**IRRIGATION AND RECLAIMED SWAMPS BILL 1908**

**Legislative Council, 27 August 1980, pages 250-1**

Second reading

**The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS,** in moving the second reading of the Bill, said they would remem.be' the measure he introduced last year. This Bill took the place of a Bill for an Act to provide for irrigation and settlement on Crown lands at Beri Beri and elsewhere contiguous to the River Murray, which was introduced last session. The principal alterations were (1) that the Bill dealt with no individual scheme, but provided for the establishment of irrigation areas in any suitable localities; and *'*2) the Bill dealt with reclamation of swamp lands as well as irrigation. When reclamation and irrigation schemes had to be carried out together, and would afterwards have to be worked side by side as practically one concern (and this must frequently be the case), it would be far more convenient to treat them as one work, and for both to be under the same control in any particular locality. Hence one Act dealing with reclamation and irrigation would be by far the most convenient form of legislation. The enactments at present dealing with reclamation of swamps and swamps lands trusts were Part I. of the Crown Lands Amendment Act, 1905, and the Reclaimed Swamp Lands Trusts Act, 1006. Those, together with provisions as to irrigation, had been worked into the present Bill, which thus consolidate the law as to those matters. Members would remember at that time it was proposed to start the place on the banks of the Murray, known as Beri Beri. Members had had the advantage of seeing the place. It was admirably situated for an irrigation settlement. Along the banks of the Murray there were probably hundreds of places like it. The scheme would put settlers on the banks of the river and open up homes for thousands of families in time to come. The Government was anxious to make the experiment as soon as possible, and that was the reason for bringing in a Bill to allow them to cut up the land and make advances to blockers and to make other provisions. So far the Murray Swamps had done well.

The previous Act would be repealed by the present Bill if passed. - (Mr. Burgoyne—“Have you taken locking into consideration ?”) The Bill did not deal with any country which might be affected by locks. It dealt principally with lifting water up to the banks. They had a pretty good object lesson in Renmark and the village settlements. While all the village settlements had not been successful, they could not attribute the fact to lack of opportunity, but to want of knowledge regarding management. With the information they now possessed they would probably make a success of village settlements on the Murray banks. Lyrup was now a paying concern, and was making a handsome return. Renmark was an undoubted success. That settlement had certainly been helped by the Government, but the money was being paid back. Last year Renmark cultivated 3,400 acres, and. obtained £85,000 worth of produce, or about *£25* for an acre. Of course that, return was not secured every year, but it was obtained last season and the year before. With better methods of working the land no doubt that splendid result might be continued, except in exceptionally bad seasons. He believed a man with 20- acres of that irrigable land and a piece of back country could make a living for himself and his family. The idea of the Government was not so much to encourage the growing of raisins, apricots, and oranges, as to encourage people to go in more for dairying. A settler could grow, say, 10 acres of lucerne and 10 of vines or other fruit trees, so that he should not have all his eggs in one basket. Successful applicants for irrigable land would also have from 300 to 500 or 600 acres further back from the river for stock. Everything pointed to the reclaimed swamps being a success. The returns from land properly worked—he was sorry to say all the land had not been properly worked—had been satisfactory. The Government, as had already been indicated, had made provision, for lending blockers up to £75 on the value of their improvements, so that they could make a home for themselves at the start. The scheme involved little risk to the Government, and in any case it was faced with the fact that people required land. If success resulted it was intended to have additional projects of a similar nature. There was any amount of suitable land this side of Renmark and between Wakerie and Ramco, and he asked the House to earnestly consider the matter. Two swamps had already been reclaimed and irrigated, and others were being purchased. Water was being dammed up, and it was proposed to put a man on every 20 acres. (Mr. James—“What about Morgan?”) He believed the trouble there was that the water had to be lifted too high. Wherever water was under 100 ft. it was good enough to go in for a scheme. As pumping machinery improved the chances were that they would be able to lift 150 or 200 feet. He recommended the Bill with confidence. After a few years, when the land between Loxton’s Hut and Murray Bridge, on the west coast and in the Port Lincoln district—an approximate total of a million acres--was taken up, he did not know where they would put the people if not on the Murray banks. He had had experience of drought country, and he would not be a party to sending people into areas of that character. The Government could not recommend a better scheme than the one embraced in the Bill, and he believed prosperous homes could be established on the Murray banks without very much risk to the State. The Government would have to provide for the first pumping plant, for the provision of drains, and the general laying out of the scheme. Then it was the purpose of the Bill to charge interest. The measure represented the best proposal the Government had before it at present.

On the motion of Mr. McDONALD the debate was adjourned until September 8.