**RURAL INDUSTRY ASSISTANCE BILL 1977**

**House of Assembly, 30 March 1977, pages 3062-3**

Second reading

**The Hon. HUGH HUDSON (Minister of Mines and Energy**) obtained leave and introduced a Bill for an Act relating to an agreement between the State and the Commonwealth in respect of a scheme to provide assistance to persons engaged in rural industries. Read a first time.

The Hon. HUGH HUDSON: I move: That this Bill be now read a second time.

I seek leave to have the second reading explanation inserted in Hansard without my reading it. Leave granted.

Explanation of Bill This Bill ratifies and approves an agreement made between the Commonwealth Government and the Governments of the States of Australia on January 1 of this year. This agreement is set out in the second schedule to the Bill. The agreement arises in part from a report and recommendation of the Industries Assistance Commission following an investigation into rural reconstruction in Australia. Under the agreement the following forms of assistance will be available:

(a) Debt reconstruction: in certain circumstances assistance will be provided to a farmer who has sound prospects of long-term commercial viability but who at the material time has exhausted his cash and credit resources and cannot meet his financial commitments. Generally debt reconstruction will take the form of re-financing existing financial commitments.

(b) Farm build-up: assistance provided in this area will be aimed at assisting a farmer to build up his holding by acquiring adjoining holdings that themselves do not have prospects of long-term commercial viability.

(c) Farm improvement: here assistance will be provided to farmers whose present property is uneconomic but can be rendered viable without necessarily adding to its size.

(d) Rehabilitation: assistance in this area may be provided to farmers who are compelled to forsake farming and who may thereby be suffering temporary hardship.

(e) Carry-on finance: assistance in this area may be provided to specific areas of primary industry which are suffering from severe marketing difficulties.

(f) Household support: assistance here may be provided to give the farmer “economic breathing space” while deciding whether or not he will leave farming.

In form the Bill closely follows the Rural Industry (Special Provisions) Act, 1971-1972, the principal change being in the rather more comprehensive rural assistance coverage provided under this Bill. On the coming into operation of the Act presaged by this Bill no further assistance will be provided under the 1971-72 Act, but that Act will remain in operation until farmers’ commitments to the authority under that Act have been discharged.

Clauses 1 to 3 are formal. Clause 4 sets out the definitions used for the purposes of the measure. Clause 5 formally approves and ratifies the agreement and authorises the Government and authorities and instrumentalities of the Crown to carry out and give effect to the agreement. Clause 6 formally appoints the Minister having the administration of the proposed Act to be the authority within the meaning of the agreement. Clause 7 establishes a fund to be known as the Rural Industry Adjustment Fund, and sets out the mechanics of its operation.

Part III, which consists of clauses 8 to 21, provides for the grant of protection certificates in the circumstances set out in clause 9. The scheme of protection certificates is well known in this State where they have been used effectively to enable farmers to continue farming in times of great economic hardship. In fact, the provisions in this Bill are substantially the same as the corresponding provisions in the Rural Industry (Special Provisions) Act, 1971-1972.

Clause 22 protects certain moneys payable by way of assistance under the Act from previously incurred debts or charges. Clause 23 grants the Minister a power of delegation and is in aid of the convenient administration of the proposed Act. Clause 24 gives certain exemptions from stamp duty. Clause 25 is a formal financial provision. Clause 26 is a formal provision dealing with the summary disposition of offences. Clause 27 is a general regulation making power. The agreement is, as has been mentioned, set out in the second schedule to the Bill, and is quite detailed and self-explanatory.

Mr. RODDA secured the adjournment of the debate.