**IRRIGATION BILL 1922**

**Legislative Council, 8 November 1922, pages 1438-45**

Second reading

**The COMMISSIONER of PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. T. Pascoe)—**This is one of the most important measures that have come before us this session. We are proposing to make vital alterations in regard to irrigation matters and the administration of the Irrigation Department. These alterations have become necessary because of the tremendous growth which that Department has made during recent years, and the magnitude to which we expect it to grow in the years to come. I do not think it would be out of place to bring before members, not simply the subject matter contained in the Bill, but questions relating to irrigation as it has been and to the growth of the department to what it is to-day, and to some of the expectations we have for that department as regards the future. We would have a very poor vision indeed if we could not look into the future and expect great things to happen so far as this particular industry and department are concerned.

The Hon. J. Lewis—-What industry do you refer to?

The COMMISSIONER of PUBLIC WORKS —Irrigation.

The Hon. J, Lewis—-What do you produce?

The COMMISSIONER of PUBLIC WORKS —Surely the honorable member is not serious in asking what we produce under irrigation. However, if he will have a little patience I shall show him directly what we are producing and what we expect to produce in time to come. I fancy that if Mr. Gordon, the author of “The Nile of Australia,” were to set himself to-day to write a similar work he would perhaps give a very much more glowing report on the possibilities of the River Murray lands. I am not finding fault with what he has already written in those very useful articles contained in the “Nile of Australia,” but I think to-day he could paint them in very much brighter colors from the history of the past than he actually did use on the prophetic side which he adopted when he compiled the work in question.

The Hon. D. J. Gordon—I think I was justified in my prophecies.

The Hon. T. McCallum—What about the financial side?

The COMMISSIONER of PUBLIC WORKS —I agree with Mr. Gordon. The expansion in recent years has been such as to justify any member in looking forward with tremendous optimism to the future possibilities in regard to the River Murray lands. In 1887 or 1888 the South Australian Government entered into an agreement with Chaffey Brothers, who established the irrigation colony at Renmark. That settlement has had a chequered career. For many years it was not an absolute success. There were difficulties to overcome and problems to be solved, and yet Chaffey Brothers did a wonderful work for South Australia. Professor Perkins has written a bulletin on the rise and progress of the Australian fruitgrowing areas on the River Murray, from which I quote the following:—

When, from the standpoint of 34 years’ experience, we look at the results that have been achieved, we realise that it would have been difficult to have made more happy selections for the growth and production of dried and citrus fruit. This fact alone is an abiding tribute to the genius of the three brothers, who not only blazed the way for us, but who laid the foundations truly and well of one of the finest assets we have in these States. It is easy enough to-day to determine where and how irrigated fruitgrowing can be practised to best advantage in the State, but the position was otherwise difficult 34 years ago. The river was there, it is true, but who was to say that these wastes of mallee and box pine were eventually to carry flourishing orchards and vineyards and a prosperous population? Chaffey Brothers not only believed that this would be so, but they staked their reputation on this belief, and sank large sums of money into this apparently valueless land in support of it.

The Hon. J. Lewis—They sunk all their money there and got nothing out of it.

The COMMISSIONER of PUBLIC WORKS – I agree, but while Chaffey Brothers as a company failed, the work they did has not failed, but has proved an enormous success for Australia as a whole.

The Hon. J. H. Cooke—They were simply ahead of their time.

The COMMISSIONER of PUBLIC WORKS —Yes; a good many people are ahead of their time and some are behind. Professor Perkins’ Bulletin goes on to say:—

Unfortunately Chaffey Brothers met the fate of most pioneers. From the purely personal point of view they were not successful, and after eight years of strenuous labor and disappointments were forced into liquidation in 1895. These brothers were so intimately connected with these irrigation settlements that I may be pardoned a brief digression on their behalf. Democracies are proverbially fickle and forgetful. We remember that they failed financially, but we are apt to forget the gallant tight they put up against overwhelming odds, and the inestimable boon (notwithstanding their personal failure) they succeeded in conferring upon us and our successors. The early nineties was a period of very pronounced .financial depression. Unemployment was general, credit difficult to secure, enterprise dead, and it is against these difficulties that Chaffey Brothers had to battle single-handed coupled with the lack of markets and the general inefficiency and inexperience of early settlers who were unable to see what prospects were ahead of them, and proportionally critical and restive. Hard things were said of Chaffey Brothers in their later years, and yet if there are any in our midst who deserve well of the Commonwealth, it is these men, and perhaps some day we, or our successors, will realise it, and do them tardy honor in Appropriate fashion.

That puts the early history of irrigation and the efforts of the Chaffey Brothers more concisely than probably I could put it in moving the second reading of this Bill. Then came the village settlements, which were not a success. I do not think that to-day we need examine the causes of why they were not a success. My point is that out of these failures and partial failures—because, although Chaffey Brothers’ enterprise was a failure for a time, eventually their scheme succeeded—has grown an industry that is today and will be vital in the future to South Australia as a whole. That industry moves slowly, but it moves surely, and its growth during the last 10 years has been very faster and greater than during the whole before. I have here a comparison dealing with the population along the River Murray in the two census periods 1911 and 1921. The population of Barmera was nil in 1911 and 756 in 1921; Berri, 217 and 1,197; Cadell, 59 and 235; Cobdogla, nil and 207; Glossop, nil and 235; Lone Gum, nil and

116; Monash, nil and 84; Moorook, 235 and .367; Renmark, 1,933 and 3,453; Waikerie, 398 and 1,130; Mypolonga, 88 and 432; Murray Bridge, 1,255 and 2,734. The total population of those settlements in 1911 was 4,185 and in 1921 it was 10,946, an increase of 6,761 in ten years.

The Hon. J. Lewis.—How many of those people were assisted by the Government?

The COMMISSIONER of PUBLIC WORKS —I have not got the figures with me, but probably under a thousand. But we hope that they will all be successfully settled and produce wealth for South Australia.

The Hon. H. Tassie—The number of soldiers actually settled, including their families and dependents, is nearly 2,000.

The COMMISSIONER of PUBLIC WORKS —That is probably so. The last census was taken in 1921, and consequently the figures are not up to date. Take another phase of the growth of these settlements during that 10 years. In 1911 the expenditure from loans was £48,853; in 1921 it was £861,807. The expenditure from revenue in 1911 was £1,705, and in 1921 it was £65,939. The expenditure from loans to date totals £2,873,259. The revenue received in 19.11 was £471, while in 1921 it amounted to £125,656, which represents something over 4 per cent, on the expenditure from loans. The areas allotted in 1911 were—Irrigable land, 2,430 acres; reclaimed land, 1,930 acres; the number of settlers being 226. To date 17,200 acres of irrigable land have been allotted and 6,100 acres of reclaimed land, and the number of settlers is 1,200. The areas in course of preparation amount to 34,000 acres of irrigable land and 5,700 acres of reclaimed land.

The Hon. R. T. Melrose—Are the figures you quoted the total expenditure or the money expended by the Government?

The COMMISSIONER of PUBLIC WORKS —I am giving only the departmental figures. We have no means of knowing what the private expenditure amounts to. We have at present about 20,000 acres under survey preparatory to the commencement of construction work, and a further 70,000 to 80,000 acres, all of which can possibly be irrigated, are in course of examination. Those figures prove conclusively the growth that has taken place in the department during recent years. They show what the expenditure has been and, also judging from the revenue we are receiving, that we are not in such a bad state as some people would have us think. The promise for the future is that we will make even more rapid progress. One of the great problems connected with the settlement of our Murray lands is the finding of markets for the produce. As to that matter the Government have not been idle. We have used every possible effort in order to assist the settlers in finding markets. That is the most vital problem we have in regard to the success or otherwise of these settlements. Representations were made to us by the A.D.F.A. which brought the matter before the Government here and also before the Government of Victoria early in the year. The result was that the Prime Minister cabled to the British Government with a view to getting them to alter their tariff so that they might grant preference in favor of Australian fruit. It is too much to expect that the sending of a mere cable would cause the British Government to alter their fiscal policy which has been settled for years. It is not surprising, therefore, that the result was that the Imperial Government declined to consider the question of granting preference to the Dominions in regard to their products. But in any big undertaking like this we would be very unwise to accept one, two, or even three denials from the British Government as regards altering their policy. Neither the A.D.F.A. nor the Government feel that the matter should be allowed to rest. In April last I visited Mildura, and it happened that the A.D.F.A. people there had on the preceding night brought the matter of future markets under the notice of the Premier and Assistant Minister of Agriculture of Victoria who were on a visit to Mildura. They brought the same thing under my notice on the night I arrived there. The result was that Mr. Cattanach, the Chairman of the Mil­dura Water Commission, telegraphed to the Victorian Premier and a conference was arranged between the Ministers of Agriculture of New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia. That conference took place early in April or May of this year, the Commonwealth Minister of Trade and Customs being also present. The conference unanimously adopted the following resolutions:—

1. That this Conference considers it is essential in the interests of producers of dried fruits and canned fruits, and especially in the interests of soldier settlement, that the Commonwealth Government should reopen negotiations with the Imperial Government for substantial preference to dominion products, and that co-operation of the State Government be sought.
2. That the State Governments be asked to consider and submit to the Commonwealth Government definite proposals in respect to the settlement of British ex-service men in return for or in recognition of the granting of dominion preference to our dried and canned fruits.
3. : That this Conference recommends the initiation of a publicity movement to place before the British public the mutual advantages to Great Britain and Australia from the settlement of ex-service men in Australia, and that this can readily be achieved by the British Government granting substantial preference to dominion dried and canned fruits over the production of foreign countries.
4. That it be a recommendation from this Conference to the Commonwealth and State Governments that representatives be sent to England to support the movement for prefer­ence, such representatives to be men with practical knowledge of the industry, the expense (including publicity work) to be not more than £6,000, the apportionment of such expense to be a matter for arrangement between the Commonwealth and State Governments concerned.

The Hon. J. Lewis—Could not the Agents-General do that?

The COMMISSIONER of PUBLIC WORKS—I do not think they could. You want a man directly in touch with the trade— a man who gets his living from it. While our Agents-General are very capable men they cannot be expected to be expert in all matters.

The Hon. W. Morrow—Have you not a Trade Commissioner over there?

The COMMISSIONER of PUBLIC WORKS—We have a representative of the Produce Depot, but he has very little idea of our irrigation works or of the necessity for guaranteeing permanent markets. It was agreed to submit the resolutions I have just read to the Conference of Ministers of Agriculture held in Perth on May 29, and that conference unanimously adopted them. Following on these resolutions all the States except Queensland agreed to pay their share. The allotment of the £6,000 was that the Commonwealth Government should pay half and the other States the remainder. The three States chiefly concerned in the question of the dried and canned fruits are New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia. To a lesser extent Tasmania is interested in the canned fruit, and to a lesser extent still, Western Australia is interested, though that State might become very much more interested later on. Up to the present Western Australia and Tasmania will pay £200 each and the remainder will be apportioned between the other three States. Victoria has nominated Mr. Chaifey, of Mildura, one of the Chaffey Brothers, and South Australia has nominated Mr. McDougall, a very energetic and capable Englishman at Renmark, whom Mr. Chaifey regards as his right hand man. We believe that with the tremendous amount of knowledge these two men have of the dried fruit business they will be able to put forth very great efforts to find markets for Australian produce in Great Britain. I believe New South Wales have nominated Mr. Mears.

The Hon. J. Jelley—It cost Australia £8,500 to send Senator Pearce to the Washington Conference.

The COMMISSIONER of PUBLIC WORKS —This will be a much cheaper and more profitable investment for Australia than that was. The functions of the Committee will be educational to a large extent. They will get in touch with the British public and with British public men and have samples of Australian products to display. They will also use the press as much as possible. It is hoped they will be able to develop a spirit favorable to trading with the Dominions. I have no doubt that apart altogether from the question of preference we will obtain from the work of these men a substantial increase in the trade in these lines between Australia and Britain. We have read a lot recently about the failure of Australia to market these products attractively. The A.D.F.A. has been tightening up matters in this respect. These men will be able to ascertain what is necessary in the way of attractive marketing, and they will also be able to find out whether the exported fruits which earned Australia such a bad name came from the A.D.F.A. or, as that body suspects, from speculators who bought goods cheaply from men who wanted money quickly and exported them without any consideration of how they were marketed.

The Hon. J. Cowan—The goods would come from Australia in any case.

The COMMISSIONER of PUBLIC WORKS —That is so, but these men will be able to learn who was responsible for exporting them. They were chiefly from the River Murray. It was the export of these goods in that condition that to a very great extent earned for Australia the bad name which she at present bears in regard to these products. It is admitted everywhere that so far as quality goes Australia can compete with the world. Mr. Chaffey, who has had Californian experience, says that the quality of the Australian product is better than that of California, but on the other side of the world the latter country has organised the industry to such an extent that it can afford to keep back anything of a doubtful nature, and sell it at a cheaper price in its big home market.

The Hon. J. Cowan—If the industry were properly organised in Australia we could do that.

The COMMISSIONER of PUBLIC WORKS —Yes; and this delegation to England will not only do good work on the other side of the world, but will be able to bring home lessons to our own people in the matter of the organisation of the industry and get-up of our products. When we were at Mildura we met Mr. Hiam, one of the delegates from the British Exhibition, who heard our arguments, went through the sheds with us, and saw what we were producing, and his personal feeling was that Australia had some claim on the Imperial Government to come to its assistance in these products. At our conference in Melbourne we met Major Belcher, who took up practically the same stand as his colleague, Mr. Hiam. Our own Tariff Board has the same feeling, and I believe that we can put up a very strong case to the Imperial Government. We are not asking for anything without being willing to reciprocate.

The Hon. D. J. Gordon—We are already reciprocating.

The COMMISSIONER of PUBLIC WORKS —I shall quote some figures on that point.

The Hon. R. T. Melrose—Unfortunately, we buy from England only when we can buy cheaper.

The COMMISSIONER of PUBLIC WORKS —So far as the tariff of Australia to-day is concerned, we give to British traders as against outsiders a preference averaging 11.9 per cent. which, in 1920-21 amounted to £8,700,000, the estimate for 1921-1922 being £5,400,000.

The Hon. J. Jelley—That much worth of trade?

The COMMISSIONER of PUBLIC WORKS .—It means that much worth of trade preference given by the Australian tariff to British traders over and above foreign nations. It means that amount of Customs duties which would have been paid if we had bought the same goods from foreign countries.

The Hon. D. J. Gordon—Now give us what the British Government allow us.

The COMMISSIONER of PUBLIC WORKS -—The total value of British preference to Australia for the same period was £257,324.

The Hon. D. J. Gordon—A most one-sided bargain.

The COMMISSIONER of PUBLIC WORKS —Of that sum £250,000 is represented by wines and spirits, so that on all our other products we have British preference only to the amount of £7,000 odd. Therefore, while they have in name in Great Britain a preference to the Dominions, actually it is nothing, and when we consider what Australia has done for the Mother Country under our tariff, I think we can put up a pretty strong case in the matter of our fruit products.

The Hon. D. J. Gordon—An unanswerable case.

The COMMISSIONER of PUBLIC WORKS —We are even willing to go further. We have in South Australia more land that can be brought under irrigation than we have settlers to put on it, and Cabinet has agreed to set aside at least 40,000 acres for British ex-service men or other British immigrants who might desire to settle on our irrigation areas. That should be a further inducement to the British Government to assist us to market our products. The figures that follow indicate the growth of the industry. In 1911 our counties of Albert, Alfred, Hamley, and Young produced 61,546bush. of fresh apri­cots, and in 1921 69,401bush.; peaches and nectarines, 13,622bush. and 71,781bush.; pears, 3,233bush. and 33,126bush.; plums and prunes, 666bush. and 4,143bush.; oranges and lemons, 20,415bush. and 102,746bush. In dried fruits the same four counties produced 4,658cwts. of apricots in 1911, and 5,266cwts. in 1921; peaches, 959cwts. and 5,223cwts.; sultanas and raisins, 32,826cwts. and 38,521cwts. The 1921 production of sultanas and raisins represented a bad year, because in 1920, when there was probably a little less area under cultivation, the production of sultanas and raisins amounted to 57,521cwt. instead of 38,521cwt. In 1911 15,000 odd cwts. of currants were produced, and in 1921, 22,000 odd cwts.; wine, nothing in 1911, and 929,606galls. in 1921; and grapes nothing in 1911, and 18,648 tons in 1921. That shows a steady and fairly rapid growth, but on the question of markets we have to consider, not only South Australia, but to some extent the Commonwealth as well. The estimated production of raisins and currants for the Commonwealth in 1922 is 19,000 tons, and the estimated Australian consumption is 11,000 tons, leaving 8,000 tons to be exported. In 1925, owing to the extent to which planting has been going on, we expect that the production of raisins and currants for the Commonwealth will be 30,000 tons and the

home consumption 13,000 tons, leaving an exportable surplus of 17,000 tons. In 1927, which will include practically all the production from the planting that has been done up to the present time, but nothing from that to be done in the future, we shall probably have a production of 53,000 tons of raisins and currants, with a home consumpton of 14,000 tons and an exportable surplus of 39 000 tons. These figures allow only for production from lands already planted or in preparation for immediate planting to drying varieties of vines. It is, therefore, obvious that the entire character of the marketing conditions of the industry are being changed. It is also obvious that this change is being brought about by direct Government action. To show, in brief, the position, I may say that the pre-war average of the Australian consumption was 80 per cent, of the crop and the exportable surplus 20 per cent.; but after 1927 the Australian consumption will represent only 20 per cent, of the crop and the exportable surplus 80 per cent. The whole future of the industry, of the soldier settler, and of the large sum of money advanced by the Commonwealth and State Governments depends on the ability of Australia to compete with the outside markets. From the reports of Mr. Little, the Commonwealth Trade Commissioner in China, it would appear that there are possibilities of a big expansion of our trade there if we are alive to the get-up of our fruits. I have not yet received the report of Mr. Markwell, our own Commissioner who visited the East in an endeavor to work up trade there, but in conversation with him since his return he expressed the feeling that in Calcutta there is certainly a big chance of our doing a considerable amount of trade in our dried fruits, and even in our fresh fruits if we can get a direct steamer service to Calcutta. The difficulty at present as regards many of the Eastern centres is that we have to go such a roundabout way to get to them. Our products have to be shipped here, sometimes transhipped at another port in the Commonwealth, and again transhipped in the East before finally reaching market, by which time they are liable to be damaged on account of all the knocking about they get.

The Hon. J. Cowan—The Commonwealth Navigation Act is a big obstacle.

The COMMISSIONER of PUBLIC WORKS —Yes, this industry has suffered a good deal from Commonwealth legislation. Its difficulties to-day are due largely to Commonwealth legislation, and when we get Mr. Markwell’s written report it will be for Cabinet to see whether it will not be possible to induce some shipping company to carry our products direct to these Eastern markets. Mr. Markwell says that not only should India provide a market for our dried fruits and other products of our orchards and irrigation settlements, but there will be a tremendous demand there for salt and other things we produce very largely in South Australia, but much depends on getting direct shipping. Personally I have no doubt upon the subject. Although we have difficulties and may suffer still further I believe that eventually these markets will be found and the industry placed on a permanent and safe basis. I now want to read the concluding portion of Professor Perkins’ bulletin on the “Rise and Progress of the South Australian Fruitgrowng Areas on the River Murray,” as follows:—

The relative value of these vine and fruit settlements to the State may be stressed in a final contrasting statement. The Government Statist has estimated our general crop revenue for 1919-20 to have amounted to £13,728,224; it was secured from 4,467,696 acres (including 1,408,926 acres of bare fallow). This represents a mean return of £3 Is. 5d. per acre. On the other hand, 9,310 acres, which, after deduction of vines and fruit trees not in bearing, represents only 0.21 per cent of the total area from which our crop revenue was derived, yielded £580,879, or 4.23 per cent, of that revenue. It follows, therefore, that from the point of view of production, one acre on the Murray which 35 years ago was of little or no economic value, is to-day worth 20 times more than our average crop-producing land. Much imagination is not needed to form a definite picture of the future prospects of the Murray Valley. If to the vine and fruit settlements of the upper river we add the as yet barely skimmed wealth of its lower reaches, it is no exaggeration to anticipate that in no distant future the Murray Valley will carry a population equal to the present State population and yield an agricultural revenue equal to the present State revenue. We cannot, however, close our eyes to the fact that there is one major difficulty looming ahead of us. It may delay the brilliant future which we anticipate and involve existing settlers in temporary difficulties; it cannot, however, permanently check the progress of these settlements. I am referring now to the difficulty of disposing satisfactorily of the enormous produce which will soon come pouring in from the newly planted areas. The difficulties which are confronting us to-day were present in the minds of the far-seeing founders of Mildura and Ren­mark. Listen to what Mr. George Chaffey says, as reported by an “Argus” of 1887:—“The market is the last thing to trouble any man who has gone deep into the matter. I have told you (your own Customs returns told me) that you import now £750,000 worth of various fruits in the year. With the natural increase in population and the education of taste afforded by good and cheap commodities, you will double that quantity in 10 years, though I can hardly hope that we alone shall be able to supply you with such an amount in 10 or 100 years. A million and a half a year is a bigger contract than we ever reckoned on. But take others into the reckoning. Suppose you go in as big as California, is not the world open to you? There are a million and a half acres of vineyards and fruit gardens in California now, and fruit is a better price than when the first acre was watered. I expect to see a million and a half acres tilled on the Murray before I die, and have not the slightest doubt about the market. There may be a glut—a glut almost always precedes the opening of the best market for any produce—- but there is no doubt whatever about the sufficient opening being found when it is properly sought. . . . Your market is the world, and when the world is glutted you may stop your taps and hoes, but not before.” Well, as has been stated, Chaffey Brothers probably over-estimated the area of irrigable land on the Murray; they also did not make sufficient allowance for the population factor. Nevertheless, they believed that we could market our dried fruits in competition with other peoples of the world. Personally, I have had my periods of doubt over this question, but when I have reflected that California, a country of high wages and high standards of living, has been able to do so, then I have felt satisfied that what California has been able to do, we too shall be able to do, so soon as we set our minds to it. Nevertheless, the glut will come—the bitter hour before the dawn—and in view of the magnitude of the interests involved, true statesmanship will endeavor to circumvent it, and leave no stone unturned in the immediate search for foreign outlets and markets. Personally, I have no fear for the future of the Murray, whatever our supineness, but if early action is taken much individual suffering and loss will be avoided, and it is quite possible that the inevitable glut may, after all, never materialise.

I have said sufficient to show the growth that has taken place and the possibilities of this industry in the future.

The Hon. D. J. Gordon—There are great possibilities in Australian consumption if prices are reduced.

The COMMISSIONER of PUBLIC WORKS —That is so. I have shown the possibilities for the future. I have shown the expansion that has taken place and which is now going on. The question now comes, is it reasonable t» expect that one man can control the whole of this great business. The Director of Irrigation has accomplished wonders. But at what personal cost? Those who have come closely in contact with him during recent years must realise that unless the Director of Irrigation is relieved of some of his responsibilities his life will not be worth much for long. I have been, in close contact with Mr. McIntosh for a considerable time. I suppose that I know him as intimately and enjoy his confidence as much as any public man in South Australia. He is not only one of my officers, but he is also a close personal friend. I feel that in his own interests it would be better that he should be relieved of some of his responsibilities.

The Hon. D. J. Gordon—He is a fine public servant.

The COMMISSIONER of PUBLIC WORKS —Yes; and he has done wonders for South Australia. I do not think our records can be equalled by any of the other States. Victoria years ago imported a man from America at a very high salary, more than three times the amount our Director has ever received, and he has certainly made greater mistakes than, have ever been made in South Australia. In Victoria they have had to write off more than we have had to write off in connection with our settlements, and to put their Irrigation Department in order they have adopted the principle we are coming to to-day—that is, a board to manage it, as it is too big for any one man. Our work compares more than favorably with either New South Wales or Victoria. New South Wales took this work up at a later date than did Victoria, but they proceeded in such a way that in a short time their loss was equal to that of' Victoria. We have gone on slowly. If we put on to the Director of Irrigation, in addition to the responsibilities he has been carrying, the responsibilities of the Soldiers' Irrigation Settlement Department, how can we expect one man to cope with the work? We have been asking one man to carry more than he could in justice to himself and the country. Mr. Cattanach, of Victoria, who recently reported on our River Murray settlements, was very strong on the point that the whole of the Works on the Murray should be put under the control of one department. He expressed the opinion that the dual control which exists at present should not continue, and that the Soldier Settlement Department, so far as the settlements on the Murray are concerned, should be under the department which; to use his own words, has the control of the life, namely the water. Mr. Cattanach said that the Irrigation Department is the department which should carry the whole of the responsibility. If members read his report they will find that its whole tenor is that the safest policy for South Australia is to adopt that principle. This particular industry and department are destined to become the biggest thing we have in the State. Mr. E. R. Lawrie, the Chief Mechanical Construction Engineer, who also has been a wonderfully good servant of South Australia, in a paper read before the Adelaide Division of the Institution of Engineers, stated that the total quantity of water for irrigation allowed South Australia under the agreement will be 690,000 acre feet per annum. “Consequently," he proceeds,

“with full storage development South Australia can rely on irrigating 272,000 acres along the River Murray, including reclamation areas”. The area now under irrigation and being developed for irrigation totals about 69,000 acres, which leaves a tremendous area yet to be dealt with by this department. The great principle for which we are bringing, forward this Bill is the reconstruction of the Irrigation Department, so that it shall be under the control of a body of men, who will be wisely chosen and who will be able to manage what is going to be a tremendous asset to the State, so that we may successfully settle thousands of people on the Murray with advantage to themselves and the country. The Bill creates a board, and gives to it greater powers than are at present enjoyed by the Director of Irrigation. I will not weary members by going into the details of the measure, but when it gets into Committee I will supply any details I can. I thought it necessary to put up a case for this particular industry, because through the reports in the press much wrong has been done, not only to the Irrigation Department, but to South Australia as a whole. They have not made allowance in the press and elsewhere for the coming in of the personal element. Not only in irrigation work, but in. other lines of agriculture and in pastoral pursuits it is strange that on one side of a fence you may find a man who is prosperous, and on the other side a man who is doing no good at all. The land is often blamed, but it is out the fault of the land at all. In circumstances such as these and when things are sick the departments have often been adversely criticised when as a matter of fact it is the incapacity of the settlers who fail to take advantage of their opportunities. Summed up in a phrase, the purpose of this Bill is “unity of control in regard to all irrigation matters”. I move the second reading.

The Hon. J. JELLEY secured the adjournment of the debate until November 9.