**AGRICULTURAL GRADUATES LAND SETTLEMENT BILL 1922**

**House of Assembly, 29 November 1922, pages 1881-4**

Second reading

**The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS (Hon. G. R. Laffer)—**I move the second reading of this Bill. Experience has shown that a number of the young men who are educated at the Roseworthy Agricultural College and who receive the college diploma are, through lack of means, prevented from settling on the land. This is a grave loss to the State. These young men have studied at a highly efficient technical institution for a number of years both the theory and the practice of agriculture, and if, after they have acquired the highest award in the gift of the college, they are to be allowed to drift into avocations in which their particular talents are not required and their specialised knowledge useless, then to the detriment of the State both their time and work at college and of their teachers in teaching them is wasted absolutely, the fees spent on their education and the salaries paid to their teachers money thrown away. In order to obviate this wastage, to make the college a still greater asset to the State, and to take advantage of the education it imparts to its young men, the Government, in this Bill, propose to assist the successful students of the college in settling on the land, firstly in the acquisition of suitable land, and secondly by the making of special advances to them during their early years on the land for the purpose of purchasing the necessary stock and implements. The provisions of the Bill in aid of these purposes will be dealt with in turn. Clause 4 sets out the qualifications required of a student at the agricultural college in order to be eligible for the benefits of the Bill. He must have obtained the college diploma, and, if he received it after the passing of the Bill, he must be over twenty-one years of age at the time he makes his application, or, if he received the diploma before the passing of the Bill, he must be under twenty-five years of age. In addition, he must satisfy the principal of the college that he has had, apart from his training at the college, sufficient practical experience in the particular calling he proposes following (e.g., farming, dairying, stock raising) to enable him to engage in it with a reasonable likelihood of success. Students at the college, who are eligible for the benefits of the Bill, are referred to therein as agricultural graduates. The Principal of the Roseworthy College is, by the Bill, constituted in effect the advisory guardian of all operations thereunder. He must be consulted with reference to the acquisition or allotting of land to agricultural graduates, and with regard to the making of advances to them, and unless he recommends it their applications may not be granted. This is the effect of clauses 5, 7, and 11. In view of the liberal privileges accorded to agricultural students by the Bill it is important that precautions should be taken against the Bill being exploited by the unworthy, inefficient, or unsuitable, and it is considered that the principal, under whose supervision the applicants will have studied for some years, is the man most capable and in the best position to judge of capabilities of applicants and of their suitability for an agricultural life. Subclause (2) of clause 4 provides that the principal shall not recommend the granting of any application by an agricultural graduate, whether for land or advances, unless he is satisfied that the applicant is likely to make a success of the pursuit he proposes to follow. It is not expected that the number of students becoming eligible year by year will be very large, not more than four or five per annum, so that, liberal as the scheme of the Bill is, its administration in practice will not involve any considerable amount of additional expenditure in any year. Clauses 5, 6, and 7 deal with land settlement. Clause 5 requires the Land Board, in allotting Crown lands, to give preference to a person who, in his application, relies upon his qualifications as an agricultural graduate, and whose application for the land is recommended by the principal. For the purpose of advising the Land Board in its deliberations with respect to applications by graduates, the principal is made a member of the board, but is not given a vote. He sits on the board in an advisory capacity only. Clause 6 deals with the terms on which Crown lands are to be allotted to graduates under the Bill.

Mr. Reidy—Under this clause are not the son of the rich man and the son of the poor man treated alike\*

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS —That is the position to-day as regards soldier settlement.

Mr. Butterfield—This Bill is being introduced to assist boys who cannot afford to take up land, but this clause gives the wealthy man’s son the same chance.

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS —There is a limitation as regards the amount to be advanced. A rich man would probably want to do more for his son than the amount provided in this Bill.

Mr. Denny—What is the amount?

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS —Three thousand pounds.

Mr. Denny—Could you not arrange the same as with college scholarships, that where a boy’s parents have means he does not get the scholarship?

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS —We do not desire to differentiate between students. If a boy’s father can advance a sum in addition to that provided by this Bill he is at liberty to do so. It is not proposed to give persons who come in and get land under the preference clause of the Bill any special terms which there is not power to give to settlers generally under the Crown Lands Acts, but clause 6 does give the easiest terms those Acts allow. Sections 49 and 180 of the Crown Lands Act, 1915, which confer these easier terms and conditions do not apply in every ease but only in special cases where the Commissioner so directs; this clause provides that those sections shall apply in every case where land is granted to an agricultural graduate. The effect of this will be that in the case of a perpetual lease, the graduate will pay no rent for the first four years and for the next six years a reduced rent; in the ease of ordinary agreements, the term will be forty years, the advance being payable in the last thirty; in the case of closer settlement agreements, the term will be sixty-four years, interest only to be payable for the first eight. As regards land within an irrigation area, the ordinary terms and conditions are so easy as not to warrant the granting of any further concessions to students of the college. Clause 7 is the most important of the provisions of the Bill dealing with land settlement. It enables the Government to buy single farm propositions for the settlement of a particular graduate. It follows on the lines of the similar provision made by the Discharged Soldier Settlement Acts for the settlement of a discharged soldier. The purchase of the land for the graduate must be recommended by the Land Board and by the principal of the college, and the purchase price of the land, together with all improvements thereon, must not exceed £3,000. The land when bought may be either vested in the graduate directly and the loan from the Government secured by a mortgage, or else it may become Crown lands and the graduate will then be granted a Crown agreement for sale and purchase, on the easiest terms allowed under the Crown Lands Act, 1915, for the purchase of closer settlement lands. The terms referred to are those provided for by section 180 of the Crown Lands Act, 1915. If, after the land is purchased, the graduate makes default or proves unsatisfactory, or for any other reason the proposal to settle him falls through, another graduate may be settled on the land in his stead, or else the land may be dealt with under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Acts and used to repatriate a returned soldier, or under the Crown Lands Acts as if it were closer settlement land, and be allotted to anybody willing to recoup the Government for its outlay. Clauses 8 to 16 deal with advances. The advancees under the Act will be made by the Advances to Settlers Board, and all the. provisions of the Advances to Settlers on Crown Lands Act, 1914, will apply to every advance made under the Bill (clause 15) so that all the securities and precautions prescribed by that Act will be available to secure the Government in the administration of the Bill. The Bill proposes to give agricultural graduates, whether settled on freehold land or on Crown lands, the following privileges in the matter of advances, in addition to the advances they may obtain under the Advances to Settlers on Crown Lands Act, 1914:— Firstly (clause 9). They may obtain £500 for the purpose of purchasing implements, stock, seeds, plants, trees, and such other things as may be deemed by the board necessary for the successful occupation and cultivation of the land. Under the Advances to Settlers Act they could receive only £200 for stocking their holding. The Bill, however, provides that the total amount advanced under the Bill for the purchase of stock and plant and under the Advances to Settlers Act for stocking the holding must not exceed £500. With this limitation, all the advances an agricultural graduate settler receives under the Bill are in addition to the other advances he can get under the Advances to Settlers Act (the maximum amount of such other advances being £650). The advances for stock and implements must be repaid in nine years, but during the first three years interest only is payable. Secondly (clause 10). If the agricultural graduate settler’s land is uncleared mallee country (of which condition the Minister is the sole judge), the settler may get an advance of any amount up to £1,000, £1 for £1 in value of the permanent improvements already carried out by him on his holding. The total cost, however, of all the moneys advanced to or expended on behalf of an agricultural graduate under the Act in the way of purchasing land and making loans for stock, plant, improvements, &c., must not exceed £3,000 (clause 12). In addition to the foregoing financial assistance under the Bill he may receive advances under the Advances to Settlers on Crown Lands Act up to £650 (clause 14). Summing up, the effect of the Bill is that an agricultural graduate may get any assistance within the following limits:—The land must not cost more than £3,000; his stock and plant must not exceed £500; and he can get up to £1,000 for permanent improvements. The total must not exceed £3,000, so that if he receives a large amount for his land, his margin for advances is reduced or eliminated, and vice versa. Clause 8 extends the privilege under the Bill enjoyed by an agricultural student who settles on Crown lands to students who own their own land. This is in view partly of the provisions of clause 7 (enabling a farm purchased by the Minister to be transferred direct to the graduate), and partly of the consideration that there is no good reason to distinguish between a person settled on Crown lands and a person on private land. Clause 11 establishes the principal’s control of the making of advances under the Bill. He must recommend all applications if any action is to be taken upon them, and no application is to be granted unless he so recommends.

Mr. Butterfield—-Does that mean that the principal must be satisfied with the proposition?

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS —The principal must be satisfied that the proposition upon which the graduate wishes to settle is a satisfactory one.

Mr. Butterfield—Will the Principal of Roseworthy Agricultural College be an inspector under this Act?

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS —He will not be exactly an inspector. The Land Board recommends the purchase of property, and in the case of property for a graduate, after they have made a recommendation, the principal of the college would visit the property himself and pass his opinion. Clauses 12, 13, and 14 have already been dealt with. Clause 16 is an additional security in favor of the Government to secure any moneys which remain owing in respect of advances under the Bill. Whilst the settler is indebted to the board he must not give a bill of sale, lien, or other security over any crop on his holding without the consent of the Minister. If he does the security is void. Clause 17 provides for regulations, and clause 18 makes provision against the passing of the Irrigation Bill now before the Legislative Council, which incorporates the Advances to Settlers Act so far as it applies to irrigation areas. That will convey to members exactly what is intended by the Bill. Sir Archibald Weigall was very much impressed with the fact that in this State we have one of the most successful agricultural colleges in Australia. It seems

strange that the State should provide such an excellent agricultural education for young men and then make no provision for putting them on the land. A man in humble circumstances cannot find £2,000 to £3,000 to buy a farm for his boy after he has passed through the college, and this Bill will give a guarantee to students, whose parents are not wealthy, that they will be able to secure a farm after they have graduated.

Mr. Harper—What is the idea of limiting applications to young men between the ages of 21 years and 25 years?

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS —It was thought it was better to limit the ages. The policy was arrived at by conference between the principal of the college and the Director of Agriculture, and the Government must be guided by the opinion of those two gentlemen. The majority of boys who -pass through the college secure their diploma when they are about 21 or 22. It is not only a question of three years’ training, because the principal has to be satisfied that the boys are of such character that they are likely to be successful if put upon the land. That safeguards the interest of the State.

Mr. McLachlan—Under this Bill can any boy go to the college and graduate?

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS —Yes, up to the capacity of the college. There are about 66 boys at the institution .and about 20 go through every year. The reason why Roseworthy Agricultural College is such a success is that there has always been a limitation on the number of students. Not only does the limitation apply to accommodation, but also to the practical work that can be given to the students. That is one of the reasons why the college has proved so successful. At a similar institution in New South Wales there are 200 students. That means that those boys cannot get the necessary practical work. That was the trouble with respect to our training farms for returned soldiers.

Mr. McLaehlan—A boy with influence can get there whether he wants land or not.

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS —No. There are six scholarships provided every year for different districts, and in a number of instances there are no competitors.

Mr. McLaehlan—They did not have the same prize as will be offering if this Bill be passed.

Mr. Butler—This measure will create a demand.

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS' —I hope it will.

Mr. Reidy—Can every boy who applies for admission to the college be accepted? How do they get in?

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS; —A boy pays £30 a year, which does not pay for his food and keep. The terms are exceptionally liberal. Outside of that £30 the State provides everything.

Mr. Moseley—The boy’s work is worth another £30.

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS -—I suppose it is worth something.

Mr. Butterfield;—Under the generous terms, of this measure a great number of people will wish to place their boys at Roseworthy College. Will you put a limit on the number of boys who may attend the institution?

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS —There are certain limitations so far as qualifications are concerned.

Mr. Reidy—Will you arrange for the boys to receive preference by ballot?

Mr. Butler—Or by a qualifying examination?

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS —That is outside the ambit of the Bill. I move the second reading.

Mr. GUNN secured the adjournment of the debate until November 30.