RENMARK IRRIGATION TRUST ACT AMENDMENT BILL 1971

House of Assembly, 9 November 1971, page 2826

Second reading

**The Hon. J. D. CORCORAN (Minister of Works)** obtained leave and introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Renmark Irrigation Trust Act, 1936-1971. Read a first time.

The Hon. J. D. CORCORAN: I move:

*That this Bill be now read a second time*.

Although this measure, of 39 clauses, looks formidable, the majority of its provisions are intended to provide for formal conversion of units of measurement of the *system internationale* units or as they are more commonly called metric units. In addition, opportunity has been taken to effect certain formal conversions from old currency to decimal currency. Although both the metric and decimal conversions generally do not effect any change of substance in the principal Act, in a few instances changes of substance have been made and these will, of course, be indicated. Quite the most significant effect of the Bill will be to increase somewhat the power of the Government to make grants and loans for works and this will be dealt with when the particular clause of the Bill is reached in the explanation of the clauses of the Bill.

To consider the Bill in some detail, clauses 1 and 2 are formal. Clause 3, which amends section 11 of the principal Act, makes a metric measurement conversion which has the effect of somewhat increasing the minimum size of the holding qualifying a person to be a member of the trust. In terms, the size has been increased from 10 acres to five hectares, an effective increase of about 2.35 acres. Clauses 4 and 5 effect formal decimal currency conversions. Clause 6 amends section 54 of the principal Act and increases the permitted petty expenditure of a committee of the trust from £20 to $100 and merely recognizes the decline in purchasing power since 1936 when the principal Act was enacted.

Clause 7 again by amending section 57 of the principal Act has increased the charge for an inspection of certain trust records from 1s. to 20c. Clause 8 effects a formal decimal conversion to section 65d of the principal Act. Clause 9 effects what is in substance a formal metric conversion amendment; in fact, by amending section 78 of the principal Act it reduces by about one-hundredth of an acre the minimum size of a block that must be included in the assessment book kept under that section.

Clause 10 effects a formal decimal conversion to section 79 of the principal Act. Clause 11 provides, by an amendment to section 91 of the principal Act, that in future rates will be calculated on the basis of hectares rather than acres and clause 12 is consequential on this clause. Clause 13 amends section 97 of the principal Act by increasing the maximum petty cash payment that may be made from £2 to $5. Clause 14 effects a formal decimal currency conversion to section 104 of the principal Act. Clause 15 makes a similar provision in relation to section 105 and clause 16 again makes a similar provision in relation to section 114.

Clause 17 increases the penalty for an offence against section 121c of the principal Act (Disconnection of meters) from £10 to $50. Clause 18 amends section 121k of the principal Act, which relates to the installation of overhead power lines to ensure that future installations will be in accordance with approved current practice. Clause 19 amends section 123a of the principal Act and, as has already been mentioned, is the most significant provision in the Bill. Following investigations over the period from July, 1964, to January, 1966, it became obvious that new pumping and distribution facilities, together with some additional drainage, would be needed if growers within the trust were to continue in the business of fruitgrowing under irrigation. It was equally clear that the trust would need substantial assistance to meet the cost involved. On the basis of unit costs applicable in 1964-65 and on rather sketchy information as to ultimate requirements, the cost of providing new pumping facilities, rising mains, and ancillary works was estimated at $1,120,000. This was the amount requested for consideration by a Select Committee of the House of Assembly in January-February, 1966, and written into this section.

The rising mains are completed except for certain valves, inspection openings, and connecting pieces, contracts have been let for the pump support structures, pumping plant and equipment, and the control room, and tender prices have been submitted in respect of most of the ancillary works in and around the main pumping station complex. The relift pumping facilities are the only works for which firm costs have not yet been decided. Nevertheless, a realistic estimate has been made. Progress and experience so far indicate that all works under this section will be completed during the latter half of 1973 and the final cost will be $1,675,000.

The amendments now proposed do not vary the purposes for which the money made available is to be used or the general terms and conditions for repayment of the loan. However, amendments to subsections (1) and (3) provide for an increase as to the total Government expenditure from $1,120,000 to $1,675,000 whilst that for subsection (4) merely clarifies the date from which interest will accrue on the moneys made available by the Government by way of loan.

Clause 20 effects a formal decimal conversion. Clause 21 increases the interest rate of “section 141 blocks” that are contracted to be sold after the commencement of this measure from 4½ per cent to 5 per cent. I would point out to honourable members that it is highly unlikely that any agreements for sale will actually attract this provision but it has been included for the sake of consistency of interest rates on agreements.

Clauses 22, 23, 24 and 25 effect formal decimal currency amendments to the sections of the principal Act set out therein. Clause 26 again effects certain formal decimal currency amendments to section 177 of the principal Act. However, paragraph (d) of this clause increases the penalty for a continuing offence against subsection (4) of that section (fouling of water courses) from £1 a day to $5 a day. Clauses 27 to 33 inclusive again effect formal decimal currency amendments to the sections of the principal Act respectively set out therein.

Clause 34 amends section 185 of the principal Act and lifts the penalty for obstructing officers, etc., of the trust from £5 to $20 to make this penalty consistent with others in the Act. For the same reasons clauses 35 and 36 have also raised penalties somewhat. Clause 37 amends section 218 of the principal Act by increasing the charge for a certified copy of the by-laws of the trust from 1s. to $1. Clauses 38 and 39 make formal amendments to the third and seventh schedules of the principal Act.

This Bill is a hybrid Bill and will, in the ordinary course of events, be referred to a Select Committee of this House. I am grateful to the Opposition, which has indicated that it is willing to proceed to the stage where the Select Committee can be appointed.

Mr. RODDA (Victoria): As the Minister has said, this Bill will be referred to a Select Committee and I express to the Minister the Opposition’s gratitude for making available, earlier today, copies of the Bill and the second reading explanation. We have considered these and there is not much that I wish to say now, except that the measure underlines important public works in an important industry, and the Select Committee will deal with the details, when any questions that we have can be answered. I support the Bill.

Bill read a second time and referred to a Select Committee consisting of the Hon. J. D. Corcoran, Messrs. Curren, Groth, Nankivell and Rodda; the committee have power to send for persons, papers and records, and to adjourn from place to place; the committee to report on November 18.