's right to make his own bargain with a new tenant: in the second place, to the produce limit on rent: and in the third place, to the excessive compensation for disturbance. During the passage of the Bill through the Select Committee, these provisions have been expunged, new proposals which seemed to me equally objectionable have been rejected, and it is with much regret that I find myself still compelled to dissent from the report of a body, whose fairness I recognise, and one which has, in my opinion, fought a good fight against extreme proposals from both sides. My regret has been increased by hearing an hon'ble member make use of my dissent in support of a motion which raises the general issue as to the necessity of legislation, and which would postpone legislation for the present. I myself do not understand how any one who listened to the statements made in this Council on the 12th of March, 1883, on behalf of the Government of Bengal and on behalf of the Government of India, can think it either right or expedient that that general issue should now be raised. The Bill came before the Council with the assurances of three Lieutenant-Governors of Bengal that a legislative adjustment of the land question had become necessary for the tranquility and good government of these provinces. These assurances were supported by the opi-

nion of the most experienced district officers and by a great body of information collected by a special Commission. The Government of India had, after further inquiry, given its deliberate assent to the necessity for legislation—an assent which carried with it the sanction of the Secretary of State. But if doubts still remained in the mind of any member as to the sufficiency of the grounds on which the necessity for legislation had been admitted, I think that the papers placed before us in the Select Committee must have completely removed those doubts. I will refer to only one such paper. Mr. Finucane shows that in a tract in which the rents were excessive, over one-fifth of the cultivators absconded into Nepaul in the course of two years; and that nearly fifth of the arable land went out of cultivation. From another tract, in which the rents were still more excessive, one-third of the population absconded, and an almost similar proportion of the land became waste. Why did these British subjects, some 30,000 in number I am told, fly across our frontier to Native territory? Mr. Finucane's report supplies an answer. 'I noticed people,' he says—'by hundreds, sometimes digging in the field for roots which they gathered for the purpose of eating them. Every year people eke out the scanty meals that their means allow them to provide for themselves by digging for roots. The circumstance attracts no special attention. It is not necessarily a sign that the poorer classes are in distress. And yet I can vouch for the fact from personal experience that the bread or cake made of this root (*chechaur*) is the most disgusting compound a man can put into his mouth: and medical officers have pronounced it to be most indigestible, utterly devoid of any nourishment, and provocative of the most irritating bowel complaints.' My Lord, this description, I am thankful to say, applies only to particular tracts. I do not wish to generalise from it: still less do I desire to infer from it that the Bill now before the Council provides the only or the best remedies for the agricultural distress which Mr. Finucane's report reveals. But I do say that even if we were to reject the repeated assurances by the Government responsible for the tranquility of the country, and if we were to question its assertion that legislation is now necessary for the preservation of peace, yet these and similar statements before the Council most clearly show that legislative interference is necessary in the interests of humanity. Whatever may be my differences in points of detail in regard to the particular remedies proposed, and steady as my opposition has been to what I considered extreme proposals for curtailing the landlord's rights, I think that the native landholders in now raising the general issue as to the necessity for legislation, have adopted a course indefensible in itself, and calculated to do a moral injury to their cause.

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"As regards their specific contention for the republication of the Bill, I would ask them what new points are there in the revised measure, which have not already been submitted during a full year to public discussion by the preliminary report of the Select Committee, or by the letter of the Government of Bengal six months ago? I have listened carefully to the speeches of the Hon'ble Peári Mohan Mukerji and the Mahárájá of Durbhunga—in the expectation that some such points would be specified. I have heard that 13 out of the 196 sections did not appear in the Draft Bill. But I have not heard any really new point specified. The truth is that the work of the Select Committee during its second session has chiefly been to reject the extreme proposals, after those proposals had been duly submitted to public discussion by its preliminary Report; and not to insert new provisions of its own. Where a new provision has found entrance into the Bill, it has almost invariably been framed upon old lines. The result of the republication of the Bill, would now be, not to submit new points to public discussion, but to resubmit to public discussion the decisions of the Select Committee upon the old points which have during the past year been amply and publicly discussed.

"My Lord, I have thought it right to state at some length my objections to raising afresh the general issue as to the necessity for legislation, because I shall have to raise several particular issues in regard to the exact form of legislation now proposed. First of all, while I believe that some legislation has become necessary, I do not think that the Council has been placed in the best position to effectively legislate. For, as I have urged in my written dissent, the legislature is asked to deal with the entire relations of landlord and tenant in Bengal, without being furnished with any body of cross-examined evidence to guide its deliberations. I agree with the hon'ble member in charge of the Bill that the process of hearing and cross-examining witnesses in the various districts might have led to agitation. But the absence of cross-examined evidence has, in my opinion, intensified and prolonged the present far more serious agitation. In a country where the expression of opinion is unrestrained, and where each of the great interests is powerfully represented in the Press, it is impossible to enter on a measure affecting the rights of large and influential classes without exciting opposition and agitation of a most determined character. The best way to encounter such an agitation is to meet it with facts, and the examination of witnesses is the ordinary and only practicable procedure for collecting a body of facts which can be relied on in a conflict of interests, such as is involved in this Bill. I agree with the Hon'ble Sir Steuart Bayley, however, that when the measure reached the Select

Committee, the time had gone past for a peripatetic Commission to take evidence; and I also think that, with the agitation now at full flood, such a Commision would find it very difficult to arrive at the truth.

"If I believed it likely that a delay would enable the Government to collect really important information, or would add materially to the data now before the Council, I should vote for the postponement. But whence is such information to come? If one thing has been made clear by the labours of the Select Committee, it is the extremely meagre and uncertain character of rural statistics in these provinces. The Bengal Government is endeavouring by legislation in its own Council to provide machinery for increasing its knowledge, and for dealing with the administrative difficulties to what insufficient knowledge has given rise. But several years must elapse before the machinery can be brought into working order and produce practical results. Meanwhile we have exhausted all the sources of information which are at present available to the Bengal Government. It has been my business, during the past fifteen years, to acquaint myself with the statistics of each province of India, and to study the sources from which they are derived. More than any other officer of Your Lordship's Government I have had to deplore the inadequacy of the information which we possess for Bengal. I may, therefore, be permitted to say that all the classes of really ascertained facts known to me in regard to Bengal have been fairly used and are now exhausted. I hope that before many years elapse, those facts will have been supplemented by a mass of new information obtained under the Acts now passing through the Bengal Council. But I see no possibility of obtaining that new information within any period, say of six months, during which this Bill could be postponed. Statistics cannot be run up in a night, unless indeed they are to tumble down next morning. If the Bengal Government were to attempt, in the midst of the present agitation, to institute a statistical enquiry on a large scale throughout Bengal, it would merely be deceiving itself and misleading the public. We have not only exhausted all sources of information now available, but we have heard the views of every class and interest which claims to be affected by the measure. A further postponement would prolong the rural agitation in a most undesirable manner: but it would yield no compensating body of new facts.

"The Select Committee has with much patience threaded its way through the conflicting statements submitted to it. The result has in some cases been the rejection of what seemed to me useful proposals. For example, the sale of the occupancy-tenure, which had at one time the approval of the Select Committee,

no longer finds a place in the Bill. It appeared expedient to legalise such sales, not on theoretical grounds, much less from an abstract love of any three letters of the alphabet, but simply because such sales had grown into an established custom in Bengal, and because it would save litigation and prevent extortion, if we gave to such transactions the express recognition of the law. But when the incidents to which the custom was subject came to be discussed, there was no evidence to guide the Committee. Some members maintained that the custom of sale was subject to a fee to the landlord for registering the transfer. Others contested this position; one member thought the fee should be as high as 25 per cent., another thought that there should be no fee at all. In the end the right of sale was dropped out of the Bill, chiefly because no agreement could be come to in respect to the conditions to which the sale should be subject. I regret this result, and I shall give my support to the Hon'ble Mr. Amír Alí's amendment for re-introducing the provision, if he sees his way to attach a substantial fee for the landlord to the exercise of the right by tenant. The position of the hon'ble gentleman and myself in this matter affords a good illustration of our position and that of several other dissenting members in regard to many provisions in the Bill. We dissent not because we disapprove of the measure as a whole, but because each of us wanted to get a little more of his own way in the Bill than he has been able to get. If any one infers from the number of dissents that a majority of the Select Committee is opposed to the Bill as a whole, he will be very completely undeceived when the votes on the motion at present before the Council are recorded.

"I regret, however, to have to call attention to what I conceive to be a fundamental source of weakness in the Bill, arising from its attempt to apply one set of minute provisions for the regulation of rent to two provinces in which the relations of landlord and tenant are so widely dissimilar as in Bengal and Behar. In Behar, owing to over-population and to the consequent competition for land, the difficulty is to secure a sufficient share of the crop to the cultivator. Throughout large areas in Bengal the difficulty is for the landlord to realise his rent. Yet the profound economic differences between agricultural relations in Bengal and in Behar find no recognition in the Bill. Throughout the two years' labour of the Select Committee we were perpetually struggling in the meshes of this fundamental error. In my opinion, the result has been to tie our hands in providing perfectly effective remedies for the tenant in Behar, and for the landlord in parts of Bengal. The Bill has accomplished something for both, but not enough for either.

"It is also, I think, defective in another important respect. The root of the agrarian difficulty in Bengal is over-population. 'I consider,' says Mr. Finucane in describing the wretched condition of the Behar peasantry, 'that it is only the redundant population of Behar which has brought things to this pass,' and the minute sub-division of estates 'creating a number of proprietors whose name is legion.' The Bill attempts to alleviate the evils arising to the peasantry from a too keen competition for the land by placing restrictions on the enhancement of rent. Such restrictions, when effective, are necessarily made by curtailing the rights of the landlords. But there are two other means of dealing with over-population, namely, the reclamation of waste lands, and the shifting of the people to unoccupied tracts. With regard to reclamation of waste lands, I shall, in submitting an amendment to the Council, shew that the Bill not only gives no new encouragement for such undertakings, but that it places the proprietor, who himself reclaims waste lands, in a worse position than before. With regard to assisted migrations or shifting of the people to unoccupied tracts, I acknowledge that it would be unreasonable to expect any specific provisions in the present Bill. But I hope that the Government may see its way to reconsider this aspect of the question. The waste land uncultivated but capable of cultivation in Bengal and the two provinces immediately adjoining on the east and west is equal to the whole land under crops in Great Britain and Ireland, and large areas of this waste land are to be found close on the outskirts of some of the most overcrowded tracts, especially Behar. The experiment which the Government has hitherto made to promote and assist the migration of the people to unoccupied or sparsely inhabited tracts have been few in number and inconclusive as to their results. But such enterprises have been conducted on a considerable scale by private enterprise in several parts of the country. I shall cite only two such undertakings. In Birdpur, in the Gorakhpur District, over 23,000 persons have been settled on 250 reclaimed villages, on a tract which forty years ago was swamped and heavy jungle; while the success of the new Sonthal colonies in Assam shows how much can be effected by State aid combined with private organisation. The Government has rendered migration possible by opening up railways, but experience shows that the mere possibility of transport does not suffice to make the people move on. This Bill, in attempting to mitigate the evils of over-population by placing restrictions on the enhancement of rents, tries to remedy what is really a national difficulty at the cost of a particular class. I admit that the legislature is justified in regulating the monopoly in land which over-crowding and over-competition for holdings create in favour of the landlords. The permanent remedy for over population is not, however,

to be found in artificial restrictions upon rent, but in adding to the cultivated area, by encouraging the reclamation of waste lands, and by assisting the people to migrate to unoccupied tracts.

"While, however, I believe that the Bill fails to do all that it might have accomplished, owing to the absence of properly-sifted evidence, and to the fundamental error of attempting to prescribe one set of regulations for two altogether dissimilar provinces, I acknowledge that it does much towards the solution of the questions with which it deals. In the first place, it makes the old law a reality—a reality for the tenants as regards the enforcement of their occupancy-rights within the entire village; a reality for the landlords as regards the enhancement of rent, when such an enhancement can be equitably claimed; and a reality for both landlord and tenant as regards the ascertainment of rent actually due. I am no unqualified admirer of the Bill; but if it had done nothing more than give reality to the uncertain and unworkable provisions of the old law, I should consider myself bound to give it, as a whole, my support. It has been able, however, to do much more than this. It has developed the occupancy-cultivator with all his old uncertainties as to the maintenance of his rights into the settled raiyat. It has given to the settled raiyat a clearly-defined area within which no man can defeat his right to hold his land as long as he pays a fair rent. It has placed a limit to the enhancement of his rent out of Court, and it has given him what amounts to a statutory lease for fifteen years if his rent is enhanced by a suit in Court. Of not less importance are the provisions which render null and void any contract which would prevent the growth of the right of occupancy, or interfere with the enjoyment of the incidents of that right. To the ordinary cultivator it has also secured advantages of great value. In the first place, it gives to every cultivator the presumption that he possesses the right of occupancy in his holding, until the contrary is shown. This presumption is in strict accordance with the facts, if, as has been stated and not contested, that something like nine-tenths of the cultivators of Bengal are at present entitled to claim those rights. The importance of this presumption has been well shown by the hon'ble Mr. Evans in the present debate: and so far as the ordinary cultivator is concerned, the Bill would, in my opinion, have justified its existence, if it had done nothing more than create this presumption in his favour. It has also, however, provided safeguards against his sudden ejectment from his holding, and against the unreasonable enhancement of his rent. Unless the ordinary cultivator himself consents to an enhancement, his rent can only be raised by a suit in which the Court shall determine what is a fair

and equitable rent. The rent thus determined cannot be again enhanced for a term of five years; so that, while the Bill practically secures judicial leases for fifteen years to the occupancy-tenant, it also provides what amounts to a judicial lease for five years for the ordinary cultivator.

"My Lord, these are substantial changes in the existing law in favour of the cultivator. We may regret that these changes afford no general protection to the under-tenant, and no special remedy for the particular circumstances of Behar. But we have the satisfaction of knowing that every one of the changes in favour of the cultivator which the present Bill makes in the old law is justified by the facts, and that the Bill, as revised by the Select Committee, errs by defect rather than by excess. The Hon'ble Sir Steuart Bayley has very fully shown what the measure effects for the other great class affected by it, namely, the landholders. I acknowledge the increased facilities which the Bill provides for the realisation of rent by extending the system of registration, and by creating a new procedure for the record of rights and settlement of rents. But just as I regret that the Bill fails to make adequate provisions for the special needs of the cultivator in Behar, so I regret that it fails to give an adequate response to the demands of the landholders in Eastern Bengal. I do not think that the Bill can be accepted as a final settlement of the land difficulty in either province. I hope that amendments will be carried in this Council which will render the Bill more effective in the hands of both the landholders and the cultivator. But I accept the measure as an important and a valuable instalment towards the adjustment of land rights in Bengal, and I believe that, on the whole, it advances as far towards a final settlement of those rights as we are at present justified in going either by the condition of the country or by the ascertained facts."

The Hon'ble Mr. Amír Alí said:—"My Lord,—My views respecting this Bill are sufficiently indicated in the dissent which I have recorded, and were it not for a feeling that I am bound to lay before this Council at some length the reasons which induce me to support the present motion I should have abstained from trespassing on the time of this Council. If I prove too lengthy, my apology will be the proverbial long-windedness of the profession to which I belong.

"I had hoped that we had by this time passed out of the region of discussions concerning abstract principles and intangible theories. I had hoped that the question of the necessity for some legislation of this character had been sufficiently demonstrated by stern facts. The only subject which

remained for determination at this stage was whether the Bill in its present form sufficiently covered the ground which it was intended to traverse—whether it fulfilled thoroughly the objects for which it was introduced? I do not propose to enter here into an examination of that somewhat abstruse question—given the necessity for legislation to regulate the relation of landlords and tenants in this country—whether the State has the power to do so or not; in other words, whether the State, by ensuring the zamíndárs against enhancement or variation of its own demands, (and that in effect is the meaning of the Permanent Settlement,) had abdicated in perpetuity its legislative functions to protect and safeguard the interests of another class—a much larger and more permanent class. If the contention of the landlords on this head is correct, the result necessarily follows that the Government of this country is an incomplete Government, that it has in fact established an *imperium in imperio*, and that, so far as the raiyats are concerned, it has delegated all its powers to the ever-shifting body of zamíndárs.

"The zamíndári argument reduced thus into plain language sounds somewhat absurd, and one can hardly suppose that the zamíndárs, or rather their advocates, mean seriously all that they have urged against the power of legislation possessed by the State. Assuming, however, that the Permanent Settlement was a bar to the State ever interfering between the raiyats and the zamíndárs, the fact that in 1859 the legislature did interfere with the acquiescence or consent of the landlords of that time has, I would contend, removed the bar. It is unnecessary for me to dwell much longer on this branch of the question, for my hon'ble friend Mr. Evans has completely demolished that preposterous argument. However, one observation I would make. Whatever may have been the position of the zamíndár under the Moghuls, whether he was merely a rent-receiver of the territorial revenue of the State from the raiyats, as described by Mr. Harrington, or something more, the legislature, whilst settling the revenue payable to the State in perpetuity, expressly reserved to itself the right, which belonged to it as sovereign, of interposing its authority in making from time to time all such regulations as might be necessary to prevent the raiyats being improperly disturbed in their possession or loaded with unwarrantable exactions. That power, expressly reserved on that occasion, has been exercised repeatedly, and it is trifling to contend that because the State a hundred years ago settled in permanency the revenue payable by the zamíndárs, therefore, it abandoned all its duties and responsibilities towards millions of its subjects.

"The question of necessity is one which is certainly deserving of great consideration. With reference to this point I desire to say a few words. Since the year 1870, the necessity for a thorough revision of the land-law has been forcing itself upon the minds of all thoughtful observers. The tension of feeling which had sprung up about that time between the zamíndárs and raiyats had occasioned considerable administrative difficulties. The zamíndárs themselves had commenced to demand some change in the existing law, in order to give them facilities for the realization of their legitimate rents, while the raiyats complained of the arbitrary exercise of the powers of enhancement and eviction. These difficulties were accentuated on one side by the confusion of ideas relating to the subject of tenant-right, on the other by the extravagant claims put forward by the new landlords, who were most tenacious of their rights to enhance the rents of their raiyats. It will be remembered that Act X of 1859 had been passed with the object of providing some efficient safeguards against the exercise of arbitrary power on the part of the landlords. From 1799 to 1859, as His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor remarked in his speech on the introduction of the Bill in Council, 'feudalism on the one hand, serfdom on the other, were the principal characteristics of the land system of Bengal.' The legislature no doubt endeavoured to maintain intact 'the constitutional claims of the peasantry,' but 'practically,' His Honour said, 'they were submerged in the usurpations and encroachments of the zamíndárs.' Act X of 1859 undoubtedly effected some improvement in the position of the raiyats, but the rule for the acquisition of prescriptive occupancy-right by a twelve years' occupation of particular plots of land did more harm than good. And the rule of enhancement based on the productiveness of the soil eventually became a fruitful source of difficulty and trouble.

"In 1873, the Government for the first time awakened to the gravity of the situation. The famous Pubna riots broke out in that year, and since then there have been periodical collisions between raiyat and landlord in different parts of the province. In 1873, Sir George Campbell spoke thus about a definitive settlement of the land question:—

'If the settlement is to be effective, it must not only get the zamíndárs out of their present difficulties, it must bind them for the future. It must settle all questions of possession, measurement and rates, it must decide who is and who is not liable to enhancement, and it must have power to prescribe a term—a good long term—for which its adjustment is to be binding, and the zamíndárs are not to be allowed to disturb the rates and arrangements made. No doubt this will be a serious undertaking, but it would be an effectual and

beneficial settlement if fairly and thoroughly carried out. The Lieutenant-Governor would not advocate interference unless it is carried to this point.'

"In 1875, Sir Richard Temple, who had taken the place of Sir George Campbell, again brought forward the proposal regarding the amendment of the substantive law, and invited the opinion of the British Indian Association on the subject. In a letter dated 10th of March, 1876, the Honorary Secretary of that body pointed out the defective character of Act X of 1859 in essential particulars, and the necessity for a radical amendment. Before this, in June, 1875, the British Indian Association had already represented that the struggle between zamíndárs and raiyats, due to the indefiniteness of their relations and the readiness of the raiyats to combine in withholding rent, could only be ended by a general revision of the rent law. In March, 1876, whilst the Agrarian Disputes Act was pending before the Bengal Council, our lamented colleague, Rái Kristodás Pál, urged that the indefiniteness of the principles of Act X of 1859 had brought suits for the adjustment of rents to a deadlock. It was in consequence of these repeated representations, and the urgency of the difficulties which had arisen both in Eastern Bengal and Behar, that Sir Richard Temple asked for leave to introduce a measure into the local Council; but before he could get a reply he was sent to Southern India to look after the relief measures. When Sir Ashley Eden assumed charge of the Lieutenant-Governorship of Bengal, he found affairs in this position. The zamíndárs, on one side, were calling out for facilities for the recovery and enhancement of rents; the raiyats, on the other hand, were asking for protection against illegitimate enhancement and eviction; whilst the officers of Government charged with executive administration were of opinion that some measure by which the existing tension of feeling could be removed should be taken in hand at once.

"It was in view of these signs and shadows of coming events that Sir Ashley Eden strongly urged upon the Government of India the advisability of settling the rent question definitely while the country was tranquil, while seasons were favourable and the people well off, and reason could make its voice easily heard, instead of allowing things to drift on until another famine or a second outbreak of the Pubna riots compelled the Government to take up the subject with all the haste and incompleteness that too frequently affect measures devised under circumstances of State trouble and emergency.

"This Bill, I mean the *original* Bill, was introduced with the object of definitely placing, so far as was possible, the relation of landlords and tenants on

a satisfactory basis. The objects were distinctly defined in the speech of the hon'ble the Law Member—

"(1) To give reasonable security to the tenant in the occupation and enjoyment of his land, and (2) to give reasonable facilities to the landlord for the settlement and recovery of his rent.

"In order to attain the first object, it was proposed to make the following changes in the existing system :—

"(1) to extend the occupancy-right to all resident raiyats holding lands in a particular village or estate for more than twelve years;

(2) to make occupancy-rights transferable;

(3) to introduce a fixed maximum standard for the enhancement of rents.

"The disastrous and demoralising consequences resulting from the twelve years' rule of prescription are now recognised by all. It did away with the long-established distinction which had existed from the earliest times between the resident and non-resident raiyats, reducing them all to a dead level of uniformity; the raiyats claiming rights of occupancy being required under the existing law to prove that they have held for twelve years not merely in the village lands, but in everyone of the particular field or plots in respect of which the right was claimed. When it is borne in mind how frequently the twelve years' prescription is interrupted by a mere shifting of the fields, sometimes by eviction within the term, in other cases by the grant of terminable leases for short periods with the option of renewal, it will become apparent how difficult it is in general for the raiyat to acquire a right of occupancy, or to prove it when it is questioned. Considering the testimony which has been borne from all sides of India to the prosperity of raiyats possessing occupancy-tenure, to their ability to withstand and make head against droughts and scarcities, to tide over in general more successfully such disasters as were caused by the cyclones and the great tidal wave in Deltaic Bengal, it is unjust to charge us with being doctrinaires and theorists in coming to the conclusion that a measure simplifying and facilitating the proof of occupancy-rights is essential to the well-being of the agricultural population of Bengal; in fact, in endeavouring to restore the occupancy-raiyats to their old position.

"The same fatality which overtook Act X of 1859 in Committee has befallen this measure. Owing to the same spirit of compromise which wrecked

that Act, most of the alterations which have been effected in the present measure at its latest stage have been made, as admitted by the Hon'ble Mr. Evans, in favour of the zamíndárs, and some of the most important provisions for the security of the raiyat and the improvement of his condition have been abandoned, or so modified as to be of little advantage to him. We had expected that the measure now under discussion would give a legal validity and statutory sanction to the custom of transferability of occupancy-holdings; we had hoped that the law relating to the enhancement of rents would be so modified that, supplying to the landlord a more workable method of enhancement, it would protect the raiyats from incessant harassment and perennial destitution; we had hoped that there would be a practical check imposed on rackrenting that some substantial guarantee would be given against the ejectment of non-occupancy-raiyats, simply with the object of preventing their obtaining that interest in the soil which would induce them to improve their husbandry and their condition in life.

"The amended Bill falls far short of the just expectations of those who, after all this agitation, would have liked to see a definitive settlement of the land question in Bengal.

"I shall have to say something with reference to each of these points when I move the amendments which stand in my name. I desire, however, to remark in passing that I cannot help regarding the abandonment of the transferability clauses as a serious misfortune. The custom of transferability had grown up in many districts of Bengal and Behar, and was gradually extending itself throughout the province. It had also been conclusively proved that those raiyats who had a permanent alienable interest in all their holdings were more prosperous than those who had no such interest, that their cultivation was better, and that they were more capable of making head against scarcities and famines. In the face of this evidence, to forego all the advantages gained after so much discussion, to leave the right of transferability to custom in the present tension of feeling between landlords and tenants, is to invite the zamíndár to contest the right every time the opportunity occurs. The result of all this will be, firstly, to place a large proportion of the purchase-money in the pockets of the zamíndárs, and, in the second place, materially to retard the extension and growth of the custom of transferability even where it has taken root. I am glad that my hon'ble friend, Dr. Hunter, is willing to give his valuable support to my proposal for the re-insertion of the transferability clauses, and I think I shall be able, when I bring forward my amendment, to meet his views regarding the amount of fee which

ought to be paid by the raiyat. Probably my hon'ble friend will not object to exempt those *guzáshtadárs* whose right is protected by long-established custom from the payment of any fee.

"The objection against a gross-produce limit proceeds mainly on theoretical and *á priori* grounds. It has been said that, if such a limit is adopted, in every case of enhancement by contract, the registering officer will have to enter into a minute and difficult enquiry, and that the same will be the case in Court. I maintain that this argument assumes two points. In the first place, it presupposes an insuperable difficulty in making a fair rough average estimate of the yield of land and its value. Now, I venture to say there is no villager with any knowledge of cultivation who has not a rough conception of the yield of produce and the value of the crop In the second place, the argument against the gross-produce limit assumes that in the registered agreements to pay enhanced rents the parties do not or will not enter the quantities of land, its nature, capacity, &c. If the statement of these facts will not enable the registering officers to form some rough estimate of the produce limit, I am afraid the Local Government will have to improve its staff of registering officers.

"I may observe here that in the Punjab the land-revenue assessment is limited to the equivalent of one-sixth of the gross produce, and the system has been found to be extremely practicable. If it is practicable in the Punjab, why should it not be workable in Bengal?

"As regards the non-occupancy-raiyat, our contention that the protection which has been given to him by this Bill is utterly inadequate, is borne out by the frank avowal of the zamíndárs' representative that henceforth no non-occupancy-raiyat will be allowed to acquire the status of an occupancy-raiyat; such an avowal would hardly have been made if the guarantee given to the non-occupancy-raiyat against eviction had been adequate.

"If the extension of occupancy-rights among the raiyats be conducive to the general welfare of the community, then there can be little doubt that any loophole for perpetuating tenancies-at-will, for continuing the vicious system of shifting and eviction would be disastrous to the public weal. As population increases, as the demand for land becomes greater, the effort to exclude the possibility of acquiring occupancy-rights will be redoubled. At the same time I desire it to be distinctly understood, that I do not advocate the promiscuous extension of the occupancy-right to non-occupancy-raiyats. What

I want to see is that the latter should be reasonably protected from perpetual harassment. This I submit has not been done efficiently by the Bill. At the same time I admit that the present measure is an improvement on the existing law. The acquisition of a right of occupancy by residence; the prohibition of contracts precluding the accrual of the right of occupancy; the restriction on enhancement out of Court; the validation of the raiyat's right to make improvements, constitute the most commendable features of the present Bill, and I accept it as the first instalment of the inevitable legislation which *must* follow sooner or later to settle the relations of the cultivating classes with their landlords more satisfactorily. My Lord, the hon'ble member in charge of the Bill has referred in kind terms to the services of the non-official members on the Committee. As far as I am concerned, it was a labour of love, for I cannot help taking a keen interest in this measure. The bulk of the peasantry in Eastern Bengal, numbering several millions of souls, belong to my faith, and naturally have a claim upon the Muhammadan member for the time being in Your Excellency's Council. In Eastern Bengal, the agrarian troubles are aggravated by religious differences and the fact that many of the zamíndárs are new-comers. The new landlords, generally speaking, have little or no sympathy with their peasantry, most of whom are Mussulmans. If the law gives them power, say, of enhancement or ejectment, it is worked without compunction and without mercy. I say this advisedly. The causes and character of the Pubna outbreak must be familiar to this Council, though apparently they have been forgotten outside this Council Chamber. They illustrate most strikingly the general nature of rent-disputes in Bengal. I will take the liberty to quote here a passage with reference to the outbreak from the Government of India's despatch to the Secretary of State, dated 21st March, 1882:—

'The affair originated in the Isafshahi parganá, formerly owned by the Rájás of Nattore. In the decay of that ancient family a part of its possessions was purchased by new-comers, whose relations with their raiyats and with each other appear to have been unfriendly from the first. Collections were raised by decreasing the standard of measurement and by imposing illegal cesses which were afterwards more or less consolidated with the rent. The raiyats never gave any written or formal consent to the conversion of these voluntary abwábs or cesses into dues which could be realised according to law. In time the rent-rates of Isafshahi came greatly to exceed those of neighbouring tracts.

'Two causes of the dispute were thus a high rate of collection compared with other parganás, and an uncertainty as to how far the amount claimed was due. A third cause was the violent and lawless character of some of the zamíndárs, and of the agents of others. There had been affrays in which men were killed by spear-wounds. Swordsmen had been sent to

make collections, and cases of attack by clubmen and of kidnapping are mentioned in the report.'

"It has been stated in this Council that the reasons for interfering in Behar with the status of occupancy-raiyats are non-existent; that the practice of shifting is not resorted to there for the purpose of avoiding the accrual of the right. This statement may be true in the case of considerate zamíndárs like the Hon'ble the Mahárájá of Durbhunga, who, whilst tenacious of their ancient rights, respect and value the constitutional rights of the peasantry. But by way of answer to his criticism on that portion of the Bill which aims at giving a certain degree of security to the occupancy-raiyat and towards facilitating the proof of his right, I would recall to his mind what the zamíndárs of Shahabad, at a meeting held on the 31st October 1880, at Arrah, said on the subject:—

'At present landowners prevent the growth of occupancy-rights by granting leases for five years only, or by changing the lands, or by managing so that a raiyat shall never hold at the same rent for 12 years. In practice the last expedient is found sufficient, as the Courts find claims to occupancy-right not proved unless the raiyat can show that he held the same land for 12 years, by proving that he paid the same rent. Under the proposed law zamíndárs would not suffer raiyats to remain for three years.'

"The Hon'ble Mr. Evans has urged that, if the circumstances of Behar were so exceptional as they were represented to be by the officers of Government who had reported on the subject, there ought to have been two Bills, one for Behar, another for Bengal. I admit that, if we had adopted this course, we would have been better able to deal with details; but on that principle there ought not to be two Bills, but four Bills—one for Eastern Bengal, another for Central Bengal, a third for Northern Bengal, and a fourth for Behar; for the conditions of rural economy in each of these tracts are dissimilar to each other. I doubt, however, whether the public or the people would have thanked the legislature for such a course. Besides, the evils which the legislature desires to remedy, the circumstances which it desires to direct and control, are not after all very different in either of these parts. The landlord everywhere desires to recover his rent easily; the raiyat everywhere wants to be allowed to leave in peace; and the legislature has before this dealt with the province as a whole. The limit of two annas on enhancement by private contract has been strongly objected to. It is said that such a restriction is not only opposed to all the principles of freedom of contract, but that it will prove practically mischievous, as it will always drive the parties into Court for obtaining a higher enhancement. My Lord, how far the rules of poli-

tical economy are applicable to a country where the mass of the people live from hand to mouth is a question which was answered effectually, though at the cost of a million of lives, during the Orissa famine. The Bengal Government on the occasion attempted to deal with the calamity which had overtaken the country in strict accordance with the rules of political economy, but the results completely falsified the expectations entertained at the time from the application of the economic nostrum. 'When political economy speaks of freedom of contract,' were the memorable words of Sir Evelyn Baring used in this very hall, 'it means that free choice, dictated by intelligent self-interest, is the most efficient agent in the production of wealth.' Can any one, who is acquainted with the condition of the millions of raiyats, whose holdings do not average more than two or three acres, and who pay a rent of less than five rupees a year, can any one who knows the circumstances under which this vast mass of pauperised cottiers, living always on the verge of starvation, till the soil, say that these men can exercise a free and intelligent choice in their contracts?

"My Lord, I am afraid I am encroaching too much on the indulgence of the Council. But I cannot help being somewhat long, in spite of the charge of prolixity that may be brought against me. Political economy is thrust down one's throat at every turn of the question; indeed, so often, that I am tempted to quote a passage from the master of political economists, which I hope will be taken to heart by the warmest upholders of zamíndári rights.

'Rent,' says Mill, 'paid by a capitalist who farms for profit and not for bread may safely be abandoned to competition; rent paid by labourers cannot, unless the labourers were in a state of civilisation and improvement, which labourers have nowhere yet reached and cannot easily reach under such a tenure. Peasant rents ought never to be arbitrary,—never at the discretion of the landlord; either by custom or law it is imperatively necessary that they should be fixed, and, where no mutually advantageous custom has established itself, reason and experience recommend that they should be fixed by authority.

"My own view is that it is not only necessary to impose a limit upon private contracts, but that, in order to be efficacious, a similar limit should be introduced upon enhancements in Court; otherwise I believe the wholesome provision will become practically valueless.

"The remarks of the Hon'ble Bábú Peári Mohan Mukerji, that there is practically no non-judicial power of distraint given by the Bill for the realisation of rents, are perfectly true. Undoubtedly in the despatch to which both the hon'ble member and I myself have referred it was proposed 'to provide for the more speedy realisation of arrears of rents, *when the rates are undisputed*, by a

modified method of distraint.' It must have escaped the notice of my hon'ble friend the importance to be attached to the expression 'when the rates are undisputed'. Is there any case in which the rates are not disputed? Probably, in some districts, or rather estates, bordering on Nepal and other frontier tracts, which give the raiyats a facility to disappear after raising their crops, a modified power of distraint might prove useful; but when the Committee came to consider the abuses to which this power is open and the oppressions practised under its guise, it was thought advisable not to leave to the zamíndár the power of distraint at his own free will and according to his own method. The provisions of Chapter XII are, I think, in accord with the Government of India's proposal in the despatch referred to.

"It has been contended that we have no cross-examined evidence furnishing, as it were, the groundwork over which the legislative structure has been built. A great deal of money has already been spent in various quarters in the course of these discussions, and probably, if the Select Committee had decided to hear cross-examined evidence, a little more would have been put into the pockets of lawyers. But whether evidence so collected would have been one iota more valuable than the testimony of competent officers and thoughtful observers is a question which I cannot answer. I have pointed out the features in the Bill which stand out as marked improvements over the existing law. I have also pointed out the features where it falls short—miserably short—of the just requirements of the present situation. I trust that, before the final vote is taken, the objectionable features in the Bill will be removed, the most important of them—the most dangerous—being the ground of enhancement based on increase in the prices of food-crops.

"This ground of enhancement, besides being open to various economical objections, furnishes the landlords with a most formidable and trenchant weapon for enhancement of rents, the use of which in many parts of Bengal and throughout Behar must prove ruinous at no distant date to those raiyats whose rents are already high enough. In defence of this proposal it has been put forward that enhancement on the ground of increase in prices does not take more of the crop from the raiyat; in other words, that it is the value of the crop expressed in larger terms owing to the diminished value of silver. This is undoubtedly a very specious argument, but in spite of its speciousness I maintain that it is extremely unfair to the raiyats. On examining the argument even on the basis of political economy, it is seen that it leaves out of consideration an increase in the necessities of a raiyat, and a larger expenditure on account of what

he has to buy. Furthermore, it is clear that the allowance for cost of production may often prove totally insufficient. For these and other reasons, which I shall mention more particularly when I move my specific amendments, it seems to me that the effects of this ground of enhancement have hardly yet been realised to their fullest extent.

"As the question stands at present, I accept the Bill as a step in the right direction, and in looking at it in that light, and approving entirely of the principles which it embodies, I vote for the motion that the consideration of the Bill should be proceeded with without delay.

"With reference to the motion for the re-publication of the Bill, I desire to mention that, had I believed any possible object would be gained by such a course, that the zamíndárs or raiyats would become by delay more willing to make concessions to each other, I might have been inclined to vote for the postponement of the consideration of the Bill until next session. As it is, I believe a postponement will keep the country in a state of feverish excitement, intensify still further the bitter feelings existing between the two classes, and prove of no avail to anybody."

The Hon'ble MR. GIBBON said:—"My Lord, with reference to the amendment proposed by the Hon'ble Peári Mohan Mukerji, that the Bill be re-published, and that the consideration of the measure be deferred for at least three months, I must, I am sorry to say, oppose the amendment. The state of the country is such, the agitation for and against the measure is becoming so widespread, I am convinced that it leaves only two courses open to Your Excellency's Government—either to proceed with the measure, or to abandon it for ever; any third course will be fraught with danger to the public peace, as well as ruinous to the interests of both landlords and tenants. For six years the provisions of the Bill have been in some shape or another subjected to public criticism; every alternative proposal, every impossible crotchet has, been discussed and threshed out; and, although the Bill may contain a few sections that were not contained in the draft Bill submitted to the Committee, it contains no provisions that have not already been subjected to public criticism.

"I am sure no arguments could be adduced for or against any of its provisions that are not contained in the mass of correspondence already submitted.

"Believing such to be the case, I cannot realize what good purpose is to be served by the delay asked for. On the contrary, in the interests of the landlords more so than in the interests of the tenants, delay is to be deplored. We have

nothing to gain by the delay, much to lose. Judging from what I see and hear around me and in my work, I believe further delay, more indecision, means ruin.

"The fears of the zamíndárs have been excited fully as much by the many crude proposals from time to time submitted as from anything contained in the Bill. Their fears of the measure, their public utterances, are having their effect on the minds of their tenants, and we must not be surprised if their tenants measure their own gains by the estimate placed by the zamíndárs on their own losses.

"The raiyats believe that the Bill will give them fixity of tenure without any reference to the means by which they may acquire possession of the land; a right to sub-divide and transfer their holdings piecemeal; freedom from enhancement; freedom from payment of rents; a general right to appropriate other peoples' property. We now require something definite, something final, to recall us to our senses. If the proposal of the hon'ble member is carried, we may expect to see the tenants acting up to the tenor of their convictions, defying all law, following the bent of their inclination.

"The Courts are at present blocked with litigants, but unless something is decided upon quickly the work the Government officials are now required to do will be child's play in comparison with the work that would be cast upon them.

"If the Bill is not proceeded with or abandoned, Your Excellency's Government must be prepared to substitute one of a very summary nature. Your Excellency's Government must be prepared to manage half the zamíndáris of the country, for I am quite sure that if the present agitation is allowed to proceed unchecked we will not be able to manage them for ourselves.

"The only means of checking this agitation is to let us know at once the best and worst we have to expect under the Bill.

"If I understood the Hon'ble Mahárájá Bahádur correctly, he would even at this stage of our proceedings delay the progress of the measure until a Commission of Enquiry has been held. A Commission issued now with the declared intention of basing legislation on its report would have a most demoralizing effect on the country; it would divide the country into two hostile camps, bespattering each other with mud; few among us would see the end of it; all would regret the result.

"My Lord, with reference to the subject-matter of the Bill, so much has been said on almost every one of its provisions that little is left for me to say. For me to attempt to improve on the many admirable arguments adduced in support of the views I hold I conceive to be an impossible task—also a needless one to attempt to refute, in one set speech, the many arguments with which I differ—a waste of time—with so many amendments on the notice-paper,—an amendment, sometimes two or three, on every important section in the Bill. I may hope that ample opportunity will be afforded us of discussing our respective differences to some better purpose hereafter.

"With reference to the much-disputed point as to whether the Bill in any manner infringes the terms of the Permanent Settlement, or whether the Government, in now legislating as it is about to do, only acts up to the powers it reserved to itself in the Regulations, I have no wish to enter at any length. I would only say that, in my opinion, with the exception of section 18, which does to all intents and purposes transfer the proprietary right in the soil from one class of persons to another, the Select Committee, and through it the Government, have carefully kept within its powers. The Bill, with the exception of this one section, does nothing to interfere with the proprietary right in the land, but it does overmuch to regulate the landlord's dealings with his tenants.

"I will now try to confine the few remarks I wish to make to those portions of the Bill which are to regulate our business transactions, which instruct us in the manner we are to conduct ourselves towards our tenants, and the difficulties we shall have to contend against in following its instructions—points which it appears to me have been lightly passed over or not gauged at their true significance. The Bill as it stands will do all the hon'ble member in charge of it has declared it will do to secure to the tenant the uninterrupted enjoyment of his legitimate rights; it has made the position of the raiyat, both occupancy and non-occupancy, impregnable; and in one most important respect it will effect more for them than the hon'ble member has taken credit for; by a small and as yet little noticed change made in the procedure free the country from wholesale enhancement under pressure.

"The alteration I refer to is the substitution of immediate suit for the present practice of issuing 'notices of enhancement through the Courts months previous to the introduction of the suit.' The practice of issuing notice of enhancement through the Courts has done more to facilitate wholesale

enhancement of rents of estates than any other provisions of the present law. Notice of enhancement has necessitated present legislation and made this Bill possible. This change about to be made in the procedure will, I am sure, be beneficial; its effects will, I hope, be far-reaching; it will, I hope, make the restrictions placed on voluntary enhancement under section 29 unnecessary.

"That legislation is to a certain extent, as provided by the Bill, necessary, there can, I think, be no doubt; but whether in the early stages of the controversy the alteration of a few sections in the present law would not have proved sufficient may, I think, be allowed to be an open question. We will admit that you have gone too far to recede: you must proceed, and we, both landlords and tenants, are wise if we accept the inevitable with a good grace. But with reference to this Bill many hon'ble members, many persons who have taken part in this controversy, when they fail to meet the argument that it is not suited for Bengal, fall back upon the argument that it is required in Behar. Nothing is too bad to say of Behar; no restriction is too severe to be placed on our actions. If the measure is required for Behar and is not required for Bengal, we should withdraw that Province from the sphere of its operations. If the Council are of opinion that the Bill is required in Behar and not in Bengal, we should drop it for Bengal and proceed with it only with reference to Behar. For my part I am happy in believing that we in Behar are no better, no worse, than our brethren in Bengal; that our tenants are not the down-trodden, poverty-stricken men they are often depicted; and I would fain hope that, when some among us set aside the spectacles through which we are looking, and judge with our own eyes, our tenants will be found in every way as well off and as independent a class as any in Bengal. For my part I am convinced that, if any portion of this Bill is unsuited for Bengal, it is equally unsuited for my province. That the rents of whole estates have been unduly enhanced I admit, but that my province is rackrented as a province I deny. I deny also that there is any necessity for the severe restrictions to be placed on voluntary adjustment of rents under section 29, and in placing such restrictions on it we are acting contrary to the declared principles of the Bill.

"Although I am strongly opposed to indiscriminate enhancement of rents, I am equally opposed to severe restrictions being placed on the landlord's right to enhance where enhancement is fairly due. I am still more opposed to unnecessary obstacles being placed in the way of a mutual adjustment of rents, or, for that matter, in the way of voluntary enhancement out of Court.

"All such unnecessary restrictions only hamper the good men among us; they will be evaded by the worldly-wise.

"My Lord, three more gaps must be filled up before the restriction in this section will be effectual, and to stop these gaps some of the best portions of the Bill must be revised.

"With reference to section 29, the Hon'ble Mr. Evans has shown the Council more clearly than I am able to do the difference between adjustment of rents and enhancement of rents. He has quoted the Malynuggur case as a case in point. If I understood him correctly, he submitted it in support of the planters' contention 'that an adjustment of rents should be allowed when one party to the agreement declines to continue to fulfil the conditions under which the tenancy was previously held.'

"If I understand the case correctly, it was hardly a case to the pointit; was a case in which it suited one party to the agreement to set aside the conditions under which the tenancy was held, and the party who found it convenient to set aside the conditions of the tenancy claimed an enhancement of rents on the ground that he had cancelled a condition of the tenancy which he no longer found it convenient his tenants should fulfil.

"As to the rights of the different parties under the present law I have no concern. I would only point out that this case in no way represents our claim: our claim is represented better under section 51, which says:

'If a question arises as to the amount of a tenant's rent or the conditions under which he holds in any agricultural year, he shall be presumed, until the contrary is shown, to hold at the same rent and under the same conditions as in the last preceding agricultural year.'

"The practical effect of this will be that the Courts will find the conditions of a tenancy are equally binding on both parties, and that the person who sets aside the conditions without consent shall make good the other's loss by a re-adjustment. All we claim is that the party who finds it convenient to set aside the conditions of a tenancy shall not be placed in a position to retain all the advantages minus any onerous or compensating conditions.

"Section 29 will have the mischievous effect attributed to it by the Hon'ble Mr. Evans; its effects could only be redeemed by the Government declaring that all suits for enhancement may be brought free of cost. This I deem to be impossible. Many urgent representations have been made in Committee and out of it to cheapen costs of suits.

"It has been recommended to reduce court-fees and to expedite the hearing of suits—both very necessary. At present we are put to great expense and needless loss of time by the delays in the hearing of our suits; our witnesses are obliged to travel long distances only to be sent back. The lessening of court-fees is not sufficient; it is necessary to reduce process-fees also.

"I do not know how many of the hon'ble members here present are aware that if I procure a decree against a tenant for arrears of rent, if his holding consists of ten pieces of land, he must pay an attachment fee of Rs. 2 for each piece and also a further fee of Rs. 2 on each piece as a fee on sale. Such fees are exorbitant, and they fall on the judgment-debtor. Unless such are remedied, the provision of the Bill which substitutes sale of holding for ejectment after decree will be cruel.

"For all sums under Rs. 100 the judgment-debtor has to refund 65 per cent. of the principal as costs of the plaintiff; he has to stand all his own costs plus sale-fees if the holding is sold.

"The changes the Bill will necessitate in our modes of transacting business are very great. Receipts must be kept in counterfoil, with severe penalties attached for neglect to deliver; agreements must be registered; all accounts must be kept in bound books; a suit for pattá and kabúliyat has been set aside and an application for a declaration of conditions under section 158 substituted; the landlord must no longer neglect to deliver a receipt; and other changes too numerous to mention have been made—all improvements in a way; but the penalties for omission and commission are so severe, so many opportunities will be afforded for worrying the landlords, that the Bill if hastily or harshly administered may be turned into an engine of oppression. It must be remembered that to carry out the instructions of the Bill in their entirety the habits of a lifetime must be discarded. In attempting to follow your rules we shall require all your sympathy—much forbearance. Throughout the discussion much stress has been laid upon the necessity of compelling the landlords to keep their accounts in bound books, much discredit has been cast upon their mode of keeping accounts, but no one has thought it necessary to enquire if it has even been made possible to do otherwise than as we now do. When we keep our accounts in bound books they are called for in evidence not only in our own cases but in the interests of others; our servants have to take them to Court half a dozen times before their evidence is taken; our books are detained in or out of Court for days together; some of my books are detained for months; we are at the mercy of our opponents and of the Courts.

"I will leave the Hon'ble Council to judge of what use such books are to us when returned.

"The remedy we must leave to others to provide. All I can say is that, as the accuracy of the landlords' accounts will depend upon the punctuality with which they are written, it becomes a matter of the first importance that the present state of affairs be not allowed to continue; if it does, our second state will be worst than our first; the landlord will be compelled to keep two sets of books, one for himself and one for the Courts.

"Under the Bill a registered document is in many instances absolutely necessary; in all instances it will carry greater value than an unregistered one. The Hon'ble Mr. Evans has quoted the authority of the Board of Revenue to prove how difficult it is induce tenants to register. I myself am a strong advocate of registration; registration should be encouraged in every way possible, but it remains for the Government to make registration possible. The Select Committee has called the attention of the Government to the necessity of expediting and cheapening registration: at present registration is in some cases almost prohibitory, in some cases quite so; at present every tenant must waste at least 48 hours of his time besides having to travel long distances; documents are impounded or returned for the most trivial errors; and if such is the case when registration is the exception and not the rule, what will it be when registration is made compulsory? Under the Bill there is no enhancement of the rents of a bhaoli tenure, and rightly so; the initial rent will be the rent for all time to come; but under the law a bhaoli agreement cannot be registered; should a dispute arise as to the rate of the tenant's rents, he must prove his right to hold under section 51 or pay at the rate others are paying. Another change is about to be made in the procedure, and I hope it will prove itself to be a beneficial one, but again all will depend upon the cost of the application.

"An application under section 158 to declare the terms and nature of a tenancy is to be substituted for the time-honoured but cumbersome practice of a suit for the interchange of documents. There is nothing in the Bill to prohibit their interchange; on the contrary, they are made necessary at every step, but they cannot be sued for. The change is a good one and practical, but it will take us some time to understand. If the cost is not made prohibitory, it should benefit both parties: as it is to be a simpler mode of proceeding I hope it will be a cheaper one. Under the Record-of-rights and Settlement chapter much good will, I hope, be effected; vast and exceptional powers are given to the

Government under it; but those powers, as they are intended to meet exceptional cases, we may, I think, trust the Government to exercise them only in cases of grave necessity. I believe this chapter, as it stood in the draft Bill, created more uneasiness, greater consternation, among the landlords than any other portion of the Bill. I hope when they fully realize the great changes that have been made in this chapter by the Select Committee they will be re-assured.

"Much as the Bill will do for the position of the raiyat in respect to the position he will stand in to his landlord, it does nothing for him with respect to his credit with his banker. It omits transferability from among the incidents attached to an occupancy-holding; on this point it leaves the law as it stands.

"I regret that the Government does not see its way to legalizing and controlling transfers of holdings. I do not now intend to re-open the question. I believe it would be a hopeless task to attempt to carry such an amendment to the Bill against the solid vote of the Government. I believe the measure will soon force itself on the attention of the Government, when they will have to review their present decision. By forcing on a discussion now I should weaken my case. I am strongly of opinion that legalized transferability of the whole holding is the only valid restriction that can be effectually put on the sub-division of holdings which is now going on all over the country, which the landlords are in some instances encouraging, in others are powerless to prevent.

"There is only one other subject that I would wish to refer to. I will then cease from monopolizing the time of this Hon'ble Council. I refer to the matter of contracts. A great outcry has been raised against the Government for prohibiting a tenant from contracting himself out of certain rights attached to a tenancy. Although it is to my interest as a trader to support free contract, in this matter I have voted with the majority of the Select Committee.

"Under the Contract Law a contract to be valid must be made with the free consent of parties, for a lawful consideration and for a lawful object.

"As well as I am able to remember, their representatives in or out of Council have never claimed a right to make a contract with their tenants for lawful consideration; all they have ever claimed is a right to induce their tenants to sign away acquired rights under the shadow of a renewal of leases, or to debar them from acquiring prescriptive rights in the future. With reference to the other important and equally weighty matters contained in the Bill, such as prevailing rates, under-raiyats, non-occupancy-raiyats, settled raiyats, presumptions,

proprietors' zirát land, merger, &c., and with reference to the gross-produce limit which has been omitted from among its provisions, I will reserve what I have to say until the specific amendments come under the discussion of Your Excellency's Council.

"Before I cease, I would refer to a remark which fell from the Hon'ble Mr. Goodrich, that no provision has been made for the acquisition of land for charitable purposes. I think, if, the Bill is seen to, it will be found that section 84 provides for this; but I am sorry the majority of the Committee did not see their way to adopting my suggestion to include the acquisition of land for irrigation-purposes in the section. If it is possible to acquire land for the one purpose, it is possible to acquire it for the other."

His Honour THE LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR said:—"My Lord, I do not think I should have attempted to say anything at the present stage of the discussion had it not been that I have been referred to by very many speakers who have preceded me. We have had very appropriately an exhaustive statement from the hon'ble member in charge of the Bill, who has given us a full history of the proceedings since this Bill was last before the Council. We have had speeches also from most of the members of the Council—certainly from all on the Select Committee—dealing at length with the details and principles of the measure; and in these speeches we have had laid bare, at least I trust so, the thoughts and intents of the heart of each speaker as to the main issues with which we shall have to deal in the further consideration of the Bill. I think I shall best consult the wishes of my hon'ble colleagues in Council, and certainly my own convenience, if I limit what remarks I have to make upon the present occasion to the practical issues which have been raised by the speech of the Hon'ble the Mahárájá of Durbhunga, and by the speech of my hon'ble friend to the left who ably represents the British Indian Association and the zamíndárs of Bengal. All or most of the other points to which allusion has been made in the course of this debate will arise on a consideration of the various amendments which are upon the notice paper; and for myself I would prefer to deal with these in detail as they arise rather than by the running commentary of a general statement.

"Now the definite questions which are immediately before the Council, are contained in the addresses of the Hon'ble the Mahárájá of Durbhunga and the Hon'ble Bábú Peári Mohan Mukerji. The Mahárájá says the Bill should be abandoned because it is a bad one; and the latter contends that the Bill has been imperfectly and insufficiently considered, and that there-

fore it should be postponed for re-publication. Anticipating the formal notice which stands in his name on the paper, he wishes that the postponement should be for three months, but we are all aware that that practically means a postponement for nine months or one year.

"The Mahárájá condemns the Bill, because, to use his own words, it was 'discredited and disowned by the Select Committee' on account of their want of unanimity as shown by the many dissents; and secondly, that the zamíndárs and raiyats are not agreed in regard to it; and lastly, that it is, of course, a gross breach of the solemn promises made by the Government in the Permanent Settlement. Now I do not think that the absence of union in the views of the Select Committee need distress the Mahárájá so much as it appears to do. We are dealing here with a very large measure; indeed, we may say that no larger measure has been under the consideration of the Government since the days of the Permanent Settlement. It is a measure also involving very deep and abstruse questions—questions which go back to a period even before the time of the Permanent Settlement; and it is complicated with innumerable details in all the relations between the landlord and tenant. It seems to me, having regard to the character of the legislation contemplated, impossible to have expected that union and unanimity in the opinions of the Committee which the Mahárájá so strongly desires. For, if we look at the composition of that Committee, we see at once what a variety of different local experience and interests they represent. You have the representatives of landlords of both sections of this great province of Bengal, of the landlords who have and own property both in Bengal Proper and in Behar, the circumstances and conditions of which vary in many important particulars. Then you have the hon'ble member from the North-Western Provinces, who brings to the consideration of the problem a very practical knowledge of the land system which exists in those provinces. We have also traditions of the Board of Revenue influentially represented by the Hon'ble Mr. Reynolds; the statistical research and information which have affected so many of our decisions in the person of Dr. Hunter; and the special usages and customs in which the Muhammadan community are interested; and lastly, not least, the influential opinion and support which my hon'ble friend Mr. Gibbon has brought to bear upon the whole subject, speaking in the interests of European planters, and as himself the manager of extensive landed properties.

"Having regard, then, to the constitution of the Committee, and to the well-known and admitted fact that there are wide differences in the circum-

stances of different parts of the province, the demands for a complete unanimity in the Report seem to me unreasonable.

"Then, as to the dissents themselves, I think an examination of them will tend to show that there is no such force in the expression of their differences as is sought to be attributed to them. I will take my own first, though I do not put it forward from any idea of its special importance, nor from any sense of its claim to priority having regard to my position as the head of this Administration. But it will perhaps best illustrate what I mean. The nature of my objection is that there are certain mattters, such as the abolition of the 'prevailing rate' as a ground of enhancement, the adoption of a gross-produce limit of rent, and some plan for the better security of the non-occupancy-raiyat, which, if included in the Bill, would have greatly improved it. The majority of the Select Committee thought otherwise; but this is no reason why I should reject the Bill as it is submitted to the Council. I think there is a great deal in the Bill as it comes before us which is in advance of the legislation of 1859. There have been considerable improvements in many respects which I gladly accept. If I cannot have my own way in everything, still I am not going to reject what the Bill contains because I cannot have my own way altogether. I take it that this is very much the view of Mr. Reynolds, who regards the Bill as an instalment of a more complete measure. So, if regard is had to the dissents of the Hon'ble Members Mr. Hunter and Mr. Amír Alí and Mr. Gibbon, though they severally raise points of considerable importance, I think you will find that they are more or less upon matters of detail, which will be fully dealt with under the amendments to be considered in Council; but whether they were rejected or accepted, they are not of that vital character which would justify us now in endorsing the Mahárájá's recommendation to abandon the Bill. Of course, I am aware from the dissents of the two hon'ble Native members that they go to a greater length than the others, and will concede to no compromise. They seem now to say 'We do not want a Bill of this kind at all; we live under the best possible of all Governments, and we have the best possible of all rent laws, and we do not want any modification of them. We very much prefer the existing state of things to any change which goes in the direction of this Bill.' This seems to me the attitude of the zamíndárs represented by the two hon'ble members at the present moment; but after ten years of labour devoted to the subject, and the general agreement to which the majority of the Select Committee have come in favour of the kind of legislation which the Bill contains, any idea of abandonment seems out of the question. I think it will be clear to any one who will take the pains to analyse the several dissents, that, with the exception of the zamíndári members

who stand out, notwithstanding the numerous concessions which have been made to their views, for an absolute concession to all their claims, that, admitting a variety of opinion upon particular points (and they chiefly refer to points expunged from the Bill in deference to the views of the majority of the Committee, and the removal of which should rather conciliate the extreme section on the side of the zamíndárs), there is a general concurrence in favour of the Bill; that it is considered to be a great improvement upon the Bill which was presented to the Council last year; and that they are quite willing to accept it, though it does not contain all that they wanted.

"I would now allude to the argument of the Mahárájá of Durbhunga that the zamíndárs and raiyats do not agree upon the matter. He says that the Bill neither satisfies the zamíndár nor the raiyat; and he implies rather than declares that an absolute Government and a packed Council were forcing an obnoxious piece of legislation upon all the landed classes in Bengal. Evidently what the Mahárájá wishes us to infer is that the zamíndár and the raiyat are at one in the matter and want one and the same Bill. Nothing, however, can be more certain than the fact that the zamíndárs look upon the Bill from one extreme, and the raiyats from the opposite extreme; and there can be no doubt that, if the Government had to wait till the raiyat and the zamíndár were agreed in a common view upon the character of the legislation upon such a wide subject, we should have to wait for that prophetic period when the lion and the lamb shall lie down together, and the millennium shall have dawned in which it may be hoped that there will be no need for legislators nor land bills. Will not the Mahárájá accept the fact that where the zamíndárs assert an extreme position on one side and the raiyats on the other to such an extent that I have, within the last few hours, received telegrams from a large body of them urging me to sign no Bill which will not grant their full demands, the only right way is to accept as a settlement that which has been adopted upon the recommendations of the majority of the Select Committee? For my own part I am prepared to surrender my predilections in deference to the results of the Committee's deliberations and decisions, in respectful submission to the views of the Government of India, who, it seems to me, must by necessity be the final arbiter of the questions which arise in a matter involving such large issues, and especially in consideration of the position of the eminent statesman, His Excellency the present Viceroy, upon whom has devolved, within a few weeks of his assumption of the administration of this great Empire, the very difficult task of disposing of a question of such magnitude.

"I must now refer to the contention of the hon'ble member who has urged that the Bill has been insufficiently considered, and who in support of that contention has brought forward arguments which I think we have often heard before; and I have little doubt that, if we yielded to his wish for a postponement, we should have just as great difficulties a year hence in reconciling the interests and claims of differing sections as we have had in the past and as we have at the present moment. The truth is that the hon'ble member wants to impose upon us the labours of Sisyphus. We have no sooner rolled the heavy block to the top of the hill than we are asked to roll it down again; only in our case, unlike that of the unfortunate king upon whom this penalty was inflicted, each year adds to the weight of the burden and enhances the difficulty of the task. The request of the hon'ble member cannot be justified; certainly not on the ground of insufficient consideration. Upon this point I don't know that I can add anything to the force of the statements made by the hon'ble member in charge of the Bill, who has shown that this Bill has undergone longer and more thorough consideration than any measure of the kind which has ever been placed before the Council. If any one doubts this, I would refer him to the first thirty-five paragraphs of a despatch which the Government of India sent home on the 21st March, 1882, to the Secretary of State. Although that paper is now only three years old, it is an almost forgotten part of the extensive literature of the Bill; but if any one wishes to learn the facts he will find in the passages to which I have referred a full history of the origin and progress of the measure. The fact is that very soon after the law of 1859 was passed it devolved on the administration of Sir William Muir, who was then Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces, to recommend an amendment of it. It has since then been before four successive Lieutenant-Governors of these Provinces, and that represents a considerable period of time, perhaps not less than 15 years. Sir George Campbell especially took up the matter with the view of checking the illegal exactions going on in Orissa and the very serious complaints of oppression in Behar. Sir Richard Temple had to deal with grave agrarian riots in Central and Eastern Bengal; so serious were they that an Act of the legislature was passed to control and suppress them, and to prevent their recurrence in future. From that time excitement on the subject became so intensified that Sir Ashley Eden had to appoint two Commissions to consider the whole subject of the revision of the law of landlord and tenant. The Bill submitted by the united Rent Commission of both Bengal and Behar was subjected to further revision by the Hon'ble Mr. Reynolds in

conference with different local authorities, and the Bengal Government under Sir Ashley Eden eventually submitted their proposals to the Government of India. I can speak with personal knowledge when I say that these proposals underwent a detailed and thorough criticism at the hands of His Excellency the late Viceroy in Council, whose final conclusions were forwarded to the Secretary of State in a historical despatch of March, 1882. Those who contend that this Bill has not had the same time and care bestowed upon it as the Penal Code and the Permanent Settlement Regulations are quite mistaken. It may be the case that the Penal Code was under consideration for many years before it was passed, but it should be remembered that after its first introduction it was left in abeyance for a long period, and moreover the codification of the criminal law was a new subject in this country; while, as regards the Permanent Settlement, the period during which it was under enquiry was, I believe, not nearly so long as the time which has been given to this Bill. It is clear from the records of the day that Lord Cornwallis intended at first to make a decennial settlement as an experimental measure on which a permanent settlement might be based; but so impatient was he to secure the enactment of the measure before his period of office expired, that he passed it before even the assent of the Court of Directors had been obtained to his proposals; so that what was intended in the first instance to be only a decennial settlement came into operation as a permanent settlement. I am, however, attacked by the hon'ble member (Bábú Peári Mohan Mukerji) as to what took place in my own Council with regard to a Bill for the appointment of kanungos and patwáris, in the course of the discussion upon which I expressed the opinion that great darkness prevailed with regard to all the relations of landlords and tenants; and he asks with reference to this, how can I press forward a Bill of this character, while I plead the existence of such gross general ignorance upon all material facts bearing upon the subject? I need not enter here into a discussion of the merits of that Bill. It is acknowledged to be a measure subsidiary to this Bill. If the chapter in this Bill which relates to the survey and record of rights falls through, the Patwárí Bill in the Bengal Council will not be proceeded with. But it must be obvious to every one that if a cadastral survey and preparation of a record of rights is to form a material part of the present legislation,—and I would sooner abandon many parts of the Bill than that,—there must be some recognised agency to record the changes which take place from time to time, or else the results of that survey and record will be thrown away in a few months. Now, when I complain of the darkness and ignorance which prevail as to the relations between landlords and tenants, I

allude to those kinds of facts of which no one has given us a more direct and practical illustration than the hon'ble member himself. The members of the Select Committee will remember that when we were dealing with some questions as to providing a form of receipts for rent in connection with this Bill—a form which was to show the name of the tenant, the quantity of land he held, and possibly the boundaries of it, the rent he paid, and simple details of that nature—the hon'ble member opposed the proposal on the ground that not one zamíndár in a hundred would be able to give such information. I say that if the zamíndárs do not know the names of their tenants, and the land they hold, and what rent they pay, we are in grosser darkness than I could have conceived possible. Now a survey and record of rights would give authoritative information on all such points as these. But the possession or non-possession of that knowledge certainly does not affect the merits of a measure like this, whose primary object is to declare and establish the rights of tenants in their relations to the zamíndár, and to try and secure to them greater fixity of tenure, and to afford them some protection against continuous and unlimited enhancements. The issue here which the hon'ble member raises, and which he has a perfect right to raise, is that the Government has no business to attempt any such thing; but the right or wrong of Government intervention depends altogether on the interpretation of the Regulations on which the Permanent Settlement was framed. We all know that there is a great deal of difference in opinion regarding that important settlement. The zamíndárs contend that in dealing with this Bill as we are doing we are depriving them of those rights which were guaranteed to them by the British Government in the beginning of this century; and the argument is used that, as the claim of the zamíndár to do just as he likes with his own is indefeasible, they will accept nothing else and nothing less. I never could admit the validity of such a plea. The contention is a very one-sided view of the Permanent Settlement, for I think that, if you examine Regulations I to VIII of 1793, you will find that there is nowhere throughout them anything more in the way of a promise than the single promise that the public demand on the land should be limited in perpetuity. The reasons for adopting that principle we know, because they are recorded in the Regulations. That promise, notwithstanding grievous provocations, has been kept for all these 90 years, and it will remain inviolate. But I assert most strongly that to urge that the whole Permanent Settlement was passed in the interests of the zamíndárs is a very one-sided aspect of the case. For, apart from the very strong reservation which the Government recorded at the time that it would, whenever it thought fit, legislate for the protection of the

cultivator, we have express mention in those Regulations of the positive rights of the raiyats. It may be true, as the hon'ble and learned member (Mr. Evans) said the other day, that the settlement of rents between the raiyats and zamíndárs was, in 1793, a matter to some extent of contract. But two things in this connection have to be borne in mind—that the competition in those days was for raiyats to clear and cultivate the land, and the zamíndárs naturally had a motive for leniency; and secondly, there was, as found in the Regulations, the absolute barrier against undue exactions of the parganá rate which was known and respected in every district.

"I know that the zamíndárs in dealing with interpretations regarding the Permanent Settlement are very unwilling that any reference should be made to contemporary history. They have openly said so in a public document. For my own part I do not see how we can avoid a reference to contemporary opinion when we have to interpret an important Act like the one under notice; and we are justified in looking to what eminent men of the time said on this point. There is valuable evidence on the subject scattered among the pages of contemporary writings, and I will read to the Council some extracts bearing upon the issue to which I have referred:—

'Sir Philip Francis, in a Minute written in 1776, considered that the rate of assessment per bígha should be fixed for ever upon the land, no matter who might be the occupant.

'Warren Hastings wrote in the same strain on 1st November 1776—"Many other points of enquiry will also be useful to secure to the raiyats the permanent and undisputed possession of their lands, and to guard them against arbitrary exactions,"—the term "exactions" from raiyats signifying in that day the levy of more than the established parganá rate of rent.

'Sir John Shore, in the same spirit, was not content that the Permanent Settlement should be with the zamíndár alone; he observed: "And at present we must give every possible security to the raiyats as well as, or not merely, to the zamíndár. This is so essential a point that it ought not to be conceded to any plan." The Court of Directors on 19th September, 1792, approving of these views, recognised it as an object of the Perpetual Settlement that it should secure to the great body of the raiyats the same equity and certainty as to the amount of their rents, and the same undisturbed enjoyment of the fruits of their industry, which we mean to give to the zamíndárs themselves. Twenty-seven years later, the Court, on 15th January, 1819, deliberately re-affirmed:—"We fully subscribe to the truth of Mr. Sisson's declaration that the faith of the State is to the full as solemnly pledged to uphold the cultivator of the soil in the unmolested enjoyment of his long-established rights, as it is to maintain the zamíndár in the possession of his estate, or to abstain from increasing the public revenue permanently assessed upon him."'

"Nothing, it seems to me, could be more conclusive of the privileges and position of the raiyats than these statements. They indicate at least the intentions of those in authority when the Permanent Settlement was made, and it

was a misfortune for the country that they were not carried out at the time. The agitation which has been going on now for several years brings the case to a climax, and demands a final settlement on the lines of this Bill. I shall certainly support the motion that the Bill be taken into consideration, and shall oppose most strongly any motion for postponement. I am quite certain that we incur a risk in putting off the final settlement of this question; and I trust the zamíndárs will understand that it is the settled policy of the Government that the right of the raiyat to hold his land is as clear and undisputable so long as he pays a fair and reasonable rent, as is the right of the zamíndár to hold his estate so long as he pays his revenue."

The Hon'ble MR. ILBERT said:—

"MY LORD,—I do not propose at this stage of the debate to discuss point by point the objections which have been brought against the particular provisions of this measure. But there are two criticisms of a general character about which I should like to make some remarks, and I shall have a few words to say on the question of urgency, which, though it is raised more directly by the motion which stands in the name of my hon'ble friend Bábú Peári Mohan Mukerji, has been discussed in connection with the motion now technically before the Council. Of the two criticisms to which I have referred, one is that the Bill has been so changed by the Select Committee as to have lost its fundamental characteristics, and the other is that the Bill as now revised does not possess those qualities of completeness and finality which are essential to good legislation.

"I do not wish to minimize or underrate the importance of the changes which this measure has undergone, not merely since the date of its first preparation by the Rent Commission, but since the date of its introduction into this Council; but I do undertake to say that those changes are fully explained and justified by the circumstances under which the Bill was prepared and introduced, and by the nature of the subject-matter with which it deals, and that they do not in any way warrant the charge that the Bill in its present form involves a departure from the principles on which it was originally based, or that the Select Committee have lost sight of or abandoned the objects which the Government of India had in view.

"This Bill, as we all know, took its origin in a draft which was framed by the Bengal Rent Commission. Now, what was the nature and scope of the task which the Rent Commission undertook? It was a task of no ordinary mag-

nitude. It was a task singularly arduous, ambitious and comprehensive. They undertook to frame a law of landlord and tenant which should be applicable to the whole of Bengal and Behar, with certain exceptions. They proposed to make important alterations in that law. They undertook, in so doing, not merely to amend the existing Acts and Regulations, but to repeal them and to re-enact them in a consolidated form with the necessary modifications. And last, but not least, they proposed to codify the whole of the judge-made law on the relations of landlord and tenant in the Lower Provinces. In short they undertook, at one and the same time, to amend, to consolidate and to codify. Now, in dealing with so difficult and delicate a subject as the law of landlord and tenant an ordinary legislator thinks himself fortunate if he achieves with some degree of success any one of these three objects: that he should be able to achieve them all is more than any mortal is entitled to expect. Accordingly, when the Government of India came to consider from the point of view of practical legislation the Bill submitted to them by the Bengal Government,—which was in fact the Rent Commission Bill with sundry modifications,—one of the first conclusions at which they arrived was that it would be desirable to drop so much of it as merely codified existing law, and to leave the measure one of amendment and consolidation. I will not trouble you at length with the reasons which led me among others to this conclusion—a conclusion about the soundness of which I have never had any doubt. They were reasons which did not involve the slightest disparagement of the admirable work which had been done by the learned author of the Digest of the Law of Landlord and Tenant in Bengal, and did not imply any scepticism as to the value of codification, or as to the importance of continuing the great work which has been commenced for India by the framers of our codifying Acts. Shortly stated, the reasons were these. Apart from any doubt which we might feel as to the expediency or possibility of attempting to present in a code the effect of judicial decisions on subordinate rules or propositions of law, it was clear that up to this time the process of codification had only been applied with success to those portions of the English common law which are suitable to the circumstances of India; the general principles of the English law of landlord and tenant had quite recently been codified by my learned predecessor Mr. Whitley Stokes in that chapter of the Transfer of Property Act which relates to leases; and the legislature on passing that measure into law had expressly declared that this chapter—the chapter relating to leases—is not suitable to the relations which exist between landlord and tenant in the Mufassal. Furthermore, we held that, even if the law with which we had to deal admitted of codification, it was of

the first importance to simplify and reduce in bulk as much as possible the long and complicated measure which had been laid before us by the Government of Bengal. Accordingly, as I have said, the merely codifying portions of the Bill were dropped, and, as I hold, wisely dropped; but the mere fact that this measure once professed to be a Code has given it an appearance of completeness and finality which was always illusory, and which has had an unfortunate effect.

"Even in its reduced form the Bill was sufficiently long and complicated, and was in a shape—I am speaking merely of form and not of substance—was in a shape which would have made an English Minister reluctant to submit it to Parliament. For it is a received maxim of English legislation that when you have important changes to make in the law—changes which are likely to encounter much opposition or to invite much discussion—you should not attempt to combine the two processes of amendment and consolidation, because by so doing you divert the attention of Parliament and the public from the real issues before them. You raise questions which have been already settled or are of minor importance, and you thus materially impede and embarrass the passage of the measure through the House.

"In this country, where the machinery of legislation works more easily and smoothly, it has always been held—whether it will continue to be so held if we have many more such notice-papers as that which has been laid on the table with reference to this Bill I cannot say, but at all events it has always been held—up to this time that the advantages to the public of consolidation outweigh what may be called the tactical disadvantages of presenting a too widely extended front for opposition and criticism; and accordingly we have, as a general rule, whenever we have had to make extensive changes in the law, applied the process of repeal and re-enactment. The Government of India did not think that they would be justified in the present instance in departing from this practice, but at the same time I am bound to confess that in the course of the discussion of this measure I have found abundant reason for appreciating the practical wisdom of the English rule. For there can be no doubt that the form in which this Bill has come before the public has tended to obscure the main issues which are raised by the present legislation, and has roused many of those ghosts of buried controversies which still hover and shriek round the Permanent Settlement Regulations and Act X of 1859. Let us endeavour to abstract our minds from those arts of the Bill which merely reproduce existing law, and those parts which embody miscellaneous amendments of minor importance, and consider what were the main defects in the existing law which the Rent

Commission proposed to remedy, and what were the main remedies which they proposed to apply for the removal of these defects. The main defects were two: first, that the existing law gave, or appeared to give, to the raiyat rights which he could not prove; and secondly, that the law gave, or professed to give, to the zamíndár remedies which he could not enforce. Whether by reason of any deliberate policy of shifting tenants' holdings, or by reason of local customs of cultivation, or by reason of the absence of proper landmarks, but at all events in fact the raiyat was unable to prove that kind of twelve years' occupation which was necessary to give him occupancy-rights under Act X of 1859. And the zamíndárs found the process of recovering their rents through the Courts tedious, and the process of enhancement through the Courts unworkable. Want of adequate legal security for the raiyat, want of adequate legal facilities for the landlord—those were two substantial defects which were made the subject of repeated complaints before the Commission. And at the same time that the Rent Commission admitted that there were in the existing law these defects, which impaired its efficiency as a law and prevented it from achieving the objects which it was intended and expected to achieve, the Famine Commission, looking at the subject from a somewhat different point of view, came to much the same conclusion with respect to one of these defects, and pointed out that the absence of adequate legal security for the tenant had produced and was producing disastrous economical effects.

"These, then, were the practical problems which the Rent Commission—sitting, not as codifiers or as consolidators, but as amenders of the law—had to solve:—whether they could devise in the interest of the tenants more effectual checks against liability to capricious eviction and excessive rackrenting; whether they could devise in the interest of the landlords more effectual facilities for the ascertainment and recovery of their just dues. Reasonable security for the tenant, reasonable facilities for the landlord—these were the two things which they had to endeavour to provide. Suggestions for attaining these objects poured in upon them in great abundance, and from very different quarters. It was their duty to consider these suggestions; to sift them carefully; to view them in the light of different interests and different experiences; to recommend them for adoption if they appeared to be reasonable and practicable; to reject them if they appeared to be unreasonable or impracticable. And that, Sir, is the history of this measure from its first inception to the present time. The process which has been continuously applied to it has been a careful sifting of numerous suggestions which have been put forward

with the view of meeting certain specific evils. The Government of Bengal took up the suggestions of the Rent Commission, made them the subject of a very careful examination, and then transmitted them with modifications to the Government of India. The Government of India examined with equal care the suggestions laid before them by the Government of Bengal, and, with the approval of the Secretary of State, embodied in the Bill which was introduced into this Council such of them as appeared to afford a reasonable prospect of working with success. That in the course of this process the measure should have undergone considerable modification is no matter for surprise, but at the same time is no ground of blame to the Rent Commission, no cause for imputation against the Government of India or the Select Committee of this Council. The Rent Commission would have been much to blame if, in the exercise of the duties imposed upon them, they had rejected any suggestion which appeared on the face of it to be reasonable: the Government of India would have been equally to blame if they had not incorporated in their original Bill such of the proposals laid before them, as, with the information then at their disposal, seemed to offer a fair prospect of meeting the requirements of the case; the Select Committee would have been still more to blame if they had obstinately stuck to these proposals, or had adopted any alternative suggestions which might be subsequently made by the Bengal Government, after further inquiry and examination had thrown grave doubts on their fairness or feasibility.

"There is another circumstance which has not a little obscured the real nature of the changes which have from time to time been made. In the course of the discussions which take place on a measure of this nature, ranging as it does over a considerable ground, and affecting a great variety and number of interests, it always happens that some particular proposal assumes a factitious importance, and comes to be described, in varying metaphors, as the keystone or core or kernel of the Bill. I always distrust these phrases. They usually mean that some particular feature of a measure has happened to strike the imagination of some particular writer or set of writers, to coincide specially with his or their sympathies or prepossessions, or to assume exceptional prominence from some one point of view, and when it disappears or assumes a less prominent position a cry is raised that the measure is irretrievably ruined, and that it is no longer of any value.

"There have been a good many keystones and cores and kernels of the Rent Bill. There was a time, in the earlier discussions of this measure, when the

proposal most in vogue was a proposal which not unnaturally found favour in zamíndári quarters, a proposal to devise some kind of summary procedure for the recovery of rents. This was to be the be-all and end-all of legislation on the subject of landlord and tenant. 'Give us back our Huftum and our Punchúm,' said the zamíndárs, 'and all will be well. Or, at all events, if you cannot do that, put the raiyat who is sued for rent in the same position as if he had signed a bill of exchange, that is to say, had agreed in writing to pay a specified sum of money to a specified person at a specified time.' This was a form of 'facility' which was much discussed by the Rent Commission, and the conclusion to which they came about it was substantially the same as that which was subsequently arrived at by the Government of India. I spoke at such length on this topic in obtaining leave to introduce the Bill that I may be pardoned for not dwelling on it at any length on the present occasion. The conclusions to which we came were in short these; not that the difficulties complained of by the landlords were non-existent, but that the remedies suggested were superficial; that where the rights involved are obscure and uncertain, and the facts difficult to ascertain, no mere tinkering of procedure would provide a method of judicial determination which should be at once speedy and just. But at the same time I expressed a hope that when the measure came to be fully discussed other expedients for simplifying the procedure might be devised. In the course of the long discussions which have since taken place sundry suggestions for that purpose have been made; some of these were brought before the Select Committee by my lamented friend the late Rai Kristodás Pál; others have been embodied in a paper written by Bábú Mohini Mohan Roy, who was himself a Member of the Rent Commission; others again have been communicated to me privately by my friend the Mahárájá Sir Jotíndra Mohan Tagore. The Select Committee have not overlooked or disregarded any of these suggestions. On the contrary, they have given them their most careful attention. We invited judicial officers to examine them and express their opinions upon them, and we specially referred them for the consideration and opinion of the Calcutta High Court. But the replies which we have received have been unfavourable to these suggestions. We have been told, and told on the highest authority, that they could not be adopted without serious risk of failure of justice. Under these circumstances it was impossible for us to endorse recommendations which had by the authority most competent to express an opinion upon them—I mean the Judges of the Calcutta High Court—been unanimously and decisively condemned. It would have been a satisfaction to the

Members of the Select Committee, as it would have been a satisfaction to the Hon'ble Judges, if we had been able to accept any of the suggestions put forward for the simplification of procedure and the removal of the means too often employed by raiyats to harass their zamíndárs. But in the face of such strong and authoritative expressions of opinion that these suggestions were dangerous or impracticable, we could not take upon ourselves the responsibility of recommending their adoption. Some minor amendments of procedure we have indeed proposed, and I believe that they will be found useful as far as they go. But I fully agree with the deliberate opinion of the Rent Commission and of the High Court that it is in other quarters than the amendment of procedure that the true remedy for difficulties in the realization of rents is to be found. Some of these remedies can, as the Judges point out, be provided by executive action; means of providing others are supplied by this Bill; and it is to the machinery that we propose to provide for the ascertainment and recording of obscure and disputed facts and rights that the zamíndárs, if they are properly advised, should, I believe, look for a removal of the difficulties which they now experience in enforcing their rights.

"On this point, then, the views of the Select Committee are in complete accordance with those of the Rent Commission and with those which the Government of India entertained and expressed on the introduction of this Bill.

"But with respect to other matters I freely admit that, in the course of the deliberations which have taken place on this measure, the Select Committee have found themselves compelled to drop certain proposals to which at one time considerable importance was attached by their authors, and from which considerable advantages were expected to accrue. Take, for instance, the proposals as to the preparation of tables of rates. These proposals formed a very prominent feature of the Bill which was submitted to the Government of India by the Bengal Government, and they were incorporated by the Government of India in their original Bill, though not without expressions of great doubt as to their feasibility. There was a great deal to be said for these proposals, and, if they had proved capable of being carried out, they would have simplified many questions and removed many difficulties. Therefore, I think the Government was fully justified in inserting them in the Bill which was laid before this Council two years ago, and that they were entitled to a fair trial before being rejected as unworkable. The Bengal

Government did give them a fair trial; they deputed special officers to try and prepare tables of rates on the lines indicated in the Bill; and the result of their inquiries and experiments was to satisfy both the Bengal Government and the Select Committee that the expectations once based on this particular scheme were not likely to be realized. Very similar has been the fate of the gross-produce limit. This particular proposal did not, if my memory serves me rightly, figure very largely in the earlier discussions on this measure; it was adopted by the Rent Commission, but without, as it appears to me, any adequate examination or consideration of the difficulties by which it was attended; it formed also part of the proposals embodied in the Bill introduced by the Government of India; but whilst I do find in the papers and speeches relating to the Bill indications of doubt as to the possibility of imposing any such general limit, or as to the propriety of the particular limit proposed, I do not find anything to show that it was regarded two years ago as being an essential feature of the measure. It was not until a comparatively late epoch that it attained the dignity of being described as the 'core' of the Rent Bill. Now, it must be admitted that it would be eminently satisfactory if we could devise some form of ultimate barrier against which the waves of rackrenting should ineffectually dash; and when the subject was discussed in the Select Committee—and it underwent a very full and thorough discussion before the Committee—there was a strong feeling on the part of the majority of the members in favour of imposing such a limit, if only a fair and workable limit could be devised. But when we proceeded to examine the facts and figures on which the particular fractional limit proposed in the Bill was based, we considered them insufficient to warrant the inferences drawn from them, and at the same time we were informed by the Bengal Government that to fix the limit at any other fraction would be to provide an ineffectual protection against that form of rackrenting which it was the object of the limit to counteract. Under these circumstances we reluctantly came to the conclusion that this was a form of check which we were not in a position to impose.

"Take, again, those provisions of the Bill which have been the subject of more and hotter controversy than, perhaps, any other of its provisions. I mean those which relate to the transferability of the occupancy-right. The object of the Rent Commission, the object of the Bengal Government in the earlier drafts of the Bill, the object of the Government of India in the Bill of two years ago, was to recognize and legalize a practice which, whether for good or for evil, either had grown up or was fast growing up in all parts of these Provinces, but to surround it with such checks and limitations as might be con-

sidered necessary or advisable for the purpose of preventing it from being used to the detriment either of the zamíndár or of the raiyat. That, I repeat, was the object which we all had in view: we wished to recognize and confirm existing customs, to give them the express sanction of the law, but at the same time to give them a reasonable shape. We found, however, that the existing customs were so multiform that it would be impossible to devise any one general form of legal check on the right of alienation which might not reasonably be charged with causing hardship to the zamíndár in one part of the country, and hardship to the raiyat in another; and, this being so, the conclusion at which the majority of the Committee, after many intermediate experiments and suggestions, ultimately arrived was that, if varieties of custom were to be recognized at all, they had better be recognized in their entirety, and that the balance of advantages was in favour of leaving the custom, at all events for the present, unregulated by any express provision of law. In arriving at this conclusion individual members of the Committee, as would naturally be the case, reached the same goal by different paths. The question was an eminently arguable one, and was one as to which both the advocates of the zamíndárs and the advocates of the raiyat were much divided in their views,—I know for instance that the view taken of it by my hon'ble friend the Mahárájá of Durbhunga differed materially from that taken by my hon'ble friend Bábú Peári Mohan Mukerji,—and it had to be determined with reference not only to the consideration whether the right of transfer was in itself a good thing or a bad thing, but with reference also to such considerations as whether the advantages of having a positive and definite but inelastic rule outweighed the disadvantages incidental to an elastic but uncertain custom, whether the mahájan purchaser of whom so much has been heard was a reality or a bugbear, and last, but not least, whether any discouragement which might be imposed on the practice of sale would not operate as an encouragement of the practice of sub-letting. It was under the influence of all these different considerations that we came to the conclusion that with regard to this particular matter the natural check imposed by custom and usage would probably operate better than any artificial checks which could, under existing circumstances, be imposed by law, and that the safer and more prudent course would be to abstain, at all events for the present, from positive legislation.

"There is no foundation for the suggestion that such a change as this involves a radical departure from the principles of the original Bill. Nor is there any foundation for the suggestion that we have by any of the provisions of the Bill as now revised violated any pledges which we gave on the introduction of this measure. We have been told that the power given

to reduce rents in cases where a special settlement is made is inconsistent with the assurance that was given that there would be no reduction of existing rents. Now it is important to be accurate about what was actually said and written with reference to this point. On looking at our despatch of 17th October, 1882 (paragraph 17), I find that we explained our intention to be that a raiyat should not be at liberty to sue for a reduction of rent on the *sole* ground that it exceeds that indicated by the table of rates. The assurance was that rents were not to be reduced solely on the ground of their being above those shewn in the table of rates, and I need hardly point out that the Bill contains no provision inconsistent with this assurance.

"In my own speech on obtaining leave to introduce the Bill I referred specially to this point. What I said was this :—

'On a comparison of the provisions for enhancement with the provisions for reduction, it might be said that they have a somewhat one-sided appearance. The landlord can use the table of rates for the purpose of levelling up; the tenant cannot use it for the purpose of levelling down. But it must be remembered that the principle on which the Bill is framed is to proceed as far as practicable on the basis of existing rents, and that nothing is further from our intention than to bring about a general reduction of rents. Whether under exceptional circumstances and in special areas—such, for instance, as the area in Behar, where we learn from recent reports that the average rates all round have been enhanced by 500 per cent. in the last 43 years, whilst the area under cultivation has actually decreased, and the rise in prices during the same period has been at most 73 per cent.—it may not be necessary to take steps, if not for a reduction, at least for a re-adjustment of the rates of rent, is a separate and difficult question on which I will not enter now. But I repeat that proposals for a general reduction of rents form no part of the Bill.'

"I fail to discover in the Bill as now amended anything which is in the slightest degree inconsistent with any of the statements which I have just quoted. What we intend by the section to which reference has been made is that in very special and exceptional cases special and exceptional powers should be exercised.

"My Lord, I will not go through the other changes which have been made in this Bill since its introduction. The changes themselves, and the reasons for making them, have been fully and completely explained by my hon'ble friend Sir Steuart Bayley, and I have nothing to add to his exposition. I have listened sympathetically to the expressions of regret which have fallen from the lips of several hon'ble members for some of those changes; but I have heard nothing which has satisfied me that the grounds on which

they were made were not good and sufficient, or that the arguments which have weighed with the majority of us in the Select Committee are likely to produce a different effect when brought forward in Council. What I wish specially to guard against is any confusion between means and ends, between matters of principle and matters of detail. Where we have seen fit to modify our views we have modified them not with respect to the general principles by which our legislation should be guided, not with respect to the objects at which we ought to aim, but with respect to the particular means which it may be necessary, expedient or advisable to adopt for the purpose of attaining those objects. The objects which we had in view in introducing this legislation were the objects which we have in view now, namely, the provision of reasonable security for the tenant, of reasonable facilities for the landlord. As to the particular form and degree of the securities or facilities which the circumstances of the case justify or require, that is a question with respect to which we may justifiably modify our views in the light of further experience and inquiry. We have given a little more in one direction, a little less in another; but the general scope and tendency of our proposals remains what it was. Thus in dealing with the occupancy-raiyat we have lessened the area over which his rights may be acquired, but we have, at the same time, facilitated the proof of the rights to which he is entitled within that area. We have removed some of the checks to which enhancement of his rent was subjected, but at the same time we have tightened others, and have extended the period during which he is to have absolute immunity from all enhancement. Again, in dealing with the landlord, we have declined to adopt suggestions which have been made to us for taking away from him any ground of enhancement through the Courts to which, from long usage or otherwise, he may reasonably claim to be entitled. We have declined to adopt any suggestion which would have had the effect of making any of those grounds unworkable, and thus of perpetuating what has been justly described as a public scandal; we have endeavoured to give the landlord a right which could be honestly enforced through the machinery of the Courts and not dishonestly abused as an engine of oppression out of Court; and we have endeavoured to assist the Courts by indicating somewhat more clearly than under the present law the circumstances under which, and the limitations subject to which, the landlord's remedy is to be applied.

"With reference to these and several other provisions of the Bill, the question has usually been a question not of principle but of degree—a question where we should draw the line between conflicting claims, and, as is usual with boundary disputes, our decision has not been accepted with satisfaction by either party.

The question which you are entitled to ask is, 'What is the net result of our proposals?' Do they give too much or leave too much to one side or to the other? The question is *not* 'Does the Bill satisfy the expectations, reasonable or unreasonable, of one party or of the other party?' but does it—to use a phrase to which some of our critics appear to entertain an insuperable objection—does it afford a fair and equitable solution of an exceptionally difficult problem, a fair and equitable compromise between claims which are conflicting and irreconcileable? What we have endeavoured to frame has been not a landlord's Bill, nor a tenant's Bill, but a just Bill. We have endeavoured to give substantial security to the tenant without restricting more than is necessary the powers of the landlord. We have endeavoured to give reasonable facilities to the landlord without weakening more than is inevitable the customary privileges of the tenant. Whether and how far we have succeeded in our endeavour is a question which I leave to persons of cool and dispassionate judgment to determine. After hearing the vehement and angry denunciations by which we have been assailed on either side, they will, I am disposed to think, come to the conclusion that the Government of India has not ill discharged the duty which was imposed upon it of acting as a just and impartial arbiter between conflicting claims.

"I deny, then, that the Bill which is now laid before you involves a departure from the principles by which the Government of India was guided in its introduction. What foundation is there for the other charge to which I have referred, that it is wanting in completeness and finality? 'I had hoped,' says His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, in his minute of dissent, 'that the legislation now in hand would have carried with it some measure of finality'; 'but', he goes on, 'in its present outcome there is scarcely the assurance which had been expected of a final settlement of many important principles connected with a Tenancy Bill in the Lower Provinces of Bengal.' 'I am unable,' says my hon'ble friend Mr. Reynolds, 'to regard the Bill in the form which it has now assumed as an adequate and final settlement of the question raised in this great controversy.'

"Sir, in one sense I admit the charge. That the Bill is one-sided, I deny: that it is not complete or final I will admit. But I will go further and say that any Bill of this kind which claimed for itself the characteristics of completeness and finality would carry its condemnation on its face. Look at the social and economical condition of Bengal at the present day. What are its most striking features? Are they not transformation,

transition, growth and change? Here, as elsewhere in India, and here perhaps, more than anywhere else in India, you find the past and the present, old things and new, brought into sudden and violent contact with each other, with results which are often unexpected, and which, unless there is some intervention to temper the shock, may be disastrous. You have been told with truth—and the truth is one which cannot be too often repeated or too strongly insisted on—that the Bengali raiyat is not the same thing as the English farmer, that the Bengali zamíndár is not the same thing as the modern English landlord, that the rules which govern, and should govern, the relations of zamíndár and raiyat are not those rules of the law of landlord and tenant with which the modern English lawyer is most familiar.

"The Bengali raiyat is not the same thing as the English farmer; he is something widely different from him. But he presents many curious and instructive points of resemblance to the English customary tenant of some six or seven centuries ago. The rights and powers claimed by the zamíndár are not unlike those once claimed by the feudal lord of the manor; the privileges, duties and liabilities of the raiyat resemble in some important particulars those which once belonged to the English customary tenant, and which were gradually developed into the status either of the free-holder or of the copy-holder. In the phrase which is still technically applied to the English copy-holder, namely, that he holds 'at the will of the lord according to the custom of the manor,' we discern echoes of the controversies which once raged round the customary tenant of the English manor, and which still rage round the position of the Bengali raiyat—controversies in which the assertion of high proprietary rights on the part of the landlord is set against the assertion of strong customary privileges on the part of the tenant. If we were to pursue the investigation further we should find equally suggestive analogies. The bewildering multitude of tenures with local variations of nomenclature and incidents finds its parallel in the multitude of subordinate interests in land which are recorded on the Domesday survey, the English record of rights of the eleventh century. Again, it is well known that there is no point in English legal history which is more obscure than the question of the extent to which, and the circumstances under which, alienation of land was legally recognised and actually took place before the 13th century. But in the midst of this obscurity one fact is clearly established, namely, that such alienation as took place assumed the form not of sale but of sub-infeudation or sub-letting, and that the extent to which this sub-letting was carried was distasteful to the superior landlords. We know that at the instance of the great lords a famous statute was passed to

stop sub-letting; we know that while the intention of the statute was to stop sub-letting its effect was to legalize free sale, that it enabled the fee-simple tenant to alienate his interest without consulting his lord, and that it has since become the foundation of the modern English law of the sale of land. If there had been a Hansard in the days when the Statute 'Quia Emptores' became law, he might perhaps have supplied us with an additional arsenal of arguments for and against the comparative merits and demerits of sub-letting and free sale.

"However, I do not intend to weary the Council with any elaborate historical disquisition. My object in touching on these analogies between the past and the present is not to demonstrate—what has been demonstrated to satiety—that the application of the modern English landlord and tenant law to the relations of zamíndár and raiyat would be both an anachronism and a political blunder, but also to illustrate some of the exceptional difficulties which surround any attempt either to declare or to amend the law bearing on those relations. For to say that the Bengali raiyat is still living in an age which to us Englishmen has become an age of the past, is to present only one side of the picture. There is another side to it. Side by side with the landlord who exercises, and is content to exercise, his old customary seignorial rights so far as they are compatible with the modern system of Government, we have the auction-purchaser who has bought his rights as a commercial speculation, and thinks only how he can turn them to the best advantage. Side by side with the hereditary tenant, cultivating and living on his land in the old traditional fashion, we have the enterprising planter, who has got his lease and wishes to work it so as to extract from the land the greatest possible profit in the smallest possible time. The modern theory of competition rents is jostling the old practice of customary rates; the new fashion of terminable leases is threatening to displace ancient occupancy-rights. The thirteenth century is being brought face to face with the nineteenth century, and is striving with more or less success to understand and accommodate itself to its ways. The cultivator for subsistence is giving way before, or developing into, the cultivator for profit; those who have hitherto walked in the dim twilight of custom are emerging into the hard and fierce glare of law as administered by the Courts. The ideas, habits and customs of widely different ages and widely different civilization are being thrown into a common crucible, and are assuming new and strange forms. We cannot arrest this process of change; we cannot predict with certainty the rate at which it will progress or the direction which it will take if left to itself

All that we can do is to endeavour by such means as are at our disposal to guide it in the right direction; to ease off the abruptness of the transition from the old to the new, from an age of feudalism to an age of industrialism; to bridge over the interval between status and contract; to prevent custom from being ousted too violently by competition; to see that rules of law based on commercial transactions between hard and keen men of business are not applied to the ignorant and unlettered peasant before he is able to understand them or to use them.

"Can we afford to stand aside and let things drift, trusting that they may somehow come out right in the end? Such may be a policy which would commend itself to some of the influential classes in this country, to men of the strong hand and the long purse; such is not a policy which the British Government of India has ever ventured, or can ever venture, to adopt; such is not our conception of the duty which we owe to the millions whom Providence has confided to our care. We are responsible for the introduction into this country of forces which threaten to revolutionize and disintegrate its social and economical system; we cannot fold our hands and let them work in accordance with nature's blind laws. We must, to the best of our ability, endeavour to regulate and control their operations, and in so doing it is inevitable that we should occasionally interfere in a manner and to an extent which, to those whose institutions have not, for long ages, undergone the strain imposed by foreign conquest or foreign immigration, may not unnaturally appear difficult to justify or explain.

"That in so doing we should be charged with ignoring or violating the laws of political economy is a matter of course. We do not ignore or violate those laws. On the contrary, the whole of our action as a State in legislation of this kind is based on a recognition and appreciation of the laws which regulate the production and distribution of wealth, just as the whole of our action as a State in dealing with famine is based on the recognition and appreciation of the laws, so far as they are discoverable, which regulate the recurrence of famines. We do not ignore these laws, but we proceed on the view that their operation is capable of being modified and controlled by human action.

"Assuming, then, that interference is justifiable and necessary, what kind of interference is possible and expedient, what kind of legislation is suitable to the circumstances with which we have to deal? Must we not admit, are we not always being compelled to admit, that it is a legislation of opportunism? For a transitional period final legislation is neither appropriate nor possible.

What we have to do is to establish a *modus vivendi*, a working arrangement, not merely between conflicting interests, but between the customs, habits, ideas and ways of different ages and different forms of civilization. Our legislation must contain much that is in the nature of expedients, adjustments, compromises; it will inevitably contain provisions which will be to political economists a stumbling-block, and to lawyers—I will say even to law-lords—foolishness, but which, for all that, may be based on good sound common sense.

"Again, whilst fully acknowledging the necessity—the urgent necessity—of interference on some points, we can afford to admit the wisdom of non-interference on others. There are some proposals about the expediency and suitability of which we can make up our minds with reasonable certainty; there are others about which we do not see our way so clearly, and with respect to which we should prefer to wait a while. There may be points—I frankly admit that there are points—with respect to which the provisions of this Bill are imperfect and incomplete, and with respect to which we are leaving our successors to supplement our task. But the fact that we are unable to do all that we might have wished to do is no reason why we should not do what we can; the fact that there are evils for which no suitable remedy has yet been found is no reason for delaying to apply to other evils such remedies as may appear to be suitable; to admit that the range of human prevision is limited is no unmanly confession of impotence; to acknowledge that the morrow will have its task is no ground for putting off the task of the day.

"What the Council have to consider as practical men is, not whether this is an ideally perfect measure, not whether it is a final settlement of questions between landlord and tenant in Bengal, not whether it is likely to usher in a millennium either for the zamíndár or for the raiyat, but whether it represents a step in advance, whether it does anything substantial towards removing admitted defects in the existing law, whether it does not give some substantial form of security to the tenant, some reasonable facilities to the landlord. It is because I believe that the measure, however it may fall short of ideal perfection, does embody substantial improvements in the existing law, that I commend it to the favourable consideration of the Council.

"One word in conclusion on the question which, though it is not technically raised by the present motion, has been appropriately discussed upon it—the question whether we should now proceed with the consideration of this measure or

should defer its consideration until the expiration of a certain interval after the Bill has been re-published. The period of delay for which Bábú Peári Mohan Mukerji asks is a period of three months, but we all know that this practically means a delay of not less than a year, and therefore the question before the Council will be whether they will hang up the measure for another year, and thereby, amongst other things, condemn the officers of the Bengal Government and their own Committee to a re-commencement of what my friend the Lieutenant-Governor has properly described as their Sisyphean tasks; the former of piling up reports which are written in the summer, edited and annotated in the autumn, discussed in the winter, and shelved in the spring; the latter of renewing, under circumstances which involve a lamentable sacrifice of valuable time, discussions, the renewal of which is only rendered possible by the fact that the human memory is incapable of retaining, for more than a very limited time, the vast store of facts and arguments which have accumulated round this Bill.

"Now on what ground is this motion based? Is it on the ground that the public have not had sufficient time to consider the points of difference between the Bill which was published with the Preliminary Report, and the Bill which has now been laid on the table. My hon'ble friend Bábú Peári Mohan Mukerji has referred to the Resolution which was issued rather more than two years ago with reference to the desirability of giving greater publicity to legislative measures. That Resolution issued from my Department, and therefore I am in a special manner responsible for it. I concur entirely in every word that it contains, and I have done, and shall continue to do, all in my power to give effect to the principles on which it insists. If, therefore, the procedure which we now propose to adopt were in any manner inconsistent with that Resolution, I should be justly chargeable with inconsistency. But it is not inconsistent with that Resolution. The answer to the suggestion that no sufficient time has been given for the consideration of the Bill as now amended has been supplied by my hon'ble friend Sir Steuart Bayley, and it is this, that the alterations which have been made in the Bill since the date of its last publication are almost entirely in the nature of excision and reduction, and that we have not added any new matter of such importance as to require the opinion of the public upon it. Or is the motion before the Council based on the wider ground that the information laid before the Select Committee is not sufficient to justify their recommending the adoption of any such proposals as those embodied in the Bill? On this point, again, I need only refer to what has been said by my hon'ble friend Sir Steuart Bayley as to the excep-

tionally searching and exhaustive nature of the inquiries and reports on which our conclusions are based, and express in the most emphatic manner my concurrence with his opinion that the constitution and procedure of the Select Committees of this Council are entirely unsuitable for that kind of examination of witnesses which has been suggested. That there are depths of this vast subject which we have not fathomed to the bottom, that there are tracts which we have left unexplored, nobody denies; what we do say is that the information before us was sufficient, and sufficiently tested, to enable us to come to certain definite conclusions on certain important points, and that it is upon those conclusions that our recommendations are based. My hon'ble friend the Mahárájá of Durbhunga claims the support of the majority of the Select Committee for the motion for delay, and says that the majority of them signed dissents from certain more or less important recommendations of the Report, and therefore must be taken to have dissented from the specific recommendation that the Bill be passed as now amended. The fallacy is obvious, and the accuracy of the assertion is easily put to the test. It will be tested shortly by the vote which is to be given on Bábú Peári Mohan Mukerji's motion. I am one of those members of the Select Committee whose signature to the Report is conspicuous by the absence of a decorating star, but on the question whether there should or should not be further delay in the prosecution of this measure I appeal with confidence to the majority of the Select Committee. To the unflagging assiduity with which the members of that Committee have devoted themselves to their arduous labours no one is more willing to testify and render grateful acknowledgment than their chairman. That they should respond with alacrity to an invitation to a renewal of their labours one could hardly expect, unless indeed they belong to that exceptional class of mortals whose conception of Heaven is that of a place where congregations ne'er break up, and the sittings of Select Committees never end. But in all seriousness I apprehend that their reply would be that the information laid before them, though not complete, was sufficient for the practical purposes they had in view; that further information would not be likely to bring more united counsels; that they had completed their task, whether well or ill, at all events to the best of their ability; and that another year's delay would not be likely either materially to enlarge their knowledge, or materially to modify their conclusions.

"As for those hon'ble members to whom the privilege or penance of sharing in the deliberations of the Committee has not been extended, and who must therefore content themselves with a broad and general view of the measure which is laid before them, I would ask them merely to consider

whether the measure may not, in its present shape, be fairly regarded as a substantial and honest piece of work, and whether the advantages which might possibly arise from further enquiry and discussion are not far outweighed by the disadvantages necessarily incidental to the prolongation for an indefinite period of a state of uncertainty, tension and irritation which is in the highest degree prejudicial to the interests of landlord and tenant alike."

His Excellency THE PRESIDENT said:—"I do not think it necessary that I should trouble the Council with any observations of my own at this stage of our proceedings. I shall have ample opportunity, when we come to discuss the several points in this Bill with respect to which amendments are to be moved, of expressing my opinion in regard to them. I will therefore content myself by saying that, although it is likely that during the course of our deliberations this Bill will be considerably improved in many of its particulars, I have no hesitation whatever in giving to its general features my cordial and sincere support. I have convinced myself that it is, as my hon'ble colleague has just said, a very honest and conscientious piece of work. I am quite certain that those who have engaged in advancing it to its present stage have been actuated by the sole desire of doing equal justice to all those interests which are dealt with under the Bill. It cannot be seriously urged that this Council has not a right to legislate in the direction proposed. It so happens that I became Under-Secretary of State for India while the legislation which resulted in Act X of 1859 was still under discussion, and I then came to the conclusion, which further examination has only confirmed, that it would be idle to contend that legislation of this description is any invasion whatever of the rights accorded to the zamíndárs under the Permanent Settlement. If I thought that any clause of the Bill interfered with rights which have been granted to any class of Her Majesty's subjects in India by the Imperial Government, I certainly would not be found among its supporters; but, on the contrary, I believe that this Bill is in perfect harmony with those principles which inspired the authors of the Permanent Settlement; and I am quite certain that hereafter, when the present controversies have subsided, even those who consider their interests most injuriously affected by what it is proposed to do will acknowledge that this legislation has benefitted the agricultural interests of the country. With regard to the special point which is before us, namely, whether or not the present Bill should be hung up for another year, I can only say that, in the presence of the all but unanimous opinion which has been delivered by my colleagues in favor of proceeding at once to the immediate consideration of the Bill as amended by the Select Com-

mittee, it would be impossible for me, even if I myself did not share that opinion, to undertake the responsibility of delaying a measure, the postponement of which, I am told by so many persons competent to speak with authority on the subject, would be so disastrous. In conclusion I may observe that I for one have listened with the greatest interest and pleasure to the discussion which has taken place. Although I have certainly done my best to acquaint myself with all the facts and arguments bearing on this question as far as they are contained in the voluminous literature connected with the subject, this is the first occasion on which I have had the advantage of hearing it discussed by persons so capable of handling it. I have been specially struck with the moderation, the ability, the temper and with the eloquence with which my several colleagues have placed us in possession of their respective views, and I may be permitted to add that the Native members of this Council were certainly not those who have shown the least ability in dealing with the question."

The motion was put and agreed to.

The Hon'ble BABU PEARI MOHAN MUKERJI moved that the Bill as amended by the Select Committee to which it was referred be re-published, and that the consideration of the measure by the Council be deferred for at least three months from the date of its re-publication.

He said the hon'ble members of the Council were already in possession of the reasons why he considered such a course desirable. If the opinion of hon'ble members was that the republication of the Bill at that stage was inexpedient, he would ask whether His Excellency the President could not see his way to put off the consideration of the amendments on the provisions of the Bill for two or three weeks, with a view to enable hon'ble members who were not members of the Select Committee to study the amended Bill, and to enable English-knowing landlords and tenants to give their opinions on the subject.

The Hon'ble Sir STEUART BAYLEY pointed out that the proposition of the hon'ble mover of the amendment simply amounted to this, that the postponement of the Bill for two or three weeks meant its postponement for one year. This, he presumed, was open to the same objection as the first amendment. As had also been pointed out by the Hon'ble Mr. Gibbon, any postponement of the

measure would lead to the continuance of the agitation against the Bill. For these reasons he would ask the Council to reject the amendment.

The amendment was put and negatived.

The Council then adjourned to Wednesday, 4th March.

R. J. CROSTHWAITE,
Offg. Secretary to the Government of India,
Legislative Department.

FORT WILLIAM;
The 13th March, 1885.

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