**METROPOLITAN AND EXPORT ABATTOIRS ACT AMENDMENT BILL 1936**

**House of Assembly, 25 June 1936, pages 348-50**

Second reading

**The Hon. R. L. BUTLER (Wooroora— Premier and Treasurer**)—The only amendment proposed by the Bill relates to the fees payable to members of the Metropolitan and Export Abattoirs Board. Section 7 of the Metropolitan and Export Abattoirs Act, 1933, provides that the chairman of the board is to be paid such remuneration as the Governor fixes and that every other member of the board is to be paid the sum of £78 a year. All these amounts are payable out of the funds of the board. It has been suggested to the Government by the Stockowners’ Asso­ciation of South Australia that the amount paid to members is inadequate. It is not only a suggestion from the stockowners. Members of the board have pointed out that it is impossible for them to carry on at the present fee. Most of them are privately engaged by outside firms and consider that as they have to give a tremendous amount of time to the board’s work for a small remuneration some alteration should be made.

The alterations in policy effected by the legislation of 1933 have considerably increased the responsibilities of the board, but the present remuneration of £78 a year is the same amount as was payable to members before the passing of the 1933 Act. It is submitted that, if the board were a board of directors controlling a private company conducting a business of a similar nature, the fees payable to the directors would be very much greater than those now received by the members of the board and that, in view of the responsibilities of members, some increase is justified. The Bill therefore provides that the fees for all members of the board shall be fixed by the Governor as is now the case where the chairman’s remuneration is concerned. This provision will enable such remuneration to be fixed as is reasonable in the circumstances.

Mr. Bardolph—What extra work are they doing ?

The Hon. R. L. BUTLER—The previous board dealt with local supplies only, but the present board has to deal with the export of frozen meat, the building of new works, and other matters, and has had various committees formed within it which necessitates about three days work a week. I do not think that anyone will agree that the present remuneration is sufficient.

Mr. Bardolph—You are going to make it a full time job?

The Hon. R. L. BUTLER—No.

Mr. Bardolph—You are going to pay sufficient to make it a full time job

The Hon. R. L. BUTLER—No. We propose to fix fees in proportion to those paid to members of other boards who sit on only one day a week.

Mr. Bardolph—It seems rather strange to introduce this measure on the recommendation of the Stockowners’ Association.

The Hon. R. L. BUTLER—This Association is particularly interested and has applauded the alterations which are being brought about by the change over. In 1933 the profits were £5,456, in 1934 they increased to £12,645, and last year they were £31,481.

Mr. Bardolph—How much of these profits was due to the export trade?

The Hon. R. L. BUTLER—I do not think any of them were. We fixed a fee for the slaughtering of stock, and it is approximately what the Produce Department always charged for the slaughtering of stock for export. In fact there may be a slight decrease in the charge to-day.

Mr. Bardolph—Meat is no cheaper to the consumers to-day.

The Hon. R. L. BUTLER—The present board has carried out many economies, such as transferring the head office to the works, which is a decided improvement.

Mr. Bardolph—Is this being done on a semi-socialistic system?

The Hon. R. L. BUTLER—The board is carrying on without any interference from the Government. It is useless for members who do not know anything about the work of the board to say what the fees should be. There is not the slightest doubt that the legislation which placed the Abattoirs under new control has been most beneficial, not only to the producers but to the consumers. I am convinced that when the new works are completed at the Abattoirs it will lead to a further reduction in the cost of handling and delivering meat in the metropolitan area. There can be no criticism against the administration of the board. The point is, is sufficient remuneration paid to the members of the board for the work they do? If something is not done I am afraid there may be at least three or four vacancies on the board, as the result of men who know most about the business not being prepared to go on as at present. One member of the board acts as manager for a city firm, and other members hold high positions in other firms, and the employers of these men are saying that although the men receive a certain salary from them they spend a considerable proportion of their time on business connected with the abattoirs. I understand that the remuneration paid by the board to those men is handed over to their employers.

Mr. Bardolph—Has the chairman of the board informed the Government that he is not prepared to continue in the position?

The Hon. R. L. BUTLER—The chairman has informed me that it will be impossible for other members of the board to continue. As far as he is concerned, no change is contemplated. Some people say that the present board is too large, but that is a matter of opinion. Some time ago the number of members was reduced, but no alteration was made in the remuneration. I am sure that if the; honourable member were offered a position- on- the board at a- remuneration of £75 a year he would not accept it in view of the amount of work to be done. There will be a difference *of’* opinion as to whether the Government or Parliament should fix the remuneration. It is immaterial to me who does it, but the Government would naturally be careful to see that members of the board were not unduly recompensed for the work they did.

Mr. Stephens—Will salaries be paid out of the funds of the board?

The Hon. R. L. BUTLER—Yes. The members of the board, even those elected by the municipalities, are of the same opinion regarding the remuneration.

Mr. Dunks—The representatives of the municipalities held a different view when they were nominated.

The Hon. R- L. BUTLER—Yes, but they hold a different opinion now.

Mr. Dunks—One man was re-appointed during the last three months, and he did not raise any objection to the fee. He was anxious to get back to the board.

The Hon. R. L. BUTLER—That may be so. My view is that a fee of £200 per annum should be paid if the business is to be conducted efficiently.

The Hon. R. S. Richards—Put that in the Bill.

The Hon. R. L. BUTLER—I have no objection. I would not introduce the Bill if it were not essential to do so. I know what will happen if no action is taken—members of the board will resign.

Mr. Thompson-—Have they threatened to do so?

The Hon. R. L. BUTLER—There have been no threats, but they have told me that they, cannot carry on bcause their employers will not allow them to do so unless the remuneration is increased.

Mr.- Lacey—The firms employing the men will get the advantage of the increase.

The Hon. R. L. BUTLER—One firm, for whom one member of the. board acts as manager, has been complaining about the time he has been spending on Abattoirs business. Parliament should decide what is a reasonable fee-for the service rendered. You cannot get competent men- for the work unless, a reasonable fee is paid. The Savings Bank, Farmers' Assistance Board, State Bank, and the Transport Control Board all pay the members on their boards fees which are infinitely higher than those paid to the men attending to Abattoirs business. I submit the Bill in the hope that something will be done. If Parliament can congratulate itself on one thing, it is the change which took place in the administration as the result of the appointment of a new board at the Abattoirs. I think it will be essential for the Abattoirs to take over the Port Lincoln freezing works in the future. Last year the works at Port Lincoln experienced difficulty in the slaughtering of lambs, with the result that the lambs were available too late to be exported. There should have. been co-ordination between the Port Lincoln freezing works and the Abattoirs, so that lambs which were not fit for export could have been sold in the metropolitan area. I suggest to members that they inspect the new slaughtering works at the Abattoirs. Eventually all the slaughtering will be done at the one place, whether the lambs are for export or for home consumption. Although it was a big job, the work was done exceptionally well. I move the second reading.

Mr. LACEY secured the adjournment of the debate.