**VERMIN ACT AMENDMENT BILL 1930**

**House of Assembly, 12 August 1930, pages 594-6**

Second reading

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS (Hon. R. S. Richards)—This' Bill is one of several measures the Government intend to introduce with a view to affording some relief to those people who have been severely hit as a result of the drought. The following is the report of the Assistant Parliamentary Draftsman:—

Under the provisions of the Vermin Act, 1914 the State Bank of South Australia has power to make loans for fencing to vermin boards district councils, vermin trusts, and occupiers of land, outside a district council district or vermin- fenced district. Owing to the bad seasons recently experienced, many of the occupiers of land upon whom the duty of paying the instalments or rates to meet the repayment-of these loans rests, are unable to meet their obligations. The Government have therefore introduced this Bill for the main purpose of affording some measure of relief to the persons concerned. This relief will be afforded in two ways. Clause 3, which provides the first of the methods adopted; deals with vermin boards and of pastoral land who have received assistance from the State Bank by way of loans for fencing. Loans to vermin boards under Part III. of the Vermin Act, 1914, are repayable in 20 annual instalments, although in special circumstances the bank may, to avoid hardship, extend the term of the loan to 30 years. Loans made vermin boards and lessees under Part VI. of principal Act are repayable in 20 years. Fences erected up to about six years ago were, it is considered, erected under such conditions as to price of materials, &c., as to render it unecessary to afford any further relief as to the extension of the term of the loan. Fences erected within the last six years, however, have been erected at inflated prices, and the Pastoral Board and the State Bank have made recommendations to the Government that special consideration be given to vermin boards and occupiers who have secured loans for fencing from the bank within that period. It is accordingly provided by clause 3 that in any such case the bank may extend the time for repayment of a loan to a vermin board or a lessee of land to 42 years, but in the case of a loan to a lessee the time for repayment must expire on the expiration of the term of his lease if the lease expires before 42 years. It is to be understood that under the clause the bank has no power to remit payment of any part of any instalment of principal or interest but that only the time for repayment may be extended as already mentioned. Before granting the extension under the clause the bank may require payment to be made of all arrears or such portions thereof as the bank thinks fit, or the bank may, if it thinks fit, capitalise the arrears or any portion thereof. If the bank grants any extension under the clause to any vermin board, the vermin board is required to grant the same extension to occupiers of land who have obtained loans from the vermin board from the money received by the Vermin board from the bank.

Clause 4 provides for other measures of relief for vermin boards, district councils, vermin trusts, and lessees, and is similar to the provisions of the Vermin Act Suspensory Act, 1915, which was passed at a time when somewhat similar, conditions to the present were existing in South Australia. Under clause 4 the Com­missioner of Crown Lands may suspend the operation of the provisions of the principal Act .requiring repayments of instalments of loans granted under Part IV. or Part VI. of the principal Act for any period not exceeding two years. The period may commence from any date not earlier than January 1, 1930, and must expire not later than December 31, 1932. The period of suspension granted in respect of any particular district council, vermin board, vermin trust, or lessee may be different from any other period of suspension, so that each case may to dealt with on its merits. During the period of suspension no instalments of interest or principal will be recovered from the borrower, but the amounts which should have been paid during this period will be carried over for: an equal period added to the end of the term of the loan, and the instalment will not be increased by reason of the period of suspension. During the period of suspension, however, interest at the rate of £0 per centum per annum on the amount of the loan unpaid shall be payable. This interest will not be received during the period of suspension, but will be required to be paid at such time after the expiration of the period of suspension as is fixed by the Commissioner, on the recommendtion of the bank.

Part VI. of the Vermin Act, 1914, provides for the making of loans for fencing by the State Bank to district councils and vermin boards, who are liable to the bank for the repayment of the necessary instalments of principal and interest. These loans are expended by the councils and boards in furnishing fencing material to occupiers of land within their districts, the occupiers being in turn liable to repay the loans to the councils and boards in question. In the case of a loan to a vermin trust, the loan is repayable by all the occupiers of land who are members of the trust. Clause 5 therefore provides that when a suspension is granted under clause 4 to any district council, vermin board, or vermin trust in respect of any loan the obligations on the part of occupiers as. to payments falling due in respect of the loan to the council, board, or trust during the period of suspension will be suspended to the extent that the obligations of the council, board, or trust are suspended. The remaining clauses of the Bill make various amendments to the Vermin Acts which were found to be necessary during the preparation of a consolidating Vermin Act which will be later introduced into Parliament. With the exception of clause 16, none of the amendments affect the policy of the Act, but are necessary for the purpose of removing anomalies and making drafting amendments of various kinds. Section 30 of the principal Act provides that in the case of an associated board of district councils formed for the purpose of enforcing the principal Act within the district of the associated board, the district councils are to pay to the associated board, to meet the expenses of the board, amounts proportionate to the amount of the assessment of each council. The section makes no provision for a case where the assessment of one of the councils is based on annual values and the assessment of another of the councils is based on land values. Clause 6 accordingly makes provision for such a case. Section 36 of the Act provides that no person is under a duty to destroy rabbits kept by him in cages. There is considerable doubt as to what the word *“”*cages*””* actually means. Clause 8 therefore provides a definition of this term. Under section 81 of the principal Act it is provided that a vermin board must appoint a male person of full age to be the secretary. Recently a similar provision in the District Councils Act was amended by deleting the word “male” so that females can now hold the office of district clerk. A similar amendment of the Vermin *Act* is made by clause 14. Clause 16 repeals Part IV.of the Vermin Act, 1914. This part dealt with vermin fencing by a vermin trust. A trust was formed by several occupiers of land joining together and applying for a loan from the Government for vermin fencing, each occupier being liable for the full repayment of all loans granted to all the members of the trust. In practice the scheme has been found to be unsatisfactory, as members of Trusts object to shouldering the liabilities of their fellow members and consequently it has been deemed desirable to repeal the part in question. Subclause (2) of clause 10 provides for the continuance of existing trusts until their liabilities to the Government are repaid. The remaining clauses make amendments of a drafting and administrative nature to the Vermin Act that do not require special mention. Asbefore stated, none of them make any alteration in the policy of the Act.

I would like members to expedite the passage of this Bill as there is nothing contentious in it, and some consideration along the lines of the measure is necessary. I move the second reading.

The Hon. E. L. BUTLER secured the adjournment of the debate until August 13.