**LAND SETTLEMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL 1958**

**House of Assembly, 15 October 1958, page 1240**

Second reading

**The Hon. C. S. HINCKS (Minister of Lands)—**I move—

*That this Bill be now read a second* time***.***

The object of this Bill, which is similar to the one passed last year, is to extend the operation of the Land Settlement Act until the end of next year. The Government believes that the time has not yet arrived when the provisions of the principal Act may be allowed to lapse, and the effect of the Bill is to extend the term of office of the members of the committee and the power to acquire certain laud in. the South" East for a further 12 months.

Clause 3 of the Bill extends the term of office of committee members until December 31, 1959. Clause 4 amends section 27a of the principal Art and will enable the Government on the recommendation of the committee to acquire lands in that portion of the western division of the South-East which is south of drains K and L, up to December 22, 1959.

Mr. O ’HALLO RAN secured the adjournment of the debate.

**LAND SETTLEMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL 1958**

**House of Assembly, 21 October 1958, pages 1305-7**

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from October 15. Page 1241.)

Mr. O’HALLOKAN (Leader of the Opposition)—I support this Bill with much enthusiasm. The Land Settlement Committee has performed a useful service in connection with soldier settlement. Its inquiries have been thorough, its reports sound, and soldier settlers will undoubtedly benefit in the future because of its existence. The legislation continues the committee for a further 12 months, but I would make it a permanent committee, like the Public Works Committee. We hear much about the need for increased primary production in order to maintain the balance between primary and secondary production, and to bring that about this committee is one of the necessary pieces of machinery. I see no reason why in the future it should not serve a useful purpose by reporting on land settlement schemes for civilians.

The time must come when there will be no more ex-servicemen applicants and when there will be a need for civilian settlement. There is an inherent desire on the part of people brought up on the land to remain on the land. I will not give my views now about closer settlement schemes, but in their establishment a Land Settlement Committee is essential. Our committee has investigated schemes as the agent of the Commonwealth, but the time will come when the Commonwealth itself will be interested in land settlement, which is a fairly costly business in the primary stages and which needs someone with the necessary financial resources to carry it out. Our Land Settlement Committee should be a permanent body with power to make inquiries where land is held in large estates, and it should be able to advise the Government on the classification of land and how it can be used to the best purpose. If this transpires, the Land Settlement Committee will be of great importance to the State in future.

Mr. BYWATERS (Murray)—I support the Bill which, although short, is important. I re-echo some sentiments expressed by the Leader of the Opposition and agree that the Land Settlement Committee should be made permanent. To a large extent it has been indirectly instrumental in the settlement of some contented people on the land, but the time is approaching when it will have fulfilled the purpose for which it was originally appointed, namely, soldier settlement. However, it should continue in operation because some young men who did not have the opportunity to take part in the last war at present have no chance to go on the land; and it is these people to whom, I think, a service can be rendered by the retention of the committee. Even if the Government does not appoint it permanently, no doubt it will continue it from year to year.

Some people are undertaking intense cultivation on areas adjacent to the Murray. I have mentioned this before and reiterate it because it is something to which we shall have to pay attention soon. A visit to the area adjacent to the Murray will reveal how arid land can be converted to good land by irrigation. I have proved this on a small area which was practically sand drift and grew tobacco bushes, but by the addition of water and fertilizers and by cultivation I grew vegetables equal to, if not better than, those grown by market gardeners on highly productive land. That goes to show that by correct treatment this land can become very productive.

We have read recently that the demand for land for building has become acute and the rates on some land in the metropolitan area have risen so high that market gardeners have been forced to go further afield and into the country. A number who have sold out either to the Housing Trust or others seeking land for building have come to my district and are happy with the change. At the East End Market I have often been asked whether any land is available adjacent to the Murray, but this land is not easy to come by. Often it is held in large tracts which at the moment are deso­late, but with proper treatment it could become very productive.

I believe the Land Settlement Committee could explore this position with the idea of intense cultivation being undertaken on land adjacent to the Murray. This matter has been placed before the Lands Department and has received some consideration, and it will continue to be placed before the department. I believe the time will come when it will be necessary to do something along those lines. Therefore, there is need for this Land Settlement Committee, which has done yeoman service, to continue in operation. It is playing a vital part in our progress.

Mr. JENKINS (Stirling)—As I am a member of the Land Settlement Committee perhaps I should have nothing to say on the Bill, but there is one aspect I should like to mention. It can easily be expected that when the Commonwealth Government ceases its war service land settlement activities the Land Settlement Committee may lapse, but, as some honourable members have said, there is still ample scope for its continuance, although perhaps on different lines from those for which it was originally designed. There are tremendous prospects for development in the South-East as a result of drainage operations. The Land Development Executive is possibly using much equipment belonging to the Commonwealth, and I should like an assurance from the Minister of Lands that when the Commonwealth eventually withdraws from its operations that equipment will be taken over by the Land Development Executive to develop for closer settlement the land being drained.

There is a terrific potential in the South- East. I notice that in his explanation of the Bill the Minister referred to the acquisition of certain lands in the western division south of drains L and K. There is excellent land there and also in the eastern division, which will become available as the drains become operative. Some larger holdings will be sub-divided as the land increases in value. Therefore, I hope that the Minister will consider keeping the equipment belonging to the Commonwealth in the hands of the Land Development Execu­tive for the future development of these lands.

Mr. QUIRKE (Burra)—I hope that this legislation never expires. Last year when I drew the Government’s attention to the fact it was likely to lapse if an amending Bill was not passed, the Government took the appropriate action, and we now have another amending Bill to keep it alive for an additional year. I draw members’ attention to the fact that the Act provides for the acquisition of underdeveloped land—if any other land were involved a further amendment would be necessary. The legislation also incorporates at least one section of the Compulsory Acquisition of Land Act of 1925, but I understand that under this Bill there can be no compulsory acquisition of fully „ developed land, although it may be acquired with the consent of the owner.

Undeveloped land is one thing, but to what extent must land be under-developed to come within the provisions of this Act? The Land Settlement Committee has to decide, on the recommendations of the Land Board, whether land is under-developed and whether or not to acquire it. Much land in South Australia could come into this category. A few years ago it would have been difficult to classify some of it as under-developed, but because of the application of scientific methods to land it can now definitely be classified as such.

The broom bush and scrub oak country, sandy dunes, and shallow sands overlying clays in the east country of the South-East were just waste lands years ago. The only thing they were good for was to run a fire over them every other year, which succeeded in burning out all that was good for sheep, leaving hard growth that only kangaroos would eat. This land was let on leasehold for a fraction of a shilling an acre, but anyone holding it in that condition now could definitely have it classified as under-developed land in view of what is known about the development of that type of country.

I support this measure, and hope the Act will never be allowed to go out of existence. I am not an advocate of grabbing land from people, but one purpose for which the legislation was passed was to deal with this type of land, and in that respect it is extremely valuable, apart from its use in giving preference to soldier settlers. Some people do not do the right thing with their land, and while this Act exists they will be forced to do something with it or dispose of their land. I have no pity for anyone inside the 20in. line of rainfall who deliberately keeps land out of production so that its value is increased because of development all around it—and there are such instances. These people will be cleaned up under this Act, as they should be. I support the second reading.

Mr. HARDING (Victoria)—I support this Bill, and wish to comment on it, because the South-East has been mentioned. It is known that there is between 3,500,000 to 4,000,000 acre feet of water in the South-East, draining to a depth of from 15ft. to 200ft. This means there is 1,000,000,000 gallons of water there, which is a tremendous volume, but there is thousands of acres of under-developed land in the area. Dr. Callaghan has been asked to re-assess the carrying capacity, which he has now fixed at the equivalent of 9,000,000 sheep; he also said thousands of acres of underdeveloped land exists there. I agree that the Land Settlement Committee should be re-appointed; my only criticism is that it would be preferable to have a smaller committee consisting of experts. I strongly support the Bill.

Bill read a second time and taken through its remaining stages.