**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (FORESTRY RESERVES) BILL 1944**

**Legislative Assembly, 9 November 1944**

Second reading

**The Hon. G. F. JENKINS (Newcastle— Minister of Afforestation)—**This Bill is the out­come of the policy outlined by the Government at the last election. One of its planks was to give assistance to local governing bodies to establish afforestation areas with the assistance of the Government, which undertook to help them in localities recommended by the Conservator of Forests. The purpose of the Bill is to authorize municipal and district councils to establish and manage local forests, and, in order to foster the establishment of such forests, the measure provides for the giving of financial and other assistance to councils. The need for a progressive forestry policy for the State is accepted by all and it is considered by the Government that, in addition to the large scale forestry programme to be carried out by the Forestry Department, steps should be taken to stimulate the interest of local governing bodies in this important matter and to encourage councils to establish local forests.

Many councils have lately indicated their interest in district forests when submitting programmes for post-war development and, although it is obvious that any councils would need expert advice and financial assistance, it is thought by the Government that the present time is opportune to formulate a policy which will lead to the development of district forests in suitable parts of the State. The Conservator of Forests has reported that the State is in such a condition of timber shortage that no opportunity should be missed of increasing local X2 production, even if only for firewood, as a part of the post-war programme. This Bill therefore sets out a legislative scheme which, it is expected, will enable these local forests to be established.

Clause 3 provides for the proclamation of local government forest reserves. These reserves may be constituted by proclamation made upon the recommendation of the Conservator of Forests. A reserve may be established on any Crown Lands which have been dedicated or reserved for forestry purposes and placed under the care, control and management of a council. Power to reserve Crown lands for this purpose is already contained in the Crown Lands Act. It thus follows that the clause will enable the Government to set aside suitable Crown lands for development by councils as forests. Clause 3 also provides that any land of a council which is not subject to any inconsistent trust or reservation, may be declared a local government forestry reserve. The clause also provides that whilst any land is included in a forestry reserve, it may be used only for forestry purposes and for incidental purposes. Clause 4 empowers a council to establish a forest on any local government forestry reserve and authorizes the council to expend its moneys for the establishment and maintenance of the forest.

Clause 5 provides for the making of Government advances to councils for the purpose of the establishment or maintenance of forests. These advances are to be made by the Minister on the recommendation of the Conservator of Forests and are to be subject to such conditions as the Minister, on the like recommendation, directs. It is provided that every advance is to be expended in accordance with any directions given by the Conservator of Forests. The clause provides that every advance is to be free of interest and, as will be seen by clause 6, it is proposed that the council to which an advance is made, will be liable to repay the advance only from the proceeds of the for­est. It is considered by the Government that, in order to encourage local forests, these, liberal financial terms should be given to councils. Obviously, a council which establishes a forest must wait for a long period. before it can derive any substantial revenue from the forest, and many councils are not in the position to undertake, the financial obligations which will arise during the period of the growth of the forest unless given assistance by way of interest remission. The amount which this remission will cost the Government will, of course, depend upon the extent to which councils avail themselves of the provisions of the Bill but, as it is considered that the capital advances will not exceed £10,000 a year, it will be seen that the annual interest loss to the Government will be a relatively small amount. Clause 6 gives power to the council to sell the timber or other products derived from the forest. The revenue thus obtained is to be applied, firstly, in payment of working expenses, secondly, in repayment of any Government advance, and thirdly, in making such provision for the replanting of the forests as it directed by the Conservator of Forests. Any surplus may be paid into the

revenue of the council. As previously mentioned, the council will be obliged to make repayments of Government advances only from the revenue derived from the forest.

Clause 7 deals with another aspect of the assistance to be given to councils, and provides that the Conservator of Forests may give advice to any council as to the management of any forest established by the council. Most councils do not have officers with knowledge of forestry management and the expert advice of the Conservator of Forests should do much towards securing the success of these local forests. Subclause (2) provides that, if a Government advance is made to a council, the Conservator of Forests is to give any necessary directions as to the establishment or management of the forest, and the council is to carry out these directions. If a Government advance is made to a council on the favourable terms provided by the Bill, it is obvious that this proposed control is reasonable in order to ensure that the advance made will be properly expended.

Clause 8 provides that the Governor, on the recommendation of the Conservator of Forests, may make regulations for purposes necessary to carry the Bill into effect. It will therefore be seen that the provisions of the Bill will enable Government assistance for local forests to be provided in three ways, firstly, by the reservation of Crown lands for local government forestry purposes, secondly, by the making of advances on generous terms, and thirdly, the making available of the expert advice of officers of the Forestry Department. With these aids, it is hoped that the Bill will bring about the establishment of local government forests throughout the suitable parts of the State. There are one or two councils showing considerable interest in forestry work and I think, perhaps, a good deal of it was encouraged during the centenary celebrations of the State, when various councils undertook the planting of rows of trees along roadsides. As a result local residents were encouraged to take more interest in the planting of trees, not only for their beauty and the shade they afford, but also for their usefulness to the council and the State generally. However, in a good many instances the expert advice of forestry officers was not sought and consequently trees quite unsuitable to particular localities were planted. The results were often disastrous and discouraging to the councils concerned. However, I may mention the especially good work done by the Mount Barker District Council, which has planted trees not only on roadsides, but on fairly considerable areas within the district, with the expert advice and assistance of forestry officers in more recent years. It is because the Government realizes the great advantages of these small forestry reserves to the State that they have introduced this legislation. It is becoming more and more apparent how necessary it is in this country, where we have been much more interested, very often, in the process of killing forests rather than creating them, that we should amend our policy. Localities which formerly burnt firewood by the thousands of tons are today compelled to import it from other localities, at very high prices. That position will be accentuated in future and, consequently, the more we can do, not only to encourage but actually to assist councils in forestry projects, the better it will be for South Australia. I move the second reading.

The Hon. R. S. RICHARDS secured the adjournment of the debate.