VERMIN ACTS SUSPENSORY BILL 1915

House of Assembly, 12 October 1915, page 1270

Second reading

**The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS (Hon. C. Goode)—**This Bill is on all fours with the one I have just submitted. It provides legislation similar in respect to vermin rates. Honorable members will see the necessity for this legislation. The same cause applies to this Bill as the one in connection with the Crown rents. The arrears to June 30 this year on loans granted under the Vermin Acts are as follows-—District councils, £11,397 7s. Id.; Vermin Boards, £3,551 7s. 1d.; trusts £1,589 4s. 6d.; lessees under pastoral and Vermin Acts, £173, 17s.; making a total of £16,711 15s. 8d. It is very probable that some of the district councils have paid amounts on account of instalments which have not been collected from the persons who have had loans granted. Honorable members will see that, comparatively speaking, the amounts under the Vermin Act still in arrear are not very great. Unfortunately, some of our pastoralists have had a very bad time, and it will be absolutely necessary if they are to remain in occupation of that country, that we should help to tide them over the lean years. I hope that with the better prospects which have returned they will soon be in a position to wipe out their arrears, although it must not be forgotten that these pastoral areas have not been visited with the same bounteous rains as have fallen in the settled districts. It is with regret at the necessity of such legislation that I move the second reading.

Mr. ALLEN secured the adjournment of the debate until October 12.

VERMIN ACT SUSPENSORY BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from October 7. Page 1270.)

Mr. ALLEN—This Bill is nearly on similar lines to the one just dealt with. It is a very important measure, for it is necessary in the interests of the pastoral industry, and as the pastoralists have had a very bad time during the last two years, it will take them quite a number of years, with ordinary good luck, to make up the losses sustained in previous years. It is only right that they should get assistance. The pastoralists, as a rule, are not always asking the Government for assistance, but when they do, as in the case of wire netting, and so forth, they have had to pay for these advantages. During the last two years the pastoralists have undoubtedly had an exceedingly hard and trying time, not only with respect to the drought itself, but owing to the losses in stock. The Government are acting wisely in making this extension of time. It is rather a coincidence that the amount of arrears is about half of what the Commissioner read in connection with the Crown Lands Suspensory Act. This assistance will be very cheerfully received by Vermin Boards and district councils, who have managed to get into arrears to the extent of about £16,000.. These Vermin districts have done a great deal for the pastoral industry of this State. Had it not been for vermin fencing in years gone by, much of that country would have been unoccupied. In the last 20 years or so, during the existence of the Vermin Boards, something like 42 vermin districts have been in existence throughout the State, which includes an area of something like 49,123 square miles. They have erected 5,096 miles of vermin-proof fencing, and about 176 miles of fencing have been erected by private individuals through the assistance of the Vermin Boards, so that these fences alone are worth a considerable amount besides the immense benefit in checking wild dogs and rabbits and other pests that the pastoralists have to contend with. The amount advanced to these boards is £289,924, and the amount of arrears £16,711. The Ministry are acting wisely in bringing this measure in. I would like to know whether this suspension of payment will interfere with the payments for wild dogs scalps under the Wild Dogs Act. These pastoralists and residents have had to contribute so much per square mile towards the wild dogs scalp fee, and if those payments are allowed to remain in arrears it will be very serious, so far as the pastoralists themselves are concerned. As a rule these men in the back country do not care to boast about their losses, in fact they try to keep these matters to themselves. I remember speaking to one man whose stock had dwindled from 3,000 to 200 sheep, partly through wild dogs. I said to him, “Are you still losing" He said, “Nothing worth speaking about. I lost seven last night, and six the night before.” There is not the slightest doubt that these losses have occurred, and there are pastoral runs in the North today carrying about 2,000 sheep when 15 or 20 years ago they carried 20,000 sheep. During the last three years, since the Wild Dogs Destruction Act: came into force, 63,593 dogs' scalps have been paid for on certificates so that a great reduction has been made in this way. There should be no relaxation of that industry, which has now become a business profession to many who hunt wild dogs for their scalps, and in this way they are not only assisting the country, but they are increasing the stock-carrying capacity. I would like to have the assurance of the Minister that this suspension of payments will not in any way interfere with the payment for scalps under the Wild Dogs Act.

The Commissioner of Crown Lands— You have my assurance in that direction.

Mr. ALLEN—I have nothing more to say, except that I am always pleased to assist the Government when they are right, and I am particularly pleased support the second reading of this measure,

Bill read a second time, and taken, through Committee without amend and reported; report adopted.