**VERMIN DISTRICTS BILL 1900**

**Legislative Council, 16 August 1900, pages 346-7**

Second reading

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS, in moving the second reading, said the Bill was introduced for the purpose of giving the Government further protection in making advances with respect to vermin-proof fending. In accordance with the promise he had given the House, he had brought down the figures showing the details of loans granted to district councils, vermin boards, and trusts to the end of 1900. They were as follows: Advanced to district councils £63,683 19/7; repaid £23,764 19/9; arrears £85 3/10. Advances to vermin boards, £40m365 10/; repaid £2,522; arrears £75 15/5. Advanced to trusts, £12,075 0/11; repaid, £1,320 5/3; arrears £932 8/11. With the exception of the trusts loans had been repaid very well. The following nine vermin districts has been declared under the Act of 1894:— Pandurra 646 square miles, Wilgena, 3,337; Carriewerkoo 622; Yarley, 382; Braemar 289; Murkaby, 257; Old Koomooloo 295; Elliston, 2,289; Flinders, 2,290; a total area of 10,407 square miles. Several application for further loans to vermin districts had come in, but he would like to see the Bill passed before they were granted. At present the Government had not the right to properly supervise the erection of fences, and they not the say in the expenditure of the advances as they ought to have. The Bill provided for a Government official on every board in order to give them the power they required. That would keep the Government in touch with things, and let .them know that the money was being spent wisely. The Government had good capable officials, conversant with the subject, who could act on the boards. Many of the boards held their meetings in AdeIaide. The Bill also provided1 for an inspector to inspect the fences and advise the Government, and if necessary compel the boards to alter their fences. Provision was also made for exempting those who had erected vermin-proof fences from the payment of the wild dog and fox tax of 6d. a mile. The third clause of the Bill provided for the kind of fence to be erected. The reason for subsection B was that the fence that would suit one district would not suit another. (Mr. Handyside—“How do you propose to inspect it?”) By Government inspectors. The Government had inspectors now, but they had not the authority which this Bill would give. There was a provision in the Bill to provide that where lands adjoined by a vermin district, and the vermin board’s fence protected it, the board could ask the owner of the adjoining land to pay half the cost in yearly instalments Clause 8 allowed a board to alter the line of a fence, as given in the plan submitted to Parliament in order to overcome natural difficulties, such as sandhills and lakes. Clause 11 related to elections, and clause 12 dealt with the abolition of boards in certain cases, and clause 13 allowed the Commissioner to exercise the powers of the board until a new one was appointed. According to clause 14, the property of the boards was to vest in the Commissioner. Clause 16 provided--“The first rate declared by a vermin board shall be for the portion of the year between the date of the publication of the proclamation constituting the district, and the thirtieth day of June next after the declaring of the rate.” The Bill was of a non-contentious character, as it was for safety of the Government he did not expect any opposition to it. He moved the second reading.

In committee.

Clause 1. Passed.

Clause 2. Repeal.

Me MILLER said that as it was a very thin House, the of Commissioner of Crown Lands should fully explain what 'had been repealed.

The bells having been rung, and a quorum obtained,

The COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS said the clause repealed the old de­finition of vermin-proof fence, and a bet­ter one was provided in the next clause.

Clause passed.

Clause 3. Vermin-proof fence.

Mr. HANDYSIDE said the clause pro­vided that all fences must be dog-proof and have two barbed wires on top. That should not be made compulsory in districts where there were no dogs, but where there were rabbits. It should be left to the board to de­cide whether the barbed wire was required. People wished to erect a good substantial fence in the cheapest way possible. It was not always the best fence that contained the greatest number of posts. His expe­rience was that the best fence was the fence which contained the greatest number of strainers.

Mr. ARCHIBALD did not like the Bill at all. There had been no discussion upon the second reading. (The Treasurer—“The Bill went through this House last year.”) If it had been a Bill dealing with a few factory operatives the debate upon its se­cond reading would have extended over a month. He desired to know if Parliament was prepared to go in for an unlimited ex­penditure for the purpose of fencing pas­toral runs? The sooner pastoralists were obliged to undertake their own fencing the better.

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS pointed out that the clause did not prevent the Government lending money to district councils with which to erect any fence they liked. At the present time the State advanced funds to district councils to enable them to erect fences to keep out rabbits. Some £65,000 had been lent in this way, of which sum £27,000 had been repaid, whilst the arrears only represented £83. It was about the best agreement the Government had ever entered into.

Mr. POYNTON protested against the action of the Government in prematurely forcing the Bill into committee. There were several measures on the business paper before this Bill, and yet they had been passed over, so that the measure under discussion might be sprung suddenly upon members. Quite recently he had fur­nished the Commissioner of Crown Lands with a list of amendments, which the boards interested in the working of the Bill desired to have inserted, and the Commissioner had promised to get a report from the Surveyor-General upon those amendments. (The Commissioner of Crown Lands—“I have it.”) He had not seen it yet, and he asked the Commissioner to report progress, so as to allow members an opportunity of perusing it.

Mr. CALDWELL thought that the na­ture of the fence to be erected ought to be left to the boards of management in the various districts.

Mr. McKENZIE said that the district of Flinders was more interested in this Bill than any other part of the colony. He did not think that a dog-proof fence should be less than 4 ft. high. The money ad­vanced to district councils for wire netting had been regularly repaid, and the State was not likely to suffer any loss in this connection. He had no objection to the clause as it stood.

Mr. MILLER asked if any particular brand of netting would be specified? Mr.Landseer had stated that much netting was being made -winch would not stand the weather.

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS—We are making enquiries.

Mr. ARCHIBALD thought the Govern­ment should see that the fence is of a height to keep back the type of jumping wild dog mentioned as infesting the district of Flinders. Would it not be better to make it 5 ft. high instead of 4? He moved to strike out “4 and insert “5” instead.

Mr. McKENZIE said every one in Flin­ders intended to make the fences nearly 5 ft. high. He understood they intended to have 3 ft of 1 1/2 in. mesh at the bottom and 2ft. of a wider mesh above.

Mr. HANDYSIDE said Mr. McFarlane on the lakes, had found that fences as pre­scribed in the clause are not sufficient, and he had raised them to 5 ft. He considered the board should be left to decide as to the nature of the fence, and he would like to strike out the references to the barbed wire. What was the use of having two barbed wires as well as the big-mesh netting above?

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS hoped the hon. member would not insist on an amendment. The definition of the fence had been agreed upon by those most interested in the subject. Subsection B would do all that the hon. member de­sired by giving the Commissioner power to accept any substantial fence.

Mr. POYNTON believed the fence might, safely be fixed at 4 ft. 6 in. He suggested that the Minister should report progress, because the clause contained no definition as to posts. At Wilgena they had seen 30 ft. spans between the posts, and under the clause they might have 60ft. spans.

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS said he would help to recommit the clause later.

Mr. POYNTON moved to insert after “four feet'" "6 inches.”

Mr. ARCHIBALD withdrew his amend­ment.

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS said to raise the height to 4 ft. 6 in. would be to do serious harm to many parts of the country, by compelling lessees to put up an unnecessarily expensive fence. At Mutooroo the fence was only 3 ft. 10 in. high, and answered every purpose. He asked hon. members to stick to the clause as it stood.

Mr. SHANNON said if a 3 ft. 10 in. fence was deemed to be high enough, why compel farmers to erect one 4 ft. 6 in, high?

Mr. McKENZIE said this was a most im­portant Bill, and they should be careful not to discuss its provisions too hurriedly. While he was anxious that a fence of a fair height should be put up they should not compel people to erect a fence any higher than was necessary.

Negatived.

Mr. HANDYSIDE moved in subsection D to add after “defined” “consisting of posts not more than 30 ft. apart."

Carried.

Clause as amended passed.

Clause 4 passed.

Progress was reported, and leave ob­tained to sit again on Tuesday next.