AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE ACT AMENDMENT BILL 1938

Legislative Council, 10 August 1938, page 842

Second reading

The Hon. A. P. BLESING (Northern— Minister of Agriculture)—This is a short Bill to make it clear that the Minister of Agriculture is the Minister in charge of the administration of the Agricultural College Act. For many years the Minister of Agriculture has in fact administered the Act. When, however, it became necessary a little while ago to investigate the law relating to the control of the college, it was brought to the Government ’s notice that the Act provides that the Roseworthy Agricultural College is to be under the administration of the Commissioner of Crown Lands, and that the rules of the college must be made by that Minister. The Government, however, does not desire to disturb the existing arrangement which has been in force for many years. It is very convenient to administer the college in conjunction with the other work of the Department of Agriculture. The Government has, therefore, brought down this Bill to provide that the Minister of Agriculture is to be the Minister in charge of the college, and that the past acts and transactions of the Minister of Agriculture in relation to the college shall have the same validity as if he had always been the Minister in charge of the col­lege. I move the second reading.

The Hon. H. HOMBURG secured the adjournment of the debate.

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE ACT AMENDMENT BILL 1938

Legislative Council, 16 August 1938, page 925

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from August 10. Page 842.)

The Hon. H. HOMBURG (Central No. 2)— I have previously pointed out what the Roseworthy College is costing the taxpayers, but no sooner have I stated the facts than a number of my friends have done their best to explain them away. Therefore, on this occasion I take my figures from the Auditor-General’s report. The accumulated cost of the Agricultural College since 1883 is approximately £400,000. I did not call it a loss, because the institution can indirectly create many benefits. The cost to the taxpayer of primary education has been £8 10s. a student, secondary education £17 10s., technical high school education £25, and Roseworthy Agricultural College £200.

The Hon. A. P. Blesing—Over what period ?

The Hon. H. HOMBURG—That is the cost Per annum, whereas a well conducted institution, the Waite Research Institute, is carrying out much the same work. I am glad the Minister shows surprise at the cost of the Roseworthy College because, although he introduced the Bill, he was apparently unaware of this position.

The Hon. S. R. Whitford—Are you taking into account the fees paid by students?

The Hon. H. HOMBURG—Yes, everything.

The Hon. A. P. Blesing—It is well worth while.

The Hon. H. HOMBURG—In 1932, according to the Auditor-General, there were 40 students at the college, and I doubt whether there are more than 50 there to-day. According also to the Auditor-General the ratio of students to employees is 1- to 1. I am sure that there should be no complaint because these facts are brought before members. When I dealt with this matter about 12 months ago I was rather unpopular in certain quarters. If in face of this information members are prepared to continue the expenditure on these lines no grounds exist for complaining that taxes are higher. In 1883 the college was established as a college and not an experimental institution. It has since developed into an experimental institution but surely many of the experiments now carried on at Roseworthy could be carried on at the Waite Institute. We have never asked responsible officers of the Roseworthy College to report to this House.

The Hon. A. P. Blesing—Have you visited both institutions?

The Hon. H. HOMBURG—Yes.

The Hon. A. P. Blesing—Are you satisfied that the experiments carried on at Roseworthy could be carried out at the Waite Institute?

The Hon. H. HOMBURG—I am not an expert. If the Minister says they cannot be,, and that could be supplemented by someone who is responsible for guarding the taxpayers’ interests, I would be more satisfied. I ask that investigations be made to see whether a great deal of overlapping can be avoided.

Bill read a second time and taken through Committee.