**SHEARERS ACCOMMODATION ACT AMENDMENT BILL 1925**

**House of Assembly, 24 November 1925, pages 1687**

Second reading

**The TREASURER (Hon. J. Gunn**)—The Bill is introduced for the purpose of amending the Shearers Accommodation Act, 1922, so that the provisions in that measure relating to the accommodation required to be provided for shearers may be .amplified and extended. Section 6 of the principal Act is that which sets out the conditions which must be fulfilled if the accommodation supplied for the shearers is to comply with the requirements of the Act. Paragraph i. of subsection (2) provides that not less than 240 cubic feet of air space shall be allowed to each person sleeping in any room or compartment. This allowance, it is considered, is totally inadequate, and when it is realised that a space 6ft. by 4ft. by 10ft. is all that this provision allows for every man sleeping in the shearers’ huts it must be admitted that an increase in the air space allowed is highly desirable. Regulations under the Health Act provide for a minimum amount of space of 500 cubic feet for a person in police and other barracks. Clause 2, paragraph (a), therefore, increases the space allowed for each shearer in the sleeping accommodation provided for him to 500 cubic feet. The paragraph further provides that in calculating the air space in pursuance of the paragraph no allowance shall be made in respect of any air space at a greater height than 14ft. from the floor. This is intended to put an end to the practice which sometimes obtains of providing huts with very high ceilings, and consequently with extremely circumscribed floor space. The paragraph also provides that beds are to be placed so that there is a distance of at least 3ft. between the sides of the beds and of at least 4ft. between the ends of the beds, and that not less than 54 square feet of floor space shall be provided for every bed. Paragraph (a) of the clause provides that all buildings used for sleeping are to be divided into compartments, each compartment to accommodate not more than three persons. Paragraph ii. of subsection (2) of the principal Act provides that when the shearers for whom sleeping accommodation is provided include persons of any Asiatic race separate rooms are to be provided for the sleeping accommodation of the Asiatics. Paragraph (c) of clause 2 amends the principal Act so that separate dining accommodation must also be provided for Asiatics. Paragraph (d) of the clause makes amendments to the provisions of the principal Act dealing with sanitary arrangements and substitutes better provisions in order that proper sanitary arrangements shall be made for the shearers. Paragraph (e) of the clause provides that shower baths and an adequate supply of water shall be supplied for the shearers.

Mr. Anthoney—The boss has not got one of those in most of these places.

The TREASURER—Have you ever been in a shearing shed?

Mr. Anthoney—Yes.

The TREASURER—Worked there?

Mr. Anthoney—I agree they should have showers.

The TREASURER.—You only have to stand in a shearing shed on a hot day for a few moments to realise the need for a shower bath. The Queensland legislation dealing with the same subject matter as the principal Act contains provisions on the lines of the amendments made by the Bill. The object of this Bill is to bring our legislation more in keeping with what exists elsewhere, particularly in Queensland. The Queensland Act is the best in Australia. There are a number of defects in our legislation. Only the other day I saw a report from a police officer who inspected many of these places, in which he said there was no power to deal with quite a number of the defects existing. Probably one of the greatest complaints is the fact that men are compelled to sleep in stretchers or bunks right up against one another. It is like the steerage of a ship in some ways, inasmuch as the bunks are on tiers. It may be there is sufficient air space because the buildings are lofty, but the Board of Health regulations do not calculate air space above a height of 14ft. I submitted the question of air space to Dr. Morris, and he reported on the lines of the provisions embodied in this Bill. There should be a space between each stretcher, and three stretchers in one compartment is quite sufficient. I understand that in a number of huts quite a number of men are compelled to sleep in one compartment with their beds very close together, and in some places very close on end. That certainly is not conducive to their good health. It would not inflict any hardship on the employers of shearers if they had to comply with these provisions. I know of some sheds where the provision is all that could be desired

and it is not for these men this legislation is intended. It is like the good employer and the bad; you have to pass legislation to make the bad employer do the fair thing, which is usually in the interests of the good employer. It is quite within the power of the Government to appoint an inspector, apart from a police officer, to make an inspection. No more power will be given to the Government than now exists under the old legislation, but it has never been availed of.

Mr. Reidy—The police officers generally do a very good job.

The TREASURER--I am not in a position to express an opinion on that, but I saw a report from a police officer, following on complaints made by the Australian Workers’ Union. He said that there were many things he could rectify, but that there were many he did not have any control over because of lack of provision in the legislation. When honorable members get a grip of this Bill they will realise that it will not inflict hardship on employers, and that provisions such as I have mentioned— proper air space and sanitary arrangements— will be something that they can support readily. I move the second reading.

Mr. McLACHLAN secured the adjournment of the debate until November 25.