**WILD DOGS ACT AMENDMENT BILL 1924**

**Legislative Assembly, 1 October 1924, pages 843-6**

Second reading

**The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS (Hon. T. Butterfield)—**This is a non-contentions measure arising out of the fact that during last year the number of wild dog scalps paid for was so excessive that the fund has become depleted. The position possibly could have been avoided had the Government decided to reduce the price of scalps, the present price being 7s. 6d. each. When there was a similar amendment to the 1912 Act moved by Mr. Anstey the fee was 12s. 6d:, but, owing to the increase in the number of dogs being caught and the number of scalps handed in for payment the Government reduced the price to 7s. 6d. That price has been maintained, but, owing to the very great increase during the last 12 months the sum of money voted by Parliament and raised by taxes on pastoral lands for the purpose of creating a fund has become insufficient to meet the requirements until December next. The proposed amendment is similar to the one moved by Mr. Anstey, except that he applied for £1,000 less. It will be operative only until the end of December next, when it is hoped that the new amount which will be voted in the ordinary way will be sufficient to carry on from that date. In 1919 when Mr. Anstey moved to make that sum £6,000 the Government were recouped from the rates in 1921. The probability is that this Bill would have been unnecessary had there been stricter supervision in regard to the issue of certificates for payment by the Government. I believe there was some laxity and leakage, and probably the Government have had to contribute largely, or to some extent, for scalps which came into the State from the Northern Territory. It will be impossible to completely obviate some of the leakages in that direction, but we have tightened the ropes up considerably during the last three months with regard to the issue of certificates. We propose to increase the. amount by £7,000 making the sum payable under section 8 £8,000 until the end of December when the effect of this Bill will lapse. Section 8 was amended in 1919 by Mr. Anstey but there was a limit then of £6,000.

Mr. Blackwell—Under this Bill you are asking for an increase of £4,000?

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS —Yes, but only a temporary increase which will be refunded as the rates are collected. This short Bill is necessary owing to the large number of claims for payment for wild dog scalps that have been presented during the current year pursuant to the provisions of the Wild Dogs Act, 1912. The scheme provided under, that At is that the pastoral lands of the State are rated and moneys raised in this manner are paid into the Wild Dogs Fund. In addition, the Treasurer pays to the credit of the Fund a subsidy, up to £4,000 a calendar year, at the rate of £1 for every £1 raised by the rates. Section 9 provides that the Treasurer may pay for the tail and scalp of any wild dog killed in the pastoral areas such sum as is from time to time fixed by the Minister. I would hesitate to urge any reduction in the amount paid for scalps, but I will insist as far as possible that we have proper supervision in regard to payment for scalps and in regard to the issue of certificates.

Section 8 gives the Governor power to make advances to the Treasurer of such sums as are for the time being required carrying out the objects of the Act, subject to the provisoo that the total amount advanced and not repaid shall not at any time exceed £2,000. The object of this section is to permit the fund to be temporarily increased if, at any time , the rates and subsidy are insufficient to meet the claims made on the fund. The fund is insufficient to meet the claims at present, and this amount is necessary to be voted by Parliament in order to carry us on until more rates accumulate during the next few months. During 1923 claims were presented for 34,397 dogs and it was necessary for the Governor to advance £2,000 to the fund in order to meet all the claims. Up to the 31st May of this year 15,741 claims for payment had been presented and it appears quite certain that further advances must be made to the fund by the Governor if all claims made during this year are to be paid. The Bill accordingly increases the amount which may be advanced under section 8 from £2,000 to £6,000. Provision of a similar nature was made in 1919 when the amount to be advanced was increased to £7,000. This amount was repaid by the fund from the rates by 1921. As the relief sought by the Bill is temporary only, the operation of the amendment is confined to the present calendar year. I do not think it is necessary to go into the question of payment for dog. scalps. That was settled by this House long ago, and by public opinion in regard to the benefits which accrue to the country from such payments. It would be regrettable indeed, if we should cease it at the present juncture.

Mr. Blackwell—What is the. reason for the increase of dogs?

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN IAND8 —I do not know that it is possible to explain what is the reason. There may be many reasons, one of which would be possibly a dry season in the interior, scarcity of rabbits, and removal of dogs to the inside country. Another reason is that during the past two years there has been a tendency on the part of pastoralists to push put into the outside country with sheep. Some of the sheep stations abandoned in the nineties are again being stocked, and there is activity, on the part of those people in regard to the capture of dingoes. There may be other reasons why more scalps are being paid for than in former years. The Federal Government pay only half-a-crown within their borders, and we are making representations asking them to pay their rate up to an equivalent of ours, that is 7s.6d. We realise there may be some hawking of scalps from the Territory down into South Australia in order to collect the greater amount. As againstthat position, Queensland pays 15s., compared with our 7s. 6d. so that Queensland may be paying for some scalps which we should pay for. The Western Australian Government, after a great deal of discussion carried on for a good many years, at last agreed to pay for dog scalps within their borders. They passed an Act, and having done so allowed the matter to remain at that stage, and never appointed a receiver of scalps on our border. They promised to do so. During the last few days I have had a letter from Mr. Troy, Minister of Agriculture in Western Australia who said he was communicating with one of the pastoral officials at Eucla, intending to appoint him, if agreeable to act, as a receiver of scalps, so that there will be payment on the border for scalps of dogs caught adjacent to it, which scalps we have a suspicion are paid for at present by the South Australian Government. I hope the Bill will be passed as soon as possible, owing to the shortage of money at present in connection with that fund.

Mr.Blackwell—Does the measure apply to foxes as well as dogs?

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS - No

Mr. MOSELEY – I think there can be no possible objection to this measure, which provides really for a temporary loan to the various boards in order to tide them over to a time when they will have sufficient funds to pay the Government back. It would be a pity to have any hiatus in the payment for scalps, as the result would be to create a great deal of loss and trouble to flocks. The payment for the wild dog scalps has been of incalculable benefit, not only to the Crown Lands Depart­ment, but to the State generally. A pair of wild dogs will kill as many as 50 or 100 lambs in one night, so it is easy to realise the extent of damage of which they are capable. I daresay some dog scalps are finding their way from the Northern Territory border on account of the higher payment for them in South Aus­tralia, but if the animals are killed off no great term is being done, except that the wrong people are paying for the scalps

Mr, ALLEN—I support the measure. At first I thought the Minister should have made it a continuous sum, but if the amount to be collected next year will be sufficient to keep the fund going, well and good. As it is money well spent it would be a great mistake to curtail operations, or to leave a gap even between now and Christmas in activities against the dogs. Some years ago the Act was suspended for the time being; and it gave the dogs an opportunity to re-organise and get going more strongly than ever. Wild dogs are doing harm now and are coming from outside the vermin fenced districts. The Government went to con­siderable expense in years gone by to fence that country in order to check the dogs. The men inside those fenced districts are really paying to help those further out, whereas others outside the vermin fenced districts altogether, who have taken no great care in the destruction of dogs, are allowing the ani­mals to get down into the fenced country and to be the cause of destruction. The pure dingo is rather pretty, and one of our few native animals which continue to survive to any con­siderable extent, but unfortunately he is becoming a somewhat expensive commodity now and action has to be taken against him. The dingoes through being mixed up with dogs of other breeds have produced a cross-bred strain which is more dangerous and expensive than the pure dingo, who killed only to eat, whereas the cross-bred dog kills for sport.

Mr. Mosely – My experience of a dingo is that kill until he is knocked up.

Mr. Allen – Or knocked down. The dingo could have been dealt with much more easily if it had not been for the rabbits. Prior to the introduction of rabbits in Australia it was not usual for the dingoes to rear more than about two puppies in a season, but after the rabbits came they had a more permanent and reliable supply of food, and now-a-days produce four, six, or as many as eight puppies in a litter. Some pastoralists say they would rather deal with the rabbit than the dingo because the rabbit comes and goes, whereas the dingo comes and stays. Wonderfully good work in checking them has been done since the introduction of the Wild Dog Act and payment for scalps. Prior to that many pastoralists did a great many things for themselves and at heavy expense tried to cope with this pest. There are some­thing like 49,000 square miles enclosed now and the Government have to maintain those fences.

If we were to cease paying for dog scalps in six months there would be such an invasion outside the fences that a great deal of damage would be done and a large sum of money would have to be spent on supervision. Dogs from the Queensland and Northern Territory have been coming down into South Australia, but the border fence between Queensland and South Australia is now finished so that in future no Queensland dogs will be able to get into South Australia. According to the figures given by the Minister, something like 226,000 dogs were scalped and paid for up to May last. It cost approximately £76,000 to secure those scalps. That money was well spent however, because if the dogs had remained running loose they would have wreaked havoc on those north­ern runs. As the dogs decrease in numbers we should increase the price for scalps, so that there would still be an incentive for men to go after the scalps. Many stations have paid as much as £5 for the scalp of a dog which had caused much damage to their flocks. It is only by continued activity that the dogs can be kept down. I strongly support the Bill.

Mr. McHUGH—I support the Bill. From life experience I know that the stockowners and the Government have unquestionably done much good work in combating the dog pest. This is not a far reaching measure because the Bill is only introduced to get over a difficulty in regard to paying expenses already incurred. It will not mean the placing of a rate or an in­crease in subsidy. The £76,000 spent in an endeavor to keep down the dog pest has been well and most economically spent. People who understand anything about sheep realise that when flocks can be left unguarded during the day and night a much greater profit is made than when it is necessary to shepherd the sheep in the day time and pen them up at night. The wool industry is one of the most progressive and valuable in the State and I have much pleasure in supporting the Bill.

Bill read a second time and taken through Committee without amendment; third reading, October 2.