**BRANDS BILL1882**

**House of Assembly, 5 September 1882, pages 819-20**

Second reading.

**The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS (Hon. A. Catt),** in moving the second reading of this measure, said that the Registrar of Brands had found the Act of 1879 to work fairly well, but there were some difficulties he had experienced which it was proposed to remedy in the proposed Bill. The Act of 1879 provided that only letters and numerals should be used as brands, but some of the letters had become exhausted, and others nearly so, and the Registrar now asked to be allowed to use signs of a plain character, each of which would provide for 300 extra brands being issued. The report of the Registrar showed that up to the end of last year 5,000 brands had been registered, 1,600 or 1,700 of which were in last year alone. The use of signs in addition to letters would also allow of a distinctive brand for Pound purposes, ;and admit of the triangle or some other sign being used, and known as such it would to some extent show persons whether an animal had been sold out of pound, and prevent disputes and possible litigation. Power was further given to enable distinctive numerals to be used for stud and herd purposes. A circular issued by the Indian Government requested that horses for that market might be branded on the neck, and several stockholders had asked for the power to brand horses in the same place with numerals in addition to the registered brands, and cattle on the horns and neck. This was necessary to enable stockholders to keep a better record of their stock than at present. It was also felt necessary to make an alteration as regarded re-branding. The present Act provided for one brand being placed under another, which led to confusion sometimes. It was provided in the new Bill that a subsequent brand should be placed in the next following position according to the Act of 1879. The Bill also provided for tattoo-marks and paint-brands, the Act of 1879 providing for tattoo-marks or paint-brands only Owners of registered brands for sheep were allowed to use numerals. The Registrar was empowered (where he might consider it necessary) to cancel any registered brand, thus preventing the Directory being crowded with brands where the owners were dead or had left the colony and the brands not used, and enable cases to be dealt with where one person might settle beside another and adopt a brand very similar. This had been done and made the means of carrying on cattle-stealing to a very large extent. The alteration required in the brand being so minute, it was almost impossible to identify the cattle. Certain penalties were included in the Bill which were omitted from the Act of 1879, and an alteration was proposed in the mode of ear-marking sheep by allowing a slit of an inch and a quarter in length instead of three-quarters of an inch, which was found to be too small. If the Bill were carried, all drovers when travelling with cattle for a distance of thirty miles would have to carry a waybill. In the Act of 1878 this provision was included relating only to a distance of five miles ; and in consequence of the stir made about it, it was never put into force and was left out of the Act of 1879. A large number of stock-owners now requested the Registrar to re-introduce the matter. It was found to work well in Queensland and New South Wales, where it was considered invaluable. It would prevent a drover going through a run and picking up stray cattle; enable stock inspectors to trace diseased cattle more readily, and the police to track cattle that might have been stolen. These were the chief provisions of the Bill, and he trusted it would soon become law.

Mr. ROUNSEVELL was pleased to hear that the Brands Act had been of service, and worked fairly well. He thought it would have been just as well if the two previous Acts had been repealed, and the whole question dealt with under the one Act, which was a matter that might be considered next session. The Commissioner had shown good reasons for the alterations in the present law; but there was one clause which might have been included in the Bill to enable persons stealing stock to be more easily convicted. When stock were stolen the hides were frequently disfigured to such an extent by being denuded of hair or wool or having the brands cut out that they could not be sworn to as belonging to the stolen property. (The Commissioner of Crown Lands—“ Amendments are being prepared to meet this.”) He was glad to hear that, and he would support the Bill.

The Hon. J. COLTON drew attention to the fact that a great many hides were spoilt so far as the tanner was concerned by being branded on the ribs and rump, and he suggested that provision should be made for preventing this.

Mr. HARDY said that one of his constituents had pointed out that with the power the Registrar had to cancel brands a great deal of hardship might be caused in the case of a person, for instance, who bought an estate with which a well-known brand, which was of value, was associated, if it were withdrawn and he was not allowed to use it. He suggested that provision should be made in Committee that where the Registrar withdrew a brand he should furnish a report in writing to the Commissioner of Crown Lands, stating his reason for doing so.

Mr. STIRLING moved the adjournment of the debate till Tuesday.

Carried.