**EYRE PENINSULA LAND PURCHASE BILL 1946**

**Legislative Assembly, 10 September 1946, pages 451-2**

Second reading

**The Hon. T. PLAYFORD (Gumeracha— Premier and Treasurer)—**I express the Govern­ment’s appreciation at members’ co-operation in enabling me to, introduce the Bill this after­noon. It has been brought forward because the purchase of a large area of land is involved and before the matter could be considered a report had to be obtained from the Parliamentary Committee on Land Settlement. That report was completed this morning and a copy will be available to members before the Bill is further considered. The committee’s report favours the purchase of the property as set out in the Bill. Normally, the purchase of land by the Government does not require special legislation as there are certain standing approvals to enable it to acquire land for closer settlement and repatriation purposes. The Bill is necessary in this instance as the basis of the offer was that the whole of the estate of Mr. J. T. Moortlock, which includes a fairly substantial area of township land and property in the township of

Tumby Bay, should be purchased. That does not come within normal Government procedure in purchasing land for closer settlement or for repatriation purposes. No appropriation of money is set out in the Bill; the appropriation will be obtained elsewhere. The Government has found it necessary to adopt the unusual course of proceeding with the Bill this afternoon and I desire to make an explanation to the House. The property is subject to an entail and the offer to the Government is con­tingent on its acceptance by the end of this month. Members will appreciate that the sittings of the House will be somewhat dislocated later this week, and Parliament will adjourn for the week preceding the forthcoming Federal elections at the end of the month. The Government considered it desirable, therefore, to place the Bill before hon. members sufficiently early to enable them to make inquiries and discuss the matter with members of the Land Settlement Committee if they desire to do so. The Government is anxious that the legislation should be passed by the end of next week in order that it can comply with the offer by the Mortlock Estate.

The Parliamentary Draftsman’s report on the Bill is as follows:—

"The object of the Bill is to empower the Minister of Lands to carry out an agreement for the purchase of certain lands on Eyre Peninsula owned by Mr. J. A. T Mortlock and the estates of W. T. and F. R. Mortlock, deceased. The lands in question comprise approximately 43,400 acres in the hundreds of Hutchison, Yaranyacka, Lincoln, and Lake Wangary, and are commonly called the Yalluna, Warratta, Wangary, and Coffin Bay Stations. The township of Tumby Bay is included in them; and the agreement between the vendors and the Government provides that the Government is to purchase the whole of these lands, including the township, but excluding about 100 acres surrounding the homestead at Coffin Bay. The purchase price is £165,000 and the land will be available to the Government on 31st March next. One of the terms of the agree­ment is that the purchase is subject to ratification by Parliament prior to September 30, 1946. The vendors insisted on this stipulation so that they would definitely know where they stood before the end of this month, and would thus be in a position to make arrangements for next year’s operations in the event of Parliament not approving. Even if the vendors had not stipulated for Parliamentary approval, that approval was necessary in any event because the Government has no power to purchase the township of Tumby Bay. Its present powers are limited to purchasing land for settlement.

"The Government does not intend to retain the township of Tumby Bay. It will be pur­chased subject to all the existing tenancies and rights, and the Government intends to dispose of it as quickly as possible. No doubt the existing tenants will be given an opportunity to purchase their blocks. The Bill by clause 4 deals with the disposal of the land which, is to be purchased. Land which in the opinion of the Land Board is suitable for primary production may be dealt with under the Crown Lands Act, the Crown Lands Development Act, or the War Service Land Settlement Act. Land which in the opinion of the Land Board is suitable for township blocks or for purposes other than primary production, can be sold, let, or disposed of in any way recommended by the board. The purchase has been recommended by the Land Board and reported on by the Land Settlement Committee, and in order to complete the transaction it only remains to pass the Bill before the end of this month”.

It will be seen that the Bill is related to a repatriation question of considerable import­ance. Much of the area in question is good land, and the Bill provides a fine opportunity for the settlement of many of our returned servicemen.

Mr. O’Halloran-—For what purpose is the land now being principally used?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—For grazing, although some of it is used for mixed farming and share farming. The Bill provides an opportunity for the settlement of returned servicemen in a way which would be hard to approach other than through such a Bill. The report of the Parliamentary Committee on Land Settlement on the project will be available to hon. members before they resume discussion on the measure. I move the second reading.

The Hon. R, S. RICHARDS (Wallaroo— Leader of the Opposition)—I do not intend at this juncture to make my speech upon the Bill, but I want one or two points cleared up. I am concerned with certain provisions under the Public Works Standing Committee Act and the Land Settlement Act. One provision aims at protecting the State against expenditure on any public work. That was varied during the period of the war. I am concerned about the amount involved in the purchase of this land, and should like to know whether it involves the scheme as set out within the province of the Land Settlement Act itself. I should like to know whether the report referred to by the Premier is merely a report on the desirability of purchase. Frankly, I am uneasy about , the purchase of this area, and dislike the condition attached to the offer that it must be closed by Parliament within a certain time. That restricts our opportunity of discussion. It seems to me that however desirable the area may be, the vendors have placed a tag on the proposition which compels us to take, action that not only expedites the consideration of the proposal itself, but asks us to accept the responsibility of incurring the expenditure in order that the owners may walk out. I should like to know whether we are strictly in order in proceeding with the Bill in view of the definition of "public works” within the meaning of the Public Works Standing Committee Act, and the responsibility placed on Parliament that it cannot proceed with any scheme involving an expenditure in excess of £30,000 without a report with certain certificates attached being tabled. There is also the provision in the Land Settlement Act which implies that a project has been inquired into. I should like to know whether this overrides the provision of the Public Works Standing Committee Act referred to. I should be glad if the Treasurer would get these points cleared up before the debate on the second reading is proceeded with. I ask leave to continue my remarks.

Leave to continue granted; debate adjourned.