**DROUGHT RELIEF BILL 1927**

**House of Assembly, 1 December 1927, page 1845**

Second reading

**The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS: (Hon. G. F. Jenkins)—**This Bill is introduced for the purpose of affording assistance to farmers affected by drought, and, to a large extent, follows the form of previous Bills introduced for this purpose. In one important particular, however, a departure is made from the practice adopted under those Acts. The Drought Relief Acts have, in the past, been administered by the Commissioner of Crown Lands, while the administration of this Bill is entrusted to the State Bank of South Australia. The reasons for the change are that the bank has now facilities throughout the country for dealing with this class of work, and that in a large measure the bank has taken over the whole of the lending operations of the Government. Relief under the Bill may be granted within any portion of the State which the Commissioner of Crown Lands declares by notice in writing to be a drought affected area for the purposes of the Act. Clause 4 enables the bank to supply applicants for assistance with seed wheat, cereals other than seed wheat, manure, hay, chaff, flour, and any other commodities. No commodity will be supplied after December 31, 1928. It is infinitely better wherever possible for farmers themselves to make their own arrangements, and they themselves will in those circumstances be responsible for any terms they can make with the sellers of either hay or seed wheat. Under clause 5 it is provided that any farmer holding any land for any estate of freehold or under lease form or agreement with the Crown, other than under the Pastoral Act, 1904, or the Irrigation Act, 1922, may make application to the bank for assistance under the Act. Clause 6 makes provision for sharefarmers, and provides that the person who holds the land may make application to the bank for the supply of commodities to the person who is farming the land. The person holding the land who makes the application will, in such a case, be liable to the bank for the repayment of the advance, but will, subject to any agreement between him and the sharefarmer, be entitled to be reimbursed by the sharefarmer all amounts paid to the bank except to the extent (if at all) that the advance was made in respect of commodities which, under the agreement between them, were to be provided by the applicant. The bank under clause 7 is empowered to grant such assistance as it thinks fit in proper cases, and under clause 8 the person receiving assistance is required to sign an acknowledgment and contract in the form in the schedule. Under clause 9 the amount of an advance is to be repaid to the bank on or before February 1, 1929, or within such further time as the bank may approve, or upon the alienation or mortgage of the applicant’s interest in the lands held by him when the advance was made, whichever first happens. Interest at the rate of 6½ per cent, is to be paid on the advance. The clause gives the bank power in any case which it considers to be one of special hardship to extend the date of repayment of the whole or any part of an advance or of the interest thereon. Clause 10 provides that the amount of an advance and interest thereon is to be a first charge upon the lands held by the applicant, while clause 11 provides that if any advances are made before the passing of the Act the provisions of the Act shall apply as if the commodities had been supplied after the passing of the Act. The remainder of the Bill provides penalties for the misuse of' commodities supplied under the Act, and contains other provisions of an administrative nature. Members will agree that under legislation such as that proposed the State is likely to benefit to a considerable extent. In past experience of measures of this description the losses have been remarkably small, and the State has benefited to a tremendous extent as a result of the advances made. In 1914 the State advanced under such a measure over £800,000 to applicants for drought relief, and of that amount only £40,000 is outstanding. It was declared at that time by Mr. Field, who handled the matter with the Committee, that we would be liable to lose something like £20,000 absolutely, and I think the forecast then made will, when all the accounts are closed, be found to have been remarkably accurate. The benefits that accrue are such as to warrant the House passing this legislation with as little delay as possible.

The Hon. L. L. HILL secured the adjournment of the debate until December 6.