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**OYSTER FISHERY BILL 1873**

House of Assembly, 20 August 1873. Page 186

Second reading

**The COMMISSIONER of PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. H. E. Bright)** moved that this Bill be now read a second time. Its object was to take better care of the oysters found in the waters of South Australia, as had been found necessary in other places where oysters were cultivated, and a large amount was derived by various Corporations through taking care of their oyster-beds. The Bill provided not only for the proper care of natural oyster-beds, but also for the formation of artificial ones, giving the discoverer of fresh beds the exclusive right to use them for twelve months. It also referred to the close season which had to be observed for the preservation of oysters. At present oysters were taken from the beds all through the year, and the falling off in the supply arose from this fact. There might be some difference of opinion as to the particular months the Government had set down, but as Mr. Mortlock had handed to him a letter from parties acquainted with the matter recommending that the close season should commence in September and end in November, the Government would have no objection to alter the Bill accordingly.

Mr. MORTLOCK, whilst supporting the Bill, pointed out that it would have to be altered in several respects; the quantity of water allowed for beds must be increased for one.

Mr. WARD said three or four years ago he obtained leave to introduce a Bill to amend the Game Act, and he would suggest whether it would not be well to incorporate a measure of the kind with this for the protection of oysters. In the present Game Bill there were a great many mistakes. In that Bill rabbits were included as game, and it was singular that the hon. member for Light (Mr. Pearce) should that day have presented a petition about the destruction of rabbits, when at present no person was permitted to destroy one. He was afraid if the Bill were now passed, with so little information before them, that some mistakes would be made similar to placing rabbits as game in the Act. He thought this Bill should be incorporated with the Game Act, and there were four or five persons in the colony who could give valuable information to a Commission—Mr. Hughes with reference to rabbits and hares, and Mr. Rounsevell with reference to pheasants. The appointment of a Select Committee to consider the Bill would, he thought, be the means of preventing blunders.

Mr. PEARCE had intended to ask that the Bill should be incorporated with the Game Act, and that at least “hares and rabbits” should be struck out of the schedule, so as to prevent their being protected any longer. If this was not done, from what he knew both with reference to his own and other districts he felt certain that much loss would be the consequence. He hoped what he had pointed out as to the rabbits and hares would be done if the Government did not see its way clear to incorporate both subjects in one Bill. One gentleman had told him that he would lose 800 or 1,000 bushels of wheat through the ravages of the rabbits. He would support the Bill if pressed to a division, but hoped that the Government would not lose sight of the remarks that had been made.

Mr. WEST-ERSKINE pointed out as an additional reason why the Bill should be passed at once, and alone if necessary, that the oysters found round the coasts of the Northern Territory, he had reason to believe, were valuable as pearl oysters. In Ceylon, where a revenue some years ago was collected from this source of £90,000 a year, the supply was beginning to fall off, and that would have the effect of raising the price obtainable for pearls got on our coasts. The whole of the Game Act should be altered.

Mr. MYLES could say something about rabbits, if that were required; but did not think it was necessary to combine the two Bills. In this matter those who made their bread at oyster-fishing should be considered, and their information allowed due weight. He thought, from what he had been told, that December 21 was the proper date in the Bill.

Mr. RAMSAY hoped the Bill would pass; and as to the game laws they should be at once dealt with, as rabbits and hares would be found to do much damage in the Northern districts.

Mr. BOOTHBY said he had been told by persons who were allowed to know that no particular damage would be done at the particular time to oyster-beds if the young oysters were put back again. This was not now done. It would be well if a provision for this were made in the Bill.

The Bill was then read a second time.