**METROPOLITAN ABATTOIRS BILL 1908**

**Legislative Council, 28 October 1908, pages 283-7**

Second reading

**The CHIEF SECRETARY**, in moving the second reading of the Metropolitan Abattoirs Bill, said it was an important measure, and intended to provide for the erection of abattoirs in the metropolitan area. The Bill contained 105 clauses, and was divided into nine parts, as follow's:— Part 1, preliminary and application of Act; part 2, the Metropolitan Abattoirs Board; part 3, borrowing powers; part 4, abattoirs; part 5, markets for stock; part 6, power to take land, &c.; part 7, extension of metropolitan abattoirs area; part 8, regulations; and part 9, miscellaneous. The Bill was intended to apply to the metropolitan abattoirs area, which included the corporations of Adelaide, Unley, Kensington and Norwood, St. Peters, Hindmarsh and Thebarton. and the district councils of Burnside, Prospect, Walkerville, West Torrens, and Payneham, -and part of the district council of Mitcham (as far as the top of the ridge). Its operations might be extended by proclamation to other contiguous places. Provision was made for the appointment of a board of management as follows:—The Mayor of Adelaide, who shall be ex-officio chairman, and six representative members, who shall hold office for two years. None of such representative members need, at the time of his appointment or election, be a member of any constituent municipal corporation or district council. The Bill also provided for the remuneration of the members of the board. The board would receive and recover all fees, dues, and charges, appoint officers, and generally carry out the provisions of the Bill. Provision was made, for the site to be fixed as follows:—“The board shall not accept or purchase any land for the purpose of erecting abattoirs thereon until a site has been, agreed upon by a majority of votes of representatives of the constituent councils and corporations present at a meeting called for that purpose, and the voting power of each corporation and council would depend upon its rating capacity. Provision for borrowing was made, the amount not to exceed £100,000, for the purposes of the Act. All revenue was to be applied to working expenses, interest, and a sinking fund. The Bill provided for the inspection of all stock killed for consumption within the abattoirs area. The Bill was drawn by the town clerk, city of Adelaide, assisted by Mr. Alderman Baker and Mr. J. T. Mellor, the president of the Local Government Association, and settled by the city solicitor, and the amendments consequent upon the Select Committee’s report were settled by the Parliamentary draftsman. The Bill was the outcome of city and suburban conferences, and it embodied the views of the people’s representatives. The object of the measure was to secure a pure meat supply for the people. On June 5, 1906, the following petition was presented to the Premier:—“Sir—We, the undersigned mayors of the city and suburban corporations and chairmen of the metropolitan district councils, have pleasure in handing you the Bill for the establishment of abat­toirs for large and small cattle for the metropolitan area. We desire to emphasise the fact that the Bill has met with the approval of the municipal corporations of the City of Adelaide and the towns of Unley. Kensington and Norwood, St. Peters, Hindmarsh, and Thebarton, as well as the District Councils of Burnside, Payneham, Walkerville, Prospect, and West Torrens. Provision is made in the Bill for the local governing bodies to be brought into the metropolitan abattoirs area by proclamation, but we are desirous of starting at once, as the suburbs already joined in the scheme are those which surround the city on every side. The Bill as drawn is an advance on all similar existing legislation in the Commonwealth of Australia and New Zealand, and we have been greatly assisted in our efforts to create a municipal monopoly of the killing in connection with the meat trade (a monopoly owned and worked by the people for the people) by the splendid support which your Government has accorded to us ever since the scheme was initiated in September last, and we also owe a debt oi gratitude to the president and members of the Central Board of Health for their cordial sympathy with us. The attitude taken up by yourself and your Government and that of the Central Board of Health has been made public through the medium of the press, and both the daily papers have been powerful advocates of one model set of abattoirs on scientific lines for the metropolitan area by repeated articles in their leader columns. The Bill is now ready for presentation to Parliament, and we feel confident that it must be successful, as it is designed solely to conserve the health of the people and make their welfare paramount. We therefore trust, sir, that you will introduce the Bill immediately upon the opening of Parliament, as we are desirous of taking early advantage of the money market in order to raise as advantageously as possible the necessary capital to finance the scheme. We beg to subscribe ourselves, on behalf of our respective councils, your obedient servants Theodore Bruce, Mayor of Adelaide; H. J. Holden, Mayor of Kensington and Nor­wood; G. Wright, Mayor of Hindmarsh; G. H. Glover, Mayor of St. Peters; W. H. Goodenough, Mayor of Thebarton; J. R. Osborn, chairman District Council of Burn­side; Arthur C. Sanders, chairman District Council of Prospect; James T. Mellor, chairman District Council of Walkerville; John Maries, jun., clerk, pro-chairman District Council of West Torrens; T. McRostie, chairman District Council of Payneham; John H. Cooke, Mayor of Unley.” Nothing could be more unanimous than that the Bill had the support of the Central Board of Health, all local bodies, and everybody in fact who believed in the great reform. The daily press were also favorable to it. Both daily papers have been consistent advocates of it, and “The Advertiser,” in a leading article on May 22, 1906, said;—“The City Council and the suburbs advocate central abattoirs, to be worked in connection with the stock mar­kets, and they have gained for their scheme the support of the Government and the Central Board of Health. The project is the best adapted to attain the end in view—a pure meat supply, and it is financially sound.” The “Register,” on May 18, 1906. stated in a leading article;—“Are private or parochial considerations to override vital requirements of public health? If they are not the Government and civic authorities should persevere with their admirable proposal to establish public abattoirs for the metropolitan area. As Parliament exists to promote the welfare of the community, it ought to give the necessary statutory power to set in operation a scheme the essential principle of which has received the practical endorsement of the representatives of all the districts interested.” Much evidence could be given from abroad as to the absolute necessity of the careful inspection of meat killed for human consumption, but he would rely solely on the evidence obtained in this State. There was no gain saying the fact that diseased meat was sold in Adelaide and the suburbs when opportunity admitted. It was on record in the City Council's evidence on the matter that one suburban butcher in a large way said: — “He had a slaughterhouse about three miles from the General Post-Office, at which he slaughtered for a few butchers altogether about 50 or 60 cattle per week. He got through about 15,000 sheep a year and about 1,500 pigs. There was no inspection of either, but his own cattle, which he bought at the Adelaide sale yards, were in­spected. He knew when a beast suffering from tuberculosis, pleuro-pneumonia, or actinomycosis, but he could not say about cancer. If cattle were suffering from disease he sold the meat; it was never noticed when it was dressed.” A suburban corporation took evidence in 1905, from which the following was extracted; — “About nine months ago a cow was brought to certain premises. The cow was taken bad soon after she was brought there. She lingered for a week or two and then be­came so poor that when she got down she could not get up again. She was pulled into the slaughterhouse, killed and dressed, and the meat was sold to the customers.” For the information of the House he would briefly review the various clauses. The Bill was divided into nine parts . Clause 3 contained definitions, only two of which required comment. The “Constituent corporations and councils” included the local governing bodies of the area to be directly benefited, by the measure, which was generally regarded as the metropolitan area, and that was embraced within the ''metropolitan abattoirs area,” as defined in the clause. It would be noted that part of the district of Mitcham was excluded, namely, that part which lay beyond the top of the range. It was exactly defined in the first schedule. Clause 4 repealed the enactments dealing with slaughtering, but only so far as regarded their operation within the area covered by the Bill, and clause 5 made the Abattoirs Board the sole authority as to slaughtering within that area. Clause 6 limited the application of the Act to the metropolitan area, which under clause 7 might be extended by proclamation. Clause 8 exempted bacon cured outside the area. Part, II. dealt with the authority which was to administer the Act. Clause 10 fixed the constitution of the board thus;—“(a) The Mayor of Adelaide, who is to be chairman; and (b) six representative members to be appointed by the constituent bodies and groups of bodies set out in subsection 1.” There was a proviso enabling the number of representative members or the arrangement of the groups of bodies to be altered. That was to provide for fluctuations in the populations of the various localities, the board was to be a corporate body, with the usual legal status of such a body. Clause 11 provided for fees to be paid to members. Clause 12 made the Adelaide Town Clerk secretary and treasurer for the first five years, but gave power to remove him or any successor for proper cause. Clauses 14 and 15 dealt with the appointment of representative members, who, it would be observed, held office for two years each. Subclause 3 of clause 14 provided for the various district councils in any group of bodies to nominate candidates, and clause 15 provided for such councils to vote by resolution for the nominees to be elected. In case of an equality of votes the mayor had a casting vote. Clause 17 fixed the quorum as four. Clause 18 enabled the board to fix the times of meeting, and for calling special and emer­gency meetings. The board might appoint such officers as were necessary (clause 21) and pay salaries (clause 22) and travelling expenses (clause 23). Clause 25 was to enable the board to pay the costs of promoting that and any other necessary Bill out of its revenue or borrowed moneys. The remaining clauses of the part dealt with the keeping of records and accounts, and for auditing accounts and laying balance-sheets before Parliament. Part III. dealt with the raising of funds to establish the abattoirs, and the application of its revenue. Clause 34 empowered the board to borrow not more than £100,000, on the credit of the constituent corporations and councils, for the purpose of establishing abattoirs and markets for stock and all other necessary incidental works. The money was to be raised by the sale of debentures (clause 35), to be charged upon the general rates of the corporations and councils and on the property of the board. Each corporation and council was to be liable (clause 38), and if one was called upon to pay any debenture it had a right to contribution from the other corporations and councils, and each would have a right of recourse against the board (clause 39). Clause 40 prescribed that the revenue of the board should be applied in the following order:—“(a) Payment of actual expenses; (b) interest on borrowed money; (c) upkeep; (d) a sinking fund sufficient to repay the cost of machinery within 15 years and the borrowed money within 30 years; (e) the balance to be profits divisible amongst the constituent bodies; but one-third of such balance might be placed to a reserve fund." To provide for interest during the initial stage of the undertaking it was stated in subclause 4 that for three years such interest might be paid out of borrowed moneys. Clause 41provided for apportioning the liabilities and profits of the board into the various constituent bodies. That was to be done in proportion to the assess­ments for rating purposes of those bodies; and clause 42 provided for readjusting the apportionment every three years after the first six. Clause 43 provided for constituent bodies being called upon to contribute proportionately towards any deficiency of the board, should it arise. Clauses 45 and 47 dealt with redemption of debentures, and did not call for special notice. Clause 49 stated how sinking and reserve funds were to be invested; and clause 50 dealt with banking accounts and raising temporary loans by overdraft or otherwise not exceeding £5,000. Such a loan would probably be an absolute necessity at the outset of the undertaking. Part IV. was the principal part of the Bill, as it dealt with the establishment of abattoirs, and provided that after the abattoirs were opened no stock should be slaughtered within the metropolitan area except at the abattoirs, and that no meat should be sold in that area unless either slaughtered or inspected at the abattoirs. Clause 51 authorised the establishment of the abattoirs, upon a site to be selected by a meeting of representatives appointed by the constituent corporations and councils in proportion to their various assessments for rates (clause 52). Public notice was to be given specifying the date upon which the abattoirs would be available for slaughtering stock (clause 53), and after that date it was provided by clause 54 that no person should, within the metropolitan area, slaughter any stock for sale lor human consumption, sell or expose for sale, any carcase or meat not slaughtered at the abattoirs, or, as regarded stock slaughtered outside that area, sell or expose any meat unless the carcase, with certain organs attached, had been brought to the boards’ premises for inspection by an inspector of the board. The reason for requiring certain organs to be attached to a carcase brought for inspection was that it was impossible for an inspector to say without seeing those organs whether the animal was diseased or not. To make easier the requirement as to carcases slaughtered outside the area, it bad been provided that the board should have a. place within the four terraces of South Adelaide to which carcases might be brought for inspection. The reason for the last four lines of paragraph 1 of clause 54 would appear when clause 55 was considered. Paragraph 2 prohibited the sale of flesh of young and immature calves. Paragraph 7 excluded poultry from the operation of the clause. By clause 55 all private abattoirs and slaughterhouses within the area were required to be closed on the day specified for opening the board’s abattoirs. This, however, by reason of the proviso, would not apply to premises used only for slaughtering stock for export, and for meat to be canned for export, or for curing bacon and ham. Clause 56 was also important. The Select Committee of the House of Assembly, which considered the Bill last session, recommended in their report that Mr. Conrad should be allowed to continue the use of his abattoirs at Walkerville for his own business only, for a term of ten years; and that Mr. W. J. Hill should be paid £300 compensation for the closing of his premises at Knoxville, but that no other compensation should be paid to anyone. The Assembly, however, in committee, in lieu of these recommendations, provided a scheme for compensation to all owners of premises closed owing to the provisions of the Act. This scheme was embodied in clause 56, which in brief provided as follows:—(1) To entitle an owner to compensation his premises must be in use as an abattoir or slaughterhouse when the Act passes, and be suitable for use as such; (2) A deduc­tion is to be made on account of the value of the premises for other purposes; (3) Nothing is to be allowed for goodwill; and (4) The aggregate of all amounts paid is not to exceed £7,000. Then subclause 3 regulated the mode of ascertaining the amounts to be paid:—(1) Claims must be made within 21 days of the compulsory closing of private abattoirs; (2) The Governor appoints a valuer to deal with all claims. The reason for this was obvious— the aggregate was limited. Now, if some claims might be settled between the board and the claimants by agreement so much might be disposed of in that way that other claimants would be treated unfairly. Again, if some claims were decided by one valuer and some by another there would be no guarantee of a uniform basis, and in the end adjustments of all the amounts allowed might be necessary so as to keep within the £7,000 limit. The only alternative was for one valuer to consider all the claims; and subclause 5 directed him to keep the limit in mind in considering each claim. A subclause (6) was added for the relief of butchers who were not the owners of their business premises for the closing of their slaughterhouses after their rents had been fixed. As the owners were compensated the tenants should have their rents reduced proportionately. Clause 57 forbade anyone to act as a slaughterman or slaughterman’s assistant unless licensed by the board. It must be obvious that it was desirable to have some means of seeing that the men were suitable. And clause 59 made them practically additional inspectors by requiring them to report any disease discovered by them at the risk of dismissal. Clauses 60 and 61 dealt with inspection and with stock and meat found to be diseased. By clause 60 no stock was to be slaughtered except in the presence of an inspector. After slaughter he had to inspect the carcase, and no meat was to leave the abattoirs unless he declared it free from disease. If a carcase was found to be diseased notice had to be given immediately to the owner, and he had four hours within which to challenge the inspector’s opinion. If he disputed the opinion the chief inspector was to appoint an independent veterinary surgeon to decide, and his decision would be final. Clause 61 required carcasses found to be diseased to be dealt with in such a manner that they could not be used for con­sumption by human beings or animals. If they could be used for by-products allowance was to be made to the owner. That clause was necessary if the communication of disease through infected meat was to be stopped. Clause 62, prohibiting the slaughtering of stock except at the abattoirs was supplementary to. the main provisions of the Bill contained in clauses 54 and 55. Clause 63, as to the duty of the owner of stock which dies, was also a precaution against the spread of disease. It was meant to give the inspectors an opportunity of using effective means to prevent the spread of disease by rendering the carcase innocuous. Clause 64 and following clauses provided for branding meat and using that as a means of preventing sale of uninspected meat. Clause 64 provided that all meat going out from the board’s premises must be branded. Clause 65 gave inspectors power to enter other premises, and place brands on meat as to which the Act had not been compiled with. Clause 66. gave power to seize non-branded meat kept for sale, and provided a summary relief for the owner of meat so seized, which must be adopted within 48 hours if at all. Subclause 6 of the same clause imposed a penalty for selling or exposing for sale meat not branded as required by the Act. Clause 68 enabled the board to undertake the work of delivering meat slaughtered at the abattoirs, a power which might be a convenience to the owners of the meat. Clause 69 required the board to make by-products merchantable; the object was to prevent owners of stock losing the value of the parts of carcasses which were not suitable for meat. Clause 70 carried out in detail what was intimated in clause 54 (1), namely, the inspection of carcasses slaughtered outside the metropolitan area, and brought to ...the board’s premises. Part V. empowered the board to establish markets for stock or to lease the markets now established on North-terrace (clause 71). When the markets so established or leased were ready for use the board was to give public notice of the fact (clause 71), and thereafter no other market for stock should be used within the. metropolitan area (clause 73). Part VI. gave the board power to take lands compulsorily for the purposes of the Act, under the provisions of Part XII. of the Municipal Corporations Act and the Lands Clauses Consolidation Acts. Part VII. enabled local bodies outside the metropolitan area (as defined by the Act) to come into the area, so that the provisions of the Act would apply to their districts or the parts thereof specified by proclamation. Under Part VIII. the board was empowered to make regulations for carrying the Act into effect. It would be found that the powers relate first, to details: in connection with the work of the board and its officers, and the management of the abattoirs, and, second, from paragraph 17 to paragraph 22, to precautions for preventing the contamination of meat by reason of insanitary con­ditions of butcher’s shops and carts. Clause 83 made the approval of the Central Board of Health, and confirmation by the Governor necessary, before regulations were published, and clause 85 provided a convenient mode of testing the validity of regulations. Part IX. contained certain miscellaneous matters relating mostly to procedure and evidence. As they were usual provisions, and in common form, it was hardly necessary to mention them specifically. Clause 86 made any contravention of the Act or interference with its administration an of­fence. Clause 87 fixed the penalty where none was specially mentioned, and fixed a minimum penalty for all offences. Clause 89 dealt with forging brands and like of­fences. Clause 96, for proving the contents of the board’s books, by means of certified copies, was to prevent the great inconvenience which would arise if the records had to be taken away to court every time an. information was being heard for an offence. Clauses 101 to the end gave the usual appeal to the Local Court of Full Jurisdiction, and power to state a case for the opinion of the Supreme Court. He thought members would agree that the Bill was a pretty perfect one, and there would not be much difference of opinion on its details. He moved the second reading with the greatest confidence.

On the motion of the Hon. J. LEWIS, the debate was adjourned.