**DROUGHT RELIEF BILL1945**

**Legislative Council, 1 November 1945, pages 758-62**

Second reading

The Hon. R. J. RUDALL (Midland—Minister of Lands)—This Bill is introduced mainly to provide for drought relief for farmers for the current season. Reports received by the Government show that drought in several parts of the State render it necessary for the Government to afford help to a substantial number of farmers whose crops will lie partial or total failures. The drought relief provisions of the Bill are on the general lines of the Act of 1040. They provide for the constitution of an advisory board of three members to assist the Minister of Agriculture in the administration of the Act. Drought relief will be available to persons engaged in the production of cereals and who are in necessitous circumstances by reason of drought prevailing during this current year.

The Treasurer is empowered to borrow up to £750,000 for the purposes of the Act. Out of this money the Minister of Agriculture may make loans of money to farmers, or may sell or supply them with any commodities which are required for farming operations or sustenance of themselves and their families. The Minister has power to determine the conditions on which loans of money and the sale and supply of goods will be made. There is power for the Government to take security for any loan, and documents executed for this purpose will be exempt, from stamp duty.

Clause 8 deals with the purchase and sale of fodder. As hon. members are aware, in several parts of the State, and particularly on the West Coast, there, will be a very substantial shortage of hay and chaff during the coming year. The ordinary traders in these commodities, where there are any such traders, will not be able to provide the quantities required. There is, therefore, no alternative but for the Government to come into the business with the object of securing a proper distribution of the available supplies of fodder throughout the State. Clause 8 therefore enables the Minister to buy hay, chaff, and standing crops capable of being harvested as hay, and to harvest any crops so bought, and to cut hay for chaff. The Minister is also empowered to sell hay or chaff to any person who requires that commodity for carrying on primary production or for use in any other business of a class approved by the Minister.

The Treasurer may raise loan moneys up to £100.000 for the purpose of financing purchases of hay and chaff under the Bill. Any losses on the scheme may be debited to loan or revenue as the Treasurer may think fit. The Bill contains the usual provision appropriating the money required for the purpose of the Act, and for making regulations.

This matter is extremely urgent from the point of view of those whom it will benefit. Owing, unfortunately, to the drought which occurred not only on the West Coast but in other areas last year, and which followed another drought, the conditions are very unfortunate, to put it mildly, from the point of view of the settlers concerned. In fact, in cases their ability to carry on will depend the help which can be given to them under the Bill and in the circumstances I ask members to give the Bill a speedy passage. I move the second reading.