**DROUGHT RELIEF BILL 1928**

**House of Assembly, 23 October 1928, pages 1438-40**

Second reading

**The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS (Hon. G. F. Jenkins**)—This is a measure introduced as a result of the unfortunate seasonal conditions which obtained in certain parts of the State this year. It is regrettable that from time to time it is necessary to introduce legislation of this kind in order to give relief to settlers affected by drought. Fortunately, however, the experience in the past has been that where these advances have been made in necessitous cases, the State has reaped a very rich reward as a result. It is interesting to note the payments that have been made under the Drought Relief Acts passed by this Parliament in the past. In 1914 there were 7,589 applications for relief. Of that number, 6,592 were assisted. The amount advanced (including fees, &c.) was £758,240. From that it may be realised to what extent the State was hit by the severe drought which affected not only South Australia, but practically the whole of the Commonwealth, during the disastrous season of 1914. Of the total advances to settlers in South Australia, there has been repaid altogether £717,728. The accounts still open under the 1914 Drought Belief Act number only 459, and of those there are very few who have not made some payment towards liquidating the advances received from the Government. From time to time settlements have been made with those prepared to make reasonable offers. The amount of principal still owing under the 1914 Act is only £40,512. Members will realise from this that repayments have been made by settlers in a position to do so, and the State has benefited very considerably as a result of the advances made. Settlers have been enabled to remain on the land and continue producing. Under the1919 Act slight advances were made to about 680 persons. The amounts advanced at thetime totalled £5,320, of which £3,742 has been repaid. Only 22 of the settlers who received assistance under the1919 Act are still owing amounts **to** the Government. Under the1923 Act 82 applications were received and 39 persons were assisted. The amount advanced was £1,92:4, of which £1,836 has been repaid. In respect to the1923 and 1926 drought relief, theadvances were almost entirely to settlers on the West Coast and Eyre Peninsula. In 1926 157 applications were received and 60 settlers were assisted with £5,035, of which £4,314 has been repaid. Only 11 of those assisted are still owing amounts to the Government. Members will beinterested to know to what extent settlers were assisted under the Drought Belief Act passed last year. Under thatmeasure we supplied 11,426 tons of super at £6 per ton, amounting to £68,556; seed, wheat, 188,104 bush. at 6s. per bushel., £56,431; oats, 23,568bush. at 4s. bushel, £4,714; fodder, 9,049 tons at £6 10s. per ton, £58,818; sustenance, £14,953; bran and pollard, 218 tons at £7 per ton, £1,526; motor fuel, 53,693 galls. at Is. 6d. per gallon, £4,610; for total advances under the 1927 Drought Relief Act of £209,608. A great many of **t**headvances were made to settlers in the east Murray lands. Owing to the rain which fortunately fell at the end of September and during the present month there are nota great many settlers: eastof the Murray thisyear who will not get their seed at least in return for their labor. Prior tothe rains whichfell then it looked very much as though a great proportion of the agricultural lands east of the Murray would return nothing whatever. The authorities approved of 1,278 applications, declined 178, and 89 were withdrawn. Of those who applied for assistance, 36 were referred to mortgagees, who in such cases assisted them, I take it. Four applicants were referred to the State Bank. The particulars I have given indicate the large number of settlers enabled to remain in occupation of their holdings as a result of the

drought relief measures passed last year. A considerable proportion of them will this year reap very fair returns on the land sown with the seed and super supplied by the Government. Members will realise, too, that we have also assisted with sustenance settlers in those areas to the extent of nearly £15,000. That assistance has, I am sure, been greatly appreciated. Where it is necessary that assistance should be given to enable settlers to remain on their holdings, that will be done. I express the appreciation of the Government for the manner in which the matter was handled by the State Bank Board. At the time applications were being made and dealt with there were some complaints that the business was not expedited to the extent some people desired, but it was the duty of the Board entrusted with the handling of the State’s finances to deal most carefully with each application. The number of applications received and the comparative few who were declined points to the fact that the State Bank did the work not only thoroughly, but sympathetically. The Government acknowledge the good work done in that respect. The Bill follows very largely that of last year. Last year’s Bill, of course, will not enable any assistance to be granted after December 31 next, and provides that all advances must be repaid before February 1, 1929, or any extended time allowed by the State Bank. This Bill enables assistance to be granted at any time prior to the expiration of next year, and provides for repayments to be made on or before February 1, 1930, or any extension of time. The Bill will be administered by the State Bank. Clause 3 enables the bank to supply applicants for assistance with seed wheat, cereals other than seed wheat, manure, hay, chaff, flour, and any other commodity. No commodity will be supplied after December 31, 1929. Clause 4 provides that any farmer holding land for an estate of freehold, or under Crown lease or Crown agreement, not being a lease or agreement under the Pastoral Act, 1904, or the Irrigation Act, 1922, may make application for assistance under the Bill. Clause 5 provides for sharefarmers and that the person who holds the land being share-farmed may apply to the bank for the supply of commodities to the person who is farming it. The person holding the land will in such a case be liable to the bank for repayment of the advance, but, subject to any agreement between him and the share farmer, he will be entitled to recover from the share farmer all amounts paid to the bank except to the extent, if at all, that the advance was made for the purchase of commodities which under the agreement between the landholder and the share farmer, were to be provided by the land­holder. Clause 6 enables the bank to grant such assistance as it thinks proper, and clause 7 requires any person receiving assistance to sign an acknowledgment and a contract in the form set out in the schedule. Every advance must be repaid to the bank on or before February 1, 1930, or within such further time as the bank allows, or upon the alienation or mortgage of the applicant’s interest in the land held by him when the advance was made, whichever happens first. Interest at the rate of 6 ½ per cent, will be charged on every advance. The bank is given power in any case of special hardship to extend the time of repayment. Clause 9 contains the usual provision of Drought Relief Acts that an advance is to be a first charge on the applicant’s lands. The remainder of the Bill contains penalties for misuse of the commodities supplied under the Bill, provisions designed to prevent fraud, and minor administrative provisions. I move the second reading.

The Hon. T. BUTTERFIELD secured the adjournment of the debate until October 24.