**NATIONAL PARK ACT AMENDMENT BILL 1933**

**Legislative Assembly, 9 August 1933, pages 557-8**

Second reading

**The Hon. M. MclNTOSH (Albert—Commissioner of Crown Lands**)—This small Bill has been brought down for the purpose of making some amendments to the National Park Act which are designed to facilitate the business of the Commissioners of the Park. The amendments all relate to finance. The original National Park Act, 1891, contained provisions which forbade the Commissioners to incur any expenses for the payment of wages or salaries or for carrying out works in the park except out of moneys to be voted by Parliament for the purpose. The income of the Commissioners, however, was not required to be paid into general revenue but had to be paid into a bank and the account operated on by the Commissioners. The effect of these provisions was that the Commissioners were not entitled to spend their own income in paying wages or carrying out works unless by some means their own income should be appropriated by Parliament for the purpose. Parliament, however, does not appropriate any money except grants from the general revenues of the State or public loan moneys. The provisions of the principal Act were somewhat absurd in that they assumed that Parliament would control the expenditure of money which was not revenue of the State. What is required of course, is a simple provisions enabling the Commissioners to expend the income which they receive from the park or elsewhere, in carrying out their duties and functions in connection with the maintenance and improvement of the park. The Bill therefore deletes the provisions which require the expenditure of the Com­missioners to be annually voted by Parliament and provides that all moneys received by the Commissioners, including any amounts voted by Parliament for the purposes of the National Park, shall be applied by the Commissioners at their discretion in payment of

the expenses incurred by them in carrying out' their duties and functions under the principal Act.

Mr. Abbott—What is done with the money they are receiving now?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—They have not been entitled to spend their own revenues for maintenance of the park.

Mr. Abbott—They have been applying it for improvements.

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—Yes, but the Auditor-General has pointed out that technically they must spend their moneys out of moneys voted by Parliament. This Act gives them power to spend their own moneys in the maintenance of the park. If they pay the money in Parliament will have to vote it out.

Mr. Abbott—Will this Act give them power to spend more money than they have been spending?

The Hon. R. S. Richards—It is to legalise what they have been doing?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—That is so. At one time they were spending £500 a year.

Parliament in the past has been giving a grant up to £500 a year, but obviously their expenses were far above that amount, and therefore to the extent that they were paying sums above that amount they were probably acting in an illegal manner, which left it open for anybody to take action against them. It is only a technical breach, however, as they were not depriving anybody of any money. Members have nothing but admiration for the manner in which the Board conducts its operations. The Bill recognises the position, of course, that the Commissioners will have no claim on the general revenues of the State unless Parliament votes them a grant. The Bill also contains a provision enabling the Commissioners, to borrow money. Occasionally the Commissioners require a small loan to carry out their works and the House of Assembly has already during the present session made provision for lending them £500. The Commissioners have no express power to accept the loan, and it is doubtful whether the power is to be got by implication from the Act. The Bill therefore enacts that they may borrow money on any terms so long as they do not in any way create any charge upon the National Park.. The Hon. G. R. Laffer touched on this phase the other day. I can assure him that the Government would have made a grant had it been in a position to do so, but unfortunately the finances are such that it could not see its way clear to do that. After consultation, the Commissioners who said that although they would much prefer a capital grant, they felt that the making of a loan to enable them to carry out essential works would ultimately result in a good deal of economy being effected. The Government, with the consent of Parliament, has decided to make a. loan of £500 payable to the Commissioners on terms to be arranged after this measure has been given effect to. The Government has been particularly careful to put a line on the Estimates, and to get a Bill passed to give them power to borrow. After the preliminaries have been effected final arrangements in regard to interest and repayments will be settled. I move the second reading.

The Hon. G. R. LAFFER secured the adjournment of the debate.

**NATIONAL PARK ACT AMENDMENT BILL 1933**

**Legislative Assembly, 10 August 1933, pages 582-4**

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from August 9. Page 558.)

The Hon. G. R. LAFFER (Alexandra)—This measure has been introduced for two definite reasons. The Minister said the original Act did not make it possible for the National Park Commissioners to spend the money received for the betterment of the Park. One can hardly understand how a provision of that nature was inserted in the Bill in the first place, and how it passed through both Houses. No doubt the National Park Commissioners have been doing something contrary to the Act ever since its inception. It is rather extraordinary that this was not pointed out by the Auditor-General’s Department previously, because its officers audit the accounts of the Commissioners, and have to certify that the money has been raised and expended in accordance with the Act. Another extraordinary provision in this Bill is that which gives the Commissioners power to borrow money. That had been explained to the House during the Loan Estimates. It is proposed to make a loan of £500 to the Commissioners in order to maintain necessary services, with which the public are supplied gratis. In my opinion this denotes an unsatisfactory state of affairs. I presume the Government was approached on this matter from a very different angle. I think it must have been that the Government should render the Commissioners some assistance to carry on. No doubt it was pointed out that the many utilities which had been provided for the public had fallen into disrepair because of insufficient revenue being derived to properly maintain them. I am sure that any member who goes to the National Park must be impressed by the .fine work which has been done over many (now Sir Frederick) was Commissioner of Crown Lands he made a speech on the National Park, and said that if he could get the same efficiency in connection with many things as South Australia was receiving at the hands of the National Park Commissioners he would be in favor of putting other activities under separate boards, giving them, sole control. The Park has been particularly fortunate in the standard of men who have occupied positions on the board. I can speak from my own knowledge of the wonderful services rendered by the Commissioners, particularly by the Chairmen. During my term on the Board Sir Edwin Smith was Chairman. He was a man who left his mark in many directions upon South Australia. He was a great Australian, and rendered signal service as Chairman of the Board over a. period of years. By his great diligence he played no unimportant part in laying the foundations for the National Park. Upon( his decease Mr. Bullock was elected as Chairman and I have always felt sorry that some recognition of his work was not given effect to during his lifetime. Upon Mr. Bullock’s decease I prepared a statement of appreciation for the public press and sent to the "Advertiser” am account of the wonderful service he had rendered to the State. Mr. Bullock made the National Park practically the principal thing in his life’s work. I felt that it would be a mark of appreciation for those left behind, but the statement for some reason was never published. During his lifetime I urged upon the Government, in view of the fact that Mr. Bullock had given up all other interests and made the National Park such a feature of his life work, that he should be given some small recognition as a mark of appreciation. However, nothing came of it, the man passed away, practically nothing was said in the press, and only those who had been in close touch with him knew of the wonderful public service he had performed. Now let us come to the reason why a loan is sought from the Government. I say quite frankly that I do not like it. It is poor recognition for the work which has been carried out by a body of men. I know that during the years when Sir Edwin Smith and Mr. Bullock were in charge of the Board, two or three times a year luncheons were paid for by the Chairmen when distinguished visitors attended the Park to look at the improvements. The luncheons and conveyances were paid for by the Chairmen themselves so that the finances of the Boardcould be conserved for useful purposes. As the Park developed many miles of roads had to be constructed. I do not know how many, but the road from the main entrance down into the gully, which is a source of great attraction, must traverse at, least seven miles . All the roads have not been constructed out of the ordinary grant at £500 a year which was given by the Government up to a few years ago. The work was mainly carried out from revenue raised by the Board from other services. The roads have been mainly constructed out of material procured within the Park, but some has had to be procured from the ordinary quarry companies. They are not bituminous or bitumen penetration, but are water bound macadam roads, in some instances with a tar or bitumen surface, consequently the Park Commissioners are faced with the difficulty of maintaining them and keeping them in a trafficable condition. They have experienced the same difficulty as local governing bodies and have found that they cannot construct water bound macadam roads which will stand; up to traffic for any length of time. The depression has affected the Park Commissioners in the same way as other bodies, and they have reached a stage when the money they receive for services rendered to the public is insufficient to maintain their roads. As a consequence the Government has agreed, as the best means of meeting their wishes to make them a loan. I realise the difficulty the Government is faced with, and probably the granting of a loan is just as distasteful to some members of the Government as it is to some members of the House. The National Park Board has functioned without fee or reward in order to maintain those excellent grounds and I am sure their efforts are appreciated by everybody. While the loan might put their roads into a state of repair for a time, as they are of water bound macadam they will deteriorate almost immediately and when this happens are the Commissioners to approach the Government for a further loan? They will also then be saddled with the disability of repaying this loan and will probably be in a more serious financial position than now. I will put forward a suggestion for the earnest consideration of the Minister and honorable members. If I am allowed to insert an amendment empowering the Commissioners to institute a toll at the gates it will help them considerably. I venture to say that' the National Park will be equally appreciated in 50 or 100 ' years ’ time. A few years ago people visiting the National Park mostly travelled by train and their patronage of the railways meant that the State received some return, but that has changed and most people now go to the Park in motor conveyances. I do not desire to interfere with people visiting the Park, but if motor charsabancs go there, as many do every Sunday—and in some instances it is offensive to nearby residents for the visitors play cricket and other games— it surely would not be too much to ask them to pay a toll of 2s. 6d. for each charabanc load entering the Park. As the Commissioners have to provide and maintain roads and numerous other facilities it should not be any disability for those using the Park to pay a small fee. It is no exaggeration to say that between 200 and 250 motor cars go there each Sunday. It would not be a heavy charge to place on the public and would compensate the Commissioners for the wear and tear upon the roads. If the Government is in such a serious financial position that it cannot make a straightout grant to the National Park, surely it is a fair thing to ask the people who have the privilege of using the facilities to pay a little for the upkeep of the services they enjoy. A grant to the Board would be the proper thing, as the Board will be compelled to come back for a further loan because its finances will be strained in exactly the same way as they are strained to-day. In the circumstances the Commissioners could be empowered under the Act to levy a nominal charge upon those using the park. I have not consulted them in this matter, but as I have been a member of the Board, and live close by, I probably know more about what is going on than most people. I know the splendid service and unselfish work which has been and is being rendered by the Commissioners, and they should not be placed in the position of coming cap in hand to the Government for assistance. I hope the House will give the suggestion serious consideration Despite all the work which the Commissioners have done they find themselves in financial difficulty, and it is the duty of Parliament to come to their assistance. When the Bill is in Committee I shall have an amendment drafted along the lines I have indicated.

Mr. Dunks—Would you put a toll on the vehicle or the passengers?

The Hon. G. B. LAFFER—On the vehicle, a shilling on motor cars and 2s. 6d. on the larger vehicles. The roads are, in most cases, only gravelled, and it can be easily understood how the fast heavy traffic has a detrimental effect upon them. The Commissioners have provided a number of cricket pitches, and more than 50 tennis courts. Hot water and wood are available, as well as other services. It is one of the bright spots in our national life to see the people enjoying themselves under these healthy conditions, instead of congregating in mobs to watch other people play games. In connection with an inquiry with which I am associated, the thing that impresses me most, as the cause of evils existing is the number who have no object in life and nowhere to go on Saturday afternoons but hang around hotels and engage in undesirable practices. If we provided more facilities like the National Park in healthy and congenial surroundings it would do something to remove this great evil. I hope the Minister will give my suggestion sympathetic consideration. I do not want to see the Commissioners forced to come to this Parliament year after year asking for assistance, and if my suggestion were adopted I feel sure it would remove all the difficulties. I support the measure.

The Hon. M. McINTOSH (Albert—Commis-missioner of Crown Lands)—I have listened with interest to the remarks of the honorable member. The Government has no desire to push the matter further than the second reading stage just now. When the Bill is in Committee I will ask that progress be reported to give the honorable member an opportunity to place his amendment on the files. I am not prepared to indicate at the moment what the attitude of the Government will be, though it appears that there is nothing unreasonable or unnecessary in the suggestion. As, however, the Bill has been introduced at the request of the National Park Commissioners, I should like to have their opinion on the suggestion for the benefit of honorable members.

Bill read a second time.