**RENMARK IRRIGATION TRUSTS ACT FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL 1922**

**Legislative Council, 1 November 1922, pages 1297-8**

Second reading

The CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J. G. Bice) —This Bill is introduced to meet requests made to the Government by the Renmark Irrigation Trust No. 1. The Renmark Irrigation Trusts Act, 1893, provided for the constitution of trusts to control the respective irrigation districts assigned to them. The Renmark Irrigation Trust, No. 1, was constituted by section 4 of the Act, and the Act defined the district to be placed under their control. The Governor was given power to create other trusts as the necessity arises. At present there is only one trust in existence, namely, Renmark Irrigation Trust, No. 1. Within their district, a trust have the powers of a local governing body. They can make assessments and declare and levy water rates, and, in general, the methods available to a trust for the collection of rates are similar to those available to a district council. In one way, however, a trust’s powers are not so wide as those of a district council. Under section 193 of the District Councils Act, 1914, if any rate is not paid within a fixed period after it becomes due, then a fine equal to ten per centum of the rate is added to the rate. There is no similar provision in the principal Act, and the Renmark Irrigation Trust, No. 1, find that this omission hinders them in the collection of rates. The trust can, of course, enforce payment of the rates by taking possession of the property rated, and either selling it or letting it, but this is a most drastic procedure, and one which the trust are unwilling to adopt against every defaulting ratepayer. The trust consider it would help them considerably in the collection of the rates if they had some milder way of securing payment. At the present time the defaulting ratepayer suffers no penalty if he pays seven or eight months after the due date, as he knows the trust hesitate to use the more drastic means of enforcing payment that they are legally entitled to use, and when he does pay he has only to pay the original rate with no penalty or interest added to the amount due. There is no reason why a local governing body like the trust should not have equal powers in this matter to those enjoyed by a district council. Consequently clause 3 of the Bill inserts a new section in the principal Act. The clause provides that if any rate is six months in arrear, then a fine equal to 10 per cent of the rate shall be added to the rate. The fine will become, for all purposes, part of the rate and will be recoverable as if it were part of the rate. There is a proviso to the effect that no fine shall be added unless the ratepayer, if resident in South Australia, has had twenty-one days’ notice of his default. The clause is substantially similar to section 193 of the District Councils Act, 1914, already referred to. It is to be noted that the amendment is of a general character, and applies to rates declared by any trust. It will, therefore, apply when passed to rates declared by Renmark Irrigation Trust, No. 1, and also to rates declared by any other trust which may be created in the future. Under the principal Act the members and chairman of a trust are forbidden to hold any place of profit under or receive any remuneration from the trust. Since 1893, however, the duties of a trust have increased considerably. In 1900 a trust was given the powers of a district council. A trust has to exercise the control and supervision of irrigation works and schemes for water distribution in its district, and in consequence the duties of a member of a trust have become so onerous that ratepayers have become averse to serving as members in a purely honorary capacity. It is but fair, therefore, that members should receive some recompense for their services. At a recent general meeting of the ratepayers of Renmark Irrigation District No. 1, a resolution was passed that the members of the trust for that district should be paid for their services, the chairman to receive not more than £300 a year and the members not more than £25 a year. As a result, clause 4 is inserted in the Bill. The clause applies only to the Renmark Irrigation Trust, No. 1 as the request for this enactment has only come from the ratepayers of No. 1 District. Subclause (1) provides that trust No. 1 shall pay to the chairman remuneration for his services not exceeding £300 in any one year, while subclause (2) gives other members £1 for every meeting of the trust attended, but not exceeding £25 in any one year. The money that will be paid is the ratepayers’ money. They have agreed by resolution to the proposal contained in this Bill, and we are assured that the work has so largely increased that it is impossible to get men to do it in an honorary capacity. The chairman, who from my knowledge of his work has to be a whole-time officer, has to be in his office every day and often late at night, and I think it only reasonable and fair that if these people want to pay the officers who have served them so loyally, they should be allowed to do so. I move the second reading.

The Hon. W. H. HARVEY secured the adjournment of the debate until November 7.