**VERMIN DISTRICTS AMENDMENT BILL1896**

**Legislative Council, 17 November 1896, page 353**

Second reading

The CHIEF SECRETARY moved the second reading The Bill was to amend the Act of 1894, which experience had proved to.be necessary. The amendments had been suggested by pastoralists and residents of the districts affected, and they would facilitate the working of the Act by better providing for the erection of fences. It was generally admitted that the best way of dealing with the vermin difficulty was to erect fences and destroy the vermin inside the fence rather than to try to deal with them on large un-fenced areas of country. The Bill provided that persons should not necessarily live in a district to be nominated as members of Boards. A man might reside in one district where no vermin- proof fencing was required and hold land where it was needed, and under the old Act many eligible persons had been excluded from the Boards by the residential provision. Clause 3 provided that the rate declared by the Board under section 83 of the principal Act might exceed 4s. per square mile of the ratable property of the district. That Act limited the amount of rating to 4s. per square mile, but there would now be no limit to the rating power of the Boards. The only check would be the caution and care of the Board in spending the money of the ratepayers who elected them. The last provision was that there should be not less than three members instead of five. In dealing with outside country on which there were not many people, and where the stations were often miles apart, it had been found difficult to get qualified and suitable persons who could devote the necessary time to serve on a Vermin Board. Where it was convenient there could, however, be five members. The formation of Vermin Boards in some districts was dependent on the passing of the Bill, with which he asked members to deal promptly.

The Hon. J. J. DUNCAN secured the adjournment of the debate until Tuesday,November 17.

**VERMIN DISTRICTS AMENDMENT BILL 1896**

Adjourned debate on the second reading.

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The Hon. J. J. DUNCAN agreed with the proposal that it should be optional whether members of the Board should be resident in the district. It was only reasonable. He did not agree with giving power for unlimited rating. The Commissioner of Crown Lands had said in the Assembly that there had been some difficulty as regards the present maximum of the rate, but had only mentioned one case in which difficulty had arisen. It would be more in keeping with proper care and caution to increase the limit by doubling it to 8s., or they might even make it 10s., instead of making it an unlimited amount. A rate of 10s. would probably never be required. (The Chief Secretary—“The rating is in the hands of the ratepayers themselves.”) In the first year the Board would be appointed by the Government, and the ratepayers would have no voice in the amount of the rate. If the rate were found too small they could easily subsequently further increase it. He was glad the Government and the Parliament recognised the great importance of dealing with the vermin difficulty, which was one of the stumbling blocks to the settlement of the country. Anything reasonable should be done to overcome it. He still doubted, as he had in 1894, the wisdom of fencing the country into too large areas. The smaller the areas fenced the greater the control they would have over the vermin. He did not attach very great importance to the rabbit pest, as with reasonable precautions the rabbits could be surmounted, but the ravages of dogs should be prevented as far as possible by all reasonable legislation.

Carried

In Committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 passed.

The Hon. J. J. DUNCAN moved to insert “not” before “exceed.” He pointed out that they were custodians of the public purse, and had to consider the question of finance from a public point of view, as the Government were interested as holders of unoccupied country.

An unlimited extent to rate should not be given to Boards, which might consist of only three members. He gathered that the Commissioner of Crown Lands was not opposed to a limit. If he were successful in inserting the word “not” he would move to strikeout “4” and insert “10.” He believed that would meet every case that was likely to arise.

The Hon. W. HASLAM agreed that there should be a limit, because he knew cases where the rate of 4s. might be more than the rental value.

The CHIEF SECRETARY said the rate­payers would be spending their own money, and that was a safeguard against an exorbitant rate. There was something. in the remarks about the Government having to pay the rate, but if the rate was exorbitant and the Government owned most of the land they might take other steps to prevent their having to pay too much. He agreed that in most cases 10s. would meet all cases, but there might be instances in which it would be advisable to cope with special difficulties to levy a rate of 15s. He did not feel strongly on the matter, but would stand by the Bill. He suggested that the amendment should be put in the form of “up to 10s.”

The Hon. J. J. DUNCAN altered his amendment to insert “after 4s.” “but shall not exceed 10s.”

Amendment carried.

Clause as amended passed.

Remaining clauses passed.