**NOXIOUS INSECTS ACT AMENDMENT BILL 1955**

**Legislative Assembly, 11 October 1955, pages 1031-2**

**Second reading**

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN, having obtained leave, introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Noxious Insects Act, 1934. Read a first time.

**The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN (Minister of Agriculture)—**I move:—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

I regret having, without prior notice, to spring this on members, but the grasshoppers will not wait. In the administration of the Act as it stands I have discovered certain weaknesses that need rectifying, and the sooner we do it the sooner we can cope with the serious menace. It is understood that under the 1934 Act councils have certain powers to require owners or occupiers of land to take prescribed measures for the control and destruction of vermin, but the councils cannot go sufficiently far in the case of owners who do not comply with the notice. They cannot see that the required action is taken. Of course, they can prosecute the defaulting owner, but the machinery of prosecution is sometimes lengthy, and it means sometimes that a period elapses before finality is reached. In the meantime the grasshoppers are on the wing. In some cases prompt action is required, and it is therefore provided in the Bill that the council may, in the case of a landowner who refuses to comply with a notice, enter on his land and take the necessary measures for control and eradication.

That is on all fours with the powers contained in the noxious weeds and vermin control legislation. There, the council, or the Minister where the same power is vested in him, can take action to enter on the land of the defaulting owner and take the measures he was required to take. A further provision, and it is in the other legislation, is that when the work has been done by the council or the Minister, the costs can be recovered. The grasshopper plague is widespread throughout the State. There are some fortunate patches where they are not in evidence, but generally speaking the hatchings have taken place from the north down to Victor Harbour in the south, and from Ceduna in the west to Renmark in the east. Prompt action must be taken to control the grasshoppers. Fortunately, we have available to us much equipment and new types of insecticides and poisons for spraying or the laying of baits, and we can, to a large degree, control Pests once they are actually hatched lndeed, ever since my department has taken control of this matter on this occasion, there has been splendid co-operation from all district councils concerned and, generally speaking, from landholders. I think all concerned are very much alive to the seriousness of this plague. As I indicated some months ago, it could be the worst we have ever had, and that has been amply borne out by the hatchings that are taking place all over the State. If no effective action were taken we could be completely eaten out.

The Budget.

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That is such a serious prospect that officers of my department and the Lands Department have visited country areas to ascertain the extent and the location of the hatchings. As a result of those investigations we have been able to alert the councils and have had ample supplies of materials made available to combat the pest. Manufacturers and wholesalers have co-operated very well and made available large stocks of insecticides and poisons at short notice. In many council areas hundreds of gallons have already been distributed. During my recent visit to the West Coast I consulted several councils on the mainland and on Eyre Peninsula and ascertained that some councils have distributed more than 300gall. of insecticides, and have supplied as many as 150 landholders. That shows that most councils and landholders are doing their utmost to combat the menace but, unfortunately, there are always a few people who will not co-operate.

As prompt action is necessary to combat the plague it is highly desirable that local authorities and my department should have the means to deal with those who will not co-operate. That is why I have brought down this measure, which will enable action to be taken by councils or the department in case of default, and it also gives us the opportunity to recover the cost involved. I have had conferences with several organizations, and I have been assured that even in the pastoral areas the landowners will be prepared to meet the Government in regard to the costs of any campaign that we undertake. We are also looking into the question of co-opting the support of various other organizations or authorities, if the need arises, in order that we shall have available, particularly in the outside country, all possible equipment and manpower. It think it will be appreciated that in the inside country the best means of handling the problem is through the landholder himself. We could not possibly marshal all the manpower required to undertake a State-wide campaign. If landholders combat the pest on their own holdings the costs will be infinitesimal compared with carrying out a campaign, as has been suggested by some people, similar to that the Government instituted for the control of the fruit fly.

The obligation to combat the pest rests fundamentally on the landowner himself, for he has the necessary manpower under his own control and, in some cases, the necessary equipment, too. We have been issuing chemicals and poisons to councils for distribution free of cost to the landowners. Recently the Director of Agriculture estimated that so far £20,000 of material has been distributed, and eventually it will cost us much more than that, but by tackling the problem promptly we may avert a major calamity. The additional powers now sought are all designed to cope with the problem, particularly in those areas where population and manpower is scarce and where we may have to initiate measures for control and then charge the cost to the landholders concerned.

Mr. O’HALLORAN secured the adjournment of the debate.