**FIBRES AND SPONGES BILL1909**

**House of Assembly, 8 September 1909, page 303**

Second reading

**The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS**, in moving the second reading of the Fibres and Sponges Bill, said its ob­ject was to assist towards the working of certain deposits which were known to exist in South Australia. A large num­ber of applications for permits had been made. The Bill was intended to help discoverers of fibre and sponges which were known to exist in abundance in the State, and to render the articles marketable commodities. They were not sure as to the value of the material, but intended to grant licenses which would encourage capitalists to develop the industry. This Bill was practically the same as the Fibre Bill which was introduced last session, but which did not then go as far as the second reading owing to the close of the session. Several alterations had been made. In the first place a change had been made in the scope of the measure. Last session's Bill dealt only with the fibre known as Posidonia Australis, but this one dealt with sponges also. The principal provision was clause 4, which authorised the granting of licenses in respect of any portions of the foreshore, namely, the shore between high and low water marks, and the sea bed adjoining such portions, for the purpose of obtaining fibre and sponges, or either fibre or sponges. These licenses were to be granted by the Commissioner of Crown Lands or any person authorised by him, thus following the terms of section 203 of the Crown Lands Act, 1903. To prevent the operations of licensees from interfering with navigation or damaging harbors, it was provided in clause 4 that no license should be granted in respect of any place situated within one mile of any jetty, wharf, pier, breakwater, or harbor, or of any place disapproved by the Commissioner. The area to be comprised in any one license was, by clause 5, limited to five miles, with a frontage along high-water mark of two and a half miles. Applications for licenses were to be referred by the Commissioner to the Land Board to determine, subject to the Commissioner’s approval, whether the license should be granted, and if there were more than one applicant in respect of the area, to determine which, if any, was to have it. Clause 7 was important, as it fixed the terms and conditions of the licenses. They might be granted for as long as 21 years, or for a shorter term, with rights of renewal up to 21 years, and there was to be an annual rent, in addition to royalties, of £5 per square mile. Certain labor conditions were to be complied with, as at least two men were to be continuously employed, or at least £100 was to be spent in each year in working the area. Royalties were to be paid according to the scale set out in the schedule. This scale had been so graded that if the venture was not very productive only a slight payment need be made, but if it turned out to be a great success for the licensee he had to make a substantial return to, the State. And a license was not to be revocable except for non-payment of rent and royalties or non-observance of its terms and conditions. Clause 9 gave the licensee the exclusive right to take fibre and sponges from the area comprised in his license. The object of clause 10, which was new, was to bring the holders of licenses already granted into line with licenses granted directly under the Act. Clause 11 enabled the Governor to make regulations as to various matters, including the making of applications for licenses and the forms of licenses, the means of ascertaining the values of the capital expended by licensees, their net profits, and the amounts of royalties payable, and generally such matters and things as might be necessary or convenient for giving effect to the Act. There were also the usual provisions as to publication of regulations, with an opportunity for Parliament to disapprove of them. He hoped the measure would result in the development of two important industries, and that members would give it their generous support.

On the motion of Mr. VAUGHAN, the debate was adjourned till next day.