**WILD DOGS BILL 1912**

**Legislative Council, 26 November 1912, page 445**

Second reading

The MINISTER of AGRICULTURE, in moving the second reading, said the Bill was introduced largely at the request of a section of the pastoralists, to whom the measure was of great importance. In 1889 an Act was passed which provided for payment for the scalps of wild dogs. For a time, the measure was successful, £127,926 having been paid under the Act. Like the present Bill, that Act imposed a tax of 6d. per square mile, which for a time was punctually paid. The subdivision of estates in the fringe country, however, brought in a new element in regard to the administration of the Act of 1889, as the people on the smaller holdings trusted generally to sheep rather than to cattle, and it became difficult to collect the tax. (Sir John Downer—"Why did they trust to cattle?") He supposed they had not realised the profits that could be obtained from sheep. (Sir John Downer—"Was it not rather because the dogs attacked the sheep more?") He had lately had a report from the West Coast of wild dogs killing calves and yearlings, and even yearling foals. The Act was repealed in 1900 in so far as the payment for scalps in the northern part of the State was concerned, but it was allowed to exist, as it referred to foxes in the South-East and south of the Murray. In 1905, when the Vermin Act was passed, the former measure was wholly repealed, and the destruction of wild dogs was carried out chiefly by the settlers themselves, who relied largely on the vermin fences to keep them off the holdings. Under the Act of 1889 £34,427 was paid for wild dogs up to 1900, and £34,778 was collected from the pastoralists by the tax of sixpence per square mile. When the Act was repealed the arrears of taxes amounted to £1,986, and claims were in for dogs killed amounting to £1,795. It had not been found possible to collect the arrears. The Bill differed from the old Act in that areas of less than three square miles were not to be taxed. The difficulty of collecting the rents on those areas made it not worthwhile to include them. The Government had added to the Bill brought in last year £100 extra to make up the amount that would not be collected on the smaller estates. Fences had proved of great value to those inside. But in the meantime, rabbits had been fairly plentiful and the result was that breeding had gone on faster and there had been bigger litters of wild dogs than previously. Fences had grown old and rusty, and, food for dogs being scarce outside, they had turned their attention to the fences and succeeded in breaking through them, with disaster to the sheep-owner inside. It was anticipated that the Bill would give an impetus to the destruction of wild dogs, and every lessee having to help bear the burden would be interested in the destruction. The Government, realising the importance of the pastoral industry to the State, and the danger it was in through the pest, because now they had to rely more than ever upon their outside country to keep it up, had brought the Bill forward in the hope of protecting those already engaged and encouraging others to take up and develop a great deal of the unoccupied country outside. The draftsman’s report stated:—'"1. The object of this Bill is the extermination of wild dogs. 2. The means proposed is payment for scalps and tails produced. 3. The payments are to be out of a wild dogs fund to be raised by—(a) Rates; (b) Government subsidy of pound for pound up to £2,100. 4. The rates are to be levied on all lands except—(a) Lands situated in exempt areas, namely, a strip of country about 106 miles wide at the extreme north of the State, and the counties and hundreds specified in the first schedule; (b) lands in municipalities and towns; (c) suburban lands; (d) Crown lands; and (e) reserved and dedicated lands.5. The rate is to be threepence per square mile on land within vermin-fenced districts or which the Minister declares to be completely surrounded by a vermin fence, and sixpence per square mile on other land. 6, Administration—Scalps and tails to be delivered to authorised persons by applicants for payment. Authorised persons to send certificates to the Minister. The Treasurer to make payments on request of the Minister administering the Act, but his liability is limited to the money standing to the credit of the fund. 7. Regulations may be made for carrying out the objects of the Act." The total area of land held under all tenures in the State was 191,903 square miles. The area which it was proposed to exempt from rating was 45,583 square miles. After making approximate deductions of the areas under three square miles, which the Bill would exempt, the area to be rated at 6d. per square mile would be about 73,040 square miles, or £1,826. The approximate area to be rated in vermin-fenced districts and in areas fenced by pastoralists privately was 71,720 square miles, which at 3d. per square mile would bring a revenue of £859, or a total of £2,685. To that it was proposed in the Bill to add £2,100, making a total of £4,785 available annually for expenditure in connection with the destruction of wild dogs during the three years it was proposed to subsidise the amounts collected for rates. The total area leased and held under other tenures within vermin-fenced districts outside the exempted areas was 43,075 square miles, controlled by 37 boards. The Moolawatana and Yandama vermin fence and the Weedina vermin fence which were controlled in a different manner from the ordinary vermin-fenced district enclosed 5,995 square miles of leased land. According to returns forwarded during the year 1911-12 a little over six thousand dogs were destroyed, vermin boards having accounted for 4,651, lessees and syndicatesoutside vermin-fenced districts 996 and the Weedina board of control 662. On the country outside vermin-fenced districts five syndicates had been operating and had done much towards ridding the country of dogs, returns having been furnished allowing 803 dogs destroyed during the year quoted. The department contributedduring the year the sum of £60 to these syndicates in order to encourage them in their work of destruction. Since the Weedina area was enclosed between four and five years ago payment had been made for 2,359 dog scalps. In addition to that it was probable that quite three thousand more dogs than those enumerated in the statement had been destroyed, of which no record had been furnished, while many others might have died from the effects of poison, which had never been found. The total number of sheep in the State for the year 1911 was about 6,172,000. Of that number about 3,479,000 were on the country comprised within the exempted area; there were therefore, about 2,693,000 sheep on the country it was proposed to rate. Clause 3 established a wild dog fund, which would be retained by the treasurer, one of which scalp money would be paid at the request of the Minister. Clause 4 provided for the rating of certain lands showing which lands were exempt, fixed the rent at 3d. Within vermin districtsand 6d. without, and made provisionfor the payment and also to enforce payment. Clause5 provided for the interest to be added; clause 6 dealt with the money to be paid to the Treasurer: and clause 7 provided for the fund to be subsidised by the Government pound for pound up to£2,100. Last year’s Bill provided a subsidy up to £2,000, but the exemption was larger under the present Bill. Clause 9 provided for the payment for scalps and tails, also for the amount tobe paid for tails and scalps in different localities. The clause also provided that the Minister, if he thought fit, could vary the payment to be made for scalps and tails so that in the event of the dogs being plentiful a lower payment could be made, and they were scarce the payment could be raised. Clause 10 authorised certain persons, such as station owners and othersinterested, to receive scalps and tailsto see that the Act was properly carried out. (Mr. Addison—"Why scalps and tails?") To prevent thepossibilityfraud, in the event, say, of a person manufacturing scalps. They would now have to produce both the scalp and the tail. Clause 12 provided for the destruction of scalps and tails after they had been certified to by theauthorised person. The Bill came to them with the recommendation of the men who for years had been battling against the wild dog pest away in the back country. Not long ago 70 pastoralists assembled at Port Augusta and unanimously urged the introduction of legislation on the lines of the Bill now before the Council.

On the motion of Sir JOHN DUNCAN, the debate was adjourned till Thursday next.