**FOREST TREES BILL 1878**

**House of Assembly, 9 July 1878, pages 332**

Second reading \_

**The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS (Hon. T. Playford**), in moving the second reading of this Bill, said that it would consolidate the Acts of 1873, 1875, and 1876. The Bill only contained two new clauses relating to Forest Boards. The first was that the moneys received by the Boards for licences for cutting timber and for depasturing stock in the forest reserves should be paid into the Treasury. At present the moneys collected were paid into the Bank by the Board and operated on by cheque by them. The second new provision gave the power to the Boards, with the approval of the Commissioner, to let the lands for any particular purpose. The occasion for this provision arose in consequence of its having been represented to him that there was a quantity of excellent land in the Wirrabara Forest which was swampy, but which was well fitted for the growth of fruits and vegetables in the summer months. The Crown law officers had given an opinion to the effect that under the present Act he had no power to give the Boards authority to let these swamps for such purposes. There was in this reserve, which extended a distance into the Northern Areas, several excellent swampy spots similar to the swamps in the Mount Lofty Ranges, from which nearly the whole of the supply of vegetables for the colony was drawn. It was a pity that these swamps were not cultivated for the benefit of persons in the immediate vicinity. He was sure that their cultivation would be of great benefit to the residents of Port Pirie, Laura, Melrose, and other centres of population in the Northern Areas. Several applications had been received from persons who were willing to utilize these lands by growing vegetables. In consolidating the various measures he had struck out the provision which related to the proclamation of Local Forest Boards. He believed a great many years would pass before Local Forest Boards would be required, and it would be better that they should be created by the Parliament rather than by the Ministry of the day. He did not think it necessary to enter into any details respecting the progress of the forests. He might, however, state that in the Bundaleer Forest Reserve a thousand acres of trees had been planted which were in a flourishing state. In the Wirrabara Forest an immense number of useful trees had been raised, and at the present time the Board were prepared to give these in large numbers to District Councils who were desirous of planting them. The Board since their formation had endeavoured to conserve the existing forests as much as possible, which he looked upon as one of their most important functions. It was thought that the Forest Trees Act introduced by Mr. Krichauff in 1873 would have been availed of by a considerable number, but he was sorry to say that not a single person had availed himself of its provisions. Still he had no desire to strike it out of the Statute-book. It might be availed of in years to come, and if so it would be of considerable benefit to residents in different parts of the country.

Mr. HARDY thought the measure an important one, and would give the Government his best assistance towards carrying it through. The present system of dealing with forest districts might be improved in many respects. Under the existing Act the hilly country skirting the ranges from Willunga up to Kapunda was not included in any forest district. It was urged by some that as this country would grow indigenous timber it was not necessary to include it in the forest districts. He thought, however, that it was desirable to encourage the growth of the best kinds of timber, and this should be done in localities where the trees would flourish. A great deal of trouble had been taken in introducing various trees from other countries. Some of those trees would live on the plains, but they would not thrive there. The place where they would thrive was on the hills. Dr. Schomburgk had no doubt been successful in growing them in the extension park, but then they had to consider that he had an exceptionally good piece of ground and that the trees were carefully looked after. An amount of care was bestowed on them which they could not expect to be bestowed on plantations in the hands of private individuals. If the Corporation of Adelaide were to instruct their gardeners to plant the Park Lands with precisely the same trees as Dr. Schomburgk had planted in the Botanical Gardens the result would be comparative failure. (Hear, hear.) The great bulk of the trees would not live, and those that did live would be stunted in their growth and would not make useful timber. He therefore thought that as the hills were particularly adapted for forest culture they should be included in the forest districts. If they desired to raise useful timber they would be making a mistake if they excluded that part of the country. He could see no reason why the provisions of the Act should be limited to trees planted within five years. He was afraid that this provision would not be availed of to the desired extent if it were not modified.

Mr. HARE said a large amount of good would result from the passing of any Bill the object of which was to conserve forests or to encourage the planting of forest trees. From experience he knew that the growth of trees attracted moisture. In the south of France there were large sandhills, which at one time were considered worthless; but Napoleon decided to plant them with trees, and the result had been that they had flourished amazingly, and now produced a large income for the benefit of the State. The same thing might be done here, and by following the example he had mentioned they would be conferring a great blessing on the colony. Some years ago when he was Manager of Railways he suggested to the Government the advisability of planting trees two chains wide alongside railway lines. He stated in his report that his opinion was that in about 12 years’ time these trees would not only supply the Government with the necessary timber for sleepers, but would also produce large quantities of firewood. That was set down as being an American idea, and no notice was taken of it. From observations which he had since made he firmly believed that had his advice been followed the Government would not have at the present time to

purchase sleepers. Whilst they were considering the question of preserving forests he thought they should pay special attention to the preservation of the more useful classes of trees. A white stringybark tree which grew at Mount Lofty had entirely disappeared. From tests he had made he found the timber of this tree able to stand a greater pressure than English ash, and that it split more regularly. That tree might be procured from some other parts of the colony and could be planted extensively with advantage. A special variety of box used to flourish at Mount Remarkable which was very durable and was readily split, but it had now entirely disappeared. These were subjects to which the Board should direct their attention.

Mr. KRICHAUFF thought the principle of the Bill had been sufficiently ventilated in the Parliament of South Australia, and the Forest Trees Act being incorporated with the Forest Board Bill he believed it would be taken more notice of at the present time. He would impress on the Commissioner of Crown Lands the necessity of securing as speedily as possible private lands in the South-Eastern districts of the colony for the purpose of raising trees thereon from spontaneous growth. It needed only fencing and to keep cattle out. As an investment he believed that course would be found to pay well. Sleepers for the railways might thus be grown in districts which otherwise would be destitute of timber for such purposes. He believed that experience showed that timber produced by carefully attended trees was superior in quality. He would endorse the suggestion of the hon. member for Wallaroo (Mr. Hare) as to the desirability of planting young trees along the railway lines. He had in fact himself urged this course when the Kingston and Naracoorte line was proposed. He would like to call the attention of the Commissioner of Crown Lands to the fact that particularly in the South-East District the old gum-trees were apt suddenly to die off without any apparent cause, and would ask whether the Forest Board had made any enquiries which would tend to throw light upon the origin of this at present unexplained phenomenon.

Mr. BUNDEY thought the Mount Lofty and Onkaparinga Districts had been somewhat overlooked, and trusted that the Government would see their way to bring those districts within the provisions of the Bill. He believed the redgum of this colony was quite equal to the jarrah timber of Western Australia, and of such importance was it that we should use every effort to maintain our supply of home-grown timber, for he believed generations yet unborn would bless those who introduced this Bill and carried it to a successful issue.

Mr. WARD would like to see the Forest Board abolished. The same objections which had been raised against the Council of Education could with equal force be urged against the Forest Board. He hoped the time was coming when as a matter of policy Boards would be dispensed with altogether (Hear, hear.)

The Hon. J. CARR concurred in the valuable suggestion of the hon. member for Onkaparinga. Some land had been secured in a district near to Onkaparinga, where some 4,000 acres had been reserved and placed under the care of the Forest Board. Every precaution had been taken to prevent the wanton destruction of timber, and he believed that this reservation would be found very profitable. With regard to the suggestion made by the hon. member tor Gumeracha (Mr. Ward) about the abolition of the Board, he entirely agreed with the general principle. Boards were a Chinese mandarin-like importation—(laughter)—devised for the benefit of weak Ministers, and sometimes they worked the other way. An unfortunate Minister—his hon. friend the Minister of Education would excuse the word '\* unfortunate ” when he heard the context— might be blamed for many things over which he had no control. As regarded the special duties of the Forest Board, he thought no complaint could be made as to the way in which those duties had been fulfilled.

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS (Hon. T. Playford) had always found that the Forest Board had worked harmoniously with himself. With reference to the point raised by Mr. Krichauff about the trees dying off in the South- East he believed the Forest Board were making enquiry into the subject, but for his part he thought it was owing to the exhaustion from the soil of the constituents necessary for the growth of the eucalyptus. As a matter of fact the gum and the honeysuckle were dying out and the acacia and other kindred timbers appeared to be taking their place.

The Bill was then read a second time.