**METROPOLITAN ABATTOIRS ACT (FURTHER AMENDMENT) BILL 1911**

**House of Assembly, 3 October 1911, pages 622-4**

Second reading

The TREASURER, in moving the second reading of the Metropolitan Abat­toirs Act Further Amendment Bill, said the measure would have to be referred to a Select Committee, so that more information would be before hon. members as to the scope of the Bill and as to its necessity. The original Metropolitan Abattoirs Act did not contain sufficiently wide provisions, and it was found that the board ought to undertake the slaughter of stock and the delivery of meat. The expenditure had been very much greater than was contemplated under the original measure. Fear had been expressed by the smaller butchers that the Act at present would lead to the creation of something in the nature of a big meat ring. They feared larger butchers and possibly one or two outsiders would control the whole of the dead meat market, and be able to dictate their terms to the smaller butchers. The board were approached by butchers in the metropolitan area and asked to undertake the work, and they were undertaking it under conditions which would return a very handsome profit to the board. It was necessary to have the measure passed this session in order to have the cottages and other buildings created which would be required when the abattoirs themselves were completed. Section 3 of the Bill empowered the Metropolitan Abattoirs Board to borrow any further sum or sums of money not exceeding in the aggregate £55,000 for the following purposes or any of them:—(a) For the installation of plant and the erection of buildings for the purpose of and in connection with the delivery of meat; (b) erection of cottages for employees of the board; (c) purchase of additional land; (d) erection of bide and skin markets. Section 4 provided for the board to have the exclusive right to slaughter stock at the abattoirs and to charge such fees for slaughtering as the board might think fit. Section 5 gave the board the exclusive right to deliver meat from the abattoirs. Sections 6 and 7 were machinery clauses to prevent industrial disputes, or if such arose, that they should be settled by arbitration. Section 8 exempted the board and the members of the board from liability if unable to perform contracts through strikes . Section 9 made section 72 of the principal Act clearer than was originally drawn by providing that after the markets established by the Metropolitan Abattoirs Board were ready cattle were not to be sold elsewhere except in the abattoirs markets. On September 4 last he was waited upon by the Mayor of Adelaide (who was chairman of the Metropolitan Abattoirs Board) and Mr. T. G. Ellery (the general manager of the board) with a request that the Government should introduce a Bill during the present session of Parliament empowering the board to undertake the delivery of meat from the abattoirs at Gepp’s Cross to the various butchers’ shops throughout the metropolitan abattoirs area, and also empowering the board to do the slaughtering of stock. The question of delivery of meat and slaughtering of Stock had been one that had exercised the mind’s of the master butchers and the Metropolitan Abattoirs Board for the last two years; in fact, ever since the principal Act was passed. Exhaustive enquiries had been instituted throughout the Commonwealth and New Zealand both by the Abattoirs Board and the Master Butchers’ Association as to the best means to be adopted in connection with the working of the abattoirs, and both parties had come to the conclusion that it was necessary and advisable for the delivery of meat to be undertaken by the board, and for the Abattoirs Board to do the slaughtering of stock. It had been made clear by the printed report of the general manager of the Abattoirs Board, which was sent to the Government when the request was made for the introduction of the Bill, that 90 per cent, of the butchers in the metropolitan abattoirs area had urged the board to undertake the delivery of meat by means of motor lorries at a uniform rate over the who area, and it. had been made clear by the master butchers that if the Abattoirs Board had decided not to undertake the delivery of meat and the slaughtering of stock it would mean ruin to dozens of the smaller butchers in the suburbs owing to the excessive cost of cartage from Gepp’s Cross to their various business places. In other words, the smaller butchers would be at the mercy of some trust oi other. It was made equally clear, too, that owing to diverse vested interests and trade rivalry, no private meat delivery company would ever be formed amongst the butchers, and the master butchers had urged upon the Abattoirs Board the wisdom of obtaining an Act of Parliament giving that board the monopoly of the work so that a uniform or “flat” rate could be charged, irrespective of distance, for the delivery of meat. The slaughtering of stock was part and parcel of the work of an abattoir, and should be performed under the best possible conditions by a public authority such as the Metropolitan Abattoirs Board was. The master butchers had almost unanimously urged that this work should be done by the direct employees of the board instead of by private slaughtermen. He must make it very clear that this Bill (although promoted by the Metropolitan Abattoirs Board) had only received that board's advocacy by reason of the evidence of that board by the master butchers showing the absolute necessity for the delivery of meat and the slaughtering of stock being undertaken by the board, and this fact would be brought out clearly on behalf of both parties when the Select Committee took evidence on the Bill. It was certain that as the vested interests of dozens of the smaller butchers were at stake. the Abattoirs Board had acted rightly in acceding. to the request made to it. The Abattoirs Board had received petitions, asking it to undertake the slaughtering of stock and delivery of meat from the butchers in Adelaide, Unley, Parkside, St. Peters, Burnside, Knightsbridge, Woodville, Hindmarsh, Thebarton. Norwood, Kensington, Mitcham, North Adelaide, Payneham. Walkerville, and Port Adelaide, containing the names of 90 per cent, of the total number of butchers in the metropolitan abattoirs area. The line in the Bill—erection of cottages for employees of the board—meant that the board had found that it would be absolutely necessary to provide cottages for certain of its employees engaged at Gepp’s Cross, especially the men doing the delivery work, who would have to make early morning starts. To these men the railway facilities would be useless, because at times they would have to act away with their loads at daylight. The works being at Gepp’s Gross—6 ½ miles from the city, and 21 miles from the nearest tramway, rendered it imperative on the board to make some provision for residences for its employees. Regarding the purchase of additional land, the Select Committee on the Abattoirs Bill of 1910 reported:—“That it was desirable that the Abattoirs Board should acquire a larger area of land in a suitable locality for the depasturing of stock." At present, the board held 486 acres, and the general manager Mr. Ellery) considered that it should have a least another 150 in order to adequately deal with the feeding of stock. In this, Mr. Ellery was supported by the evidence of Mr. G. W. Bagot. of the firm of Bagot, Shakes. & Lewis, Limited, stock agents, who. gave evidence before the Select Committee in October 1910. and strongly urged the necessity of the Abattoirs Board obtaining more land for its requirements. With reference to the erection of hides and skin markets, the board found that it would have to provide facilities for various firms to deal with green hides and skins. The facilities would have to be given alongside the abattoirs at Gepp’s Cross just as they exist at present, near the city slaughterhouse, on the West Park Lands. No elaborate premises are required, but merely suitable galvanized iron structures with cement floors, and an expenditure of £6 000 to £7,000 it was anticipated would fully cover requirements. Hon. members would have an opportunity in committee of going into detail, and would find that this work would pay interest on the necessary outlay. Mr. Ellery was careful and conservative in his estimates, and had taken care not to overstate the case. He had made exhaustive enquiries into the cost of building cot­tages and vehicles and the acquisition of hind. and all the figures had been carefully cheeked. His estimate of revenue was likely to be exceeded. The State would be undertaking no serious liability in advancing the additional £55,000, and would thus make the former expenditure far safer than it would be without the extension provided for in this Bill. Hon. members would have full opportunity of dealing with the Bill when it came back from the Select Committee. As it was necessary evidence should be taken early he asked members to get the committee appointed as early as possible.

Mr, SMEATON said hon. members must not forget that the House already had com­mitted the State to an expenditure of a large sum of money on the abattoirs. He admitted if the House was compelled to begin on the abattoirs proposals as they now stood, members would be staggered by the sum that would have to be devoted to the purpose. Possibly had the complete proposals come up in the first instance the House might have declined to agree to them. They were launched on this matter, however, and must not spoil the work for the sake of the extra money asked for. This measure would be for the benefit of the people, and would certainly protect the smaller butchers in the metropolitan area. The Treasurer had said 90 per cent, of the Adelaide butchers backed this up. He could quite understand that, because only the wealthy butchers could afford to deliver meat from the abattoirs. The poor man would be handicapped if lie had to supply the means of delivery. He supported the Bill, and hoped the House would pass it. One aspect of the Ball that pleased him was the incorporation of a clause for the settlement of industrial disputes. This could hardly be regarded as the introduction of industrial arbitration by a side wind, because it was merely giving effect to the recommendation of the board, on which were some of the most conservative men in South Australia.

The second reading was carried.

On the motion of the TREASURER the Bill was referred to a Select Committee elected by ballot, as follows:—Messrs. Chesson, Bankel, McDonald, the Hon. L. O’Lo'ighlin, Messrs. Ponder. Smeaton, and the Hon. C. Vaughan.

The committee was authorised to call for persons, papers, and records, to adjourn from place to place. and were ordered to report to the House on Tuesday, October 10