FISHERIES ACT AMENDMENT BILL 1967

House of Assembly, 18 October 1967, page 2784

Second reading

**The Hon. G. A. BYWATERS (Minister of Agriculture)** obtained leave and introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Fisheries Act, 1917-1962. Read a first time.

The Hon. G. A. BYWATERS: I move:

*That this Bill be now read a second time.*

In July, 1965, representatives of crayfishermen’s associations from all sections of the South Australian crayfishing industry held a meeting at Millicent at which the then Director of Fisheries (Mr. A. C. Bogg) and I were present. All representatives expressed their concern at the state of the crayfishing industry and in particular stressed the need for control of the number of crayfishing boats operating and the number of craypots in use on each boat. Indirectly as a result of this meeting and because of other complicated management problems, a Parliamentary Select Committee was formed to consider the need for amendment to the Fisheries Act, 1917-1962. The Select Committee gathered evidence from many people who desired to present evidence, including individual fishermen, representatives from all professional fishermen’s associations in the State, representatives from the processing sector of the industry, representatives from amateur angling bodies in the State, representatives from interstate Fisheries Departments and a representative from the South Australian Fisheries and Fauna Conservation Department.

After considering the evidence placed before it, the Committee prepared a report which outlined many recommendations for amendment to the Fisheries Act. Effective implementation of these amendments can only be accomplished if the Fisheries Act is completely redrafted. This will not be possible during the current session of Parliament. However, the fishery for southern crayfish is so valuable to the South Australian fishing industry and the provisions of the Fisheries Act relating to its management are so urgently in need of revision that this Bill has been prepared as an interim measure. The main recommendations which the Select Committee made in relation to management of the southern crayfish fishery are contained in paragraphs 73 to 82 of its report. The committee, although hesitant to prohibit the taking of crayfish by other than professional fishermen, felt that some immediate action was necessary to ensure that over-fishing of the known crayfish areas of the State did not take place.

For this reason, it decided to recommend that a boat limit and a pot limit be imposed in this industry for an experimental period of three years. It was the opinion of the committee that, in conjunction with the proposed boat limits and pot limits, the licence held by a person who took crayfish for sale should be endorsed to indicate that the licence holder was a licensed crayfish fisherman. The committee was also of the opinion that after September 1, 1967, no boats other than those engaged commercially in crayfishing at that date should be permitted to engage in crayfishing with more than three cray pots or three drop nets, unless it could be proved that a boat under construction at that time was intended to be used for crayfishing. The committee stressed that its recommendations relating to limiting the number of boats and the number of crayfish pots which might be used by persons working these boats should be brought into effect as soon as possible, preferably for the crayfish season which will commence on November 1, 1967.

It is realized that this Bill will not give complete effect to the Select Committee’s recommendations relating to crayfish. It is presented as a preliminary means of controlling effort in the southern crayfish fishery until all the recommendations of the Select Committee can be implemented. The Bill accordingly provides by clause 5 that it will be an offence to use more than three crayfish pots or drop nets at any one time in taking crayfish without a permit. Provision for permits is made by new section 15c inserted by clause 4 of the Bill. The new section limits their issue to persons holding licences on September 1, 1967, who were prior to that date engaged in commercial crayfishing, with the exception that a licensee who had a vessel under construction on August 31 for the purpose of crayfishing commercially may be granted a permit.

Clause 6 of the Bill empowers the Governor by regulation to prescribe the maximum number of crayfish pots that may be used in taking crayfish. This provision is considered to be desirable. As the Bill is an interim measure, clause 7 provides that it shall expire on May 31, 1969, which will be the end of the main crayfishing season for 1968-69.

Mr. HALL secured the adjournment of the debate.