**RENMARK IRRIGATION TRUST ACT AMENDMENT BILL 1948**

**Legislative Assembly, 2 November 1948, page 1152**

Second reading

**The Hon. C. S. HINCKS (Minister of Irrigation**)—The Renmark Irrigation District is controlled by the Renmark Irrigation Trust under powers vested in it by the Renmark Irrigation Trust Act. The trust is the sole authority in the district for the construction and maintenance of irrigation works and the rating of land within the district for these purposes. In addition, the trust has vested in it the powers of a district council and is thus the local governing authority for the district. The purpose of this Bill is to make a number of amendments to the Renmark Irrigation Trust Act which have been suggested to the Government by the trust. It is the practice of the trust to consult its ratepayers upon matters of this nature and, as is pointed out later, the proposals in the Bill which affect the liabilities of ratepayers have been put before meetings of the ratepayers and the proposals have in this way received their approval.

Clause 2 deals with the auditors of the trust. Section 22 of the Act provides that there are to be two auditors of the trust who are elected by the ratepayers. The Act, at present, does not require an auditor to possess any professional qualifications although for many years municipal and district council auditors have been required to hold a local government auditor’s certificate which is issued by a committee of which the Auditor- General is a member. Clause 2 provides that an auditor of the trust must hold such a certificate and provides that he is to cease to act as auditor if his certificate is revoked. This amendment was approved at a ratepayers' meeting.

Clause 3 also bears the approval of the ratepayers and deals with the amount of the rates which may be declared by the trust. Section 92 of the Act now authorizes it to levy a half-yearly rate not exceeding 25s. per acre of rateable land. Clause 3 increases this maximum to £2. The trust is now rating at the present maximum of 25s. per acre and, whilst there appears to be no immediate need to increase this rate, it feels that, with increasing costs, it will probably be necessary in the future to increase the rates and has therefore, with the approval of its ratepayers, asked that the rating maximum be increased as is provided in the clause.

Sections 115 to 121 of the Act give the trust certain powers to carry out drainage works for the prevention of seepage. Under these provisions, work may be carried out for the benefit of particular properties and the cost is to be borne by the owners of these properties either by means of a drainage rate levied on the particular proprietor or by an allocation of capital cost. The trust has found these provisions unsatisfactory to administer. If drainage works are carried out, it is extremely difficult to assess with any degree of exactitude what properties are benefited or the degree of benefit and to apportion the liability according to benefit. The trust, again with the approval of its ratepayers, has suggested that it be given power to carry out drainage works as deemed necessary with the cost being borne by ratepayers generally. Accordingly, sections 115 to 121 are repealed by clause 4 and it is provided that the trust is to have general power to carry out drainage works.

The cost of construction and maintenance is to be borne by a drainage rate levied on all rateable property in the district. The drainage rate will be a half-yearly rate and is not to exceed 5s. an acre of rateable land. In instances water for irrigation purposes is supplied to land which is not included in the assessment as rateable land. In such cases the trust and the owner enter into an agreement for the payment of a charge which takes the place of an irrigation rate. It is provided by clause 4 that land to which water for irrigation purposes is supplied under agreement in this manner is to be subject to the drainage rate although not included in the assessment. The remaining clauses of the Bill have not been submitted to ratepayers’ meetings but it will be seen that they are of a different nature to the preceding clauses of the Bill.

Clause 5 deals with land in the district which is known as “Y” lands. These lands are Crown lands and comprise an area of 2,150 acres, the greater part of which is of a saline nature of low potentiality and is used mainly for rough grazing. An area fronting the River Murray is subject to inundation but isolated portions have possibilities under irrigation. Section 142 of the Act provides that these lands are to be under the general control of the trust which has power to offer the land on lease and about 70 per cent of the land is leased to ratepayers under miscellaneous lease conditions for a term of 21 years. The trust retains all rents and fees received from the land. To all intents and purposes the trust has full control of this land and it has now suggested that it be given power to acquire the freehold of the land in order to facilitate the usage of the land in conjunction with adjacent land controlled by the trust. Clause 5 accordingly provides that the land may be granted to the trust upon payment to the Minister of Lands of such amount as is fixed by the Minister on the recommendation of the Land Board. Provision is made for the continuance of existing leases of any portion of the land.

Clause 6 deals with certain channel reserves within the district of the trust. Some chan­nels constructed by it for irrigation purposes are situated upon land of the Crown. These channel reserves are controlled by the trust. Portions of these reserves are suitable for disposal for various purposes and the trust desires to acquire this land in order that it may be in a position to dispose of any portions not required. Clause 6 accordingly provides that any such land may be granted to the trust upon payment to the Minister of Lands of such amount as is fixed by the Minister on the recommendation of the Land Board.

Clause 7 deals with a minor matter and amends the nomination forms for candidates for election as members of the trust or as auditor by providing that the candidate is to sign an acceptance of the nomination. Obviously, a person nominated should be willing to accept the nomination and should indicate this acceptance on the nomination form. A similar acceptance is required under the Local Government Act from candidates nominated for local government office. This Bill is a hybrid one within the meaning of the Joint Standing Orders and, thus, if it passes its second reading, it will be necessary for the Bill to be referred to a Select Committee of the House. I move the second reading.

Mr. O’HALLORAN secured the adjournment of the debate.