APPROPRIATION (FLOOD RELIEF) BILL (NO. 2) 1956

House of Assembly, 8 November 1956, page 1551

Second reading

His Excellency the Governor’s Deputy, by message, recommended the appropriation of such amounts of the general revenue of the State as were required for the purposes mentioned in the Bill.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD moved—

That the Speaker do now leave the chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the whole for the purpose of considering the following resolution:—*That it is desirable to introduce a Bill for an Act to appropriate a further sum of £800,000 out of the revenue of the State for flood relief.*

Motion carried.

Resolution agreed to in Committee and adopted by the House.

Bill introduced and read a first time.

**The Hon. T. PLAYFORD (Premier and Treasurer)—**I move—

That this Bill he now read a second time.

The Prime Minister has advised me that the Commonwealth Government will make the State a grant of up to £800,000 on a pound for pound basis of expenditure by the State. The grant is made up of £50,000, already made available for personal hardship and paid to the Lord Mayor’s Relief Fund; £250,000 for flood-damaged roads; £250,000 for protective measures during the emergency; and £250,000 for replacement of embankments on the lower river areas. The grant is made to the State Government as a reimbursement of 50 per cent of the amounts expended by the State on the above allocations.

Parliamentary appropriation has already been given to the expenditure of £800,000 by the State for flood relief purposes, £300,000 by Appropriation (Flood Relief) Act No. 1, 1956, and £500,000 provided for in the Estimates. The total amount available for expenditure is £1,600,000—-£800,000 from the Commonwealth and £800,000 from State funds. The purpose of this Bill is to seek Parliamentary authority for the State to expend the additional £800,000 which will be repaid by the Commonwealth by way of grant. Clause 1 is the short title. Clause 2 authorizes the issue of £800,000. Clause 3 sets out the purposes on which the money may be expended and appropriates the amount for those purposes.

Actually, the Bill is introduced for technical reasons. It is Commonwealth money, but because it has been passed over to me as Treasurer of this State it is necessary to provide for an appropriation to enable the expenditure of the money. We cannot spend it unless there is a Parliamentary appropriation. The money has been provided for a specific purpose and it cannot be diverted o any other purpose.

Mr. O’HALLORAN (Leader of the Opposition)—I do not think the amount provided by the Commonwealth will be adequate to meet the emergency created by the flood, but it is all that is available at the moment. The Commonwealth has directed how it must be expended. From the Premier’s remarks, I assume that of the £250,000 provided for replacement of embankments some will be available to assist in the restoration of private embankments.

The Hon. T. Playford—I will explain that in Committee.

Mr. O ’HALLORAN—It is not for us to quarrel with the Commonwealth’s directions how it must be spent. I hope this Bill will pass without unnecessary debate or delay. Just prior to the resumption the Premier intimated that Parliament would re-assemble on February 5 next. We will then be in a better position to assess what additional assistance is required. I support the Bill.

Mr. KING (Chaffey)—I join with the Leader of the Opposition in his remarks on this Bill, which is really a recognition of a Commonwealth grant. The Commonwealth Government should be thanked for what I hope is an interim gesture, as this sum is small compared with the total amount of the damage. It will, however, at least enable the State Government to do a worth-while job, whereas its finances would be seriously hampered if it had to carry the burden alone. I trust that later another Bill of the same nature, but with a different amount, will be introduced.

Mr. BYWATERS (Murray)—I believe the grant from the Federal Government is insufficient and I, too, trust it is only an interim sum. I hope that a case will be presented to the Federal Government for a further grant, as this money will not go far. I do not argue about the sum of £250,000 to be spent on protection work, but the same amount for roads will be inadequate in view of the condition of the roads. The sum of £250,000 for the rehabilitation of embankments will be supplemented by another £250,000 from the State Government and, although this may enable the repair of Government banks, unfortunately nothing has been said about private banks, and the small groups of settlers on private swamps will find it difficult to re-establish themselves and re-build their banks.

I trust, therefore, that some means will be found to enable them to get back into production. I believe this assistance will not be sufficient in many cases where settlers are working on mortgages and will therefore find it hard to borrow more money. Their security has gone, and I trust some move will be made to borrow money on their behalf so that they can get back into production because, if they are not given that opportunity, land sharks may cash in on their misfortunes.

Bill read a second time.