**METROPOLITAN AND EXPORT ABATTOIRS ACT AMENDMENT BILL 1955**

**Legislative Assembly, 1 September 1955, pages 723-4**

Second reading

**Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN (Eyre - Minister of Agriculture)—**I move:—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

I regret that the Bill is not yet on members’ files, which is due to the excessive

Amount of work to be done by the Government Printer. I thought that if I gave the second reading explanation today members would be ready to consider the Bill further when it was placed on their files.

The object of the Bill is to carry into effect the decision of the Government, announced in Parliament last week, to facilitate the entry into the metropolitan abattoirs area of meat from country abattoirs. This matter is at present provided for in a limited way by the Metropolitan and Export Abattoirs Act; but the existing provisions are not adequate for carrying into effect the policy of the Government.

By section 78 of the Act the Abattoirs Board is empowered to grant permits to bring carcasses and meat into the metropolitan abattoirs area from the Port Lincoln branch of the Government Produce Department. By section 77 of the Act the board is empowered to grant a permit to authorize any person to bring specified carcasses or meat into the metropolitan abattoirs area in any circumstances which, in the board’s opinion, justify the grant of a permit. These sections were not designed to confer rights to bring specified quotas of meat regularly into the abattoirs area, and it is not likely that any country abattoirs, other than those at Port Lincoln, could obtain any substantial rights under them. Moreover, the Metropolitan Abattoirs Board, with all its virtues, should not be charged with the responsibility of deciding the rights of country abattoirs in the matter of slaughtering for the metropolitan area. It is therefore necessary that if country abattoirs are to be given extended rights to slaughter for the metropolitan area, some authority other than the Abattoirs Board should be empowered to decide the extent of such rights, and that legislative provision should be made for enabling a greater quantity of meat from country abattoirs to be brought into the metropolitan area than is likely to be permitted under the present legislation.

The Bill, in effect, places the power of deciding what, meat from country abattoirs should come into the metropolitan area in the hands of the Government. It is laid down that the Governor may by proclamation declare what proportion of the meat slaughtered at any country abattoirs can be brought into the metropolitan area during any specified period. Different quotas may be granted to different country abattoirs, and any quota may be expressed in terms of the number of carcasses or weight of meat. When a country abattoirs has been given a quota by proclamation, persons will have the right to bring meat, up to the limit of the quota, into the metropolitan abattoirs area under permits granted by the Minister of Agriculture. The permit system is necessary in order that proper provision may be made for ensuring that all necessary inspections are made and that the quota is not exceeded, and generally for regulating deliveries into the metropolitan area. However, it is contemplated that when a country abattoirs is granted a quota, permits will be made available in order that the quota may be filled. Provision is made for the Minister to direct inspections, additional to those provided for in the permits, if necessary in the interests of public health.

The Bill provides that meat brought into the metropolitan abattoirs area under a permit granted by the Minister may lawfully be sold within the area. A breach of the terms of a permit will be an offence and the person responsible will be liable to a fine and, in addi­tion, the permit may be revoked. The Government is of opinion that this Bill is necessary in the interests of ensuring an adequate meat supply for the rapidly-increasing population of the metropolitan area and also in the interests of producers of stock in country districts, including Eyre Peninsula. Without entering into a discussion on the merits and the facts of the dispute at the Metropolitan Abattoirs, I point out that the present situation indicates the desirability of some decentralization in the slaughtering of our stock. In other words, if you have all your eggs in one basket you can be caught out badly, and that is the situation today. I believe that if we had had some country works operating they could have assisted materially not only in feeding the metropolitan consumers but also in overcoming the grave problem of the export trade that has arisen since the strike began.

Master butchers and their employees are doing a wonderful job in keeping up our supply, so no-one is going without meat, but we are faced with the grave problem of

700 000 to 1,000,000 export lambs awaiting slaughter. If more country works were operating they could help us out in such an emergency. This is borne out by the fact that the Port Lincoln works are still operating. They can handle the output on Eyre Peninsula, and during slack periods they could even take some of the lambs from the mainland. I have heard of many lambs being taken to Victoria from as far afield as Yorke Peninsula, and we are losing that trade while the dispute continues, but this means of disposal cannot cope with the large numbers that await treatment, so I hope the dispute can be resolved soon with satisfaction to all parties.

Mr. Heaslip—Producers will have to take much less for their lambs.

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN—Undoubtedly there will be a serious price decline because the lambs will get too heavy or lose their bloom. Moreover, lamb prices are substantially lower than they were last year. Some prices I have heard quoted are about 55 per cent of the prices that similar lambs were bringing last year, so the producer and the State are faced with a considerable reduction in income from this source, quite apart from the additional loss occurring as the result of dispute at the abattoirs. I am pleased to say that the proposals for the establishment of abattoirs at Kadina have been revived. Negotiations have been resumed, and with a definite quota in prospect there will be a better opportunity for country abattoirs to function, An export abattoirs cannot exist entirely seasonal work of slaughtering solely for export because it only lasts three or four months. If there are no other slaughterings available for an abattoirs it has to be closed for the balance of the year, which means that its export killing charges must be so high as to become prohibitive, unless the abattoirs make a deep inroad into the profits of the stockowner who offers his lambs for treatment.

Unless the nucleus of the team in a meat works can be retained there is always the recurring difficulty of obtaining the necessary labour to carry on from season to season so any country meat works that are established should have some quota in the meat consumption of the metropolitan area, where we have now more than 400,000 people, which is a substantial increase on the number when the Metropolitan and Export Abattoirs’ slaughtering capacity was raised to its present standard. Therefore, there is justification for allotting some quota to country works, as envisaged by the Bill. This should offer some encouragement for works to be established outside the area in which the Metropolitan and Export Abattoirs Board operates. I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr. JENNINGS secured the adjournment of the debate.