**RENMARK IRRIGATION TRUSTS BILL 1931**

**House of Assembly, 4 August 1931, page 1140**

Second reading

**The COMMISSIONER of PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. J. Mclnnes—West Torrens)—**This Bill is urgent. It deals largely with the control of flood waters at Renmark. I ask members to be good enough to treat the Bill as urgent, and to assist me to get it through to-day, so that it can be sent to the Legislative Council, arrangements having been made for it to be dealt with there this afternoon, if possible. The upper reaches of the Murray are in flood, and there will probably be a high river at Renmark in the course of a few weeks. The Renmark Irrigation Trust No. 1 does not anticipate any immediate danger at Renmark from floodwaters, but as it is reasonable to expect more rain, which will be followed by the snow waters, the Trust deems it wise to take steps to prevent any possible damage to the settlement by floodwaters. A few years ago, the Trust established a reserve fund which it intended to expend on such emergency matters as flood protection, and it is considered that the time is now opportune for expending this reserve. It has, however, been pointed out to the Trust that the Renmark Irrigation Trusts Act, 1893, does not authorise the expenditure of the Trust’s money for such a purpose. As a consequence the Trust has approached the Government with a request that the Act be amended to permit of such expenditure. It was further pointed out that, owing to the urgency of the case, it is necessary that the required powers be granted as soon as possible. It is obvious that, subject to the proper safeguards, the power sought by the Trust is a proper one, and clause 3 therefore confers the necessary powers. Under the clause the Trust may expend its moneys for the purpose of the protection of the settlement at Renmark and the irrigation works of the Trust by means of the construction of embankments or any other works approved by the Minister. In addition, the Trust is given power to expend its moneys for any other purpose for the benefit of the district which is approved by the Minister. In every case the expenditure must be approved by the Minister, a restriction which was agreed by the representatives of the Trust to be a proper one. Some work has already been carried out by the Trust, and it is therefore provided that the clause shall have retrospective operation as from July 1, 1931. The Trust and Murray residents have had cause for weeks past to anticipate a flood, and have been working to prevent possible damage. The Trust has already expended some of its money and this Bill will ratify its action. The second part of the Bill deals with auditors. Section 34 of the Renmark Irrigation Trusts Act, 1893, deals with the election of auditors of the Trust, and, among other things, provides that no auditor who has been continuously in office for two years shall be eligible for re-election for a space of one year. This most unusual provision has had the effect of preventing the continuity of office which is highly desirable in the case of a competent auditor. The Trust therefore has pointed out that, whatever the reason for the inclusion of this provision, it now serves no useful purpose, and has asked for its deletion. This is accordingly provided for byclause 2. I move the second reading.

The Hon. M. McINTOSH (Albert)—I commend the Bill to the House, and thank the Government for introducing it. It is a wise precautionary move to deal with the present danger. The river is unduly high, and floodwaters are coming down the upper reaches. For some reason or other Renmark has rather figured as a place subject to inundation and liable to great danger, and I desire to contradict that impression, which has done the district considerable harm. The greatest portion of the Renmark Irrigation settlement is on high ground, and is not subject to inundation under any conditions. There is certain land which during high river would be inundated if protection were not given, and it is the object of the trust to prevent damage to even the smallest section of land under its control. Some of the lower land is held by soldier settlers, and of course they will be protected. The water in the river is about equal to the 1917 level at Mildura and Wentworth, and it is expected that it will flatten out as it comes down. The actual height the river will reach at Renmark is a matter for conjecture, but it is expected to be a little below the 1917 level. The Trust has already spent some of its money on protective works, and the district council adjoining has protected its section of the country. I am sure that the methods adopted by both bodies will be successful in obviating damage. Owing to the flooding of the Paringa road, the traffic between Paringa and Renmark along that route has been suspended, and the people are very anxious to maintain the service between the two centres.

The Commissioner of Public Works—The Engineer-in-Chief is up there now.

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I am glad of that. I hope that the connection between Renmark and the mallee lands will be maintained. The railway embankment at Paringa has been the subject of much controversy in relation to the effect it will have on the level of the river. It is claimed by the engineers that it will not do any serious damage, but this remains to be seen. The Trust is spending its own money on this work to the advantage of the whole settlement, and it is not asking the taxpayer to contribute one penny, although it might have an excellent claim on the Government, seeing that a considerable portion of the land is soldier settlement land from which the Trust derives very little benefit. A working bee was called for, but at a very large meeting of ratepayers it was decided to ask the Trust to undertake the work, and in the event of the Trust not having sufficient money the ratepayers are quite prepared to meet the expense by a levy on rates. However, this will not be necessary. The Trust is excellently managed, both om the engineering and administrative side, and will take all precautions to protect its ratepayers.

Mr. McMILLAN (Albert)—-I ask the House to put the Bill through as expeditiously as possible. I understand that the Trust has already put in hand the work of building stop banks. During the last flood the Government found money to augment the funds of the Trust for the purpose of building stop banks, but the work was done very hurriedly and without due regard to permanency. The banks the Trust will now build at its own expense will be permanent, and the expense will be nonrecurring. There is one point I would like to bring before the Minister. The Minister stated that the Engineer-in-Chief is at present in the area. Whilst he is there, I would like the Minister to take the opportunity to obtain from him a report giving his opinion on the railway embankment across the Paringa paddock. From all evidence available it is shown that only one engineer supported the construction of the bank and stated that the earthworks were sufficient. I consider the position serious and that the Government should have the advice of their construction authorities on that bank for the benefit of the Government and all concerned. The work provided under the measure will be carried out in an efficient manner by a body of men who have set an example to the rest of Australia in connection with irrigation and irrigation costs. The Renmark settlement is served efficiently at a lower water rate than any other irrigation pumping scheme in Australia.

Bill read a second time and passed.

Later the Bill was returned from the Council without amendment.