**PROTECTION OF BIRDS BILL 1900**

**House of Assembly, 8 August 1900, page300-1**

Second reading

**The Hon. T. PLAYFORD,** in moving the second reading of the Bill, said that in America the destruction of insectivorous birds had been going on at such a rate that societies called Audubon societies had been established for their protection. The fact that women in civilised lands had taken it into their heads to adorn themselves with feathers had led to great destruction of birds in addition to that which had been going on for years with regard to the edible varieties—the latter referred especially to small and rare birds beloved by rich epicures—had caused immense loss of bird life. In the colonies societies with similar aims to those in America had been formed. In South Australia there was a Bird Protection Society, which had done a great deal of good in calling attention to the wanton destruction of bird life in consequence of the wearing of feathers by women. That society had prepared a Bill with the object of protecting birds, and had asked him to introduce it. It was drafted on the lines of the most advanced American legislation, and he pointed out to the ladies from whom he got the Bill that he thought a great many of its provisions would not pass Parliament. There was one of the provisions he could not possibly agree to. It laid down that after a certain date any lady who wore certain feathers of protected birds should be liable to prosecution. That was excised from the Bill. Other clauses remained in it which he did not consider Parliament would accept, but he agreed to try. Accordingly he introduced the Bill last session. No sooner did he do this than several members pointed out that there were a good many objections to the measure which would prevent it passing. The result was that he placed a number of amendments on the notice paper, and in the present Bill they had all been embodied. It did not, as it stood, give effect to the wishes of the Bird Protection Society, but it did to his own. In America considerable attention had been paid to this question, and he had a paper written by Mr. Farmer, of the United States Department of Agriculture on the legislation for bird protection—other than game birds—issued from the Washington press in May of this year. He pointed out that the States had a great variety of legislation on the subject, and that in the latest laws, those of the State of York they actually protected all birds, whether insectivorous or grain-eating except some varieties specially excepted. They also prevented the wearing of wings and feathers, and altogether it was a most drastic affair. The Federal Parliament had interfered in the matter, and although they could net directly negative state laws .they had prevented by legislation the introduction of injurious birds, or those birds which might breed rapidly and become a nuisance to the farmers. The transportation of dead birds from one state to another was prevented by inter-state laws, and there was power also to restock country where the useful native birds had been absolutely exterminated, as they were in some parts. Members would therefore see that in other pants of the world laws were being passed for the protection of birds to an extent of which we knew nothing. They did it from a purely utilitarian point of view. It was not a question of sentiment. All birds, especially the insectivorous ones, that were useful to the agriculturist and horticulturist, were to be protected. They passed laws which prohibited a man from killing these birds even on his own land. The law of England allowed a man to do what he liked with the animals on his land, but in America he could not. A judge there had given the opinion that the birds belonged to the country, and not to the owner of the land oil which they happened to be. With regard to the inter-state laws in America, the duties and powers o£ the Department of Agriculture had been enlarged so as to include the preservation, distribution, introduction, and restoration of game birds and other wild birds in the state. The Bill he had introduced provided that certain birds named in the first schedule should be protected all the year round. With the exception of a few that ate a few fish they were purely insectivorous birds. In another schedule were those known as game birds, pheasants, ducks, geese, and swans, which were protected during the breeding season, and in another schedule were those that were not protected at all. These included the English sparrow, which was not protected in any part of the world. These were the main provisions of the Bill. The law at present was that we had a close season for certain birds, which at any other time could be destroyed, and we also had those that were not protected at all. The alterations he proposed were that we should protect the whole of the insectivorous birds throughout the year, that there should be a close season for game birds, and that those birds which were of no benefit to anyone should be destroyed at any part of the year. He would ask members to pass the second reading of the Bill, and to assist him to perfect the measure. He did not claim to have any special knowledge of the subject, but he had been asked to move in the matter by the ladies and gentlemen of the Bird Protection Society. There were some birds that persons might wish to protect on sentimental grounds, such as for their plumage, and it might be said that those birds which were purely seed-eaters might be protected, yet on practical grounds it was of no consequence to the community whether they were dead or alive. He moved the second reading and would answer any objections to the measure in his reply.

On the motion of the Hon. A. CATT the debate was adjourned till September 5.