CROWN LANDS ACT AMENDMENT BILL 1966

House of Assembly, 14 September 1966, page 1586

Second reading

**The Hon. J. D. CORCORAN (Minister of Lands)** obtained leave and introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Crown Lands Act, 1929-1965. Read a first time.

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

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

Its object is to increase the unimproved value that governs the limitation of holdings for allotment of Crown lands, and to increase the existing value under which transfer, subletting, or surrender for conversion to other tenure may be permitted. These amendments, which have been recommended by the Land Board, after a thorough examination of the position, follow the land tax quinquennial assessment of 1965, adoption of which for the purposes of certain provisions of the Crown Lands Act, 1929-1965, has disturbed the pre-existing relationship between permissible areas of holdings and the present requirements of the Act.

The Land Board has examined the situation very closely, and having regard to the higher unimproved values of land in certain parts of the State—in the Lower and Middle North, Yorke Peninsula, certain areas of the South-East, and lower Eyre Peninsula—has recommended that the limitation upon unimproved values for transfer, subletting and surrender for conversion of tenure, be increased from $24,000 to $36,000. An examination of the assessment shows this change to be necessary to ensure that landholders in the areas mentioned will be placed in a position approximating that which existed prior to the 1965 assessment. Although there will be some minor changes in the relative position of the landholders in these areas, the increase proposed should achieve the purpose for which it is designed.

Although the action now proposed will restore the relative position in the areas mentioned, the board ’s examination has disclosed that in many parts of the State an increase in the limitation to $36,000 would permit very considerable aggregations of land if unimproved values were the only factor considered. With recent advances in developmental and land use techniques, these areas have experienced rapid development, with correspondingly marked and substantial increases in land values. Examples are readily available in the mid South-East areas of County Cardwell and parts of Eyre Peninsula, particularly in the vicinity of Kimba and Wudinna, where the land tax assessment is considerably lower than prices realized in recent sales.

It is quite clear that if unimproved values included in the land tax assessment of 1965 were the only criteria of limitation, very extensive areas, upwards of 12,000 acres, could be aggregated. Such aggregations are contrary to the intention of the Crown Lands Act, and for this reason, and in view of the need to meet the constantly increasing demands of settlers for land, particularly from sons of farmers, provision is made in the Bill for regard to be had to the total area of land which may be held.

With the advances in developmental techniques, improved methods and installation of drainage, holdings of 4,000 acres in County Cardwell are considered to be generous living areas—they would have a potential carrying capacity of from 6,000 to 8,000 dry sheep, although the unimproved values shown in the land tax assessment would not in most cases exceed $12,000. Similarly, in certain parts of Eyre Peninsula, notably the Kimba district, areas of 4,000 acres of agricultural land must be regarded as completely adequate.

This Bill proposes to increase the limitation in cases of allotments of land under lease or agreement from $10,000 to $15,000. (Clause 4, which amends section 31 of the principal Act.) This section has not been amended for many years and it is now considered necessary to do so in consideration of the increases in unimproved land values which have taken place. Further, it is proposed to increase the limitation in cases of transfer, subletting and surrender for conversion to other tenure from $24,000 to $36,000. (Clauses 5 and 6 which amend sections 220 and 225 of the principal Act.) For reasons already set out, provision is made for a limitation of 4,000 acres upon the total area of holdings except in the case of land situated outside of hundreds or within certain hundreds specified in a new Schedule inserted by clause 7.

Further provisions of the Bill (clauses 4, 5 and 6) eliminate reference to Goyder’s line of rainfall in sections 31, 220 and 225, substituting references to lands outside of hundreds for lands within hundreds specified in the new Schedule. These amendments are designed to remove anomalies which occur where Goyder’s line excludes some substantial areas of land that, as a result of advances in techniques, are now used extensively for cereal growing.

Clause 7 of the Bill inserts the new Schedule of hundreds into the principal Act. By clause 3 the Governor is empowered to amend the schedule by proclamation. A map showing the hundreds included in the new schedule is available for information of members, and I ask leave to have the map displayed on the notice board.

Leave granted.

The Hon. D. N. BROOKMAN secured the adjournment of the debate.