**VERMIN-PROOF FENCING BILL 1897**

**Legislative Council, 9 November 1897**

Second reading

The CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J V. O’Loghlin) in moving the second reading of this Bill, said it could be shortly described as liberalising the provisions under which Vermin-proof Fencing Boards were formed under the previous Act, and providing for the reduction of the interest charged by the Government for loans for fencing. The first clause provided that the rate of interest, which was now 5 per cent., should be reduced to 4 per cent., and that the principal with the interest should be repaid in 20 yearly instalments of £7 7s. 2d. When they considered that under the Act of 1890 settlers were advanced money free of interest to allow them to grapple with the vermin, they could scarcely think the proposal for the reduction was too liberal. The Government could get money for less than 4 per cent., so that the revenue would not lose by the transaction. Clause 3 was inserted to settle a doubt which arose as to whether educational lands came under the Act of 1890. The Crown law officers thought they did, but others held a different opinion, so that the clause was put in to finally deal with the matter. Clause 4 was one of the principal clauses of the Bill. It provided that the provisions in clause 17 in the Vermin Districts Act of 1894 shall apply to land within hundreds. Settlers within district councils would have an opportunity under the Bill of forming boards the same as in outside pastoral districts. The Act of 1894 laid down the means by which boards were to be formed. It was necessary that one-half of the ratepayers should , consent and .that plans should be prepared, showing the boundaries and other particulars, and laid before Parliament. Before vermin districts were formed particulars would have to be laid before Parliament. Subject to these provisions there was no reason why the settlers on the borders of pastoral districts should not be allowed to avail selves of the provisions of the Act of 1894 Clause 5 was inserted as a matter of convenience. It was provided in the Act that the boards must meet within the districts to which they belonged, but that had been found to be inconvenient, and the clause provided that the boards could meet at the most convenient place. Clause 6 provided that where a fence was on the boundary between two districts the cost of maintaining it was to be equally borne by the boards of the districts concerned. At present the lessees on each side had to bear it. Clause 7 set out that when a district ceased to exist the property of the board was to be vested in the Crown, and clause 8 increased the limit of the rate that might be imposed from 10s. to £1. Under the Act of 1894 the limit was fixed at 4s., and it was increased to 10s. in the Act of 1896, but even 10s. had been found to be insufficient, and as the boards would be dealing with their own money they would be quite safe in increasing the limit to £1. Those shortly were the provisions of the measure, which simply gave greater facilities for the carrying out of operations under the Act of 1894 for the abolition of vermin by separating the infested from the non-infested districts by fencing and gradually destroying the vermin. The operations of the Vermin-proof Fencing Acts had been a success financially. The Government had advanced £49,171 7s. for vermin-proof fencing purposes, and of that amount £16,649 12s. 7d. had been repaid, the arrears of interest and instalments up to the present time being only £195. These figures spoke strongly in favor of the system and of the safety of making the advances. They also showed that the Government were following a wise course in providing for the extension of the legislation. He moved the second reading with every confidence.

Carried.

In committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 passed.

Clause 3. Loans to holders of educational leases.

The Hon. E. WARD asked why holders of leases with the right of purchase and per­petual leases should not be included in the clause? There were many holders of such leases who would be glad to unite with others in connection with the acquisition of vermin- proof fencing. (The Chief Secretary—“They are included in the Act, but they must form districts.”) They might not be able to form districts, and they should be given the same privilege as holders of educational leases.

The CHIEF SECRETARY said the clause was intended simply to remove a doubt as to whether educational lessees came under the Act. The other lessees spoken of by Mr. Ward came under the Act.

The Hon. J. G. BICE suggested that progress should be reported so that they could look into the whole matter as several amendments were required.

Progress was reported and leave obtained to sit again next day.