**SEED-WHEAT BILL 1898**

**House of Assembly, 15 December 1898, page 531**

Second reading

**Thee CHIEF SECRETARY** regretted the necessity for the introduction of a Bill of this nature. The fact was that a few years ago, owing to the disastrous seasons, the Government found it necessary to give some assistance to farmers in the drier districts. Parliament concurred in the proposal, and an arrangement was made with the District Councils to advance seed wheat to those in necessitous circumstances. It was hoped then that the advances would be repaid the following year. Unfortunately another bad year followed, and further assistance was given in the hope that the farmers would be able to redeem the amount of the advances made to them. That hope had also been disappointed, and now they found that in many parts of the colony it was impossible to expect the farmers to whom seed wheat was advanced to repay the amount of the advances made to them. In some instances it would be necessary to give further assistance, otherwise the land would be altogether abandoned. In 1896 the Government advanced £4,979 through District Councils, and a very small amount to farmers outside of District Councils. The following year £59,000 was advanced, and last year £27,132, or a total of £91,000. Out of these amounts, in 1896 £694 was returned, during the second year £2,283 was repaid, and last year £6,845 was returned, leaving the indebtedness of the farmers at £81,298. The proposal under the Bill was to carry forward that amount for three years in the hope that the crops would be sufficiently good to enable the farmers to pay back their advances in easy instalments. Clause 2 set forth the terms under which it was proposed to grant this assistance. Clause 4 provided that in future cases of assistance the same system should be adopted as was adopted before. The relief necessary during the present year would be nothing like what it had been in the two previous years.

The Hon. S. TOMKINSON said that seeing the District Councils were liable to the Treasurer for the advances, he would like to know whether it was understood that in default on the part of District Councils the land was liable. (Hon. A. R. Addison—“District Councils are not liable to the Government in any shape or form.”)

Carried.