

Legislative Council

Wednesday, 26th September, 1951.

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTION.

COMMUNISM.

As to Action by State Government.

Hon. H. HEARN asked the Minister for Transport—

In view of the emphatic "Yes" vote in Western Australia in favour of action against the communists, will the Government take action to bring down legislation to deal with this ever-present and formidable menace?

The MINISTER replied:

The position will be closely watched in conjunction with the Commonwealth Government and the Government will take such action as the circumstances may require.

BILLS (4)—THIRD READING.

1. Public Buildings Act (Validation of Payments).
2. Public Buildings Act Repeal.
3. Rural and Industries Bank Act Amendment.
Passed.
4. Noxious Weeds Act Amendment.
Transmitted to the Assembly.

BILL—PARLIAMENT HOUSE SITE PERMANENT RESERVE (A1162).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. E. M. DAVIES (West) [4.38]: When the Bill was first introduced I felt somewhat sympathetic towards its object, but after hearing addresses by members of the Joint House Committee giving details of the proposed building from the inception of the negotiations which took place, I feel I will have to shift my ground slightly. Whilst I intend to support the second reading of the Bill, there are certain amendments on the notice paper to which I consider I can lend support and which perhaps will be the means of affecting the desire of the Government to some extent.

On the other hand, I cannot say that I can agree altogether with some of the sentiments expressed in the House as to this Class "A" reserve. Whilst I will always maintain my constant guard over Class "A" reserves, which are the heritage of the people, I do not know whether this particular reserve comes within the same category, as far as its use by the people is concerned. To my mind this reserve has been set aside for Parliament House buildings, and whilst I agree that the surroundings of the House should be utilised for aesthetic and beautification purposes, I do not know that the buildings which stand on the lower part of the reserve and which have been there for many years, have affected Parliament House itself to any extent. However, some of those buildings certainly do not do credit to the surroundings.

Those in authority over past years have, from time to time, seen fit to utilise part of the land for the purpose of buildings required by the Public Works Department and other branches of the Public Service. I notice that it is proposed that a lease extending over 21 years is to be entered into so that the building to be erected may continue on the site for that period. On reflection, I feel I cannot support that proposition, for I regard the period as too long. It would be far preferable for the whole question to be reviewed periodically by Parliament so that those who may constitute this and another place in future may have an opportunity of deciding whether the building should be allowed to remain on the present site for a shorter period.

I might have been sympathetically inclined towards the erection of the proposed building on account of the necessity for providing accommodation that is so badly needed. I am, however, at a loss to understand why, if the Government intends to spend an amount in the vicinity of £70,000 on the erection of what will be quite a substantial building, it could not utilise other land that it obtained for that purpose.

The Minister for Transport: Only the basement of the proposed building will be of solid construction, and the rest will be jarrah-framed.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: I quite understand that, but if a sum approaching £70,000 is to be expended on the erection of what is described as a temporary building, I feel that any such expenditure could have been more economically undertaken on a more permanent site, knowing full well that the time will arrive when the building to be erected must be demolished. I think it would have been far better if the Government were to spend that money on the erection of what could be regarded as part of a permanent structure that could be added later on when the other site I refer to is made use of at some future date. In view of all the circumstances, I have come to the conclusion that although I will support the second reading of the Bill, I will take upon myself the responsibility of deciding for or against some of the amendments that will be considered later on.

While dealing with the question of the utilisation of Class "A" reserves, it appears to me very peculiar indeed that on this occasion some members are prepared to go to any length to agree to portion of this particular reserve being alienated and the people deprived of its use, whereas not so very long ago when the question of using part of Stirling Gardens was before the House for the purpose of allowing for the erection of a town hall in Perth, many of those same members could not indicate their support quickly enough for the alienation of part of those gardens. I am glad to say that I did not support that proposal. On this occasion I will support the Bill and reserve the right to decide whether I shall, or shall not, support amendments to it.

HON. A. L. LOTON (South) [4.45]: I congratulate members of the Joint House Committee on the stand they have taken on behalf of Parliament. Thanks are due to them for having given Parliament a chance to decide whether or not the proposed building may be erected on the suggested site under the conditions proposed in the legislation. As Mr. Parker pointed out, the Public Works Department, or at least one of the departmental officers, is due for censure. Whether action will be taken against him by the Minister concerned, time alone will tell. We are not in a position to deal with the matter, apart from orally censuring the person concerned respecting the action he took.

What would be the position of an ordinary citizen who decided to encroach upon Parliament House grounds with a load of bricks and commence erecting a building overnight? Would the Government of the day be so anxious to validate his action by introducing legislation for that purpose? Of course not. In this instance, simply because a public servant has made

a mistake, the Government is trying to right matters by introducing legislation. Only because of the action taken by the Joint House Committee, the proposed building is not further advanced in construction. I shall oppose the Bill on principle. Mr. Davies referred to the alienation of portion of the Stirling Gardens reserve for the erection of a town hall. I also objected to the alienation of that part of a Class "A" reserve, which is another reason why I oppose this Bill.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [4.48]: I intend to support the second reading of the Bill. Originally, I proposed to oppose it, but I always look for an excuse to support the second reading of a Bill. It is distasteful for me to throw a measure out at that stage. No matter what the Bill may be, we should at least consider its provisions in Committee so that we can get down to tin tacks and go into details. In looking round for an excuse to support the second reading of the Bill, after close examination I found it, for I believe we can achieve what I have in mind at the Committee stage. Therefore, with a clear conscience, I can support the second reading and so reverse my original intention.

While I am fully aware that the Minister will say that the proposed building will be of a temporary nature, I must point out that we have some wonderful examples of what are classed as temporary buildings. As a matter of fact, the portion of Parliament House building itself, occupied by the "Hansard" staff and others, was old when I first entered Parliament 23 years ago, so it must be over 50 years old.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: It is 53 years old.

Hon. G. FRASER: Then mine was not a bad guess. It is still regarded as a temporary building. When we look down on the wooden structures on the lower part of the reserve and note the buildings occupied by various departments, we must appreciate that some of the structures there have been in existence for over 50 years, but are still regarded as temporary buildings. Only last year a new roof was put on one of them.

Hon. A. L. Loton: The foundations must have been good.

Hon. G. FRASER: If a new roof can be put on a temporary building that has been up for 50 years, Heaven knows what meaning can be attached to the word "temporary." I, too, congratulate the Joint House Committee on the action it has taken in this matter. I feel it my duty, and I think the duty rests with members generally, in that, having elected men to constitute the Joint House Committee, we should support them in their decisions. Otherwise, we should ask them to resign. If we have no confidence in the actions of those constituting the Joint House Committee, let us tell them to get out so that we can elect others to carry out the functions of that body.

Hon. A. R. Jones: Then why support the second reading of the Bill?

Hon. G. FRASER: I believe the actions of the Joint House Committee throughout the piece have been correct, and I congratulate those concerned in looking after the interests not only of members but of the parliamentary system generally. It might be said this action should have been taken years ago when the other buildings were erected. I daresay that the personnel of the committee at that time would have taken action had they possessed the requisite knowledge. But it is only in recent months that the Joint House Committee has obtained the knowledge that this is a Class "A" reserve.

Hon. G. Bennetts: There must be some progressive members on that committee now.

Hon. G. FRASER: Apart from the proposed building, there are other structures to be taken into account, and I realise that we must do something in regard to them. Their existence on that site is illegal, and we have to put the matter right. What we can do I do not know, but in the Committee stage we should be able to do something about it. I hope that the House will carry the second reading, and that we will make a definite decision in Committee concerning the proposed building and the other buildings already on the land. I support the second reading.

HON. E. M. HEENAN (North-East) [4.51]: This is a controversial matter on which one should express a reason for voting one way or the other. I support the second reading.

Hon. A. R. Jones: That is a big reversal of form.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I supported a second reading last night which the hon. member did not support, so I do not see why he should accuse me of a reversal of form. I wish he would support measures as frequently as I do. Other speakers have congratulated the Joint House Committee on its action so there is not much more for me to do except to applaud the members of that committee for being assiduous in their duties. Through being keen on the job we elected them to do, they found that the Government had transgressed. I consider they were right in making a protest and bringing the matter to our notice. I think that having done that, their responsibility in the matter has been shouldered, and it is now our responsibility to decide how much further the matter should go.

I do not see much analogy in Mr. Loton's remarks that if an outsider had started to erect a building in that spot he would have been prosecuted. There does not seem to be much analogy there because, stripped of intricacies, when all is said and done, it is Crown land. When I read

of the trouble that had arisen, I was under the impression that the buildings were going to be erected near this House and would prove a formidable disadvantage to the immediate precincts of Parliament. But I made a closer inspection of the site today; and in trying to be fair about the whole business, I must admit that I do not see any reason why I, at any rate, should stop the Government from going ahead with its building.

From a reliable person who works in the Public Works Department, I have it that the staff are greatly inconvenienced through lack of space; that a number of young men and women employed there are suffering hardship; and that further space is urgently required. It does not seem to me that to erect the proposed building on this site will do much harm. It appears to be a long way from any part of Parliament House or its grounds over which I walk or over which I look; and, in trying to be fair about the whole thing, I think we should allow the Government to proceed with the building.

A good deal of money has already been spent on this project, and to require the Government to dismantle what has been done through inadvertence on someone's part, does not seem proper to me. The Joint House Committee was right in bringing the matter to our notice. Previous speakers have said hard words about the Government in connection with the matter and have therefore done their job. For my part, I am prepared to support the second reading and let the work proceed.

HON. J. G. HISLOP (Metropolitan) [4.56]: When I first passed this piece of land and saw that buildings were contemplated thereon, I was indeed wrathful, and I wondered what action I could take to prevent the erection of temporary buildings on the site. Then I learned that the Joint House Committee had the matter well in hand. On the face of it, I suppose I should do as so many of my friends intend to do and vote against this measure. But I have had to give the matter very prolonged thought, and I have tried to reason with myself what is the correct attitude to adopt.

First of all, I think we have to consider this piece of land in relation to the diagram, with which so many of us are familiar, of the original plan of Parliament House. This building was to have been a magnificent edifice, looking straight down St. George's Terrace, and occupying a considerable proportion, or all, of this piece of land. But no Government has felt justified in spending the money to build that edifice, and I doubt whether its erection will take place in the lifetime of this generation or that of the next.

I maintain that something should be done to improve the conditions of many workers in Parliament House, and some altered design should be made in order

that Parliament House in this State might be something to show to visitors. When one questions one's action in voting for or against this measure, one has to realise that somebody must be disregarded either way. If I vote for this measure I will uphold the Joint House Committee. I have no hesitation in saying that I do applaud its action. As I have said previously in this House, there seems to be a growing disregard for Parliament, of which I strongly disapprove. And therefore I feel the Government was perfectly justified in bringing this measure before us. What are the consequences of voting against the Bill? If we do that, we will embarrass the Government of which I and a number of other members here are adherents.

Hon. G. Fraser: You would not be bringing new ground in the proposal.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: Will we gain anything by embarrassing the Government in that way? If I feel there is something concrete to be gained by voting against the Government, I never have any hesitation in doing so; but on this occasion I remain unconvinced that by following such a course, I would be accomplishing something worth while. The present Barracks building will not be demolished in our lifetime, nor will the other buildings in the area concerned and therefore the original plan for Parliament House cannot be implemented. If by adding this further structure we make the present buildings look a bit more uniform, and cover up some of the present untidy appearance of the area, we will perhaps be justified in proceeding with the project.

I am under no illusion with regard to this matter. If the proposed building is erected, it will remain until such time as our city is so big that it feels it can afford to demolish many of our present public buildings with a view to increasing the beauty of the surroundings of the city; but that time has not yet arrived. If I felt that, having voted against the measure, we could be sure that within six months or so a new Public Works Department building could be commenced, I would not support the Bill, but inquiries I have made have convinced me that the Government would not be in a position to start on the erection of a building sufficiently big to meet the requirements. Even if the present buildings occupied by the Public Works Department were vacated by that department, in the event of new accommodation being provided for it, these buildings would have to be used for some other purpose because I do not think public opinion would countenance their demolition at this stage.

Hon. A. R. Jones: No one is suggesting that.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: The demolition of those structures must be contemplated if we envisage the completion of Parliament

House according to the original plan, but we must realise that there is no possibility of those structures being removed in even the comparatively near future. In view of that fact, there does not seem much harm in allowing this further structure to be erected. I may be accused of thinking in a specious manner, but I have given the question serious thought and have acted despite the advice of friends on both sides of the House, as I do not think we would be justified in embarrassing the Government by voting against this Bill.

I say emphatically that we should assist the passing of the measure. Although I was irate when I saw work on the foundations of the building being commenced, I have since had time to view the question carefully and logically, and I do not think we can ask the Government to discard precious building materials at this juncture and start again somewhere else. Even that, however, would not sway me if I thought that circumstances justified our taking action of that kind. I support the second reading.

On motion by the Minister for Transport, debate adjourned.

§ 2.

BILLS (5)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Act Amendment.
 - 2, Main Roads Act (Funds Appropriation).
 - 3, Law Reform (Common Employment).
 - 4, Bunbury (Roman Catholic Old Cemetery) Lands Revestment.
 - 5, Trustees Act Amendment.
- Received from the Assembly.

BILL—AGRICULTURE PROTECTION BOARD ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Order of the Day read for the resumption from the 19th September of the debate on the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt in the Chair; the Minister for Agriculture in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 3—agreed to.

Clause 4—Section 8 amended:

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I move an amendment—

That a new paragraph be inserted as follows:—

(b) adding after the word "rabbits" in line 2, the words "for consumption or commercial use."

The provision in the parent Act reads, "Subject to the Minister and the provisions of this Act the powers and duties of the Protection Board shall include the following:—", after which they are detailed. The section then continues—

Controlling and prohibiting the trapping of rabbits on any holding by any person other than the owner or occupier of the holding except where such person has the consent of the owner or occupier so to do.

I wish after the word "rabbits" in the second line, to add "for consumption or commercial use."

When introducing the measure the Minister emphasised that he did not want rabbits caught in areas where myxomatosis was spreading, and I agree with that, but my amendment would curtail the trapping of rabbits for commercial use by anyone other than the holder of a property who wishes to catch infected rabbits on one portion of his property and transfer them to other portions of it.

Hon. L. Craig: He can do that under the common law.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: The Act as it stands applies to anybody. Mr. Craig will remember that last session I was successful in having an amendment made to the measure then before the House so that the commercial trapper could not trap rabbits on any property unless the owner or occupier gave him permission to do so.

Hon. L. Craig: I remember that well, but that indicates that the owner himself has authority to trap. I think he still has.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: Not under the Minister's amendment. I want to add after the word "rabbits" the words "for consumption or commercial use." The Minister also has an amendment on the notice paper by which he wants to leave it more open. My amendment will make it more definite.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Mr. Loton is quite right. When I introduced this Bill I said that the use of this power by the Agriculture Protection Board would only be applied where rabbits were caught in myxomatosis areas for human consumption and where the board wanted a free run to carry out its experiments. I am prepared to admit that it does look a bit wide open and, in deference to the views of my friends on the back bench, I also have an amendment in order to confine the matter to where experiments are in progress. I have no objection to Mr. Loton's amendment.

Amendment put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I have an amendment on the notice paper.

The CHAIRMAN: Is the Minister's amendment logical in view of the amendment that has just been agreed to?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: We have just inserted after the word "rabbits" the words "for consumption or commercial use." Now the Minister wishes to add other words?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes. I move an amendment—

That at the end of new paragraph (b) the following words be added:—

"and in any vermin district or districts where rabbit destruction experiments are in progress for the purpose of or in connection with such experiments."

Members will see that that will tie the whole business down to rabbits for human consumption where experiments are in progress.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: I must oppose the Minister's amendment because in the form in which it is submitted, it will destroy the usefulness of the amendment we have already carried. The objection that Mr. Loton has to the proposal in the amending Bill is the restriction placed on the trapping of rabbits by a man who owns his own land and who may want to spread the infection. Mr. Loton's amendment prohibits trapping for consumption or commercial use, so that the Minister's fears in that regard are provided for.

Now the Minister says he wants to prohibit the trapping of rabbits in any vermin district—that means districts which may be 40 to 50 miles square, or in any one isolated section of that 40 or 50 square miles. He wants to do this because of experiments that are being carried out and he does not wish to have anyone trapping rabbits with the idea of spreading myxomatosis. I think the department is somewhat behind-hand in pushing on with the experiments, and because of limited staff it has not been able to inject rabbits with a view to spreading the disease.

We want to get this well established throughout Western Australia this year. We have been hearing that it is not a success in this State. I understand there is already some doubt as to the amount of infection that is being effectively established in the Geraldton area where the department is already dealing with this matter. Our only quarrel with the Minister's proposal is that the owner of land is not going to have a say in the trapping, or taking by other means, of rabbits. The Minister wants to control the spread of this disease in these few comparatively isolated centres that he is able to staff and where the facilities will, if not handicap, certainly retard very considerably the spread of this disease. I hope the Committee will not accept the Minister's amendment.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not think Mr. Roche is deliberately trying to mislead the Committee, but I

am afraid he does not understand what is proposed. All I am asking for is that it be confined to where experiments are in progress. Surely the officers should have some protection to see that the spread of myxomatosis is fostered. Mr. Roche has told us that this action will prevent the spread of the disease. I say it will not. The idea is to set up a small centre, or possibly a cage of about 10 ft. square, where rabbits can be confined, fed and then infected with myxomatosis with the object of spreading the disease in the area. That is all we want to do. As to the argument of stopping the spread of the disease, the matter is entirely in the hands of the farmers. They will be asked to bring their rabbits to the infection centres from far and wide; the rabbits will be infected and taken away. That is not being slow on the job. I would like to spread it through Western Australia.

Hon. C. H. Henning: How long after inoculation will the experiment be proceeded with?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It will go on for a long time until farmers in the vicinity are satisfied they have enough rabbits. Why should we want to prevent the trapping of rabbits?

Hon. H. L. Roche: Why ask for such sweeping powers?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am asking for powers where experiments are in progress. If the Committee wishes, we could confine it to a radius of a quarter of a mile. I will be quite satisfied if the Committee wishes to confine it to a small radius. When our officers went to the Eastern States to find out all they could about this matter they were told, "Whatever you do, get this power."

One would believe from the remarks of Mr. Roche that the Agriculture Protection Board did not want to exterminate rabbits. The Chief Inspector of Vermin thinks only of destruction, whether it be black cockatoos, rabbits or anything else. To digress a little, we have received approval for an increase of staff so that some of the officers can go into the question of kangaroos. All they think about is destroying rabbits, whether it is by myxomatosis or anything else.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: They do not like trapping.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not know why the hon. member wants to bring that up. They do not object to trapping. I made a statement recently to the effect that besides using myxomatosis, we should use everything in our power to destroy rabbits.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You agree with it, but your officers do not.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I challenge Sir Charles Latham to indicate how he knows the views of the Chief Inspector of Vermin in regard to the trapping of rabbits. I know very well that the Chief Inspector is anxious to exterminate

rabbits; I also know that myxomatosis is not going to do the job. I do not believe it will do the job in the Eastern States, and it will not do it in Western Australia. I say advisedly that the Agriculture Protection Board is doing everything it possibly can to establish these centres so that myxomatosis can be spread throughout Western Australia. This is the method that has been adopted, and if the Committee does anything to prevent it at this stage, then it will have to shoulder the responsibility.

Hon. A. L. Loton: We are only trying to encourage the spread.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: As I have said before, everything will be done to spread myxomatosis throughout Western Australia, and this is the only way to do so.

Hon. G. FRASER: I do not like butting into this country argument, but I have been looking at the amendment that has been agreed to, and that which the Minister now desires to make, and I cannot make any sense out of it. I suggest that progress be reported in order that the Minister may consider the wording to be adopted.

The Minister for Agriculture: No, I will explain it.

Hon. G. FRASER: The word "and" does not fit in, and we should not pass an amendment that means nothing.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The power is sought to control rabbits.

Hon. G. Fraser: I know what you are seeking, but you will not get it this way.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Does the hon. member think that the words "and/or" would meet the case? The board would have power to control in any area where rabbits were being caught for human consumption or where experiments were in progress.

The CHAIRMAN: If the Minister does not include the word "and," the amendment will read sensibly.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Then I ask leave to omit the word "and." Leave granted.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: My objection would be met if the Minister would agree to striking out the words "in any vermin district or districts" and inserting in lieu the words "on any location or reserve."

The Minister for Agriculture: I think that would be satisfactory.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Would it not be too restrictive?

The Minister for Agriculture: I think not.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: Then I move—

That the amendment be amended by striking out the words "in any vermin district or districts" and inserting the words "on any location or reserve" in lieu.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I suggest that the Minister should consider reporting progress because I am not at all satisfied that the amendment will give him the control he desires. I am also anxious that the control over myxomatosis will be such as to ensure that the psychological attitude of the public will be satisfied. I suggest that he alters the terminology to provide that areas could be declared because, if the locality is made too small, there will be the psychological fear that rabbits will be trapped while suffering from the disease in a state not yet recognisable.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I think the Minister might consider inserting after the words "commercial use" the words "on any location or reserve if the act of trapping or destroying by other means has the effect of interfering with the spread of myxomatosis." That would prevent anybody from going on to an area and catching rabbits for commercial or other purposes and interfering with the experiment.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: What is the incubation period of this disease?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: At least two days. Meanwhile, farmers could come from any distance with as many rabbits as they liked and get them inoculated, which is a simple matter, and take them away.

Hon. H. L. Roche: How many could one man do in a day?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I should think at least 500. It is just a matter of inoculating through the eye. I have done 450 sheep in a day for toxic paralysis. If farmers brought in 500 rabbits a day, they would do a good job. Success depends upon the co-operation of the farmers and, if they are genuine in the desire to combat the rabbit pest, they will come along. Incidentally, we hope that they will leave one or two rabbits behind for the use of the laboratory in the area.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: How many rabbits will one rabbit infect?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The number is practically unlimited. Many people are much more optimistic about the use of the virus than is the department. I had a ring this morning from the representative of an exporter of rabbits engaged in world-wide operations. He said, "I want you to keep the infection out of a certain district." I replied, "Nothing doing, but we shall not be in your immediate district for a while, though there is a laboratory not far away." I added that there would be plenty of other places where he could operate. This indicates the pressure being brought to prevent us from carrying on the experiments. Therefore I ask for assistance and not obstruction from members in the effort to do what we think is the right thing. Next year, if members are not satisfied that our officers

have played the game, they can easily move an amendment and say I broke my word. I shall not worry about it.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: Would it help the Minister to insert the word "declared" before the word "location" so that he could declare the location?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not think it is necessary. The location would have to be undeclared, afterwards.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: What is the meaning of the word "location"?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Most of us know the meaning of the word. It appears in all land plans.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: But you do not say that is the way you are using it here.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am not saying anything about it.

Amendment on amendment put and passed; amendment, as altered and amended, agreed to.

Clause, as amended, put and passed.

Title:

The CHAIRMAN: Before putting the Title, I draw attention to the long Title which includes the word "Agricultural." The Act is the "Agriculture Protection Board Act." The short Title in the Bill is correct. The Clerks will see that this typographical error is corrected when the Bill is reprinted.

Title put and passed.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—VERMIN ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. A. L. LOTON (South) [5.50]: The Bill contains only two main amendments. The first deals with the proposed increased rate, and I take exception to it. The suggestion is to increase the rate on pastoral holdings from 1d. to 2d. in the £ on the unimproved value, and from ½d. to 1d. in the case of other holdings. Members will recall that last session quite a few Bills came before us imposing rates on rural areas. I think the time has come when a halt should be called.

All the rating in the last few years has been based on the high price of wool; in fact, so has the whole economy of Australia. It is evident today that wool has taken a severe tumble, with the result that costs have more than caught up with the position as it was a short time ago and, in fact, are moving the other way. It is all very well to say that industry can carry one particular section of costs, but when it is loaded with them all, from top to bottom, it will collapse. I hope that members who represent the pastoral areas, particularly the North Province members will support me.

The other amendment deals with the delegation of powers. It is proposed that the vermin rate shall be fixed by the Agriculture Protection Board, and not by the Minister; and that the rate shall be paid to the board. That, I suppose, is an outcome of the delegation of powers to the Agriculture Protection Board. I think the rate should still be struck by the Minister. I know he will tell me that he has the power of veto, but if he strikes the rate, he is responsible to Parliament for so doing, whereas under the suggestion here the board will be responsible, through the Minister, and if we seek to censure or disagree with anything that is done, we will do so, not against the Minister directly but against him as the representative of the board in the House. I support the second reading.

On motion by Hon. R. M. Forrest, debate adjourned.

BILL—PIG INDUSTRY COMPENSATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. G. B. Wood—Central) [5.53] in moving the second reading said: The Bill has been asked for by the Pig Growers' Association and the Royal Agricultural Society. The Pig Industry Compensation Act, which the Bill proposes to amend, provides for three-quarters of the market value of a pig to be paid as compensation if the pig dies from swine fever, and the same compensation if a pig is destroyed on account of swine erysipelas or para-typhoid. If a destroyed pig is subsequently found to be free of disease, the full market value is paid in compensation.

The market value provided for under the existing legislation is £10. The main purpose of the Bill is to raise that amount to £15, and to include payment on the death of a pig as a result of swine erysipelas, and para-typhoid, as well as swine fever. The parent Act was passed in 1942 and, as the price of pigs has risen considerably since that time, an increase in the market value, as provided in this measure, to £15 is, in my opinion, fully justified. At the present time, compensation is payable on pigs proved to have died of swine fever, but not on pigs which have died from swine erysipelas or para-typhoid, but an amendment in the Bill will extend the provisions of the Act to cover these two diseases.

In the definition in the parent Act "diseases" includes "swine fever," "swine erysipelas" and "para-typhoid." However, Section 6 separates these diseases and provides for payment of compensation on pigs which die from swine fever, and for the payment of compensation on pigs which are destroyed because of swine erysipelas and para-typhoid. Compensation is paid to the owners of pigs destroyed or con-

demned as unfit for human consumption by a meat inspector or other authorised person, or with the consent of the chief veterinary surgeon because of erysipelas or paratyphoid.

As it is inevitable that deaths will occur before a report can be submitted by an owner, it seems reasonable to extend the payment of compensation to the diseases covered by the Bill. In some outbreaks of para-typhoid, death occurs within 24 hours, and animals may be found dead without having shown any symptoms of the disease.

Hon. A. L. Loton: How can compensation be paid under these conditions?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: There are always meat inspectors scattered round the country. Their services are availed of now.

Hon. A. L. Loton: What happens on the hot summer days? Do you put the pig in cold storage until the inspector arrives?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I dare say there are some difficulties, but we do not want to be refused this provision because of a few difficulties. Where there is no meat inspector, some person could be appointed by the chief veterinary officer to do the work. With an increase in the market value from £10 to £15, the maximum amount of stamp duty payable in respect of any one pig sold has been increased from 2s. 6d. to 3s. 9d. That is the maximum, and it will be used if necessary.

Hon. E. M. Davies: On what basis is it fixed?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It was 2s. 6d. on £10 previously, and it is now increased pro rata. The maximum compensation payable is £15, so the stamp duty has been increased accordingly. It has gone up by 1s. 3d. I do not know how it was worked out in the first place when it was 2s. 6d. on £10. I suppose someone had a guess at it, and apparently over the years the fund has built up sufficiently on that basis. The new maximum rate bears the same proportion to £15 as does 2s. 6d. to £10, the maximum at present prescribed under the parent Act, with a market value of £10.

The parent Act provides for a rate of contribution to the compensation fund, by proclamation, of an amount not exceeding 3d. in the £. Again the amount of stamp duty now payable on the sale of a pig is 1d. in the £, and it is not proposed at present to increase this rate. However, if at the end of the year it is found that the compensation payments exceed the amount received from stamp duty, consideration will have to be given to increasing the rate from 1d. to 1½d. in the £. As T.B. in pigs is not now so prevalent, compensation payments are not very high. The main object here—

and Mr. Fraser mentioned this before—is to build up a fairly high compensation fund without imposing too great a burden on the industry. In the event of an outbreak of swine fever or anything like that, there will be plenty of money available to compensate those people who lose their pigs.

Since the parent Act was passed, the title of the administrative head of the Department of Agriculture has been changed to Director of Agriculture, so provision is made in the Bill to designate the position correctly. Section 10 of the principal Act is repealed. It deals with the payment of compensation to the owners of pigs which were destroyed because of swine fever, or were proved to have died from the disease after the 27th October, 1942, and before the commencement of the Act. As this is no longer applicable, it should be deleted from the legislation. The amendments proposed in the Bill are desirable in view of the changed conditions since the Act was passed in 1942. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. A. L. Loton, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (Hon. C. H. Simpson—Midland): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday, the 9th October.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 6 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 26th September, 1951.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS.

HOSPITALS.

As to *Tabling Files re Carnarvon*.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE asked the Minister for Health:

Will she lay upon the Table of the House all files and papers dealing with the proposed new hospital for Carnarvon?

The MINISTER replied:

The file is in action in connection with a tender, which has just been accepted.