**IRRIGATION AND RECLAIMED LANDS ACT FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL 1912**

**House of Assembly, 27 November 1912, pages 1106-7**

Second reading

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS, in moving the second reading, said the Bill, in connection with the irrigation and reclaimed areas, dealt with the methods of managing irrigation areas in many directions, and was designed to give advantageous powers to the Minister in the matter of control. The Bill as drafted fairly explained its purpose, and there was not much difficulty occasioned by having to refer to other Acts. The chief purposes were, first, to enable the Minister in charge of irrigation to supply water for factory and domestic purposes, and to make the necessary charges and to regulate the control. The first call on the water, however, in case of shortage, would be for vineyards and orchards. Even though that might be an inconvenience to those who depended on the supply for the extra purposes, the homes and factories would be infinitely better off than to-day without any supply at all. The Moorook settlement, which had many times asked for a water supply, would profit by it. The supply for both purposes could be economically given by the one plant. The other object of the Bill was to enable the Government to spend money in improving blocks, and incidentally to stop the practice of making loans out of the Lessees of Reclaimed Lands Loan Fund. Inasmuch as those people could obtain advances under the Advances to Settlers Act, it seemed undesirable that the two departments should be lending departments. Borrowing would be restricted to one fund, and therefore the Lessees of Reclaimed Lands Loan Fund would not be used in future for loans. The Government had decided that the department could spend up to £15 an acre on grading, fencing, and channeling, on the applicant paying down 15 per cent, of the cost, and the balance by instalments, in accordance with an agreement to be entered upon. That would only take place where the lessee applied, and sought the advantage of having the work done under the skilled supervision of the department, and with such plant as the department had at command. That ought to make the work more substantial and less costly. The handy man who could do the work best himself would still be free to do it, but would have no call on that fund. In many cases settlers had been put to unnecessary expense because they had been inexperienced. It was more for those that the services of the department were offered in that direction . Clause 14 provided that the department might make similar improvements prior to the allotment of the land, and might do it in large areas before subdivision. It was thought that by doing the work on a large scale with expert knowledge and suitable plant, it would be cheaper than the individual settler could execute the work, and the land would be ready for planting immediately the settler took possession, and he would be relieved of much additional labour. The department had blocks growing lucerne, which were being retained. They would be used to produce forage for the use of the de­partment’s horses while carrying out the works mentioned. When the work was finished the land could be allotted with any fodder plant that might be on it at the time. Clause 16 provided that blocks could be allotted to partners without the limi­tation to 60 acres. Thus two men could take up 100 acres, and three men 150 acres, with the proviso that the board would insist on only one man residing on the property during such time as it saw fit. The object was that a man with capital could take in one without capital, and establish a home. There would be mutual advantage to both parties, for the Government would be enabled to settle the blocks with persons who would be likely to make a success of them, and by virtue of the position the Government would be assured of the repayment of a considerable portion of the money spent on the settlement. Clause 17 gave the Commissioner full power to manage the settlement. It also gave the Commissioner the power of district councils in respect to irrigation areas, or where it was outside a district. That enabled the Commissioner to apply all the benefits of local government. The Commissioner would have full control in respect to sanitary matters, noxious weeds, and animals, and power to make rates and im­provements, and put on rates the same as a district council. Clause 18 stipulated that the Director of Irrigation should be a member of the Land Board for the purposes of irrigation and the Reclaimed Land Act. He was already practically a member of that board for the purpose of purchasing land for irrigation purposes. His special knowledge, as the officer who had the superintendence of the expenditure of money involved in the settlement, should make him of great assistance to the other members of the board in selecting the right men for the land. In reference to irrigation areas he was not dealing with the Pekina water scheme. That did not come under the ordinary Irrigation Act. It was proposed, in connection with, the Crown Lands Bill just submitted, to introduce a clause that would make Pekina leases Crown leases for all purposes. That would enable the Crown Lands Department to take control, and enable it to come under the Advances to Settlers Act. The present Government had promised that they should receive the benefit of that measure, and that was the best method. The Go­vernment would gratefully receive suggestions from the members.

On the motion of Mr. VAUGHAN the debate was adjourned until November 29.