**RENMARK IRRIGATION TRUST ACT AMENDMENT BILL 1952**

**Legislative Assembly, 19 August 1952, pages 429-30**

Second reading

**The Hon. C. S. HINCKS (Minister of Lands)—**I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time. This is a simple Bill, but it is of considerable importance to the Renmark Irrigation Trust, at whose request it has been introduced. It deals with the maximum amount of the half-yearly general rate levied by the trust. By section 92 of the Renmark Irrigation Trust Act, 1936-1950, it is provided that the general rate for any half-year is not to exceed £2 an acre of the land on which the rate is imposed. This amount was fixed in 1948, the previous maximum having been 25s. The trust now finds that it cannot meet its expenses without an increase in the rate. It is estimated that every rise of 10s a week in the basic wage increases the expenditure of the trust by about 5s. an acre. As it is already levying the maximum rate allowable by law it will be seen that there is an unanswerable case for an increase. The suggestion that the maximum rate should be increased as provided in this Bill has been placed, before the ratepayers of the trust at a general meeting and was approved by them without dissension. The Government therefore submits the Bill to Parliament and asks that it receive early attention as the next water rate of the trust is to be declared on August 18. To meet the possibility that the Bill may not pass both Houses before that day a clause has been included to provide that it shall be deemed to have come into operation on August 1.

Mr. O’HALLORAN (Leader of the Opposition)—The Bill is a hybrid measure and will have to be submitted to a Select Committee. I am in general sympathy with the proposed set-up and feel I can rely on the committee to take care of the details. I offer no opposition to the second reading.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY (Chaffey)—As member for the district I support the second read­ing, although I regret the necessity for it. The measure has been forced upon the Renmark Irrigation Trust because of the inflationary spiral through which we are passing, and should enable it to meet expenses. There is no necessity to tell Parliament of the wonderful work that the trust is doing as a private system. The water rates charged by the trust are much lower than those for State controlled areas. I have discussed with the chairman of the trust whether it is necessary to have any limitation on the amount charged to settlers under Act of Parliament. Paragraph (a) of subsection 1 of section 92 states:—

The trust shall, for the purposes in section 93, declare on the land included in the assessment book a general rate for the half-year ending June, 30 and another general rate for the half-year ending December 31 next, after the declaring of the rate, each rate not to exceed £2 for every acre of such land.

The concluding words could be deleted and the provision finish at “rate” where third occurring. The Act controls the method whereby water rates are increased only after the settlers have agreed to an increase. The trust has to prepare a rate assessment, after which it can strike a rate. The limiting factor on any rate charged by the trust is done by the settlers themselves. As the Minister pointed out, an increase in the charges has been agreed upon by resolution of a meeting. I hope that the inflationary spiral has finished and that it will not be necessary for the trust to ask for further rating powers, but we do not know what is before us. If we continue as we are, we shall have the inflationary spiral to infinity, or until the whole system breaks down. I know that the trust is anxious for the Bill to pass without delay, but I ask the Minister to see whether should a similar request come before him it would not be possible to excise from the Act the limiting factor to which I have referred so as to leave the matter of rating to the persons concerned.

Bill read a second time and referred to a Select Committee consisting of the Hon. S. W. Jeffries, Messrs. W. Macgillivray, S. J. Lawn and J. E Stephens and the Minister of Lands; the committee to have power to send for persons, papers and records and to report on September 18.