

Legislative Assembly,

Friday, 24th May, 1918.

The SPEAKER took the Chair at 3 p.m., and read prayers.

[For "Questions on Notice" and "Papers Presented" see "Votes and Proceedings."]

BILL—HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT.

Council's Message.

The Assembly having made an amendment to which the Council agreed subject to further amendments, the Council's further amendments were now considered.

In Committee.

Hon. G. Taylor in the Chair; Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister) in charge of the Bill:

No. 1. Strike out the words "the following proviso to the clause," and insert "the following new clause, to stand as Clause 54." No. 2. Strike out "provided that the amendments made by this section" and insert "the amendments made by section 41."

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD: I move—

"That the amendments be agreed to."

This is the proviso inserted to Clause 5 that the amendments shall continue in force to the 30th September, 1919, and no longer. The Council requested us to insert this amendment at the end of the Bill, but it was sent back to the Council, and now it has been returned as Clause 54.

Question put and passed, the Council's amendments agreed to.

Resolution reported, and the report adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

BILL—GENERAL LOAN AND INSCRIBED STOCK ACT AMENDMENT.

Request for Conference.

The Council having made an amendment to which the Assembly agreed subject to further amendments, and the Council declining to agree to the Assembly's further amendments, the reasons for so doing were now considered.

In Committee.

Mr. Stubbs in the Chair; the Colonial Treasurer in charge of the Bill.

Council's reasons for declining to agree to the Assembly's amendments—"That in the opinion of the Legislative Council in the event of it being found necessary to issue inscribed stock in respect of any new loan at a higher rate of interest than five per cent., Parliament should be approached for specific power to pay such higher rate."

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I move—

"That a conference by the Legislative Assembly with the Legislative Council be requested on the General Loan and Inscribed Stock Act Amendment Bill, with a view of the substitution for Clauses 2 and 3 of a clause as follows—

(2) Notwithstanding paragraph (a) of the proviso to Section 18 of the principal Act, interest on inscribed stock or debentures issued under the authority of any Loan Act in force at the

commencement of this Act may be at a rate not exceeding 6½ per centum per annum; provided that this Act shall apply only to inscribed stock and debentures issued as aforesaid not later than the 30th day of September, 1919."

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The action of the Legislative Council shows that there could have been but one intention on their part for refusing to agree to the amendment and that was to close down all public works in Western Australia. Just imagine an opportunity arising to borrow money at a fair rate of interest, perhaps a shade over five per cent., and the Treasurer being obliged to summon Parliament in order to get permission to borrow that money. The money might be urgently required for the carrying out of public works, but he would not be able to avail himself of the opportunity which might be offering without securing the sanction of Parliament. We know that if Parliament was out of session it could not be called together in a few minutes and the chance of getting the money might be lost. People who have sums of money to invest do not want it to remain idle for any length of time. The action of the Legislative Council might have been the result of misunderstanding; at any rate the action is detrimental to the best interests of the State. I trust the managers of the conference will be able to show the Legislative Council the error of their ways. On two occasions the Legislative Council have done this and there could not have been a mistake on the second occasion even though there might have been a mistake on the first.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: The hon. member has raised quite a legitimate point. Of course I could, if the opportunity arose, borrow money at any rate of interest I liked under the Local Inscribed Stock Act. In fact there are three Acts under which I could borrow, one is the Local Inscribed Stock Act, under which I can borrow money at unlimited interest. The second is the Treasury Bills Act, and now we want this one because we have agreed with the Commonwealth Government that whatever terms they get, we shall give them the same terms. Obviously the Commonwealth will borrow at the best terms offering, and they have a right to come to us and say that they do not want our local inscribed stock, because it has only five years currency, and that they must have debentures, because they are not domiciled. There is no subterfuge about this. When we borrow money to-day it is the lender who says what kind of security he requires; and if he wants debentures, at present we have no authority to give him debentures. Of course I could borrow at five per cent. and put it at £10 discount. Members of another place will not see this. I regret that on the first occasion I did not make the position perfectly clear, but since the second occasion there has been no room for doubt as to what we want. We are likely to be so circumstanced that, in order to carry on imperative works we may have to pay 6½ per cent. interest. There will be no cheap money for some considerable time. Of course, the Commonwealth may not ask for debentures after all, but on the other hand we may have to give debentures for any loans we may raise.

Question put and passed.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Resolution reported: the report adopted, and a Message accordingly returned to the Council.

Appointment of Managers.

The COLONIAL TREASURER move—

"That the Managers be the Colonial Treasurer, the Attorney General, and the leader of the Opposition."

Question put and passed.

BILL—VERMIN.

In Committee.

Resumed from the previous day.

Mr. Stubbs in the Chair; Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister) in charge of the Bill.

Clause 9—Application of funds:

The CHAIRMAN: The position is that the member for Kanowna has moved to insert the following new paragraph, "For defraying the expenses incidental to the destruction of vermin on all Crown lands and public reserves and all vacant lands adjacent to private holdings." On this amendment Mr. Johnston has moved a further amendment to omit "all" before "Crown" and "all" before "vacant." The question is that the amendment on the amendment be agreed to.

Amendment on the amendment put and passed.

Amendment as amended put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	...	...	...	...	13
Noes	...	...	...	...	15

Majority against 2

AYES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Mitchell
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Money
Mr. Collier	Mr. Pickering
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Roche
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Walker
Mr. Jones	Mr. Lutey
Mr. Maley	(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. H. Robinson
Mr. Brown	Mr. R. T. Robinson
Mr. Davies	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Gardiner	Mr. Thomson
Mr. George	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Lefroy	Mr. Hardwick
Mr. Nairn	(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I move an amendment—

"That after 'taken' in line 3 of paragraph (d) the words 'on Crown lands or otherwise' be inserted."

This amendment embodies all that the last amendment aimed at.

Hon. W. G. Angwin: You resisted the last amendment merely because you had not moved it yourself. It is just paltry, childish play.

Mr. HARRISON: Does the amendment mean that where rabbits on Crown lands are a menace to any private holding the Government will do their best to eradicate the rabbits on Crown lands near to that holding? I want an assurance from the Minister in charge that this will be done in the same spirit by the Government as they expect the farmers, under the Bill, to exhibit in carrying out the work that they are to be compelled to do.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: It is the intention of the Government to see that everything is done that can be done to enable the farmer to successfully cope with the pest. Our Crown lands are of vast dimensions, and the Minister in charge of this work will have to decide how the money that will be appropriated is to be spent. It has been pointed out that the settlers furthest east are those who are acting as buffers against the rabbits for the rest of the State. It is for that reason that Subclause (d) was placed in the measure, and so that the Minister might, out of the moneys appropriated, allocate sums to those particular vermin districts to enable them to put down the pest. It is recognised that those boards in the thick of the pest will need monetary assistance.

Hon. T. WALKER: I am surprised at the attitude of the Government. This Subclause (d) is precisely the same as the amendment which I moved last night. I was asked to withdraw it, and it was said that otherwise the Committee stage would have to be adjourned for the purpose of a consultation being held in Cabinet on the matter. Not a word of explanation has, however, yet been given by the Government regarding the matter.

The Minister for Works: There was no necessity for me to say anything.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Why are we here to-day?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: To listen to the decision of Cabinet on the clause.

Hon. T. WALKER: Has any decision been arrived at?

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott: Evidently.

Hon. T. WALKER: If so, I want it to be placed on record as to why the amendment which I moved, and which was more clear and specific than the subclause now under consideration, was ignored and voted against, and why immediately after its defeat the Minister in charge of the Bill moved an amendment to effect precisely the same thing.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: The hon. member has some justification for feeling that he has been slighted.

Hon. T. Walker: The Opposition have been slighted.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I had intended to state my intention of moving this further amendment in Subclause (d), where I am advised by my advisers it is the proper place for it to go, but the Chairman put the question so quickly—

Hon. T. Walker: You cannot blame the Chair.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I was perhaps too slow in getting on my feet. It was my intention to do this, as I have just stated. There is no desire to be discourteous to the hon. member.

Hon. T. WALKER: The explanation is unsatisfactory. The amendment of the Honorary Minister shows that my amendment was not of the heinous character that it was reported to be. In consequence of the silence of the Honorary Minister the real value and the direction contained in my amendment are lost to the Bill. My amendment was specific as to the expenditure of money on Crown lands, public reserves, and lands adjacent to private holdings. In substance the two amendments are the same, but in my amendment there was an incisiveness and clearness of direction which is not found in the amendment moved by the Honorary Minister. I question whether, if we observe the rules of the House, we can adopt this latter amendment, on the ground that it is the same in substance as that upon which the Committee have already come to a decision.

Point of Order.

Hon. W. C. Angwin : I rise to a point of order. I claim that we have already decided, in the negative, an amendment for the appropriation of money for the purpose of "defraying the expenses incidental to the destruction of vermin on all Crown lands." My point of order comes under Standing Order 176. Although that amendment was defeated the Honorary Minister now wishes to incorporate in the clause an amendment providing for the appropriation of moneys in connection with "all Crown lands or otherwise." This amendment is the same in substance as that which has been defeated.

Hon. T. Walker : It is clear that the amendment of the Honorary Minister is against the rules of the House, and that it is the same in substance as that which has been rejected. We cannot stultify ourselves by passing this amendment, and will have to think of some other way of effecting the purpose required, namely, the destruction of rabbits.

The Chairman : The question is as to whether the amendment of the member for Kanowna to insert a new subclause—which was rejected—is substantially the same as the amendment now moved by the Honorary Minister in Subclause (d). The principle of expenditure on Crown lands has not been negatived up till now. In my opinion the Honorary Minister is in order in proposing the insertion of the words.

Committee Resumed.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT : I desire to emphasise that my advisers informed me this was the proper place to have the words inserted. I should be doing wrong if, against the advice given me, I allowed the words to be inserted elsewhere.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN : I do not think the Government have any intention of carrying out what their amendment proposes. Their objection to the amendment of the member for Kanowna was simply an objection to the side of the Chamber from which the amendment came. Both sides of the Chamber I consider have been treated discourteously in the matter. The Honorary Minister let the amendment of the member for Kanowna go without speaking because he saw the numbers.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott : Nothing of the sort.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN : The Honorary Minister's amendment does not touch public reserves at all.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott : They are Crown lands.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN : But they are vested in certain persons. I care not what Government may be in power—and I do not think present Ministers will be there long—they cannot shirk their responsibility on the rabbit question. Whether or not they are willing to have a direct expression of opinion from Parliament on the point, they will have to kill the rabbits; and the clause should contain something definitely and clearly appropriating money for the purpose. Subsidies, which are left to the Government, may be discontinued altogether, and probably will be discontinued when money is short. The result will be to cause the work of destruction to prove much more expensive later on.

Hon. T. WALKER : I intend to move an amendment on the amendment, namely to strike out the words "and otherwise" and to insert in lieu thereof "public reserves and vacant lands adjacent to private holdings."

The Attorney General : You should add the words "and elsewhere."

Hon. T. WALKER : That can be done.

The Attorney General : What do you call vacant lands ?

Hon. T. WALKER : The pressure, owing to the rabbit invasion, has been so severe in the Eastern districts that some of the settlers have been compelled to abandon their holdings. Such holdings I would describe as vacant lands. They are a greater danger than the Crown lands. I move an amendment on the amendment—

"That the words 'or otherwise' be struck out, with a view to the insertion of other words."

Mr. MONEY : The Minister can hardly appreciate what would be the effect of his original amendment. Instead of widening the powers of the Government, it would limit them. Without the mention of a place, the power is unlimited. If the intention had been that the clause should mean "Crown lands and elsewhere," those words would have been used. The Minister should be happy to accept the amendment moved by the member for Kanowna. No money is being voted for the purpose, but the Honorary Minister's amendment as proposed to be amended would point out to future Governments that they are expected to do their utmost to prevent the incursion of rabbits, and, if necessary, to cope effectively with the pest on Crown lands and unoccupied lands.

Mr. PICKERING : I support the amendment because I have contended all along that this measure is not sufficiently far-reaching. The Government must be alive to the enormously heavy responsibilities thrown on the shoulders of the farmers who are the advance guard of settlement. Those men must be helped. The question is not one of policy, but of saving the agricultural community of Western Australia.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL : I greatly regret that, owing to circumstances, the Honorary Minister was not able to give his explanation at the time. Had he been able to do so, the member for Kanowna would have seen at once that the Government do not object to the insertion of such a provision. One has only to gather the meaning of Clause 9. No moneys have been appropriated as yet, but, when appropriated, they may be spent in certain ways. Generally speaking, the Government might spend the moneys to be appropriated on Crown lands or vacant holdings, the object being to exterminate the rabbit wherever found in Western Australia. Therefore it would be almost sufficient if paragraph (a) only had appeared in the clause. The clause itself is specially wide. I agree with the member for Bunbury that where you specialise in a clause, the more contraction you make in it. I would have been satisfied if it said that the moneys appropriated shall be applied for exterminating rabbits. The paragraph might well be compressed into the words, "and generally for the destruction of vermin wherever it may be found in Western Australia." Paragraph (d) relates generally to expenditure.

Hon. T. Walker : I did not want it to be general. I want it more specified.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL : I think the suggestion of the member for Kanowna quite meets the case, provided it is made sufficiently general. I understand the words he desires to add are, "on Crown lands, public reserves, vacant lands and elsewhere."

Hon. T. Walker : No, "on Crown lands, vacant areas adjacent to private holdings and elsewhere."

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Might not "elsewhere" relate to public lands? Why not put before "Crown lands," the words "private lands"?

Hon. T. Walker: Those are dealt with by the board.

The CHAIRMAN: It would be as well to deal with the amendment to strike out the words first.

Amendment (to strike out the words "or otherwise") put and passed.

Hon. T. Walker: I move an amendment—

"That the following words be inserted:—
'public reserves, vacant lands adjacent to private holdings and elsewhere.'"

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Show me where Crown lands come in.

Hon. T. WALKER: The board is authorised to spend money there and if money is not spent in connection with private lands, the boards are authorised to do it, and the Minister can do it if the board does not. What is necessary is to draw attention to the fact that it is an obligation to deal with those lands that are not held privately. The whole Bill is for advancing and spending money on lands that are held, but there is nothing specifically to draw attention to the necessity of dealing with those portions of the State not occupied, and we are authorising now the distribution of money from moneys appropriated for that purpose.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The clause as drawn is as wide as the limits of Western Australia, and the Minister can spend money under it wherever he likes and there is no limit but the coast line of the country. When the hon. member comes forward with a limitation it falls within the general rule laid down by the member for Bunbury, that if you limit the general by specific instances, you cut the general out and only spend the money on the specific instances. The amendment will have the effect of permitting the Minister to spend moneys appropriated on Crown lands, public reserves, vacant lands adjacent to holdings and elsewhere.

Hon. T. Walker: "And elsewhere."

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: That relates to the vacant areas. Why limit it at all. Paragraph (d) is specially wide to include everything and if we start limitations we may omit something that ought to go in. I do not mind this amendment being passed provided we add "private lands," but I think the clause should be left as it is. It is skilfully drawn and if we interfere with it, we shall be making work for the lawyers.

Hon. T. WALKER: What is specifically mentioned I understand, excludes what is not. But we can alter that. I think the clause is general enough, but I do not like the word "elsewhere." There might be an addendum "and generally on all lands of the State whether held privately or otherwise." I want the amendment inserted so that it may be everlasting before the eyes of those who have the administration of this Bill that it is obligatory to attend to the clearing of Crown lands of vermin.

Mr. MALEY: I support the amendment of the Minister because, after all, it is not mandatory. Even to-day, under the existing Act, the department has no authority to spend money on the destruction of rabbits; the Bill states that money may be used for that purpose. It does not compel the Government to engage in extermination.

The PREMIER: I would prefer to see the sub-clause remain as it is printed. If we add the words

proposed, neither the farmer nor the State will be benefited. The value of the Bill depends upon the administration of it. The clause gives power to appropriate certain moneys, which may be applied by the Government for a certain purpose, and then there is brought in a drag-net paragraph, which embraces everything. It is the desire of the Government to follow up the destruction of rabbits on Crown lands and to supplement the efforts of the vermin boards. After all, it is only by co-operation on the part of the farmers, the boards and the Government that we shall be able to cope with the evil. The clause has been drafted with great care and we might let it stand as it is.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It would greatly facilitate the passage of the Bill if we were to go back to the usual method of dealing with Bills. The Honorary Minister made fair progress with the measure last night while he was left alone and until we reached Clause 9, when the Minister for Works took the Bill entirely out of the Honorary Minister's hands. This afternoon the Honorary Minister submits an amendment to the clause and no sooner does he do so than the Attorney General butts in and takes the Bill out of his colleague's hands and suggests an amendment on that moved by his colleague.

The Attorney General: I did not do anything of the kind.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Attorney General has been agreeing with the member for Kanowna and he said, "I will accept it," without even consulting his colleague. The Attorney General no sooner does that than the Premier rises and states that he does not agree with either of his colleagues, and he asks the Committee to allow the clause to stand as it is. How can we make any progress with measures when that kind of thing takes place—three Ministers in charge of a Bill and disagreeing with each other. The manner in which the Honorary Minister handled the Bill last night indicated that he had a thorough grasp of it, and if he is permitted to remain in charge of it better results will follow. It is impossible for the Bill to be dealt with satisfactorily if three Ministers are going to control it, each Minister expressing different opinions.

Hon. T. WALKER: As soon as a measure of this kind becomes law it is passed over to a department and the official head conducts practically all the business under it, and he regulates his conduct according to what he may observe in the Bill. Only the other day I was talking to one who was engaged in the administration of the old Rabbit Act, and I was drawing his attention to the migration going on to the east of the rabbit-proof fence, and imagine my surprise when he said to me, "That is practically out of my sphere of action." That officer understood the administration of the Rabbit Act as it stands, and this Bill is practically a replica of it. As sure as we are living, if we allow these general words to remain without some indication of the sense of the House, when the Bill passes into law, being almost a copy of the old Act of 1902, it will be interpreted in the same lackadaisical way as hitherto. In other words, no innovation, will be made. We want to direct the attention of the administrative staff to Crown lands adjacent to settlement and adjacent to vacant lands and public reserves, and our only way to do that is to put it in the Bill. My amendment covers every part of the State, and it must be everlastingly visible to those who will have the administration of the Act that it is our desire that atten-

tion be paid to Crown lands and public reserves which may be a source of the spread of the pest.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I agree to the amendment, and if hon. members find later on that we are confining ourselves to certain areas and not to the whole of the State, we can only blame the lawyers for it.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. T. WALKER: I move an amendment—

"That at the end of paragraph (d) the words 'in any part of the State' be added."

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I think the clause covers it.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. PICKERING: I move an amendment—

"That the following be added to stand as paragraph (e):—'The Government shall, in deciding the amount to be distributed to vermin boards, do so on the basis of the ratio that the unalienated land bears to the alienated land and land in process of alienation, and shall take into consideration the rates levied by such boards; provided that in areas other than agricultural areas the basis for consideration be that of rating.'"

We want the greater portion of the amount distributed to be placed with those boards which have the least opportunity of getting in revenue. Some of our remote areas are very sparsely populated, and the amount of rates collected therein must be very small as compared with others. I desire that every consideration shall be given to such areas. The reason for the proviso is that the method of rating in agricultural areas is different from that in the pastoral areas.

Mr. HARRISON: It appears to me that if the amendment were agreed to it would mean that certain areas in the State would have to be subsidised, irrespective of the presence of vermin, and would get an amount in proportion with the area of unalienated land. The money should go where it is most urgently needed, where the pest is spreading or doing most harm.

Mr. PICKERING: It is a question, not of the size of the area, but of the ratio of unalienated to alienated land; because the alienated land pays rates, whereas the unalienated land does not. In consequence a vermin board having a large proportion of unalienated land would have less revenue to defray the cost of extermination of the pest.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: The amendment would defeat the hon. member's purpose. Take the case of Kimberley; there is there a small proportion of alienated land and a very large proportion of unalienated land held by persons who at present are in a better position to pay rates than are any other section of the community. Under the proposed amendment we should have to subsidise that part of the State in proportion to the unalienated land. We already have power to subsidise boards, and in this respect the Minister administering the Act will give special consideration to boards in whose district the pest is worst.

Amendment put and negatived; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 10—agreed to.

Clause 11—Minister may delegate powers:

Mr. MONEY: The Honorary Minister should give reasons why the powers of the Minister should be delegated to the chief inspector.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: Under the existing Acts only the Minister has control, and in consequence farmers have had to be brought from the uttermost parts of the State to appear before

the Minister. By the delegation of authority to the chief inspector this sort of thing will be obviated, for that official will thus be empowered to take action on the spot.

Mr. MONEY: Would not that apply to every other Minister?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: It has been four necessary to give the chief inspector the full power. If he finds that a board is not performing its duties as it should do he can take immediate action. Weeks may elapse if he has to wait in order to report to his Minister. The passing of these powers on to the chief inspector will enable him to act quickly.

Mr. Pickering: Does it involve the expenditure of money?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: That is a different thing. The select committee was somewhat inclined to demur regarding this question, but it was pointed out that it was chiefly only in regard to matters of detail that the powers to be given would affect the chief inspector. It was said that these powers would be rarely exercised, and we therefore considered the proposal would be a reasonable one.

Mr. HICKMOTT: I would point out that other States the vermin boards appoint their own inspectors, but that here the Minister is to do so.

Hon. T. Walker: The board can appoint its inspector.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: We have inspectors under the central administration, and vermin boards also appoint inspectors.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 12—Vermin districts:

Mr. PICKERING: I move an amendment—

"That in Subclause 1 the following paragraph be added after paragraph (f) 'To divide and redivide a district into wards, and define the boundaries, and assign names to wards.'"

This is taken from the Roads Board Act. Districts can be better worked through the medium of wards than through indiscriminate representation. It is desirable that the vermin boards should be able to divide their areas into wards if they desire.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: There is a difficulty in carrying this out. Where there is one roads board it would be easy to divide it into wards, but where there are as many as six roads boards in a vermin district great difficulty would occur in the matter of representation. Such a vermin district could not satisfactorily be split into wards on account of the varying sizes of the roads board districts.

Mr. Johnston: That should make it all the more necessary.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I do not think the proposal would be workable.

Hon. T. WALKER: I think it would be more workable than the system proposed, and would make for localised interest. I see no reason why delegates coming from a board on to the central vermin board should not call themselves representatives of wards. They would all be under one chairman. There are places where it would not be wise to have wards, but other places where a board can best be worked under this form of subdivision. The amendment will not make it obligatory to subdivide. For instance, in some cases the Minister will be the board.

Mr. TROY: I am inclined to support the amendment on the ground that the system of dividing into wards and giving each ward a representative on the board will make for sound

administration. It would also mean that the various portions of a vermin board district will have better representation than under the proposed system.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 13—Boards:

Mr. H. ROBINSON: Part IV. seems to contain nothing definite regarding the appointment of roads boards as vermin boards. In one part of my electorate there are a vermin board and a roads board, involving double expense and not working very satisfactorily. Where a roads board exists, it should be compulsory to appoint the roads board as a vermin board.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: Clause 43 deals with the question raised by the member for Albany. If a roads board should refuse to act, the Minister can act. If a vermin board, after appointment, should refuse to act, the Minister can step in. If a vermin board should act in a way unsatisfactory to the Minister, he can step in. The idea is to amalgamate various roads boards into one vermin board, so as to save administrative expense.

Hon. T. WALKER: There is a point in the question raised by the member for Albany. Suppose that out of six roads boards appointed as one vermin board, five are acting while the sixth does not send a representative to the vermin board, what would be the position? We cannot have the board and the Minister both acting. It seems to me that in those circumstances the vermin board could still act without the Minister.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: In those circumstances the Minister would nominate a representative of the sixth roads board.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 14 to 18—agreed to.

Clause 19—Number of votes:

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: The clause provides that an acreage of holding under 10,000 acres shall confer one vote, and that an acreage exceeding 10,000 but not exceeding 100,000 acres shall confer two votes. It seems to me that under this provision a man holding 10,000 acres exactly would have no vote at all.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I wish to deal with an earlier part of the clause. I move an amendment—

“That all words of the clause after ‘have,’ in line 2, be struck out, with a view to the insertion of other words.”

The words I desire to have inserted will provide that every person qualified to vote shall have one vote, and one vote only. I believe Australia is the only part of the world which now permits plural voting. A person holding 1,000 acres of agricultural land—and very few hold 10,000 acres—contributes to the revenue of the State far more, in proportion, than a person holding 10,000 acres of pastoral land, or for that matter 500,000 acres. Under the clause as it stands, there is a possibility of the holders of small areas of agricultural land being out voted by pastoral lessees. All voters should be on an equality.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I hope the amendment will not be carried. Plural voting is considered advisable in this connection. New South Wales and Queensland have plural voting under their vermin legislation, the votes being based on the number of stock. Here we propose to base the votes on the areas of land held. I trust the Committee will not make this radical change.

Hon. T. WALKER: The change proposed is by no means radical. It is men who vote, and therefore in that respect all men should be on an

equal footing. The Honorary Minister ought to acknowledge that this clause has been adopted from the old and effete vermin legislation which the Bill proposes to repeal.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	...	...	...	...	11
Noes	...	...	...	...	20
Majority against					9

AYES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Lutey
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Troy
Mr. Collier	Mr. Walker
Mr. Davies	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Holman	Mr. Lambert
Mr. Jones	(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Money
Mr. Brown	Mr. Nalro
Mr. Durack	Mr. Pickering
Mr. George	Mr. H. Robinson
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. R. T. Robinson
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Thomson
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Johnston	Mr. Veryard
Mr. Lefroy	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Maley	Mr. Hardwick
	(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I desire to move an amendment—

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member cannot do so because the Committee has decided that the words in the clause are to stand as printed.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 20, 21—agreed to.

Clause 22—When office vacated:

Mr. PICKERING: I move an amendment—

“That in paragraph (a) the word ‘two’ be struck out and ‘three’ inserted in lieu.”

The effect of the clause as it stands will be that if a member fails to attend two consecutive ordinary meetings of the board, without leave, he shall cease to be a member. I think we might well increase that number to three.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The select committee decided, in view of the fact that the ordinary meetings of the boards were to be held every three months, that a member missing two meetings should no longer hold a seat on the board.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: A board may call a meeting whenever it so desires. It is only the ordinary meetings which are held every three months.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	...	...	...	...	10
Noes	...	...	...	...	22
Majority against					12

AYES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Pickering
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Walker
Mr. Collier	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Holman	Mr. Lutey
Mr. Jones	(Teller.)
Mr. Lambert	

NOMES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Nairn
Mr. Brown	Mr. H. Robinson
Mr. Davies	Mr. R. T. Robinson
Mr. Durack	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. George	Mr. Thomson
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Troy
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Veryard
Mr. Johnston	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Lefroy	Mr. Hardwick
Mr. Maley	(Teller.)
Mr. Money	

Amendment thus negatived; the clause put and passed.

Clauses 23 to 26—agreed to.

Clause 27—Appointment of Chairman:

Mr. PICKERING: I move an amendment—

“That the following proviso be added—
‘Provided that a meeting of a board for the purpose of this section shall not be duly constituted unless two-thirds at least of the members of the board are present.’”

I have taken this from the Roads Board Act, under which three members form a quorum, therefore three would be in a position to elect a chairman. We should have something to provide that not fewer than two-thirds of the members shall have that power.

Mr. THOMSON: It is provided in Clause 20 that an absolute majority may remove the chairman from his position.

Amendment put and passed; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clauses 28, 29—agreed to.

Clause 30—Vacation of office by chairman:

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I move an amendment—

“That in line 2 of paragraph (b) the words ‘or by resolution of the board is required to resign his office’ be struck out.”

Such a resolution might be passed when there is a bare quorum present. The chairman has to sign warrants of distress, and the odium attached to such a duty might serve to put him in the hands of three members of the board. The provision is a dangerous innovation.

Mr. THOMSON: The select committee had in mind the possibility of a chairman, being a large land-owner, practically holding up the work of the board by neglecting to carry out the instructions of the board that certain things be done. The provision is intended merely for exceptional cases. I hope it will be retained.

Mr. TROY: Knowing something of the jealousies which exist among some governing bodies, one can well understand that the chairman of a vermin board might easily fall foul of the other members of the board. Personally I do not favour either the provision or the amendment. If the chairman does something which warrants his removal, he should be removed only at the will of a majority of ratepayers present at a meeting called for the purpose. I do not think such power should be given to a bare quorum of the board.

Mr. HARRISON: I do not like the provision. It is an insinuation that the members of the board including the chairman, all of whom are working in an honorary capacity, do not know their duty.

Hon. T. WALKER: The provision constitutes an extraordinary innovation. Most gentlemen, if met by a hostile vote of those who had elected them, would get out at once.

Hon. P. Collier: Could we not leave these boards to make their own regulations regarding this matter?

Hon. T. WALKER: I do not think we ought to set this precedent.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I certainly do not like these words “or by resolution of the board.” They cast a slur on gentlemen who, if they accept their position, must give a great deal of their time for the good of the country without remuneration. With such a resolution hanging over their heads it might be difficult to get men to take on that position. The Committee would be wise to strike out the words I have referred to.

Amendment put and passed: the clause as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 31 to 36—agreed to.

Clause 37—Who to preside and his right to vote:

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Will the Honorary Minister explain this clause? There have been disputes in the past as to the deliberative vote of the chairman, and a decision has already been given by the Crown Law Department on this question. Does the clause mean that the chairman may have two votes?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I understand that this is to give the chairman, in the case of an equality of votes, the casting vote.

Hon. T. WALKER: Does that mean two votes, another vote after he has exercised his deliberative vote?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: Yes, to add his casting vote as well.

Mr. HARRISON: I have never known of a case in which a chairman has used both a deliberative and a casting vote, unless he has been convinced, from inner knowledge that he possessed, that the meeting was on the wrong track, and that otherwise action would be taken which would be detrimental to the board. The giving of a deliberative as well as a casting vote would be of service in the administration of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: If this clause is carried it will give a deliberative as well as a casting vote to the chairman.

Mr. DAVIES: The chairman of one of these boards would be both a member of the board and the chairman, and as such would have a deliberative as well as a casting vote.

Mr. MONEY: In the case of an equality of votes, the chairman should have an additional vote to his casting vote.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 38—agreed to.

Clause 39—Proceedings of board valid, notwithstanding defect of appointment, etc.:

Hon. T. WALKER: This clause requires explanation. What precedent has been followed? No doubt it is intended to save legal proceedings, but I would point out that a board not duly elected or qualified might strike a rate, and yet such rate would have to be a legal one.

Mr. THOMSON: This question was laid before the Crown Solicitor, who pointed out that, in the case of a man who after his election to a board might be found not to have been qualified to act, the desire was that this would not invalidate any proceedings which might be taken by the board.

Mr. MALEY: This is intended to deal with a case which might occur under Section 64 of the Roads Board Act, which states that no returning officer shall inquire into the qualifications of any person to be elected or who stands nominated as a candidate. If a person without qualification

was nominated and declared elected by a returning officer he would take his seat on the board at his own risk. It is then the intention that no proceedings taken by the board should be rendered invalid as the result of this.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: A case occurred recently in which a man was elected to a roads board, and it turned out that he was illegally elected. It is intended that the work of the board should not be rendered invalid because of this circumstance.

Hon. T. WALKER: I would point out that the clause is taken from the "Gascoyne failure," where the board was incapable of doing anything that was wise. The principle is an extraordinary one. There is a possibility of the majority of the board being mistaken in its qualifications, and yet that board can proceed with business in the ordinary way as if it was legally constituted.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 40, 41, 42—agreed to.

Clause 43—Roads boards or nominees of roads boards may be appointed:

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I move an amendment—

"That after 'road district' in lines 1 of Subclauses 1 and 2 respectively, there be inserted: 'situated within the South-Western Division of the State.'"

Outside the South-Western division of the State, that is to say north of the Murchison, and also in the Eucla division, the class of settlement is very different from that in the South-Western Division, being extremely sparse. On that account differential treatment is required.

Hon. T. WALKER: I would like some further explanation. By this clause we grant to the Government only a permissive or discretionary power. What makes me dubious of the wisdom of providing for the distinction suggested by the amendment, is that even in the Eucla district there are roads boards—in closer proximity to the track of the rabbits from the Eastern States than is the wheat belt of Western Australia—which are perfectly capable of dealing with the pest, more capable than a central administration could be. I hope the amendment will not be carried.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. HARRISON: I presume, that under Subclause 2 adjoining roads boards districts can amalgamate to form one vermin board district. But we cannot expect men to give their energies to this work unless they are compensated for the time lost and travelling expenses.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Clause 70 provides for that.

Mr. PICKERING: Subclause 2 applies only to roads boards included in a vermin district. I desire that this measure should provide that roads boards which are anxious to form themselves into vermin boards shall be appointed vermin boards. Accordingly, I move an amendment—

"That in Subclause 2, after 'are,' line 1, there be inserted 'or desire to be.'"

Mr. THOMSON: I do not think there is any reason for this amendment. The Governor already has the necessary power. Roads boards cannot be compelled to become vermin boards unless they are desirous of functioning as vermin boards.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Yes, they can be compelled.

Mr. THOMSON: It would be necessary first to amend the Roads Act. I am speaking on information given to me by the Crown Solicitor.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Of what use is this clause unless the Governor has power to appoint roads boards as vermin boards? If members of existing roads boards do not desire to administer this vermin legislation they will resign, and the new roads boards would be elected subject to the condition that they act also as vermin boards. If the roads boards are given an option in the matter, the object of this Bill will be defeated.

[Sitting suspended from 6-15 to 7-30 p.m.]

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: It is quite unnecessary to insert this power. No Minister would say to a board, "You must be a vermin board" if that board was not desirous of acting, because the Minister would have to take over the control if they refused. Already steps have been taken to appoint members of the roads districts and in every case the member has been written to asking if he is willing to act.

Mr. PICKERING: If that is the view the Minister is taking and if it is a fact that boards, at their request, may be appointed, I ask leave to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If a member of a roads board is appointed the term should be for the unexpired portion of the term for which he is a member of a roads board.

Mr. Thomson: That is provided for in the next clause.

Clause as amended, put and passed.

Clause 44—Suspension or abolition of boards:

Mr. PICKERING: I think Subclause (d) is unnecessary. It imputes dishonesty to a board before that board comes into existence. I shall vote against it.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 45, 46, 47—agreed to.

Clause 48—Appointment of road board in lieu of vermin board:

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I move an amendment—

"That after 'district' in line 2 the words 'situated within the south-west division of the State' be inserted."

Amendment put and passed, the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 49—agreed to.

Clause 50—Holdings rateable:

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I move an amendment—

"That the proviso be omitted and the following inserted in lieu:—'Provided that public reserves and holdings within any municipal district or townsite shall not be rateable.'"

Mr. Thomson: You should include roads board districts.

Hon. T. WALKER: Does the Minister intend to include townsites by the amendment?

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott: Yes.

Hon. T. WALKER: In agricultural districts there are many declared townsites where there is not a single inhabitant.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott: They would not be rateable.

Hon. T. WALKER: There may not be inhabitants but there are holders. I know one or two who hold townsite blocks adjoining settlement, those blocks would be very good harbours for vermin.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: The reason of the amendment is this: it is considered that the people as a whole in this State are paying a certain amount every year towards the destruction of vermin. Already £700,000 has been spent, and we are still spending a certain amount every year. Everyone in the State is taxed to assist. The people who are going to benefit directly, in particular, are those not in the towns, municipalities or the cities, but those people who have holdings outside—the pastoralists, the farmers, the orchardists, and so on, and those people must be the only people rated and not those in the towns. If we include townsites as a rateable proposition people who are already paying would be called on to pay again.

Hon. T. WALKER: Every man in the State pays his taxes.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): How much will the rabbits or dingoes trouble people in townsites?

Hon. T. WALKER: It is not the dingoes but the rabbits.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott: The holder of a block in a townsite must destroy the vermin on his block.

Hon. T. WALKER: But what about the rates? If the member for Murchison (Mr. Holman) were here he would tell members that up to a few weeks ago he held a block right upon a reserve which is a townsite. No one is living there but people have taken up blocks. There is no fence and no barrier between the vacant blocks of these holdings. Under the Bill the holder of the block would have to pay rates to the roads board, but the holder of a block just outside the townsite would not have to contribute towards the vermin expense, although on the vacant block where nobody lives, the rabbits may remain undisturbed. It is not equitable. It should be a national question and all should contribute. Why make those people in the heart of an infested district immune from contributing towards the destruction of the vermin? The townsites in the agricultural areas are practically part and parcel of the infested areas, and while they are in no way fenced off, and the farmer is supposed to protect them and keep the pest away, the townsites are not to contribute one penny. We are putting the burden so much on the farmer that very shortly we shall have no farmers at all. I know of men who have gone off their holdings because they have not been able to stand all the imposts put upon them plus the rabbits. A townsite in an infested district should be made to contribute its share.

Mr. HARRISON: The proviso says, "Provided that holdings within a municipal district and public reserves shall not be rateable, and that holdings within a townsite or portion of a townsite shall not be rateable in any case in which the Governor by proclamation so declares." Does it mean that the Governor is going to proclaim all these townsites in the country areas to be exempt?

Hon. T. Walker: The amendment will exempt them altogether.

Mr. HARRISON: Then I am against the amendment. At the townsite of Kellerberrin there is a water reserve adjoining the granite rocks, and there are 5-acre blocks there which are held by townspeople and which are splendid breeding grounds.

Hon. P. Collier: Not within the townsite.

Mr. HARRISON: Yes.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott: It is a suburban area, which is a different thing.

Mr. HARRISON: I believe that the Kellerberrin townsite extends to the racecourse. If we could have the whole State rateable for this it would be the right thing. The farmers are protecting every asset in the State.

Hon. P. Collier: But what is the use of that now that the Bill does not admit that principle?

Mr. HARRISON: I am out to get rates from anyone in the country districts who is likely to have a breeding ground for rabbits.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: This clause was very fully considered by the Committee. These townsites in many cases are only townsites in name. There may be a railway siding there, and one man living on the place, and such places make good breeding grounds. If the proviso is left as it is in the Bill it will meet the position.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: If the Committee are going to insist on including townsites we should also insist on including municipalities.

Hon. P. Collier: And cities.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: Exactly. Take the case of a man who has a block with his home on it. Under the Bill he will have to destroy all vermin on that block. We are not right in imposing a rate on that man unless we tax everyone. We should not say that we will tax people in a townsite but not those in cities and municipalities.

Mr. THOMSON: I hope the Committee will not insist upon municipalities and townsites paying rates. Take a district like Katsanning. Land throughout that district might be valued on an average at £1 per acre. How many acres in any town would be valued at £1? I suggest how unfair the incidence of taxation would be on people living in a roads board townsite, where, after all, there are no services whatever. I hope the Committee will agree to the amendment, for under the clause a man on a quarter-acre block in a small town would have to pay more than a man with a thousand-acre holding.

Hon. T. WALKER: The clause has at least some semblance of fairness. The farmer has to keep his holding clear to protect himself, and has to pay rates in addition, while all the time it is the farmer who creates the value of the town block. In some cases it is only reasonable that the owners of townsite blocks should contribute something to the upkeep of a vermin district, while in other cases it is not necessary that this should be done. The amendment crudely exempts all. I trust that the amendment will not be carried, and that we shall agree to the clause as it stands.

Amendment put and passed; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clauses 51 to 55—agreed to.

Clause 56—Power to levy rate:

Mr. ANGELO: I move an amendment—

"That in line 1 of Subclause 2 the words 'two shillings' be struck out and 'one shilling' inserted in lieu."

I wish to put the case from the point of view of the Gascoyne vermin board. Under the existing Act the rate is 1s. I understand that the reason for the proposed increase is that the Government wish to raise a further sum with which to meet the maintenance charges. But a previous Government gave a solemn undertaking that the rate would not be increased beyond the shilling, and I now ask the Committee to honour that undertaking. The member for Kanowna, on the second reading, referred to the Gascoyne vermin

board as a shocking example. If that board is in arrears, it is because the old Act was badly drafted and the Government had not power to collect the rates. Subsequently the pastoralists undertook to make up the arrears and recoup the Government the capital cost of the fence, together with interest, on the understanding that the Government restricted the rate to 1s. and maintained the fence.

Hon. T. Walker: Have the pastoralists paid up?

Mr. ANGELO: They are paying off the debt as arranged. If they are still behind it is because the Government are debiting the board with the cost of maintenance, which is against the principle and the spirit of the agreement entered into; and now if the clause is passed as printed, they will be charged double rates. I believe the Honorary Minister recognises that this honourable agreement does exist, and is prepared to support my amendment.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I propose to accept the amendment. There is no doubt that those who had the 2s. put in did not give sufficient thought to the matter.

Hon. P. Collier: To whom do you refer?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: The committee and the advisers of the committee. I think a mistake has been made here. If we took the Kimberley district as an example we would find, if the 2s. rate was levied on every 1,000 acres, that these people would be called upon to pay a vermin rate of twice the present land rate, and I consider the tax is too high.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. JOHNSTON: It is proposed to give the vermin boards power to levy a rate of 3d. an acre on all land in the vermin board district. At present the rate payable to the Crown is only 6d. an acre per annum, and for the first five years the settler gets the land rent free.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott: It is 3d. in the pound on the unimproved value.

Mr. JOHNSTON: Where the land is worth £1 per acre. As most of the land is only valued at 10s. per acre the settler's vermin rate would be out of all proportion to the purchase money he is paying for the land. I move an amendment—

"That in Subsection 2, line 3, after the word 'of' the word 'half' be inserted."

Mr. MALEY: A roads board rate is based on a maximum of 3d. and a minimum of one penny. A vermin board may not require more than the sixteenth of a penny of the sum which may be raised by a roads board.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I suggest that the amendment should read to the effect that the maximum amount shall not exceed 1½d. on the unimproved value. We only want the minimum amount that will enable the authorities to make the work effectual. In my opinion the amendment will force the vermin board to strike a rate of not less than one penny.

Hon. T. WALKER: This is already provided by the amendment in a much clearer way than is suggested by the Honorary Minister.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We are largely making a guess at the amount that will be required to carry out this work. If the maximum that can be raised is reduced to 1½d. it may be found that this is not sufficient, and that the State as a whole will have to make up the difference.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott: We worked out the amount, in the case of six roads boards at one farthing, which would be an ample rate.

Hon. P. Collier: Did the committee ascertain the total amount raised by the whole of the roads boards?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It was £92,000 last year for all the roads boards.

Hon. P. COLLIER: A considerable portion of that was raised by roads boards which will not be affected by the Bill.

Mr. Thomson: That can be cut down by half.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The rates were principally at one penny.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is difficult to make an estimate of what the cost will be. Allowing for the amount which will be provided by the Government, if we limit the rate to 1½d., will sufficient money be raised to enable the boards to cope with the cost?

Mr. Thomson: I think there will be ample.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Perhaps the best thin would be to accept the amendment, and after 12 months' experience of the Act we shall be in a position to judge how the provision works.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I accept the amendment. We worked out what rate would be required in a large district, and first came to the conclusion that a halfpenny would be sufficient, and then that one-farthing would suffice. Therefore 1½d. should be ample.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. MALEY: I move an amendment—

"That the following be added to stand as Subclause 5:—'Provided always that when any owner has enclosed his land within a sufficient fence within the meaning of this section, he shall be exempt from rating.'"

Fencing is the only efficient method of dealing with the rabbit pest, and we should encourage the use of that method. The rabbits which are within a fenced holding cannot be a danger to the surrounding landholders.

Mr. HARRISON: There is a good deal to be said in favour of the amendment. Some landholders were far-sighted enough to fence in their areas at an early date.

Hon. P. Collier: You might add, "and wealthy enough."

Mr. HARRISON: Fencing is the best method for ridding oneself of the rabbit permanently.

Mr. THOMSON: A similar provision to this was in the original draft Bill, but the Committee thought its deletion desirable. If this measure dealt with rabbits only, the amendment might be considered; but the Bill deals with all vermin. Under the amendment, the man of wealth, able to fence, would be exempt, while the poor man, unable to fence, would have to pay. How, under the amendment, would the roads be kept clear of vermin?

Mr. LUTHEY: I support the amendment, which is only fair. Later, when the sparrows arrive, we shall probably have to reconsider this exemption.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: The Committee should consider this matter very carefully. I do not like the amendment at all. This is a vermin Bill, and not merely a rabbit Bill. In the South-West dingoes are the trouble now, and not rabbits; and I have yet to learn that any fence is effective in keeping out dingoes.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 57, 58—agreed to.

Clause 59—Recovery of rates:

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I move an amendment—

"That Subclauses 2 and 3 be struck out."

These subclauses refer to the signing of distress warrants by the chairman of a vermin board—a very bad principle, and obnoxious to many chairmen. Why should a chairman be called on to do such work? Rates ought to be treated as an ordinary debt.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: But you cannot propose anyone else in the place of the chairman.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Every board has a secretary or a clerk, and that officer could take proceedings in the courts. I have known cases where people were very hardly dealt with for non-payment of rates, being actually sold up, whereas a court would have allowed time for payment by instalments.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: No doubt the hon. member, out of the kindness of his heart, wishes to do all he can to prevent anyone being sold up. At the same time I would point out that if people can pay and will not pay they should be made to pay. If we have to force these people into court, what will it cost? It is much better to leave the clause as it is. There will be no fear of a chairman rushing in to sign distress warrants and sell up people because they have not paid.

Hon. T. WALKER: This is a feudal law which dates back to the dark ages. It is the most heartless way of recovering a debt known to society.

Mr. THOMSON: I hope the Committee will not delete the subclauses because it is in the interests of the people themselves that they should remain. I have been a member of a roads board for a number of years, and we have never had occasion to summon a man for not paying rates. We have said at times "We will take what you can give us." In some instances we have given men employment in clearing or road-making so as to enable them to work off their rates. Who is going to be more sympathetic to the men owing money than fellow farmers? I would rather leave my case to be judged by members of a roads board than by a court. In the interests of the farmers themselves it is better that these matters should be dealt with in the way proposed in the Bill.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I can believe, as the member for Katanning states, that the members of roads boards give sympathetic consideration to people with regard to the payment of rates, but his argument is beside the point. He would prefer to leave these people in the hands of the board. The amendment however does not take them out of the hands of the board. We merely propose to alter the process of recovery. There is no reason why the board should be less sympathetic by the suggested method than under the existing method. As the member for Kanowna stated, the proposal in the Bill is a survival of a bygone age. There should not be any difference between the treatment over a debt of this kind and an ordinary debt. The Commissioner of Taxation has not power to levy distress upon me if I refuse to pay my income tax. He has to take me to court. And so it is if I refuse to pay my water rates. Therefore, under the Bill before us, no action should be taken to recover a debt except by the method adopted in every case. What reasonable objection can there be to the amendment?

The Attorney General: The cost. It will be necessary to serve a summons on a man who may be many miles away, and then there will be a charge of 10s. mileage.

Hon. P. COLLIER: At any rate there should not be any need to employ lawyers. The member for Katanning stated that he did not know of a case where distress had been levied. That was so, but it was because people knew that there was a liability from which there was no escape. The time is ripe for us to wipe out this old method, which does not obtain in regard to any other debts which persons may be called upon to pay.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result—

Ayes	9
Noes	18

Majority against	...	9
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AYES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Troy
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Walker
Mr. Collier	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Pickering	Mr. Lutey
Mr. Roche	(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Nairn
Mr. Brown	Mr. H. Robinson
Mr. Durack	Mr. R. T. Robinson
Mr. George	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Thomson
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Johnston	Mr. Hardwick
Mr. Lefroy	(Teller.)
Mr. Maley	

Amendment thus negatived.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Subclause 3 shows the anxiety of the framers of the Bill that a distress warrant, having issued, should be immediately put into effect to the last extreme. The subclause provides for the sale of any goods seized, without waiting for the taking out of an auctioneer's license.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am disposed to move as an amendment that in line 2 the word "may" should be struck out and "shall not" inserted in lieu. We do not want every Tom, Dick and Harry in the local authority acting as an amateur auctioneer in a distressed household. Again, under the provision the Government would be losing the revenue represented by the taking out of auctioneer's licenses.

The Attorney General: Why not move to strike out the subclause?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I do not like it myself.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I move an amendment—"That subclause 3 be struck out."

Amendment put and passed; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clauses 60 to 70—agreed to.

Clause 71—Powers of Minister and boards as to fencing:

Mr. PICKERING: What fences are likely to be erected under this provision?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: Any fences that, in the opinion of the officers administering the Act, may be necessary. For instance, it is very desirable that when times are again normal we should erect a fence east and west to connect the two north-south fences.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 72—agreed to.

Clause 73—Power to affix wire netting, etc., to fences:

Hon. T. WALKER: Under this clause the board can come along to a farmer's holding and affix wire netting to his fence; and immediately that is done the occupier of the holding becomes liable for the interest on the capital cost of the material and the work of affixing it. The settler is called upon to pay interest on the capital cost of the fence from the moment that the wire netting is erected. Why should a man on the outskirts be obliged to shoulder this burden for the protection of his neighbours in the inner side from the direction in which the rabbits are coming? It is provided that the debt in question shall be on the land itself for all time, so that it passes from owner to owner.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott: The clause stands by itself and provides for the fixing of wire netting.

Hon. T. WALKER: For nothing?

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott: Certainly.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Can you put your finger on the place in Clause 74 where it says that wire netting has to be paid for?

Hon. T. WALKER: I admit that this is not mentioned in the clause that we are dealing with. This says that the Minister or the board may cause to be affixed wire netting. At whose cost will this be done?

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott: At the cost of the board.

Hon. T. WALKER: The Honorary Minister is only guessing at that. I maintain that my contention is the right one.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: The member for Kanowna is wrong. Clause 73 simply gives the board or the Minister power to affix wire netting to an existing fence. The fence may be an ordinary sheep fence, or may be a seven-wire fence. There is no intention of charging the owner of the fence with the extra cost of putting on the wire netting. The two succeeding clauses have nothing to do with Clause 73. They were inserted at the express desire of the Chief Inspector of Rabbits, to deal with blocks immediately adjacent to the existing rabbit-proof fences.

Hon. T. Walker: Will you agree to add to the clause the words, "at the sole cost of the Minister or the board"?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I cannot accept such an amendment. Under it, the board would not be safeguarded.

Hon. T. WALKER: To test the matter, I move an amendment—

"That the words 'at the sole cost of the Minister or the board' be added to the clause."

Mr. MALEY: I support the amendment. All those clauses relating to fences, 17 or 18 of them, are going to frighten the very life out of the farmer. We can trust the local authorities to work out their own salvation in this respect.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I shall accept the amendment, if only to prove the sincerity of my reading of Clause 73. The amendment is unnecessary, but if the member for Kanowna wants it I do not object.

Amendment put and passed; the clause as amended, agreed to.

Clause 74—Contributions by owners:

Hon. T. WALKER: I hope the Minister will make this clause consistent with what precedes. Subclause 1 means, practically, that the Government are to erect fences at the cost of holders. The moment a Government or a board fence is

of use to a holder, he shall pay the cost, though that very fence may be safeguarding hundreds of settlers against the inroads of rabbits.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott: Only when the holder is fenced on three sides already, and makes use of the other fence in order to be fenced on four sides. He cannot be rated until he is fenced in all round.

Hon. T. WALKER: But the fact remains that the Government or board fence is for the benefit of the whole district.

Mr. HARRISON: I think Clause 73 has a bearing on Clause 74.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott: None whatever.

Mr. HARRISON: The argument of the member for Kanowna is that the fencing of country acts as a check to prevent the rabbits from going in that direction. The Agricultural Royal Commission suggested, as one of the best means of checking the rabbits, to run fences east and west from the existing Government fences. If these additional fences were erected, the farmers on the line of them would have to pay a fourth of the cost, although the fences would be the protection of all the settlers. It seems to me that Clause 74, in conjunction with Clause 73, is intended to provide means by which settlers may be forced to assist in the fencing of blocks between roads. Is that the meaning of the clause? If so, they have to pay the full cost of the fence, but they are allowed to pay in annual instalments. There is this as against the argument of the member for Kanowna. They are making a rabbit-proof fence through all the holdings, and that will be a good business proposition.

Mr. LUTEY: There should be some definition of what is a barrier fence.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: We all know that as soon as a man fences three side of his holding, the fourth side being already fenced by a neighbour, half the cost of the neighbour's fence has to be paid for. Surely it is only right, if a holder makes use of the fence as his boundary, that he should pay. At the present time we have Nos. 1 and 2 fences, and if a man abuts on either of those fences and uses either of them as one of his boundary fences, or a section of it, he must pay, and rightly so.

Mr. MALEY: Is this payment of interest to go on interminably, or can a farmer purchase his portion of the fence?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I take it if the board is willing and the owners is desirous, a person could purchase his portion of the fence, but I do not think any holder is likely to want to buy. It is better for him to pay a small interest on a portion of the fence which he makes use of, and which the Minister or the board have to keep in perpetual repair.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Who keeps the fence in repair now?

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott: The Minister.

Mr. Pickering: There should be a limitation of the period for paying interest.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: It seems ridiculous that, along this main fence, by paying a certain rate per annum farmers are going to buy a certain section of the fence.

Mr. Mahey: Nothing of the kind.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The rabbit-proof fence is kept in repair by the State, and immediately the Bill is passed farmers have to pay interest and keep up this fence. The Government intend to get rid of their responsibility. It does not seem fair that the adjoining holder should pay interest when the whole of the settlers in a district benefit.

Would a farmer adjoining the fence have to pay for the use of the fence on his boundary—pay interest on it?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: The board keeps it in repair.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: But the farmer has to pay for it.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: Yes; but instead of putting up a fence himself the farmer makes use of this.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: A farmer has only to pay interest; he has not to find the capital. I think it is a burden the farmer cannot afford.

Mr. HARRISON: The fences have been erected for a number of years, and the farmers along the fence are likely to be mulcted in the cost of it. It is not only their particular holdings that are getting the benefit. Does it mean that anyone who links on has to pay? I did not think a farmer could link on. Although there are farmers on either side of the fence, only one farmer will have to pay interest on the fence on his boundary.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: On one side a farmer can adjoin; that is the western side, but not on the other.

Mr. HARRISON: Then the person on the western side has to bear the brunt of the interest on the capital cost, although the fence has been up for a number of years, and it has been stated to-day that the fence would not pay for removal.

Mr. TROY: Hon. members have not much to complain about, as the settler who links up with the fence has to pay interest on the capital cost. He has the advantage that one portion of his selection is already fenced. Surely a man who uses the rabbit-proof fence as part of the boundary of his property should pay something. Under present conditions too, a man who has the opportunity of using the rabbit proof fence is in a much better position than anyone else. The Bill, however, does not compel a settler to join up with the rabbit-proof fence; if he does join that fence, he does so for his own convenience. On the Murchison quite a number of station holders are using the rabbit proof fence as a boundary fence and they are very glad to pay for doing so. I do not think any injustice at all will be done.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister): There are 400 miles of this fence running through my electorate, and I can bear out what the member for Mt. Magnet stated, that though the pastoralists are not worried by the rabbits, they are glad of the opportunity to link up with the fence and to pay for the advantage of doing so.

Mr. LUTEY: I think we ought to define what is a barrier fence, otherwise there is bound to be trouble.

Mr. HARRISON: Will the Minister explain whether there is any provision in the Bill whereby those on the inside and who do not touch any of the boundary fences will have to pay a moiety? If there are a dozen or more farms to be fenced in, the man in the centre gets the benefit and does not contribute.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: Yes, he does, under Section 76.

Mr. MALEY: I move an amendment—

"That in Subclause 3 the words 'an annual sum equal to interest at the prescribed rate per annum on' be struck out."

The subclause will then read—

If any fence belonging to the owner of any holding is, after not less than seven days' notice to the owner, altered, repaired, improved, or renewed by the Minister or a board, such owner

shall become liable to pay to the Minister or the board the cost of such alteration, repair, improvement or renewal.

Hon. members will see that the amendment explains itself. If we let the subclause stand as it appears in the Bill, payment becomes indeterminate.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: The reason for the subclause as it appears in the Bill is to give the small man a chance; he will not have to pay the full amount at once. The payment can be spread over a period.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I suggest that, instead of those words being deleted, an addition be made providing for the payment of the total cost or, alternatively, of the annual interest.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: This is similar to a provision in the Water and Sewerage Act, under which a large number of property owners elected to pay interest on the cost of their sewerage connections. In this case also, no doubt, many people will prefer to pay interest on the cost of the work rather than to pay that cost. I agree that it would be better to make it alternative.

Mr. TROY: I hope the hon. member will not persist with his amendment. I agree that it would be wrong to impose an indeterminate payment without alternative. The question of whether the holder pays the whole cost or pays interest on that cost, should be discretionary.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I think I know what the mover of the amendment has in mind, and if he will withdraw the amendment, I will undertake to have a suitable amendment properly drafted.

Mr. MALEY: I will withdraw the amendment. Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I move an amendment—

"That the following be added to stand as Subclause 4:—(4.) For the purposes of this section an owner shall be deemed to so make use of a fence as aforesaid if he receives the benefit thereof, or of any part thereof, as a protection to his holding or any part thereof against vermin."

I have previously explained the amendment. Where three owners abut on the fence, A and C link up and have to pay. B, who is in the middle, does not link up. He has all the advantages, yet he pays nothing. The amendment provides that B shall pay the same as A and C.

Mr. TROY: I have followed the illustration given by the Minister. Let us take it a little farther. D and E lie behind A, B, and C, and although not abutting on the fence receive all the advantages and are protected by the fence from the incursion of vermin. I think D and E ought to pay some proportion of the cost of the fence in consideration of the advantages they are receiving; yet they ought not to be called upon to pay quite as much as A, B, and C, who not only enjoy the protection of the fence but are able to use it as a boundary fence. I will support the amendment.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: That would be a question for the department to determine.

Amendment put and passed; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 75—Enforcement of contribution:

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I move an amendment—

"That in line 2 of Subclause 3 the words 'together with one-tenth more by way of penalty' be struck out."

The provision represents too high a penalty.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I have no objection to the amendment.

Amendment put and passed; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 76—Contribution to vermin and rabbit-proof fences by adjoining owners:

Mr. JOHNSTON: I move an amendment—

"That at the end of Paragraph (c) of Sub-clause 4 the words 'but shall not exceed one-half the actual cost of the fence' be added."

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I see no objection to the amendment.

Hon. P. COLLIER: In my opinion that which is sought by the hon. member is already provided for.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: That fixes the amendment at half the value of the fence, but the other paragraph speaks of the value at the date when the notice of demand was given.

Mr. JOHNSTON: It is only when a man joins on with the fence that the demand can be made, although his fence may have been built five years before.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 77 to 80—agreed to.

Clause 81—Power to require water supplies to be fenced in vermin infested districts:

Hon. T. WALKER: How is the Honorary Minister going to provide for this, and how is the necessary rabbit-proof netting to be obtained at the present time? Can we be sure that a supply within the purchasing power of those who have to use it can be obtained?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I admit that we cannot obtain it at present, but we are anticipating the time when we shall be able to get it at a reasonable cost.

Hon. T. Walker: This is compulsory.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: Yes, but no board would attempt to enforce the clause because the Minister would step in. The Minister himself cannot secure enough wire netting to fence in the water for which he is responsible.

Hon. T. Walker: Cannot something be inserted to make it incumbent on the Government to give notice to the settler when the time comes?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: It has to be done by proclamation, and no proclamation would be issued until the wire netting was at hand.

Hon. T. WALKER: The proclamation simply declares that a certain district is vermin infested.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott: It also sets out the time.

Hon. T. WALKER: The proclamation may be necessary before it is absolutely incumbent upon the boards to fence, or before wire netting is available. I move an amendment—

"That the following further proviso be added to Subclause 1: 'Provided also that the provisions for compulsory fencing of water supplies shall not be enforced until and unless the holders have been notified that the Government or a board is prepared to supply the wire-netting.'"

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: The amendment is unnecessary, because of the words in the subclause "within the time specified." When a district is declared a vermin infested district by proclamation, the proclamation can specify the time; and it can read that the time shall be when wire-netting is available.

Hon. T. WALKER: There are two elements of administration. The Minister makes proclamation, but the board can insist upon fencing.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott: The board cannot. The Governor may.

Hon. T. WALKER: But the board also has power to order at any time the erection of vermin proof fencing.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I intend to support the amendment. We should have a proviso in the Bill such as the hon. member has moved because it will afford the necessary safeguard.

Amendment put and passed; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 82—agreed to.

Clause 83—Supply of wire netting by Minister or board:

Mr. JOHNSTON: Subclause 2 provides—"Such mortgage shall be a first charge upon the land, in priority to every other then existing or future charge and incumbrance affecting the same, except rates and taxes." That naturally affects Agricultural Bank loans. I am sure the Attorney General will remember the active part he took in this Chamber in opposing a somewhat similar provision proposed by the late Government in regard to the Industries Assistance Board. It was pointed out that we would not be able to get assistance from the financial institutions if they ran the risk of having their first charge on the land taken from them. The districts where rabbits are most prevalent contain a great deal of the best land in Western Australia not yet improved. I move an amendment—

"That the following proviso be added to Subclause 2—'Provided that such advances shall only be made when the existing mortgagees of the holding have given their consent in writing.'"

Parliament adopted a similar provision in regard to advances under the Industries Assistance Board. The advances could only be made to take priority provided the existing mortgagees gave their consent in writing. I urge the Minister to adopt this provision.

[Hon. G. Taylor took the Chair.]

Hon. T. WALKER: I take it that the amendment will make the advances for the purpose of procuring the very necessary wire netting dependent upon the consent of the existing mortgagees.

Mr. Johnston: Unless you do that, you will not get any advances.

Hon. T. WALKER: The clause provides that advances shall be a first claim upon the land. It is incumbent that we should have wire. I do not know that we are helping to get the wire by fixing the order in which the security shall stand.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Progress reported.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

The PREMIER (Hon. H. B. Lefroy—Moore) [11.2]: I move—

"That the House at its rising, adjourn till 4.30 p.m. on Tuesday."

We had thought to adjourn till Wednesday, but if we were to do that it might result in lengthening the session until the following week. I am hopeful that if certain measures come forward from the Council in time we shall be able to finish our labours next week. We have the Vermin Bill still before us, and we hope to get further business from another place on Tuesday.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 11.3 p.m.