**LAND SETTLEMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL 1978**

**Legislative Council, 21 February 1978, page 1627**

Second reading

**The Hon. T. M. CASEY (Minister of Lands)** obtained leave and introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Land Settlement Act, 1944-1974. Read a first time.

The Hon. T. M. CASEY: I move: That this Bill be now read a second time. This short Bill amends the Land Settlement Act to prevent its demise. Under section 2a, the principal Act is expressed to expire on December 31, 1977. As the Land Settlement Committee still has certain functions in relation to the Rural Advances Guarantee Act and may in future be asked to consider other matters pertaining to land settlement, it seems appropriate to extend the operation of the Act until it appears that it is no longer required. Accordingly, this Bill repeals section 2a of the principal Act. The amendment has been deemed to come into operation retrospectively in view of the fact that section 2a refers to December 31, 1977.

Clause 1 is formal. Clause 2 provides that the Act shall be deemed to have come into operation on the thirtieth day of December, 1977. Clause 3 repeals section 2a of the principal Act.

The Hon. C. M. HILL secured the adjournment of the debate.

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**Legislative Council, 22 February 1978, page 1705**

Adjourned debate on second reading. (Continued from February 21. Page 1627.)

The Hon. C. M. HILL: I support the Bill.

The Hon. M. B. DAWKINS: After that profound speech from my colleague, I want to say a word or two in support of the Bill. The Land Settlement Committee was formed in, I think, 1945, after enabling legislation was passed. The preamble of that Act is as follows: An Act to provide for the establishment of a Parliamentary committee on land settlement and for the acquisition, improvement and closer settlement of under-developed lands, and for purposes incidental thereto. I suggest that over the years the Land Settlement Committee has done much valuable work. Unfortunately, it has been allowed to go somewhat to seed under the present Government. The settlement in Western Australia in recent years (indeed, until about two or three years ago) was proceeding at the rate of 400 000 hectares a year. Unfortunately, in South Australia there would not be much more than 400 000 ha of land all told in the State that could still be settled. Much of this land has been dedicated by the Government as national parks. I am not against the dedication of national parks, although I consider it important that some consideration should be given to land that could be developed, and to whether it should be national parks or be developed for primary production.

However, as a former member of the Land Settlement Committee who was on the committee for eight years and Chairman for two years, I know of some of its frustrations under the present regime. About three years ago, the committee sought to have investigated areas on Southern Eyre Peninsula and, I think, in County Chandos, just to give two cases, with the idea of providing further settlement there. The Hon. A. F. Kneebone was Minister of Lands at the time, and, let me say, he was always a considerate gentleman and a person whom some of the present members of the A.L.P. could emulate. However, all that we got from that Minister was sympathy: that was all he could give us, and there was no action. Unfortunately, that has been the pattern in land development under this Government. Therefore, at present the committee is little more than a rubber stamp for the provisions of the Rural Assistance Guarantee Act.

However, in more propitious circumstances and under an enlightened Government, the committee may well become a valuable Parliamentary committee again. I am pleased that section 2 (a) of the Act has been repealed. Under that section, the committee completed its life last December (the matter has been overlooked for rather longer than was necessary), but there will now not be any provision that the committee will cease to exist on a certain date as was the case for a long time previously. I am pleased that the Government has taken that action and I hope that, in more advantageous circumstances, it may be possible for this Government or future Governments to do more for land settlement in the State. For that reason, I support the Bill.

Bill read a second time and taken through its remaining stages.