**STAR THISTLE DESTRUCTION BILL 1887**

**Legislative Assembly, 24 August 1887, pages 614-5**

Second reading

Mr. HOLDER said the object of the measure was to include the star thistle in the provisions of the Thistle and Burr Act of 1862. Under that Act the owners or occupiers of land were compelled to clear their property, and also one-half of the adjacent roads, on receiving 21 days notice in writing to do so from the chairman of road boards, district councils, or corporations, the clerks of district councils, corporations, or road boards, or a notice signed by a justice of the peace, or Crown lands manager, or police officer, or any other person authorised by the Commissioner of Crown Lands. The penalty for disobeying the order was £10. A justice of the peace was given the right to suspend the conviction on proof being given that an honest effort was being made to destroy the noxious weeds, and if the order were not complied with after a fine had been imposed, then persons duly authorised could enter on the land and destroy the weeds at the cost of the owners or occupiers. District councils and corpora­tions were empowered to destroy noxious weeds on their properties, and the Government had to do so on Its property. Although in all cases all the provisions of the Act had not been enforced, in some cases they had been enforced, and with great benefit to the colony. This was notably the case with the burr, which had been destroyed systematically, and if a little more system had been used it would have resulted in a still further gain to the pastoral interest of this colony. So far as the scotch and variegated thistle were con­cerned the Act had been systematically allowed to remain in abeyance, it having been recognised since the measure was passed that these thistles, especially in their young state, provided a fodder that was by no means to be despised. While his Bill proposed to in­clude the star thistle in the provisions of the Act of 1862, it excluded the scotch and variegated thistles from the operations of that Act. Under clause 2 power was given to the Governor by proclamation in the Government Gazette to declare any weed to be a noxious weed other than those referred to, or to exclude from the provisions of the measure weeds which under other circumstances had been proclaimed to be noxious. This would render the law more elastic. The Bill which was introduced into the House last year passed its third reading by 28 votes to 8, and was only lost through the action of another Chamber. The star thistle was undoubtedly a noxious weed. No stock would eat it in any stage of its growth, and it not only prevented the stock from getting at grass which grew beneath it—being, as Mr. Howe had said last session, like British bayonets - but it was a further evil to the pastoralists, inasmuch as it took the place of useful grass. It was also a great pest to the farmers. One farmer last season only managed to reap two acres a day owing to the combs of the reap­ing machine being choked by the thistle The seed was not light like the seed of other thistles. It was heavy seed, and was difficult to separate from wheat when it got amongst it. Unless means were taken to eradicate it, it would be spread far and wide, and would not be of less importance than the rabbits and sparrows unless steps were taken at an early stage to prevent it from becoming universally spread over the country. The chief argument that had been used against this Bill was that if it were carried into effect it would amount to con­fiscation, and be claimed that that was really an argu­ment in its favor, because if the cost of eradicating the pest amounted to the confiscation of the land on which it grew, then the sooner we legislated to pre­vent the weed spreading the better it would un­doubtedly be for the country. He had been requested by the Mount Bryan District Council to press this matter on the House, and he hoped their desire to be freed from the incursion of the pest would be listened to and that their cry for relief would be heard. The star thistle was also prevalent in the south-east. This thistle was not one of that variety which spread above the surface in the form of a rosette with fleshy leaves, and which were valuable in their younger stages for fodder. In poor soil it reached a height of a few inches, and in rich soil of two, three, or four feet, and having attained to this height it spread forth a circle of branches covered with spines, at the end of which was the flower from which it had its name of the star thistle. These heads being on a slender stem were not difficult to break off. and when they got into the hay they were found to be a great nuisance, many farmers having been ruined thereby, as the stock would not touch hay in which any of these thistles were found. He asked the House to agree to the second reading of the Bill, because they would be legislating not for infected but for uninfected districts, not for those whose land was overrun with the thistles, but for those whose land would be as thickly overrun if some remedial steps were not at once taken. They would not be legislating against local authorities, but in co-opera­tion with local authorities, as these bodies would be given the power to carry out the provisions of the measure. (Hear, hear.)

On the motion of the COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS (Hon. J. Coles) the debate was adjourned until Wednesday next.