**SOUTH EAST DRAINAGE BILL 1875**

**House of Assembly, 28 September 1875, pages 1189-90**

Second reading

**The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S.J. Way**) in moving the second reading said that something over £150,000 had been expended in the reclamation of land by means of the drainage works in the South-East. These works had been to a large extentsuccessful, and had reclaimed a large extent of fertile land. It was the intention of the Government to apply to the House to complete and extend these works. It would be necessary to raise some £17,000 to complete the works at present in operation, and about £37,000 for the purpose of extending these works in another direction in a manner already indicated, making a total of some £55,000 additional, which it was intended to expend upon the development of these particular works. The Bill was directed in the first place to the constitution of drainage districts within which the Act would apply. The Governor by proclamation was authorized to proclaim drainage districts which would extend over the three counties of Grey, Robe, and MacDonnell. Power was also given to alter the boundaries of districts, and when one was found unmanageable to divide it into two or more. The second divsion was devoted to the powers of the Commissioner, who was the functionary who would be charged with the construction of the works. There would be a check upon the expenditure of money by putting this work in the hands of a responsible Minister. Part 8 related to the maintenance of the works thus constructed, and he thought hon. members would see that it was necessary there should be a Board of some character to supervise the works, consisting of persons resident in the district and not liable to the changes to which Ministries were subject. In considering the constitution of the Boards the Government had to consider whether they should be elective or representative. There were no members of the House who held more emphatically than the Government did the desirability of maintaining the principle that representation should always accompany taxation, but there were two objections to representative Boards at the present stage. In the first place the management of the drainage works was to a considerable extent experimental, and it was desirable that the persons entrusted with the duties should hold office for a considerable period, and that they should be selected because of their knowledge of the subject and their capacity in administering works of this kind. But there was another and a much stronger objection. A large sum of money was to be expended, and it was important that there should be no conflict between the persons entrusted with the management of the works and the Commissioner engaged in construction. The Government, however, believed that ultimately these drainage works would be handed over to bodies constituted in the same way as District Councils or to District Councils themselves. It had been suggested by one of the members for the district in which the drainage works were that they should have upon the Boards the benefit of the lengthened experience of residents in the district, and therefore the Bill had been altered since originally drafted so as to make the tenure of office three years instead of a shorter period. The fourth part was directed to the question of revenue, expenditure, and accounts, and the fifth to rates. In these parts the machinery of the District Councils Act with respect to rates and assessments had been adopted almost entirely. Power would be given to the Board to make a rate of Is. in the pound, and a larger rate could not be made unless the ratepayers authorized it at a meeting convened in the manner pointed out by the District Councils Act. The Bill also contained a provision, by which in parts where District Councils did not apply the duties pertaining to District Councils could be tentatively performed by Boards. The sixth division related to penalties. It was endeavoured by this Bill to make provision not only for reclaiming land rot at present available for cultivation, but machinery was provided for introducing a system of irrigation, which he had no doubt would be exceedingly useful.

On the motion of Mr. HAWKER, the debate was adjourned till Thursday.