**RIVER MURRAY WATERS ACTS AMENDMENT BILL 1920**

**Legislative Council, 24 November 1920, pages1786-95**

Second reading

The Chief Secretary, pursuant to leave, introduced a Bill for an Act to ratify an agreement for the variation of the agreement entered into between the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth and the Premiers of the States of New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia, respecting the River Murray and Lake Victoria and other waters, and to amend the Biver Murray Waters Amendment Act, 1915.

Read a first time.

Second reading.

**The CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J. G. Bice)** —I would not take the step I am to-night with respect to this Bill were it not agreed that there should be no effort spared to get the measure through at the earliest possible moment. The same procedure is being adopted in the Commonwealth Parliament this afternoon. The signatures of the Prime Minister, the Premier of Victoria, and the Minister representing New South Wales were only obtained this afternoon, so members will see I am taking the earliest opportunity of introducing the Bill. Much prominence has been given in the press to the necessity for constructing works along the River Murray and on the adjacent lands. Members are familiar with what has been going on for some time, and the difficulties we have had in coming to an absolute agreement. I am pleased to assure members that all the States and the Commonwealth are now in complete agreement with regard to the amendment of the agreement which was made in 1915 and with respect to the details and subsequent alterations made after the Premiers dealt with this question in May last. It may be of some advantage to give members an idea why the amended agreement, in substance and in detail as it is now, was decided on at the Premiers ’ Conference. The construction of works along the Murray has been proceeding since 1915. South Australia has done nothing which could be complained of, and nobody could charge us in the slightest degree with neglect to carry out the great undertaking to provide water for the irrigation works necessary on the Murray, and to provide water so that the river might be made available for navigation to the greatest possible extent. I do not want to cavil at what has been done by the other States, but it is necessary to give some idea of the stagnation which has existed in connection with these works. Had the other States done as much as South Australia has done a good portion of the works might have been in hand now. Victoria has done very little indeed. It made extensive preparations and plans for wonderful storages, and I believe that its share of the work will go on with the rapidity we are all hoping for under the altered conditions of this agreement. New South Wales is proceeding now with the great Mitta storage scheme, which will impound an immense body of water largely for use in irrigation in New South Wales and partly in Victoria; but that work has not advanced to anything like the degree we should like to see. The preparation of plans and our works at Lake Victoria and for the locks at Rufus and Frenchman Creeks had proceeded up to a certain point and reached practically a- dead lock in 1917 when I went into the Public Works Office. There was a difference of opinion between the engineers. That work, however, is now going on under contracts let by the South Australian constructing authority, and is proceeding fairly well. Our other works at Blanchetown and elsewhere are practically held up, but we hope that in consequence of the powers contained in this new agreement the delay will soon be a thing of the past. Under the original agreement it was provided that the undertakings should be carried out by each State with the assistance of the Commission, consisting of engineers and representing the three States and the Commonwealth, with the Federal Minister for Works and Railways as chairman. There is no intention to alter the conditions so far as the personnel of the Commission is concerned. The Commission will consist of the same engineers as are now controlling it with the Federal Minister continuing as chairman. The constructing authority who has hitherto been the medium for carrying on the work has been the Public Works Department of each State. The draftsmen and other officers and the machinery generally of those departments have been utilised and portion of their salaries has been paid by the Commission. That arrangement is now to be terminated. Instead of the Public Works Departments being the constructing .authorities the new agreement provides that the Commission shall be the constructing authority. This must lead to greater expedition. The Commission will be distinct and separate from the Public Works Departments of the States, and it will carry out the undertakings as a continuous whole, settling the sites for the locks and doing everything to be done by the constructing authorities. That arrangement is a good one. It will be possible to perform the task in a very much better way than was possible under the conditions of the old agreement. That is the first and most material alteration that is to be made. The next thing to be done was to decide what was to be done with the works after completion. As the Premiers left the agreement it was decided that the constructing authority should control the works until the whole of the scheme had been completed. This will be a matter possibly of 30 years, because the scheme involves the locking of the Rivers Murrumbidgee, Darling, and Murray, and three huge storage propositions at Lake Victoria, Goulburn Valley, and Mitta. It would be no use making all this extensive provision for irrigation and navigation unless the enterprise were to be followed by some practical use of the undertaking when completed. Immense bodies of water will be available, and there is a two-fold object in view—the settlement of returned soldiers and the desire to make Australia the great country we all hope it is destined to be by the promotion of an immigration policy, whereby many thousands of people may be settled along the banks of the river system and given a certain means of livelihood. It was felt that it would be an impossible proposition to expect the constructing authority, consisting of engineers and not men in touch with political work or with the aspirations of those in the forefront of politics who want to see Australia advanced, to continue to control the great scheme on its completion. We saw that when the works were constructed they would have to be handed back to the States having the responsibility of shouldering the immigration policy. The conclusion come to was that in the interest of all concerned each State should take over the works within its own bounds and control them under its own laws and conditions. Other considerations were involved, such as the obtaining of land and the method of doing so, for which we had the necessary machinery in the States and which could be brought into operation. The next thing we had to do was to devise some means whereby the constant hanging up of the works might, if possible, be avoided. To do that we arrived at the conclusion that there would have to be a special tribunal for fixing the wages and dealing with the conditions of the men generally who are engaged on the works while they are in progress. To show the necessity for that I may state that New South Wales is paying 16s. 4d. a day to the men en­gaged on the works at Mitta; Victoria is paying 12s.; and South Australia 12s. 6d., with an additional amount for country work under certain conditions. Therefore you have three rates of pay, and actually at Lake Victoria, where South Australia is carrying out some work and a contractor some other, there are two different rates of pay on the same job. It will be seen that we had to provide for a tribunal, and that legislative authority should be given for its establishment. We provide the necessary power under this Bill for the estab­lishment of that tribunal. Then, in consequence of a slip in the draftsmanship of the agreement, the tribunal was given power to deal with the wages of the men on the works after they were handed back to the States. We had no such thought in our minds. The only thing we determined in regard to the tribunal was that it should be the means of settling industrial difficulties while the works were in progress. In consequence of that slip we had to reconsider the draft agreement with a view to correcting it, and we were unable to conclude our negotiations until 4 o’clock yesterday afternoon. Happily, however, the whole thing is now complete. There is one other thing of great importance to which I wish to allude. Under the original agreement the Commonwealth Government pledged themselves to provide only £1,000,000 towards the cost of all these works. We thought at the time that that was very great generosity on the part of the Commonwealth. The total cost of the works was estimated in 1915 at about £5,000,000. Of course, the works will cost considerably more than that. In that connection I need only point out the increase in the estimates of the Spring Creek and Mount Remarkable works from £640,000 to over £1,000,000. We have no estimate of what the cost of these works on the Murray will be, but at the same proportion the estimate must be increased to something like £9,000,000. Under this agreement the Commonwealth has agreed to pay one-fourth of the cost. That is very generous on its part. Without that assistance, a contribution of over £2,000,000, this great work could not go on. We therefore view this action on the part of the Commonwealth Ministers as being exceedingly generous. Of course, they are only helping their own people, but they might have stood to the old agreement.

1788 River Murray [COUNCIL.]

The Hon. D. J. Gordon—It is a fine bit of statesmanship.

The CHIEF SECRETARY—Yes; and in that connection we are indebted to Mr. Groom for the great work he has done. Of course, all the. Commonwealth Ministers should be given some meed of praise, but Mr. Groom has given unceasing attention to this business. After he took his first trip on the Murray he told me often that he considered these works were the one thing that would build up Australia, and he is worthy of all praise for his efforts. I think I have touched on the most important points of the agreement, but I wish to again emphasise the principal ones. We have made an agreement with the Commonwealth to assist us to the extent of a fourth of the cost; we have arrived at an agreement that will ensure the works going on continuously and have provided a means of settling any disputes in regard to wages; we have made an agreement that the States should take over the works as soon as they are constructed; and also that the works shall be proceeded with as urgent works. Each State is anxious that the work shall go on to a successful conclusion at the earliest moment. I have endeavored to give members a plain statement on the matter as it appeals to me, and I hope it will be of some assistance to them in regard to the passing of this Bill.

The Hon. D. J. GORDON—I regard this measure as at once the most important and the most significant that has been brought before us this session. Indeed, it might confidently be regarded as a Treaty of Peace between the riparian States of the Commonwealth. It ratifies the armistice of the rivers controversy. Probably no other question so strongly divided New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia for over half a century than the control of the waters of the Murray and its tributaries. From the time that Sturt made his memorable voyage downstream to the mouth and his return trip up-stream—an enterprise seldom equalled in the annals of exploration— a heated and long-continued controversy waged round the question of riparian rights. When Randell, Cadell, and other early navigators of Australia’s greatest waterway showed the commercial and industrial possibilities of the river, trade jealousy and rivalry of the States were aroused, and a beggar-my- neighbor policy was inaugurated which led to very much bitterness. At one period it proved by the fact that at an Intercolonial Conference held in Melbourne in 1863 the following resolution was agreed to:—

That, in the opinion of this Conference, the commerce, population, and wealth of Australia can be largely increased by rendering navigable and otherwise utilising the great rivers of the interior, such as the Murray, Edward, Mur- rumbidgee, and Darling; and that the obligation of carrying into effect the necessary works to accomplish these objects devolves primarily upon the respective Governments having jurisdiction over such rivers.

That is the keynote of the Bill before us. I have always regarded that resolution as representing the foundation-stone of the great work of harnessing and utilising the fertilising waters of the Murray for the lasting benefit of Australia. Here I may say but for the fidelity to the great principle of riparian rights shown at all times by South Australia and South Australians there would never have been an agreement on the Murray waters, and the water of that great stream would have continued to flow to waste to the ocean. Throughout all the conferences, commissions, and controversies of half a century the principle so clearly laid down at that conference of 1863 was never improved upon, and it is the principle upon which the riparian States of the Commonwealth ultimately came together and is the principle upon which this Bill is based, and why we can give the measure our whole-hearted support. Just as South Australia promoted the exploration enterprises which ultimately penetrated into the heart of the continent, and found a roadway from sea to sea, south to north, this State accepted the national obligation of carrying a telegraph line across the continent, thus giving the first connection between the old world and the new. South Australia also undertook the task of opening up the Murray and its tributaries to navigation, and proving the wealth-giving qualities of their waters. At various intervals from 1863 onward South Australian representatives at intercolonial and interstate Conferences revived the question of joint control for a national policy regarding the River Murray, but trade jealousy and the railway rivalry of the up-stream States prevented any progress towards a solution of the problem. When the Federal Convention was in session an effort was made to protect the rights of South Australia, but with small success. Ultimately the following clause was inserted in the Commonwealth Constitution:—

The Commonwealth shall not, by any law or regulation of trade and commerce, abridge the right of a State or of the residents therein to the reasonable use of the waters of rivers for conservation or irrigation.

It was thought that this provision was an adequate safeguard, but as on other occasions South Australia soon found to its cost that scraps of paper as represented by clauses in agreements and Acts of Parliament between States do not always mean legally what they say in plain English, and the up-stream States continued to divert water without any consideration to the requirements of those down stream. It was on the discovery of the failure of the Constitution to protect the riparian rights of down-stream settlers and provide a national solution to a national problem that a league was formed in South Australia for the purpose of, by educational methods, arousing public interest in and creating public opinion on this great question. In June, 1902, a public meeting was convened, as the result of which a representative gathering was held at Brookman Buildings, and what was subsequently known as the River Murray League of South Australia was formed. The conveners of that meeting were:—George Brookman, J. Gartrell, G Fowler Stewart, and D. J. Gordon. The Hon. George Brookman—now Sir George Brookman, K.B.E.—occupied the chair, and explained the objects of the gathering, and after the conveners and others had addressed the meeting it was resolved:—

That a league be formed in Adelaide for the purpose of co-operating with similar associations at Renmark and elsewhere in guarding the rights of South Australia to a reasonable use of the waters of the Murray for navigation and irrigation; that the league consist of a president, vice-president, general committee, executive committee, hon. secretary, hon. treasurer; and that those present form themselves into a general committee, with power to add to their number.

The executive committee of that league comprised the following:—The Hon. George Brookman, M.L.C. (President); the Hon. J. L. Parsons, M.L.C. ; and Mr. Simpson Newland (Vice-Presidents) ; Messrs. P. McM. Glynn, J. Gartrell, G. Fowler Stewart, D. J. Gordon, F. W. Young, Lavington Bonython, and E. H. Bakewell, with Mr. A. E H Evans as secretary and treasurer. That committee gave great service to Australia. It held frequent meetings, engaged in publicity campaigns, convened public gatherings, waited as deputations on every succeeding Premier, watched the movements of the up-stream States in their policy of diverting water, and spent much time and effort in safeguarding the interests not only of the people of Sonth Australia but future generations of the Commonwealth. The history and the work of the River Murray League of South Australia represents one of the most remarkable efforts of a few citizens towards solving a great national problem, and I think it can be fairly said that it is very largely due to the efforts of the members of the committee and the sympathetic support of the public that the problem has at last been solved. When, eventually, an agreement was arrived at between the three States and the Commonwealth came into partnership, the River Murray League, having successfully finished the work which nearly 20 years previously it had set out to accomplish, quietly went out of existence satisfied that the problem had been solved and a national victory won. I congratulate the Minister upon his share in completing this great task. Equally so I con­gratulate the Commonwealth upon having resolved to become a partner in the responsibility of constructing these works. I agree with the Minister in saying that in no other direction can we bend our energies to such advantage as in seeking to carry out these great works, and to make available to humanity the wonderful natural gifts which the Commonwealth enjoys in the River Murray and its tributaries. With special pleasure I support the Bill. I am sure it will become law this session, and that Australia is about to enter on one of the most successful undertakings she has yet put in hand.

The Hon. J. COWAN—I congratulate the Chief Secretary upon being able to introduce this most important Bill. We are indebted to Mr. Gordon for recounting the historical events which have transpired in connection with this matter during the last 40 or 5O years. It was owing to the indefatigable and determined efforts of the many gentlemen Mr. Gordon mentioned that this question was kept prominently before the Parliaments and people of this and the other interested States. It is a source of great interest to know that the object at which South Australia aimed for so many years is about to be consummated. The Chief Secretary particularly gave credit to Mr. Groom, the Federal Minister, for the part he has played in helping to finalise this matter. But Mr. Groom has done nothing compared with the work performed by the worthy pioneers who labored long and earnestly to bring about these much desired works. When we were considering a Bill with respect to River Murray works some time ago, I was pleased that Parliament saw fit to commemorate the memory of the late Capt. W. R. Randell by naming the first lock after him. It was only right that we should give that gentleman some credit for the splendid work he did in navigating the river. Men who have been residing along the Murray for a long period have viewed with much concern the criminal neglect which allowed such a vast body of water to run to waste into the sea. During four or five months of the year the Murray is subject to high floods, which do great damage, but for the remainder of the year there is not sufficient water for navigation and scarcely enough for irrigation purposes. We shall be pleased when we see the works proceeded with more quickly. The construction of the present lock has taken too long. Now that we have a Commission appointed, with all necessary powers, perhaps they will speed up the work and see that other locks are constructed, as well as the great water conservation schemes at Mitta Mitta, Goulburn Valley, and Lake Victoria. I cannot allow this occasion to pass without paying a tribute to the Chaffey Bros, for their magnificent efforts in initiating the irrigation works at Mildura and Renmark. Those gentlemen must be extremely gratified when they see the thriving settlements along the Murray. They can now see the fruits of their pioneering which was not encouraged much by the Government of the day. Recently I met a number of Federal senators who had travelled down the river to Murray Bridge from Mildura. They told me the same old tale that I had heard for 30 years. They were all surprised to see the splendid opportunities available along the river. They had not known there were such openings for development and settlement. It is regrettable that men in public positions do not take the opportunity sooner to realise the wonderful resources of the State in which they live.

The Hon. J. Carr—You cannot go far on £200 a year.

The Hon. J. COWAN—We know that members of Parliament are chided for making what are called picnic jaunts, but we cannot travel too much in the different districts of the State. The public would find that money spent on such trips would be well spent. The present Director of Irrigation deserves great praise for the work he has done. Members of Parliament in other States have said that South Australia leads the way in irrigation work. Our methods are said to be the best in Australia, and it is considered that we possess the best system of closer settlement in the Commonwealth. More particularly do I refer to Renmark and the reclaimed areas on the lower reaches of the Murray. That reclamation work was initiated by the late Sir Wm. Jervois and the Morphett family. I stress the necessity for arriving at an early determination with respect to works at the lower end of the Murray. That requires to be done to finalise the whole scheme. Although it may be impossible to construct a harbor at Goolwa or Victor Harbor at the present time, I hope we will work towards the completion of such a scheme. There should not be any wasted effort. It would be folly to spend a few thousand pounds at Victor Harbor and then to determine that the harbor shall be at Goolwa. The question should be finalised at the earliest possible moment. I am sure that this great national undertaking will be the means of developing the natural resources of the valley of the Murray and of adding immensely to the population and prosperity of the States.

The Hon. J. JELLEY1—I shall support the second reading of this Bill, which is to alter the agreement entered into in 1915. It was a Labor Government that brought forward that agreement in this State and carried it through Parliament, and the amendment now being discussed is a natural growth from difficulties that could not be foreseen. I rejoice with the Chief Secretary in the fact that the Commonwealth Government are going to shoulder one-quarter of the financial responsibilities of locking the River Murray. Again in 1910 a Labor Government saw the wisdom of importing a distinguished American engineer to report upon the question of the River Murray works and trade outlet, and no report dealing with an engineering difficulty has ever been submitted to the people of this State which has received so little adverse comment as that of Col. Johnston. Under the agreement just recently entered into we have an object lesson of the futility of divided control in the locking of the river system. I am sorry, however, that when the work is completed the river in certain lengths or divisions, together with the works established oh it, is to be handed over to each State, which will mean a reinstitution of divided control. However, if in practice it is found that the absence of co-ordination between the States is having an undesirable effect, we can, and probably will, come to another agreement on the subject somewhat on the lines of that which we are asked to sanction to-night. Mr. Cowan has expressed the opinion that the question of the outlet for the Murray trade should be settled urgently. Before a definite conclusion can be arrived at as to where a deep sea port for the Murray trade should be established at an expense of hundreds of thousands of pounds, we ought first to be absolutely sure of the volume of trade that will come down the stream. The wool coming from the Riverina is now conveyed to Melbourne, and I take it that only time and experience will solve the problem as to whether that wool can be brought down the Murray and marketed somewhere in the vicinity of its mouth. Will there be sufficient inducement for the wool-buyers to congregate at any such centre that may be established in addition to the places of auction which they already attend in Australia ? If the natural attractions and conditions of trade are not present at any deep sea port that may be set up in connection with the Murray no amount of endeavor will force the buyers to that port. The new agreement gives to the Commission the right to institute a tribunal to prescribe the wages and conditions under which the men engaged on the works will give their service. Under the present conditions there has been a variation of as much as 2s. or 3s. a day in the wages of men doing a similar class of work in different States. Four or five months ago I noticed that there was a disparity of 2s. 9d. a day between the wages paid by New South Wales and South Australia. That kind of thing only breeds discontent, and should be rectified at the earliest possible moment . All the men engaged on these river works are living under the same conditions—living in tents far from home and amid flies, sand, sin, and sorrow. The Victorian Government asked them to work for a miserable pittance of 12s. a day. It is quite as essential to have industrial control and co-ordination as it is to have control in the direction of these great works. I believe that much good will come out of this agreement. The Chief Secretary pointed out that the hopes of Mr. Groom for the further development of Australia were centered very largely in the development of the Murray and adjacent lands. I have seen many of the settlements along the river system, and if a market can be found for the produce of the valley of the Murray the expansion of trade that can be brought about is something that the most optimistic could not over estimate. It devolves upon those who represent the people to see that no stone is left unturned to bring to a successful consummation the development of the River Murray trade.

The Hon. W. MORROW—I have pleasure in supporting this Bill. It is exceedingly gratifying to know that a measure of such a colossal character which has engaged the political thought of the various States and Commonwealth for so long has now been brought to such a desirable consumma­tion. Efforts have been made by each side of political thought to take to itself peculiar credit for having brought about this successful issue, but I think that the credit can be fairly well shared by all sections of political thought. No Government of whatever name or shade of political opinion, has been in power for some years past but what it has been called upon to take some part in dealing with this great national question. It is unnecessary to refer to the various Premiers and other Ministers in successive Governments who have played a splendid part on behalf of the individual States they have represented. They have gone to each conference with the idea that the best interests of the State they represented had to be conserved and protected. I do not think any party question ever entered into consideration at any of these con­ferences.

The Hon. J. Jelley—Who said it did ?

The Hon. W. MORROW—A suggestion has been thrown out that because of a certain course taken by a certain Government they should be given the larger amount of credit.

The Hon. J. Jelley.—Did I make any statement which was not true ?

The Hon. W. MORROW—I am referring to statements made and the impression created thereby. If the impression is not justified by the statements I am prepared to remove it from my mind. If any credit at all is to be given, it should be allotted to individuals rather than to any individual party. Reference has been made to some of those who played an important part in connection with this matter many years ago. If honor is to be given to whom honor is due, I do not think the valuable services rendered by Mr. Gordon should be overlooked. The work he has done on this great question as embodied in certain literature which has emanated from his pen, and the many public utterances he has made in order to stimulate enthusiasm in connection with it, entitled him to receive great praise. His work “ The Nile of Australia,” is accepted on all hands as an authority in regard to the Murray waters. I indorse the sentiments expressed by Mr. Cowan when he said members should take every opportunity of making themselves acquainted with the locality and the extensive sphere this work will cover. The Government should offer to members every opportunity of making themselves acquainted with a work of such a national character and which is destined to have a far-reaching effect on the progress and prosperity of the Commonwealth. I hope the Government will carry out the intention they announced some 12 months ago of providing an opportunity for members of this and the other Chamber to visit at least one section of the Murray water scheme, preferably that section which affects South Australia.

The Hon. J. Jelley—We should go right up to Mildura.

The Hon. W. MORROW—Well, if the Government can see their way clear to give that opportunity to members I do not think the expense could be regarded as unjustifiable, and it would enable all of us better to deal with any legislation affecting the work. I am pleased this Bill has been brought in and to know that we can now see finality with regard to this important question.

The Hon. J. H. COOKE—I should be sorry to allow this opportunity to pass without expressing my great pleasure at the progress made in connection with this important work and paying a tribute to the members of the Murray River League who have done such excellent service in constantly bringing the necessity for locking the Murray before the public. I first saw the river some 36 years ago when I journeyed beyond where Mildura now stands. There was no Mildura or Renmark at that time, but I had an opportunity of seeing what could be done in the way of irrigation on a small scale on some holdings along the Murray, and which was sufficient to indicate the great possibilities of the future. So far as the present agreement is concerned I strongly recommend to members to read the book which has been already referred to, “ The Nile of Australia,” which was written by Mr. Gordon. If they do so, they will see how repeatedly efforts were made by South Australia to bring about the condition of affairs we see to-day, and how constantly those efforts were defeated by the other States. It is gratifying to know that that trouble is past, and an agreement has been arrived at under which it is hoped to make the banks of the Murray the place of settlement for a very large population. I think it was what was known as the Boucaut Government which proposed what has been termed the great comprehensive public works policy. That consisted chiefly of two proposals. was the construction of a railway from South Australia to the Northern Territory, and the other the establishment of a suitable port to take the Murray trade. I believe we will have the pleasure of seeing those great- undertakings completed during our time. Just where the port should be established is difficult to say, but we must certainly bear in mind the suggestion made by Mr. Jelley that before any expenditure is made so far as that port is concerned, it must be seen that it is possible to bring the trade of the Murray to the place where it is to be located. As regards locking the river, I consider that work should have been taken in hand many years ago. I notice that in South Africa, by the aid of the Hume pipes, an Australian invention, they are diverting a river and instituting a system of irrigation which will be the means of the production of a large quantity of fruit and other produce. South Africa is nearer to the centres of consumption than we are, and consequently we shall be handicapped by the fact that before this work is finished that country will probably have established a good market for its irrigable produce in London and New York. However, in view of the fact that owing to our climatic conditions we have not to resort to artificial means for drying our fruits, we should be able to compete with other countries to advantage . I desire to pay a tribute of praise to Messrs. Chaffey Bros, for their pioneering work in connection with the development of the Murray lands. I know personally the difficulties they had to contend with and though they were not very successful from a financial standpoint, those who continued that work have been able to see it progress in a way which is destined to make Australia very much greater in the eyes of the world than she is at present. The agreement has two clauses which I think will commend themselves to members. One of these relates to machinery already in use, which I understand is to be made common property. I also understand that that system will be carried out through the whole of the undertaking. Consequently, while heavy plant may be required for several portions of the work it should not be necessary for the individual States to supply that plant, but the machinery can be moved from time to time to where it is required. The other matter I refer to is the provision that where the amount to be provided by each contracting Government exceeds £125,000 in any one year the Commonwealth shall advance to each of the other Governments by way of loan the amount which they are required to pay in excess of that sum. That should relieve the Governments of the States of very great anxiety and enable the work to be done much more quickly than it otherwise would. I am sure the agreement will commend itself to members.

The Hon. T. McCALLUM—I do not approve of Bills being brought in and rushed through at one sitting. This may be the very best Bill with the very best intentions, as I believe it is, but the practice is not one to be commended. I wish to emphasise the necessity if we are going to have a complete system of locking the River Murray of a lock being constructed at its mouth. If that is not done the ultimate result must be that the sea will come into the lakes and render them salt to the great detriment of the surrounding land. That land was bought at a high price and such a thing will prejudicially affect the owners. The Governent should deal with this matter simultaneously with the other works to be carried out on the Murray. If that is not done serious loss will be occasioned to the owners of land on the lower reaches. It is sad to see the waste of water that occurs almost every year. In some years, of course, it is much greater than it is in others. At present there are hundreds of millions of gallons of splendid fresh water running to waste. In a dry country like South Australia that is a reflection on the Government and the people. I have often wondered what the effect would have been on the River Murray if the capital of the State had been located on it. The want of a natural harbor, I suppose, precluded that. No doubt, however, if the capital city had been established where Victor Harbor is the result as regards the utilisation of the waters of the River Murray would have been vastly different to what it has been. I sound a note of warning with respect to the Murray locks. I do not speak from experience, but I have never heard of a river which has been locked at various parts of its course. The Nile has been locked at its source, but there is a considerable amount of siltage in connection with that river, and in course of time the lock will be of no use because the stream will silt up there. I am afraid that something similar may happen on the Murray, for I do not know what will become of the silt brought down at flood time. It must be deposited somewhere, and that aspect should have been more fully considered. We should look further afield than the Murray. There are rivers in the north of Australia which, if not equal to the Murray, have volumes of water approaching it. These streams should be utilised. I shall resist to the utmost any attempt to drain Lake Albert, and in doing so will have the support of every landholder along its shores. In a dry country like South Australia we have too few fresh water services and should do all we can to conserve those we possess. I support the Bill and will do my best to look into it when it passes through Committee. I am not suspicious of the measure, but do not like the principle of Bills being rushed through.

The Hon. W. HANNAFORD—This question has engaged the attention of Parliaments and Governments for some considerable time. Although the Bill has come to us late in the session most of us are familiar with the provisions of the previous agreement, on which this Bill improves somewhat. Even now if we pass this measure we will not overcome all the difficulties, although we shall have gone a long way towards coming to some satisfactory arrangement with the other States, so that we can make the use of the Murray we should. Whether navigation or irrigation should receive preference has always been the bugbear which has prevented the States from coming to an agreement. The position now is that we are practically giving to a Commission the control of works which will not only obviate the risk of there being a lack of water for navigation, but will provide water for irrigation as well. There has been a certain amount of anxiety whether there is sufficient water on the watersheds of the Murray and its tributaries to secure for South Australia a fair and reasonable quantity of water after New South Wales and Victoria have taken their requirements if their great proposed irrigation schemes become accomplished facts. We were informed that if the Mitta Mitta scheme was consummated it would very largely reduce the quantity of water coming down the river. It is true that we are making provision by constructing locks to prevent the wasting of water, and perhaps that will have the effect of South Australia not being placed at a disadvantage. The amount of fresh water is curtailed to some extent when the river is low and the saline springs are more in evidence then than when the river is high. The result is that the water for irrigation purposes is not so good when the river is low. I notice the Commission will decide where work shall be carried out. I am hoping that the jealously previously existing between the States will not be extended to that Commission, whereby South Australia will be out voted and works carried out on the higher reaches of the Murray to the detriment of this State. So far as I can see, the agreement seems to be satisfactory. I support the Bill.

The Hon. T. GLUYAS—I support the Bill because it deals with a national matter. On national questions one can get away from party politics, although Mr. Morrow was inclined to take up some of Mr. Jelley’s remarks from the party standpoint. I am glad that the States have apparently come to an absolute agreement. Mr. Cowan said that members of Parliament should receive more facilities to see the country. With the miserable stipend we get, members cannot see as much of the State as they would wish. Mr. Hannaford commented on the Mitta Mitta scheme, which is situated about nine miles from Albury. The contemplated works at Mitta Mitta comprise a huge undertaking. I visited the locality recently, and the engineer showed me plans of the outlined scheme. He told me that the work would take 10 years to complete, and that when it was finished the lower reaches need not fear that they would not get plenty of water. The engineer said that the water enclosed would cover an area equal to that of Sydney Harbor. That will give members some idea of the size of the tremendous dam . I am glad that attention has been given in the agreement to the industrial phase. When I was up the Murray some time ago there was a strike in progress on the Victorian side, and although I do not like strikes, I must confess there was some good reason for this one. The Victorian workers were being paid 12s. 4d. a day against 15s. 8d. per day that the New South Wales Government were paying men just on the other side of the border. Where is the fairness of that ? The only solution of that problem is to have a tribunal as now proposed to fix equal wages for all the States participating in this work. When the undertaking is completed, one of the main attractions of a locked river system will be its influence on immigration. It is no good inviting immigrants here unless opportunities for settlement on the land are readily at hand. Our enormous burden of taxation can best be met by increasing the population, but it is no use promoting immigration simply to hit up against the industrialists already here. Let the newcomers be so settled that they will enhance Australia’s production. My wholehearted support will be given to this Bill.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Clauses 1 to 10 passed.

Clause 10 (a)—"Claims for compensation”.

The Hon. J. JELLEY—If I interpret this clause aright, it means that each State will shoulder its own liabilities in connection with successful claims for compensation. I would like the Chief Secretary to explain why, if that is so, there should be a divided liability in compensation matters when there is co-ordination between the States in all other directions?

The CHIEF SECRETARY—All that is done in connection with this clause is to substitute "Commission” for "Minister” in a similar provision in the 1915 agreement. The Commission will be responsible instead of the Minister while the works are under construction. After construction has been completed, and the works have been transferred to the States, each State Contracting Government will be responsible.

The Hon. T. McCALLUM—I would like the Minister to make it clear as to what would happen in the matter of compensation for damage done, say, in South Australia. Would the one State bear it, or would all the contracting parties share it equally?

The CHIEF SECRETARY—The Commission will be responsible, because it is the constructing authority up to the time that the works are completed, after which each individual State will become responsible for its own liabilities in the matter of compensation. Prior to completion the three States and the Commonwealth will share the responsibility.

The Hon. T. McCALLUM—In connection with the Victorian and New South Wales undertakings there will be big sums payable for compensation in connection with land and other matters. Will South Australia have to bear her share of that?

The CHIEF SECRETARY—If the compensation claims arise during construction the three States and the Commonwealth will be equally liable.

Clause passed.

Clauses 11 and 12 passed.

Clause 13—“Second schedule’\

The CHIEF SECRETARY—I would like to reply to Mr McCallum’s remarks about the possible danger of locking the river. The point that the stream may become silted up as the result of locking is one with which the honorable member need not concern himself, because the construction of the locks will be such that during the time of high floods the whole obstruction can be removed, thus permitting of a free flow of the stream.

Clause passed.

Preamble and title passed, and Bill read a third time and passed.