

would like members to take this into consideration, that one of the main motives of the Bill is the protection of women and children. That this is an honourable motive I do not think any member will be bold enough to deny, and I think it goes without saying. I would like hon. members to weigh these considerations, and even if they leave the sentimental aspect of the Bill altogether, and if they come down to grounds of expediency as many hon. members do, I would ask them to accept in the Bill the least drastic form of factory legislation that is existent so far as we can ascertain, rather than perhaps in years to come accept a Bill that is more drastic.

SIR E. H. WITTENOOM: Will the Colonial Secretary explain exactly what a factory is? Does it apply to hotels or to mercantile houses?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: You will find that in the interpretation clause, which says:—

Building, premises, or place in or in connection with which two or more persons, including the occupier, are engaged in working directly or indirectly at any handicraft, or in preparing, working at, dealing with, or manufacturing articles for or in connection with any trade, or for sale, including every laundry.

I do not think this will apply to hotels unless their occupiers are engaged in the manufacture of liquor.

SIR E. H. WITTENOOM: They are engaged in the manufacture of food.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: They are only engaged in the preparation of food for consumption.

SIR E. H. WITTENOOM: Would it apply to mercantile houses?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not think so; they are not engaged in manufacture.

SIR E. H. WITTENOOM: They are engaged in manufacturing certain articles for sale.

THE PRESIDENT: I think the proper time to discuss this is in Committee. It is irregular to do so now.

SIR E. H. WITTENOOM: I submit that the Bill may not pass the second reading if we do not get these explanations.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: It is not usual to ask questions which should come up in Committee.

SIR E. H. WITTENOOM: The Bill may not go into Committee.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I hope the House will be reasonable enough to allow the Bill to go into Committee.

SIR E. H. WITTENOOM: That is why we want explanations; for we want to get the Bill into Committee.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: If the hon. member would have only given me notice of these questions I would have got legal opinion.

THE PRESIDENT: This discussion is out of order at this stage.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I beg your pardon; but the hon. member will see in Subclause 3 of the interpretation clause that certain places are exempted. I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by HON. G. RANDELL, debate adjourned until the next Wednesday.

#### BOULDER TRAMWAYS BILL.

Received from the Legislative Assembly, and read a first time.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 5.33 o'clock, until the next Tuesday.

### Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 25th November, 1903.

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THE DEPUTY SPEAKER took the Chair at 2.30 o'clock, p.m.

#### PRAYERS.

#### PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the MINISTER FOR LANDS: Breeding cows and store bullocks from East

Kimberley to be used for stocking the southern farms, Papers asked for by Mr. Pigott. Rabbit Department, Papers asked for by Mr. Thomas.

Ordered, to lie on the table.

#### LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by the MINISTER FOR MINES, leave of absence for one fortnight granted to Mr. Speaker (Sir James G. Lee-Steere), on the ground of illness.

#### BOULDER TRAMWAYS BILL.

##### IN COMMITTEE.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

Standing Orders suspended; the Bill read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

#### KATANNING ELECTRIC LIGHTING AND POWER BILL (PRIVATE).

##### SECOND READING.

On motion by Mr. FOULKES, Bill read a second time.

##### IN COMMITTEE.

MR. ILLINGWORTH in the Chair; MR. FOULKES in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Before passing the Bill through Committee, we should have the report of the select committee.

MR. FOULKES: It was a matter of regret to him that no copies of the select committee's report had been circulated. He was told a few minutes ago that the report was expected every minute, but it had not arrived. That being so, he was prepared for progress to be reported.

Progress reported, and leave given to sit again.

#### KALGOORLIE TRAMWAYS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

##### SECOND READING.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. C. H. Rason): Few words are necessary in moving the second reading of this Bill, to authorise the duplication of the existing tramway line from the intersection of Wilson street to the intersection of Lionel street, thence along Lionel Street to the intersection of Macdonald Street, thence along Macdonald Street

across Charles Street to the boundary of the racecourse. A provisional order was not granted until the matter had been thoroughly inquired into by the responsible engineers of the department, and I can assure the House everything is in perfect order. The local authorities are quite in accordance with this Bill, and have every desire that it shall pass into law as soon as possible. The safety of the public is provided for in every possible way, and I am assured there is no objection from any public body or private persons to the powers sought being given. I have much pleasure therefore in moving the second reading.

MR. W. D. JOHNSON (Kalgoorlie): I would like to assure the House that this matter has been gone into by the Kalgoorlie local authorities, who have decided that it will be advantageous to the town and to the people generally to give to the Tramway Company power to lift portions of lines already laid and not used, and to place them in positions where they will be used.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

##### IN COMMITTEE.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, and reported without amendment.

#### MOTION—WANT OF CONFIDENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT.

##### SECOND DAY.

Debate resumed from the previous sitting.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. J. M. Hopkins): I rise with no feelings of anxiety to answer the criticisms which have fallen from the hon. gentleman who leads the Opposition. My thanks are due to the Premier and to my colleagues in that I, the junior member of the Ministry, am given the earliest opportunity of replying to that which we were led to believe was to be a violent denunciation of the wrongs and maladministration of the present Government. While offering to the leader of the Opposition my congratulations, I think at the same time that the motion he has launched augurs well that in the future he will have many opportunities of moving similar propositions. The combined forces of the hon. gentlemen opposite conceived in

their fancy a strong feeling of resentment against what they believed to be the maladministration of the present Government. After due notice and after a deal of time spent in the preparation, the avalanche has arrived; and I venture to say that, since the little bantling has come to light, even the hon. gentleman is beginning to feel it would have been better if he had never borne it. I would be pained to learn from the hon. gentleman that any administrative act of mine had been misdirected. After running the gauntlet of this Parliament up to the present period, and after having had to reorganise more than one branch of the department I have to administer, striking out in new lines and incurring in so doing a deal of opposition (which I had naturally to expect), and in view of the fact that the work of my department, the volume of business being transacted, have increased by something over 50 per cent., this is in itself a fair indication that some disturbing influence has been at work? Now the old plan of seniority in preference to capacity has had to go, and I undertake to say as a result that the civil service of the country is better pleased and that the State is better served. The hon. gentleman in moving his motion stated that his attack was based on administration, the first plank, he termed it, of this Government. Yes; I accept that. It is the first plank, and the last. To administration we have devoted attention, and I undertake to say without fear of contradiction that to-day it is frankly admitted by those persons, other than those whose political opinions influence them in giving decisions on questions of this kind, that the hard and arduous work performed in matters of administration by the Government reflects the greatest credit upon them. I believe on that question we do enjoy the confidence of the civil service, the confidence of the people and I also believe the confidence of Parliament. This Stock inquiry was the first point raised. This in itself was a very simple issue. I may draw hon. members' attention to it because a good deal has been said upon this subject in the Press and by the hon. gentleman who leads the Opposition. The large number of exhibits which have been laid on the table, and the bulk of papers showing the

evidence taken in that inquiry are such that I have no doubt any hon. member who felt inclined to inquire into the matter said, "That is rather much; I am inclined to pass it by." There were four counts in this inquiry. The first was that Forrest, Emanuel, & Co. obtained a permit by misrepresentation and with a deliberate intention to evade the law.

MR. PIGOTT: I never mentioned any of those charges.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am going to mention them, and I intend to deal with them a great deal more fully than the leader of the Opposition did. The second was that Forrest, Emanuel, & Co. obtained a permit to truck cattle to Kalgoolie, and sent them to Coolgardie with the object of evading inspection at the termination of the journey. The third was that Forrest, Emanuel, & Co. were constantly endeavouring to break the law. The last count was known as the hay count, where Forrest, Emanuel & Co., or rather their agent, undertook to prove that although the firm had been fined £25 with costs in the Fremantle Court, the offence was of common occurrence, that the removal of hay had not been prohibited, and that bias was displayed by the Chief Inspector of Stock. When I assumed control of the Department of Crown Lands this question had to be dealt with, and I understood from the leader of the Opposition yesterday that he indorsed the proposal made whereby Mr. Craig was going to nominate one member of the proposed board of inquiry, Forrest, Emanuel, & Co. one member of the board, and the Government the third member of the board. I understood the leader of the Opposition to say that such would be a fair board of inquiry. It was the method proposed in Dr. Jameson's letter, and I understood that the leader of the Opposition criticised the department and the Government because that method was not pursued.

MR. PIGOTT: Not at all.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: When I came into office I felt that the obligation was upon me to run the department, and not upon Dr. Jameson, who had gone to South Africa, and who in consequence would not be here to answer any attacks that might be made. I looked into the question and said: "If Mr. Craig gives us one nominee, will that

gentleman be an independent man? and if Forrest, Emanuel, & Co. gives us one nominee, will that gentleman be an independent man?" I saw that these nominees would be advocates, one for Mr. Craig and one for Forrest, Emanuel, & Co., and that the Government nominee would be the only independent man on the inquiry. The question comes to this, that two-thirds of the board which would meet with the satisfaction of the hon. gentleman would be biased before the inquiry started. It has long been admitted that the curse of Australian politics has been these boards of inquiry, these Royal Commissions or these white-washing institutions raked up by individual Ministers to avoid the responsibility of inquiring into the maladministration of their own departments.

MR. CONNOR: No; corrupt Ministries.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have not the slightest doubt that the member for East Kimberley is an authority on those questions. I have explained the reasons which at least actuated me in feeling that the board of inquiry suggested at the time that I came into office was not a board of inquiry which would command the respect of the public. As a result, although young in office I was prepared to accept the responsibility of inquiring into the inner workings, of inquiring into the operations of the various servants in that branch of my department, at the same time accepting the responsibility of voicing my sentiments on the point at issue. As a result of that I made an inquiry, and perhaps members on the Opposition side feel that they are at a disadvantage inasmuch as probably to-day I know more of the inner workings of the Stock Department of Western Australia than was ever known by any preceding Minister. More than that, I am armed with that conviction which knowledge and inquiry alone can bring, and I am perfectly satisfied that to those members of the House who give any consideration to my statement of the case, to the verdicts that have been arrived at and the evidence given, they will coincide with every word I have to say. If that inquiry had been conducted on the lines suggested by the leader of the Opposition, or if that inquiry had been conducted on the lines indicated in the House by the member

for East Kimberley the other night, there would have been ample and just reason for members taking exception to the methods that controlled the inquiry; but as their statements were so distinctly inaccurate, I have no option but to draw the attention of members to the statements made, with the object of directing the opinion of those members who take up the position of independent observers to what actually did take place. The leader of the Opposition quoted Mr. Morton Craig's letter of the 3rd of May, objecting to the inquiry being opened on Monday morning. As a matter of fact if Mr. Craig had not been a member of a racing club committee and attracted with a greater desire to attend to those duties than to be in his office, and had he been in his office on Saturday when the information arrived, he having left before closing time, it would not have been necessary for him to have been acquainted after his arrival on the racecourse, that the inquiry was going to take place. I am speaking of a personal conversation I had with him on the racecourse that afternoon.

MR. MORAN: That is impartiality!

THE MINISTER: According to the leader of the Opposition, Mr. Craig wanted time for his inquiry, and when he attended the opening sitting of the inquiry, held in the Executive Council Chamber on the following Monday, he was astonished to learn that the sitting was only called for the purpose of arranging preliminaries, and the inquiry was immediately adjourned to a date mutually agreed on. Let members bear that in mind, "it was adjourned to a date mutually agreed on," so that the necessary preliminaries were arrived at without any disadvantage to Mr. Craig. The member for East Kimberley announced that he was the first to sign the evidence; as a matter of fact he stated that having given his evidence—which I just take the opportunity of stating was practically of no value—members may read it for themselves—he stated what was simply the way he understood the position, but we wanted something more definite than that —

MR. CONNOR: The signatures are not there.

THE MINISTER: With all due respect to the member for East Kimberley, he will find that there are three signatures

to the evidence before the signature of the member for East Kimberley.

MR. CONNOR: It only stated one in the newspapers.

THE MINISTER: There were no signatures a few moments ago; now there is one.

MR. CONNOR: I said there was one on the front page.

THE MINISTER: There were three signatures to the evidence on the first three sides.

MR. CONNOR: I rise to a point of order. I stated the other night that on these papers there was only one signature to any evidence before my signature, and that was the signature of Mr. Weir, the Inspector for Stock. The first evidence taken was from Mr. Craig. I challenge the Minister to produce a signature to that evidence, except one can call a type-written signature a signature.

THE MINISTER: Is this a point of order?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is hardly a point of order. The hon. member will have an opportunity of speaking and explaining.

MR. CONNOR: The hon. member is absolutely misrepresenting.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. member will have an opportunity of correcting him.

THE MINISTER: I hardly think it is fair for a Minister to be interrupted on a point of order, more particularly the first Minister replying to a vote of no-confidence by a member of the House, and when the member stands up he finds that he has no point of order to submit. The member for East Kimberley stated distinctly in the House, and it is on the records, that no evidence would have been signed had it not been for the protest which he entered. I am bound to say that is absolutely inaccurate. The other statements made by the hon. gentleman I will deal with in detail a little later. It was asked that Mr. Bull, the shorthand writer to the Supreme Court, should attend the inquiry and take a shorthand note of the evidence. Days before the member for East Kimberley was in attendance on that inquiry, it was mutually agreed between all parties that everyone giving evidence should sign his name to it, and that arrangement was carried out, and as an

actual fact, if I remember rightly, the member for East Kimberley was leaving the room without having signed his evidence, and I recalled him from the door, which after all is rather a different statement from that made by the hon. member, who would have the House believe that no evidence would have been signed unless he had directed attention to it. In criminal cases the evidence is taken and every witness signs it; in this case the evidence was taken, and every witness signed it.

MR. CONNOR: That is not true.

THE MINISTER: The member for West Perth, the member for East Kimberley, and I think the leader of the Opposition were anxious to know why I denied to the witnesses the right of being sworn, and the answer is a very simple one. It should be known to these members that although I am a justice of the peace, I had not the power to swear witnesses in an inquiry of that kind. I do not doubt that the members know perfectly well I have not that power, and that the statement was made for the purpose of directing public attention to an inquiry which they wanted to use as a political lever. I held this inquiry. Let me say this: Mr. Isidore Emanuel, who represented Forrest, Emanuel, & Co. on the inquiry, I have never met in my lifetime other than on one occasion when I was introduced to him and his wife at the Tivoli Theatre, and I do not suppose I spoke half a dozen words to him. Mr. Morton Craig, on the other hand, has been for a very long time a personal friend of mine, and some few weeks before the inquiry was held and a few weeks before I became a Minister of the Crown, Mr. Craig paid a visit to Kalgoorlie, and I drove from my home at Boulder on Sunday morning to Kalgoorlie in order to show him some courtesy by driving him round the district before his train left in the afternoon.

MR. MORAN: What has that to do with it?

THE MINISTER: Showing that the statements made were intended to reflect on my honesty in having held this inquiry.

MR. PIGOTT: Oh, no. Such a thing was never intended.

THE MINISTER: The leader of the Opposition says Mr. Craig was denied a

fair inquiry : if he says he was denied a fair inquiry, he imputes that he had a dishonest one. The member for West Perth may say "hear hear," but I take the opportunity of saying that so far as the public and the country are concerned, they are satisfied the inquiry was a straight one, and they might not say the same thing if the inquiry had been conducted by the member for West Perth. There is one document which has not been published so far, and that is a report I made to my colleagues after holding that inquiry, and that report was the one which actuated Cabinet in approving of my proposals to reorganise the Stock Department, and carry out the proposals which I submitted. I have that report. It is a confidential one to Cabinet, but I purpose reading it in order that members may know clearly and distinctly the only and the actual reasons with which the Government were imbued when they indorsed the recommendations I made. In reporting to the Premier and my colleagues I said :—

At the outset of this inquiry the Chief Stock Inspector blamed Forrest, Emanuel, and Co. for loss of permit referred to in charge 2, which the evidence shows distinctly rests entirely with the Railway Department. He and Inspector Stevens throughout the inquiry have made much of certain bullocks going in the consignment referred to in charge 2, which were, in the opinion of Inspector Stevens, "wasters," and perhaps tuberculed. Inspector Stevens states that he wired Inspector Nathan, of Coolgardie, intimating that this particular consignment had gone to Kalgoorlie. No mention was then made by him of tuberculosis cattle, although he missed certain ones on the 3rd, the day after the consignment was despatched. No wild haste was displayed at this stage in asking the Railway Department to impound the stock until such time as a careful inspection could be made by the inspector on the goldfields. This procedure required several days to develop. The whole procedure of the Stock Department at Owen's Anchorage has thrown the regulations open to serious infringements. What a travesty to trot out the boggy "tuberculosis beef," and exercising no adequate check against its daily consumption! The regulations controlling the internal working of the yards are not posted in prominent positions—in fact they are not posted anywhere. The yards were as often open as locked—that is prior to this dispute—and stock, if condemned and cut out from a mob, were not placed under lock and key. Notices given by the inspector to stock dealers were verbal.

Against this verbal notice Forrest and

Emanuel entered a protest. In reporting to my colleagues, I said :—

I cannot conceive an inspector performing work of such importance being permitted to give such notices in any other way than that of which a careful record and a copy should be filed. When the cattle forming the consignment of September 2nd, now in dispute, were being trucked, the permit was issued; the consignment should not have been permitted to leave the Anchorage, unless the inspector issuing the permit was satisfied that they were healthy.

Inspector Weir admits having casually inspected them; the inference being that he at least was satisfied. The Chief Inspector ought in my opinion to know that an officer issuing a permit should be thoroughly satisfied as to the healthiness of the stock before such permit is issued. This is an obligation the neglect of which leaves no room for palliation. The custom, as a matter of fact, has been for Inspector Stevens to sign half a-dozen permits and leave them at the yards, to be filled in to suit the requirements of the various stock owners. No one cared whether the number of cattle in a permit had been altered. The Chief Inspector stated that such appeared to him a vital point; and still we find permits, numbers and all, filled in by owners after the inspector had signed them, and in the absence of the inspector. That was the condition of affairs at the time that I inquired into the Stock Department. It is said by the inspectors that carcasses have been stripped of tubercle growths from the kidneys to the brisket in order that such beef might be placed surreptitiously on the market. I know from my own personal knowledge that the inside of a carcase cannot be stripped in that way to avoid detection. Such a statement is altogether unworthy of men holding positions so responsible. The cattle coming from the East, where tuberculosis is more prevalent than in Western Australia, undergo no examination other than the casual examination when the cattle are landing. Now this disease is one, strange to say, that frequently only becomes apparent by *post mortem* examination. There was no control then—there is now since the Department has been reorganised—and there was no inspection over the yards of other persons who were importing stock from countries where tuberculosis is prevalent, more prevalent

than it is in this State, and who were slaughtering beyond the limits of the quarantine area at Fremantle. As a matter of fact, the question of tuberculosis in stock slaughtered for consumption is a matter for the Central Board of Health; and if I have done nothing else, I have transferred that matter to the Central Board of Health, who to-day have their own inspectors, and who are endeavouring to exercise complete control over all meat slaughtered for consumption within the metropolitan area :—

It is clear that hay and other material have gone in and out of the yards for years past, and no steps taken to check it. I cannot believe that the inspectors knew nothing of the practice. There is no doubt that prior to the dispute of September last the working at Owen's Anchorage was one of mutual trust, and generally speaking they were all on the very best of terms. Now with a chief inspector imbued with such misgivings against owners and dealers, I naturally expected to find every care exercised in the inspection of stock, and in the subsequent issue of permits. If the inspection made of the 150-head consignment to which I have referred is a criterion, it is manifest that the time devoted to writing minutes to Ministers, and formulating charges against stock dealers, would have been much better employed in supervising the work of the staff intrusted to carry out the work of the Stock Department.

[Interjection by Mr. PROORT.]

THE MINISTER: I may say that I cannot very well deal with my side of the question, and with that of the leader of the Opposition, simultaneously. As to this inquiry, I have nothing to hide. The whole merits of the inquiry are clear to me. I am armed so strong in conviction and in honesty that I invite every member to take these papers, the evidence given, the verdicts arrived at, and to judge the case on its merits; and I undertake to say that instead of criticising the Minister for Lands with respect to this inquiry, such members will say that a careful and a diligent inquiry has been made. My report to my colleagues continues :—

The permits are not numbered consecutively; and instead of a press copy or a carbon copy being retained of each permit issued, a questionable record—[I repeat that, a questionable record]—only is shown in the heel of the book, which in numerous instances is incomplete.

The heel of the book is in that bundle on

the table; and I invite members to inspect it for themselves.

There is no definite means of knowing from which heel a permit is taken. The same form of permit is in use to-day as when the chief inspector ordered that the depasturing on the Eastern Goldfields should be discontinued. Inspector Stevens stated, on folio 62 of charge No. 1: "I make it a rule to date permits." On 10 permits being produced, it was found that not one was dated; and although nine bore the signature of Inspector Stevens, he did not know who had filled them in.

That was the condition of the Stock Department as I found it.

He (Mr. Stevens) admitted—see folio 65 of charge No. 1—issuing permits for ticked cattle to go overland to Kunamalling, 20 miles from Coolgardie; and this after depasturing was discontinued, his defence being ignorance of that locality. It might just as well have been some place on the Murchison or the Gascoyne for that matter, for all the care that he took. It must be borne in mind that we have no experience to show that tick will not breed and thrive in that locality. Now the Chief Inspector of Stock, in reviewing charge 2, on folio 3 of his remarks states: "Inspector Stevens promised Watson [and Watson was the manager for Forrest, Emanuel, and Co.] to come to the anchorage if he (Watson) would ring Stevens up. Now on inquiry what do we find? That Stevens is not on the telephone; that he lives at Guildford, though the yards are at Owen's Anchorage; and that he always left the morning work to Inspector Weir, as the result of a mutual arrangement. Now the Chief Inspector of Stock has complained that he was forced by the Attorney General to prosecute Uhr for the removal of cattle from quarantine to Emu Lake, whereas he (Mr. Craig) desired to prosecute Forrest, Emanuel, & Co.

In my remarks to my colleagues I said that I could not be expected to give legal opinions; but in the case of Forrest, Emanuel, & Co. removing hay from the quarantine area without a permit, the Stock Department prosecuted Watson, the real and the actual offender, who was an agent for Forrest, Emanuel, & Co.; and this on the advice of the solicitors to the Stock Department at Fremantle. In the former case the department prosecuted Uhr, the agent of Forrest, Emanuel, & Co., for removing cattle from the quarantine without a permit, which to me at least appears a parallel case. Now if Forrest, Emanuel, & Co. were the rightful offenders on the second charge, they were necessarily the rightful offenders on the first charge. Well, this did not seem to dawn upon the Chief Inspector

of Stock at all. It seemed to me there was a wild desire to seize on Forrest, Emanuel, & Co. at all hazards, and with no regard to consequences; and my opinion is strengthened because on both charges the persons prosecuted were each fined—a conviction was secured. At Coolgardie Mr. Uhr, the agent, was fined; and at Fremantle Mr. Watson, the agent, was fined. Is not that an indication that in both instances the proper course was taken? Now the Chief Inspector states on folio 4 of his review of charge No. 2.—and I will have occasion to refer to that at greater length later on—that if Mr. Weir, the veterinary surgeon at Fremantle, had admitted to him in the first place, as he did in evidence, that there was a doubt, he (the Chief Inspector) would have let the matter drop. Well, surely a matter so serious as that covered in charge 2 required some farther withdrawal than simply letting the matter drop. It is remarkable that whilst all sorts of charges and allegations were made against Forrest, Emanuel, & Co. the inspectors at Owen's Anchorage assert in evidence that they found the firm and its representatives were fair and reasonable in all their transactions up to the time of this dispute. Now Inspector Nathan, a veterinary surgeon and stock inspector at Coolgardie, stated that he inspected the 150 consignment, and found them free from disease; that tick cattle have always had a three or four mile radius to graze over around the various gold-field centres; that there are no yards on the Eastern Goldfields to accommodate such mobs as were arriving at the time of this dispute; and that whilst the Stock Department assumed ignorance of tick cattle grazing on the fields, they were issuing permits for tick cattle for Matthew's yards at Kunanalling, which yards were 20 miles from the Coolgardie railway station. The chief inspector, continuing his review of charge No. 2, folio 4, stated "that no evidence on the missing permit should be taken unless the permit was produced and it could be shown who altered it." I do urge members—at least that section of the House which is imbued with a desire to know the truth in connection with this stock inquiry—to pay particular attention not only to the first assertion made

by Mr. Craig, that Forrest, Emanuel, and Co. could produce the permit if they wished to, but also to the second assertion, that no evidence should be taken on the missing permit unless the permit was produced. Now there is no evidence to show that this permit was altered after issue; and in view of its having been left signed in blank, it might have been filled in for any place desired by the representatives of Forrest, Emanuel, and Co., as indeed was the case with scores of other permits; hence there is no justification for the imputation made. If the Chief Inspector was anxious to learn the truth, I take it that every source of information and evidence would have been equally exhausted, instead of a point of that sort being relied on to secure a verdict in that inquiry. If Mr. Nathan has kept back the fact of ticked cattle depasturing, as alleged by the Chief Inspector, then the fact is established that they did depasture; but still the Chief Inspector tries to combat that fact, and refuses to accept the truth. The Chief Inspector stated (on folio 5) that he was staggered—I invite members to peruse this evidence—at the production of a letter read by Nathan, which contained a paragraph he (the Chief Inspector) had overlooked. This paragraph referred to ticked cattle depasturing, and was part of a letter addressed to the Chief Inspector, and found a place in a departmental file produced by the Chief Inspector of Stock himself. Continuing on folio 7, Mr. Craig speaks of the connivance of an officer of the department, Mr. Nathan, of Coolgardie. If that be true, why did Forrest, Emanuel, & Co. wish to avoid an officer who was in league with them? It is also remarkable that up to the time this report was written no recommendation was received from Mr. Craig for the dismissal of Mr. Nathan. On the 9th October, 1902, the Chief Inspector admitted that owners were justified in grazing ticked cattle, if the permit stated, say, only the word "Coolgardie." That is, if a permit was issued to Coolgardie, they had the right to depasture; but not so if a yard was specified. Since this trouble the yard is specified and underlined in red ink, but such was not the practice when the dispute arose. The Chief Inspector admitted on the same



date that the department could not insist on yarding stock when a yard was not specified in the permit. No yard was specified in the permit accompanying this consignment of 150 head sent from here on the 2nd. Forrest, Emanuel, & Co. complain that although they have shipped and handled more stock than all the other firms, up to the time of this dispute not one offence against the regulations had been proved against them. I caused a return to be prepared by Mr. Craig for my information, and that return showed these charges proved up to that period: Against Forrest, Emanuel & Co., nil; Kidman & Uhr, one, fined 1s.; Connor & Doherty, three, fined 1s. on each occasion. Every time they had the option. Subsequent to the time when the charges were formulated, Uhr, an agent of Forrest, Emanuel, & Co., was fined £5 for removing cattle to Emu Lake.

MR. CONNOR: Fifty-five shillings.

THE MINISTER: I suppose you got it back again, and that is why it is not recorded.

MR. CONNOR: No.

THE MINISTER: You got some of your fines back, if I remember aright, anyway. If this Government had been in power perhaps you would not have done so. Watson, an agent for Forrest, Emanuel, & Co., was fined £25 for removing hay from the quarantine yards. These prosecutions bear on the matter in dispute. In my report I say I am fully convinced that the charges were made without due consideration.

MR. PROCTOR: The magistrate who tried the case did not say that.

THE MINISTER: I am fully convinced that the charges were made without due consideration; that the offences, or alleged offences, were in each case exaggerated, and much hostility made apparent on the part of the Chief Inspector; the only alternative being that his knowledge of the inner workings of his own department, and the methods pursued by his officers, was of a very indifferent character.

MR. MORAN: You speak like an advocate and not a Judge.

THE MINISTER: When dealing with this inquiry, I dealt with it in a judicial capacity; but to-day I stand here to answer an imputation made against the

Government by the leader of the Opposition, on the ground that the inquiry was not a fair one. I submit this report, which never previously saw the light of day, and which bears upon this issue, and I am prepared to stand or fall by the consequences. If I go under, I shall not be the first who has done so in a good cause. Let me say that if the hon. gentlemen opposite ever assume a position of power in this country—perhaps that may be a remote contingency—and the time arrives for a similar inquiry, I hope that when they defend they will be able to do so with as clear a conscience as I have in defending my action relating to the inquiry into the Stock Department.

MR. MORAN: It is the method of the inquiry.

THE MINISTER: In my report I say it is remarkable that the Chief Inspector should be satisfied with the steaming process as a means for disinfecting trucks used for the conveyance of ticked cattle, until the evidence of Mr. Nathan proved to be rather distasteful. Every effort was then made to show how lax was the administration on the Eastern Goldfields. That was intended by the Chief Inspector to reflect on Nathan, a veterinary surgeon drawing a salary of £50 a year. It is evident to any unbiased man that Mr. Nathan could not inspect all stock arriving on the Eastern Goldfields, supervise the steaming of trucks, and discharge the various other duties devolving on the inspector for the miserable pittance of £50 per annum. The files clearly show that the Chief Inspector refused to recommend a proper salary to an officer to do those duties. The maladministration reflects not on Nathan so much as on the Stock Department and its official head. [Interjection by Mr. CONNOR.] The point is that the country at the present time is being run by this Government. When the member for East Kimberley can command a majority in this House to oust the present majority he can run it, but that time has not arrived yet.

MR. MORAN: And no one is to get justice.

THE MINISTER: That might have been true when the hon. member was in power. The report of Mr. White, a stock inspector from the goldfields, will be read with consternation by the people

of the State. His letter is supported by evidence and the production by him of a bottle containing live tick, nearly all of which are, according to the inspector, fecundated females. I will deal with those dangers a little later, and show the results of some of the experiments made by the Stock Department since I reorganised it. Although up to this period no similar experiments have been made, although tick cattle have been coming here for a number of years, the gravity of the situation is not appreciated by the Chief Inspector, in proof of which members can read his minute on Inspector White's report. The simple truth is that Western Australia might be devastated with tick distributed throughout the South-Western District owing to the monstrous negligence of the Stock Department; and this illustrates to my mind whether sincerity of purpose or perhaps prejudice guided the Chief Inspector in his recommendation to the late Minister—I commend this to the member for East Kimberley with his knowledge of tick and of the Eastern Goldfields—when he urged that certain ticked cattle of Forrest, Emanuel, & Co. should be returned to Fremantle as their presence on the goldfields was dangerous, and this in the light of experience extending over several years, all of which goes to prove that tick have not thrived in those districts. [Interjection by Mr. PIGOTT.] The hon. member can submit his side of the question, and when he does, I ask that he will do as I have done, quote the evidence, and to bear in mind—

Mr. PIGOTT: He recommended that they should go back, but not on account of tick.

THE MINISTER: I ask the hon. member not to take extracts to suit his own case, but to make a résumé of the whole inquiry with an unbiased mind, the same as I claim to have done; and on that point I invite all the criticism which members may choose to offer, although it may come perhaps when I have spoken and shall not have an opportunity of replying. When the leader of the Opposition formulated his charge against this Government he should have stood by it, instead of leaving it to others to take what I may term an assassin-like attitude to perhaps stab me in the back when I have no opportunity of replying

to them. Mr. White reported as follows.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: There were some who did not hear where that report you have been quoting was from.

THE MINISTER: This is my report to Cabinet, and this is the report which justifies the Government in taking the action they did; it is the report I formulated after due inquiry—an inquiry made by myself carefully and personally, and not founded on hearsay evidence, but from what I was able to gather from a clear and independent inquiry made by myself into the working of the Stock Department. Mr. White reported as follows:—

I called at the goods sheds, Coolgardie, at 7 a.m. on the morning of Monday, the 18th of May, 1903, and was told that I could get a truck, but that they would require it to be steamed.

An engine was therefore sent from Kalgoorlie, and six trucks—the numbers of which he gives, and they are in evidence there—were steamed in his presence, and, after steaming, truck No. 3199 was allotted to him to truck a camel to Burracoppin. In the presence of a witness, he examined the trucks, and stated that he could have filled a pint bottle with live ticks in an hour out of the three trucks after steaming. The ticks which he produced to me at the inquiry were alive, and looked none the worse for their immersion in steam. The truck, after unloading the camel, was taken on towards Northam, with live ticks on it. Mr. White continues:—

If inspected to-day, I venture to say that ticks would still be found alive in these trucks.

I want to say that a bottle containing these ticks is in my office, branded and sealed. As a matter of fact, it should have been on the table along with the other exhibits of the Stock Department; but I frankly admit it would be a rather unsightly thing, and for that reason I suppose it was overlooked at the moment, and did not come down. The bottle is up there, and if members wish to see it, I can have it brought down. Mr. White says:—

I think this instance should be sufficient to show that every facility offers for the distribution of tick throughout the farming districts of the Colony.

He then relates having seen clean dairy-bred quiet cattle placed in truck 3184 with tick-infested cattle, and railed from Coolgardie to Menzies. Reporting on these ticks, Mr. Malcolm, for the Chief Inspector, states that the ticks are nearly all fecundated females, and that the work of steaming is carried out by the Railway Department, at the expense of the owners. The Director of Agriculture, in sending it on to me, states:—

This is a serious matter, and does not look well for the present method of dealing with tick-infested cattle.

I go personally farther, and say that it does not look well for the Stock Department. That is the report I submitted to the Premier and to my colleagues in Cabinet when the reorganisation of the Stock Department was recommended. To the verdicts which were arrived at I think I have also the right to direct attention, and though perhaps in the course of the somewhat lengthy remarks I am occasioned to make it should happen I may weary more particularly those hon. members who have thought to scoff at this inquiry, I think I am justified in claiming the privilege, and at the same time asking for that fair consideration from members which any man is entitled to in a British possession when his reputation is attacked.

MR. MORAN: That is what Mr. Craig wants.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: And what Mr. Craig has had. I undertake to say he was dealt with a great deal more generously and with more consideration than he would have had if probably those hon. gentlemen on the other side had filled the position the present Government occupy. Charge No. 2 was that Forrest, Emanuel, & Co. obtained a permit to truck cattle to Kalgoorlie, and then sent them to Coolgardie with the object of evading inspection at the termination of the journey. My verdict was that if the permit had been produced the case would have been easily disposed of. Unfortunately the permit was lost by the Railway Department between Fremantle and Coolgardie. Although Mr. Craig said it could be produced by Forrest, Emanuel, & Co. the evidence clearly showed that it was lost by the Railway Department, and that Forrest, Emanuel, & Co. were in no

way to blame for the loss of the permit. The permit was issued to Forrest, Emanuel, & Co.'s representative, Mr. Watson, by Mr. Weir. Mr. Weir stated in his evidence that he might have made a mistake; he had not issued many permits of that kind; he recollected altering the destination on a permit, but he did not think it was the one in question; there was an element of doubt; the cattle for which the permit was issued were being trucked when he issued it; he casually inspected them; the permit was issued to Mr. Watson. I would ask members to bear this in mind. Mr. Watson handed it to Mr. Walsh, the railway porter in charge at Robb's Jetty, and both of them assert definitely that the destination was Coolgardie. Walsh handed it to Guard Corrie, who runs the train from Robb's Jetty to Fremantle. Corrie checked it, and stated that the permit was to Coolgardie.

MR. PRIOR: What did Mr. Weir say?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have given Mr. Weir's evidence that there was an element of doubt, and that he recollected issuing a permit, but did not think that it was the one in question. The permit went through the Fremantle goods office in the usual way. That it was for Coolgardie, and that the permit was for tick cattle, was proved by the fact that the steaming charges were entered up in the Fremantle goods office, which steaming charges could not have been charged except on the permit for ticked cattle. In this instance the fees were charged against a consignment of 150 head of cattle going to Coolgardie, which bears out clearly the evidence of Watson, Walsh (the porter), and Corrie (the guard), and of the goods officer, Mr. Evan Thomas, that the permit was lost *en route* to Coolgardie. Now I found in this case that the permit issued was signed by Inspector Stevens in blank, which fact I want members to bear in mind. The permit was signed in blank on the day prior to issue, and left at Robb's Jetty for Forrest, Emanuel, & Co. to fill in to suit themselves, the customary practice of the Stock Department at the period.

MR. JACOBY: Who signed it?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: It was signed by Inspector Stevens and left

there in accordance with established practice, signed in blank to suit Forrest, Emanuel, and Co. Mr. Watson rang up Mr. Weir, the veterinary surgeon to the department and Stock Inspector, by telephone the next morning, and on arrival at Robb's Jetty Mr. Weir filled in that permit, struck out Inspector Stevens' name at the bottom, signed his own name and issued the permit, Mr. Watson remarking at the time "I am sorry to bother you so early; I was not aware there was a signed permit left." I think it was a six o'clock consignment. Now I shall draw attention to the heel of the disputed permit. It is filled in with ink except as regards the numbers of the trucks, which are in pencil. In answer to my inquiry Inspector Stevens stated that he had written nothing in the heel of the permit book other than the numbers of the trucks. On careful examination of the heel of the permit book produced as exhibit J., the word "Coolgardie" was disclosed in Inspector Stevens' handwriting. This had escaped the notice of others, but was deciphered by myself under a strong light coming from the windows behind my chair. As a matter of fact, in my office there are two large windows behind where I sit, and had it not been for the fact that the blinds were up and that a strong light was displayed on the letter, the word "Coolgardie" so indistinctly written would not have been deciphered. Mr. Stevens was unable to satisfactorily explain it. Evidently an attempt had been made to erase the name Coolgardie. It is a fact that this man has been suffering from paralysis of the hand, and that his hand was in a shaky condition. He stated that he signed numerous permits, as the lights indicated, because frequently early in the morning his hands were so bad that he had difficulty in signing his name. I mention this to show that when a man of that description signs his name he does not do it with that ladylike touch that perhaps we would expect from the member for West Perth, but that he would sign it in such a way that a strong impression would be left. Now there was no evidence to prove that the permit had been altered after leaving the hands of Inspector Weir, and from the evidence of the method in vogue at that period I considered that subse-

quent alteration was not only remote but beyond credulity. I was fortified by the knowledge that the permit was signed the night previous by Inspector Stevens and left at the office in blank, to be filled in by Forrest, Emanuel, & Co.'s representative as he might think best. My reply to that charge was that it was not proved. If there is within the walls of this Assembly an hon. member who is willing to accept independent testimony as to the result of that finding, I invite him to peruse the evidence and to go through the facts I have recorded in arriving at that verdict, and to say clearly and distinctly whether that verdict was not a just one, founded on the evidence to be found on the table of this House. The next charge was, in the order in which they were inquired into, charge No. 1, that the Chief Inspector of Stock wrongfully charged Forrest, Emanuel, & Co. with obtaining a permit by misrepresentation and with deliberate intention to evade the law. The regulations under the Stock Diseases Act of 1895, gazetted on 27th September, 1901, provided in Regulation 4:—

Cattle may only be removed from Owen's Anchorage (Reserve 6,200) on the written permit of an inspector of stock, and such cattle shall be forwarded in trucks by rail to such places on the Eastern Goldfields as shall be specified in the permit, where they shall remain in quarantine until slaughtered. The trucks used for the carriage of this stock shall be disinfected by steam immediately after use.

Although for years tick cattle had gone to these Eastern Goldfields, and although I will prove before I have finished that tick will breed and that tick will transmit tick fever in these latitudes, the Chief Inspector of Stock was satisfied for years to allow these trucks to come back after steaming into our agricultural areas laden with female tick. In supporting the charge the Chief Inspector of Stock produced records to show that instructions were issued by him to the inspectors of the Stock Department ordering that no farther consignments of tick cattle should be depastured on the Eastern Goldfields. I know no reason for that order; but it was issued. Forrest, Emanuel, & Co. admitted in a subsequent letter that cattle were being trucked, and that they had gone to depasture and were not for immediate slaughter. The Chief Inspector of Stock claimed that if cattle were

trucked for other than immediate slaughter, permits were obtained by misrepresentation and with a deliberate intention to evade the law. In reply Forrest, Emanuel, & Co. set out that the consignment referred to covered 150 head of store cattle.

MR. MORAN: Say something exciting. You are drizzling too much.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: With all due respect to the hon. member, it may be a rather lengthy speech, but of necessity, for this is a lengthy question, and I am called upon to justify not only on my own account but on account of my colleagues the action I have taken. The speech I make to-day is not in my own justification so much as it is to support the integrity of my colleagues, whose personal interests I hold are paramount to mine. Forrest, Emanuel, & Co. in dealing with this question set out in reply very clearly that the consignment referred to covered 150 head of store cattle, that they were inspected by Mr. Weir, the veterinary surgeon of the Stock Department, before being despatched, in fact while they were being trucked, and that after this inspection a permit was issued by Mr. Weir; that the instructions to terminate depasturing were not conveyed to stock owners nor to Forrest, Emanuel, & Co.; that such instructions as issued to inspectors were only intended to comprise Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie, and that tick-infested cattle sent to the goldfields for years past had been depastured around various goldfields centres. I am a goldfields resident, at least I was before I became a Minister, and I am in a position to state that it was the rule to depasture tick-infested cattle around these goldfields.

MR. THOMAS: What about Nathan's wire on that subject?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Inspector Nathan's wire was very explicit. The Stock Department were, for example, in the habit of sending cattle to Kalgoorlie, and the Chief Inspector stated that Kalgoorlie meant the limits of the municipality. The truth is that, although they could only go for slaughter to that particular place, there was no slaughter-house within the limits of that municipality. The same applies to the consignments sent to Boulder. All the slaughter-houses were outside the

municipality; and such an imaginary restriction, which existed in the mind of the Chief Inspector only, on the face of it is untenable and absurd, because there is no place at which the stock could be slaughtered within the boundaries of those municipalities. I refer those members, and particularly the member for Mt. Magnet who is taking an interest in this question, to look at the evidence, and I ask him to recognise the truth of my statement that within the boundaries of Kalgoorlie and Boulder municipal districts at that period there was no slaughter-yard.

MR. WALLACE: I have looked into Mr. Nathan's telegram.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: The cattle were trucked to Kalgoorlie, that is the permit only specified Kalgoorlie; and as there were no slaughter-yards in the Kalgoorlie municipal boundaries, the holders of the cattle were entitled to some grazing rights, as had been in vogue for years. I know from my residence on the Eastern Goldfields that after the arrival of cattle on the fields the practice was that the poorer bullocks would be cut out of a mob and be depastured to improve their condition; and the present practice of consigning to a certain slaughter-yard was not then in vogue. I want to direct hon. members' attention to my interpretation of Regulation 4, which is that it enables a permit to be granted for the removal of cattle from the quarantine grounds at Owen's Anchorage to any place on the Eastern Goldfields specified in the permit; there to remain in quarantine until removed for immediate slaughter. I want to say that this opinion is indorsed by the Crown Solicitor. This had been overlooked by the Stock Department till the dispute arose in September last, when it was discovered that tick cattle were being depastured on the Eastern Goldfields; and it remained for this dispute to show how the business of the Stock Department was being conducted. My finding on this question was that there was no evidence to support the Chief Inspector's statement that a permit had been obtained by misrepresentation, or that there was a deliberate attempt to evade the law.

[Sitting suspended for 10 minutes.]

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (continuing): I have finished dealing with charges No. 1 and No. 2. The next charge is No. 3: "That Forrest, Emanuel & Co. were constantly endeavouring to break the law"—there was an addition to this:—"and consequently giving the Stock Department more trouble than all the other trading firms put together." The latter part I could not inquire into, as to the relative trouble of one firm and another; therefore the charge inquired into was as to "constantly endeavouring to break the law." This was divided into a series of subcharges, which appeared to be the only easy method of inquiry that would make it at all clear to members when the matter came before the House. The first charge that came forward was what is known as the "Kolya" case, which involved a question of law. Mr. Burt's opinion was that the department were wrong, and the Crown Solicitor's opinion was that Forrest, Emanuel, & Co. were wrong. No prosecution eventuated in this case, but shortly after this episode the regulations were amended, namely on the 25th May, 1902, and the last legal testimony on the file from the Crown Solicitor is dated 9th September, 1901, and reads as follows: "This matter having died from inanition, may now be laid to rest in peace, *non resurget*." That was the opinion of the Crown Solicitor, and I gave no ruling on it. The next charge was "That Forrest, Emanuel, and Co. gave the department a considerable amount of trouble relative to the scale of charges for Robb's Jetty yards." A scale of charges, stated by the Chief Inspector of Stock to be lower than those adopted in South Australia, was gazetted in 1898. In this case, Forrest, Emanuel, and Co. refused to pay the first account rendered to them for the use of the trucking-yards, urging that they were part of the railway system, and were for the free use of persons trucking or untrucking stock. The then Minister for Lands—not myself—agreed to rebate the charges made, since when no charges have been enforced against those persons using the yards. That deals with Sub-charge B; now we come to Sub-charge C, "That Forrest, Emanuel and Co. complained of the condition of the sheep-yards at Owen's Anchorage." Fancy a trading firm complaining of

the condition of the yards at Owen's Anchorage! It was stated by the Inspector of Stock that the condition of the yards was due in a manner to the heavy rains and the fact that Forrest, Emanuel, & Co. discharged from trucks 109 pigs, and allowed them to remain during one night, in a heavy rain, in the pens set apart for trucking sheep, and that Forrest, Emanuel, & Co. were to blame for the yards being in such a very unsatisfactory condition. The department eventually spent £50 in cleaning these yards. There is no doubt that the presence of stock of any description must have added to the bad condition of the yards. That is not disputed. Had the yards been paved as in other important cities, no such complaint would have arisen. I certainly considered the matter unworthy of being resurrected in connection with this inquiry. I am enumerating these matters although they are not of much importance, but they illustrate to the independent observer what absurd allegations were made by the Stock Department in connection with this inquiry. The next is Sub-charge D: "Considerable trouble has also been experienced with Forrest, Emanuel, & Co. in regard to the moored buoy at Owen's Anchorage, fixed for the purpose of aiding in the discharge of tick-infested cattle from vessels." I said, "I have been unable to get any harbour file bearing on this charge. I do not consider it of sufficient importance to delay the verdict on the other cases." We come next to Sub-charge E: "That Forrest, Emanuel, & Company's cattle were unshipped at such a rate from the steamship 'Moonta' that it was impossible for the few men provided with boats to control them, consequently the cattle got such a spread on whilst swimming in the sea that many were landed a long way south of the quarantine grounds at Owen's Anchorage." I do invite the attention of members to what I have to say on this. "The owners of the stock are, the Chief Inspector asserts, entirely to blame for their cattle landing so far south of the present quarantine ground. Had proper supervision been exercised, the stock could not have been landed other than at their proper landing place. My finding is as follows:—(1.) A person accustomed to

cattle can hardly realise that an owner would wilfully unload his stock at a rate calculated to cause difficulty in their swimming ashore. (2.) Bullocks landing after a long swim, many of which after the sea voyage may probably be in a weak condition, would naturally "charge" all and sundry. (3.) The contention of the Stock Department is in this instance novel, as most owners are in matters of this kind most conservative. (4.) The evidence and files produced are not sufficient to warrant my attaching blame to Forrest, Emanuel, & Company, who had 14 boatmen at work to aid in getting their cattle ashore at the spot set apart for landing. I appeal to those members who are not prejudiced to say whether these charges which I am enumerating are not paltry and insignificant. The next is Sub-charge F: "On the 6th June, 1902, Messrs. Forrest, Emanuel, & Company committed a breach of the Stock Diseases Act, 1895, by landing stock from the steamer Willyama, without a permit, and without inspection." This case was the subject of a prosecution in the Fremantle Court, and the case was dismissed with costs against the department. On the question of an appeal, Messrs. Moss & Barsden advised that as no point of law, but only the facts were in dispute, no appeal should be made. The Crown Solicitor concurred, and I did not feel justified in reviewing this verdict. Sub-charge G: "In March, 1901, Kidman and Uhr were fined 1s. at Kalgoorlie for removing cattle from Donkey Rocks to Urilla without a permit." Forrest, Emanuel, and Co. were not interested in nor connected with Kidman and Uhr at that period, and there is therefore no blame attachable to them. "In September, 1902 (Sub-charge H), Forrest, Emanuel and Co. committed a breach of the regulations by trucking quarantine cattle to a place other than that specified in the permit." That charge is answered in the finding on Charge No. 2. "In September, 1902 (Sub-charge I), Mr. Uhr, as agent for Forrest, Emanuel and Co., committed a breach of the regulations, by travelling stock permitted to be removed to Kalgoorlie for immediate slaughter to Emu Lake for the purpose of depasturing." It is admitted that Mr. Uhr, as agent for Forrest, Emanuel and

Co., did travel certain stock to Emu Lake; but he did so on his own responsibility, without the knowledge of Forrest, Emanuel and Co., and was fined for that offence in the sum of £5. "Setting forth (Sub-charge J) that Butcher and Uhr were in the practice of depasturing tick-infested cattle which were too poor for slaughter." This illustrates that ticked cattle were depastured in October, 1902, on the Eastern Goldfields. Forrest, Emanuel, and Co. do not deny it. They assert that it has been the custom for years, and should have been well known to the Stock Department. The communication quoted by the Chief Inspector of Stock from Mr. Tupper, land agent at Kalgoorlie, is only hearsay evidence; for his statements are made on information given him by other parties. Sub-charge K: "Forrest, Emanuel and Co. committed a breach of the Stock Diseases Act, 1895, by removing hay from Owen's Anchorage quarantine yards without a permit." This charge formed the subject of a prosecution of Price, an employee of Forrest, Emanuel and Co., who was fined £25 for the offence, which offence was proved against him. I note the fact that this case arose in March, 1903; whereas the charges laid against Forrest, Emanuel and Co. by the Chief Inspector of Stock were formulated in September, 1902; that is six months before. Sub-charge L: "That Forrest, Emanuel and Co. have given the Stock Department a considerable amount of trouble in regard to the condemnation of tuberculosis beef at the Owen's Anchorage abattoirs, the actions of their employees on one or two occasions showing an evident determination of evading the law." Now the file produced and the evidence taken on another case set out that Forrest, Emanuel and Co.'s representative, Watson, objected to the organs of a beast said to be diseased on the authority of Inspector Stevens—who, by the by, is not a qualified veterinary surgeon—being destroyed until he had an opportunity of seeing them; and that Watson had objected on one or two occasions to Stevens condemning such carcasses. The evidence on that charge was conflicting. In the absence of expert evidence by a qualified veterinary surgeon, I cannot say whether the carcasses condemned were tubercled or

otherwise. The only carcasses certified to by a veterinary surgeon as being tubercled were slaughtered by a Jewish butcher in Mr. Copley's slaughter-yards. Sub-charge M: "That the presence of disease in certain cattle which died at Ejerilla was not recorded, as required by the Stock Diseases Act, and that when Inspector White made inquiries he was abused by Mr. Uhr." In my finding I said: "There is no evidence to prove that the cattle referred to were diseased. As a matter of fact, in cases of this kind, a *post mortem* examination should be made by the inspector reporting the case, prior to making such allegations. Forrest, Emanuel and Co. were not the owners of the cattle referred to. These were the property of Mr. Uhr. It is evident that Mr. Uhr did resent the methods resorted to by Inspector White when making his inquiries." In fact, I think the evidence went clearly to show that those cattle had suffered from the results of the water turning brackish in the wells at which they were being watered, and there was absolutely not one tittle of evidence to show that the cattle were diseased. Sub-charge N: "That a permit was specially asked for by Mr. Watson, a representative of Forrest, Emanuel and Co., for certain cattle from the steamship 'Kolya,' contrary to the existing practice." I would ask members to note those words, "contrary to the existing practice." Now this dispute originated through the Stock Department issuing a wrong permit, which permit specified a slaughter-yard; whereas, being clean stock, such a limitation was irregular. On this permit steaming charges were made by the Railway Department, as they assumed it to be an infected consignment; and those steaming charges were subsequently rebated. Inspector Stevens admits that he was wrong in issuing this permit (see folio 5 of the evidence), and that he overlooked the regulations; that the fault was his. Forrest, Emanuel and Co. I found were not at fault. The trouble would not have arisen if the inspector had been careful to avoid the issue of a wrong permit. We come to Charge 4: "Forrest, Emanuel and Co. were, through an employee named Price, prosecuted under Section 20 of the Stock Diseases Act, 1895, and fined £25 with

costs." Forrest, Emanuel and Co. claimed that the offence was of common occurrence; that the removal of hay, as embodied in the charge, had not in the past been prohibited, nor was the Act in this respect strictly enforced; that bias was displayed by the Stock Department in pressing for a heavy penalty for an offence which, by custom and practice, had grown up and had not been accepted by those firms engaged in the quarantine area as being a breach of the Stock Diseases Act. My finding was: "There is no doubt hay has been removed from the quarantine yards during the past few years, openly and at all times; that no adequate care was exercised to prevent such removals; that the practice was due entirely to the loose methods obtaining; and that proper notice in writing to terminate should under these circumstances have been given. The course pursued in this prosecution, and the pleadings made for a heavy penalty, although perhaps indicative of bias to the defendants in the action, is not so manifest to the independent observer." Now I did not find for Forrest, Emanuel & Co., though this is one of the cases referred to by the leader of the Opposition in formulating his charge against the Government. That covers the inquiry into the Stock Department. I am perfectly satisfied that those members who are desirous of arriving at an honest conclusion will approve of my action, if not on hearing the statements I have made, then on a perusal of the papers which I took the first opportunity of laying on the table in order that members might arrive at an independent judgment. I do not need to say that in view of my personal acquaintance with Mr. Craig, I was somewhat pained at the findings I had to arrive at. Inspector Stevens was retired. It was stated by the member for East Kimberley (Mr. Connor) that Inspector Stevens was retired to make room for a friend of my own. That statement is incorrect. Mr. Stevens was retired, and no person was appointed in his place. But, as the result of my own personal recommendation, he was given an appointment under the Central Board of Health. I mention that to show how very unfair and unjust were the remarks of the member for East Kimberley.



**MR. WALLACE:** Is not Mr. Stevens now filling a more important position than he filled in your department?

**THE MINISTER:** His present position is that of inspector of meat. In every case where the owner of a carcass disputes the opinion expressed by Mr. Stevens, a veterinary surgeon from the Stock Department is placed at the disposal of both parties to act as a final arbiter. I am reminded that a select committee, consisting of Mr. Harper, Mr. Wallace, Mr. Butcher, and Mr. Pigott, reported on the 29th October, 1902, that "We are therefore of opinion that the regulations should not be relaxed, but rather be more strictly enforced, inasmuch as it appears that lax administration prevails both at Owen's Anchorage and on the Eastern Goldfields." I went into the stock question, and sheeted home to those responsible the blame attachable to them; and, as a result, I have been pilloried by the leader of the Opposition. He said he did not believe that Mr. Craig had a fair inquiry. As I stated previously, if the hon. member thought the inquiry was not fair, he must have thought it unfair; and if it was an unfair inquiry it was a distinctly dishonest inquiry. But I appeal to every independent member of the community to say whether it is reasonable to suppose that a young man like me—a young man with his life in front of him—would, almost on the day following his elevation to a position as a responsible Minister of the Crown, go into that inquiry with malice aforethought, prejudiced against one who prior to that time had been his personal friend. The leader of the Opposition wanted a certain file bearing on an independent report which I obtained.

**MR. PIGOTT:** I never said anything about a file.

**THE MINISTER:** I know you did not; but you did in the course of your remarks on my estimates; and I take it that to the remarks made on my estimates, only a few days ago, I have a right to reply now on this no-confidence motion. The reference is to a Mr. James, who styled himself a veterinary surgeon.

**MR. PIGOTT:** I never mentioned him.

**THE MINISTER:** You wrote to me for the file.

**MR. PIGOTT:** It has nothing to do with your estimates.

**THE MINISTER:** As a fact, that gentleman wished an engagement in my department, and I did not appoint him. I had an independent report from him, for which if I remember rightly I paid either three or six guineas; and I think when members read that report from a man with special veterinary training, from a man who had been an inspector of stock in Queensland, they will admit that it was at the time very valuable. It is a most interesting report; and its production shows that although there has been no formal resolution that such reports should be laid on the table, yet in order that members may not be at any disadvantage I laid the papers on the table, under no obligation but willingly and freely. I court the keenest scrutiny into every action I have taken in connection with my department. Now I find that in the past the Stock Department paid Mr. Malcolm £275 a year to do the clerical work. I find also that they paid Mr. Weir a large salary as a veterinary surgeon, and Mr. Craig a large salary as Chief Inspector of Stock. I do not suppose we could find one owner of a single cattle station, or even of a decent farm in the Eastern States, on which there was a respectable mob of cattle, who is not capable of inoculating cattle against pleuro; but inoculation was never witnessed, I believe, by the Chief Inspector of Stock, till Mr. Weir was called upon to inspect a team of working bullocks somewhere in the Geraldton district. Mr. Alex. Forrest suggested that they should be all destroyed. Mr. Weir said: "No; I will destroy two, and I will inoculate the rest." He did so, and saved them. What did Mr. Craig do? Mr. Malcolm did the clerical work; Mr. Weir did the veterinary surgeon's work, he did the inoculation and did everything; so I am at a loss to understand, from the time Mr. Craig filled the office of Chief Inspector of Stock, what in the name of goodness he really did do.

**MR. CONNOR:** He did good work in regard to scab.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS:** The hon. member may be also an authority on scab. Since the reorganisation of this department, we have no longer gone on as it were groping in the dark. Although

tick cattle had been arriving in this State for years past, no experiments had been made during that time, no reasonable and complete system or series of experiments had been made by the Chief Inspector of Stock. We were anxious, for example, to ascertain what effect tick fever would have on cattle in these latitudes. We were told by the member for East Kimberley and by several other members of this House, and we were also told by a vote of this House, that no harm would accrue from tick in these latitudes. Well, we put two steers, each two years old and locally bred, in with tick-infested cattle at Fremantle; and what has been the result? These two steers have developed tick fever.

MR. CONNOR: Who says so?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Veterinary Surgeon and the present Chief Inspector of Stock say such is the case. The temperature when first handed to me was, for one steer 103.2, and for the other steer 105. Since then the temperature has increased, one to 106.2. I am not an expert any more than is the member for East Kimberley, though our practical knowledge may be on a par. What practical knowledge I have of stock I obtained young, when I was capable of imbibing it. Redwater has not developed, and the period for its development in these cases will not be due for about seven days hence; but I want members to have this information, to illustrate to them that as the result of the reorganisation of the Stock Department experiments are being made, and I give to hon. members the results so far. The member for Roebourne (Dr. Hicks), who is a medical man and interested in the question, told me that he found the temperature of these two steers was as stated by our Acting Chief Inspector.

MR. CONNOR: Does he say it was tick fever?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: I cannot deal with all these aspects at once. The member for Roebourne has informed me that the temperature attributed to the cattle is exactly as described in the report. We come now to the question of pleuro, which has been engaging the attention of some members of this House. Pleuro is a disease which caused great devastation in the Eastern States some

25 years ago. To-day those who have cattle there inoculate them, and they have little difficulty in coping with the disease. The other morning a report was received that pleuro had broken out in a herd in this State. The Chief Inspector ordered one of the animals to be killed, and two contacts were inoculated. Ellis's cattle, referred to previously, and among which an outbreak of pleuro was said to have taken place, are reported to be doing well, as also are the other infected herds. Since then Mr. Shepherd, of South Fremantle, has had two of his cows ill. The Chief Inspector found one of them badly infected with pleuro, and one developing the disease. Both these were destroyed. The herd consisted of 25 head; there has been no outbreak since; and the opinion of the Chief Inspector is that with inoculation and every care being exercised, as we are doing at the present time, pleuro should be absolutely stamped out probably within six or eight weeks. The present Chief Inspector is Mr. Weir, who has filled the position of veterinary surgeon of the department for a long time. The question of swine fever has been engaging a good deal of attention, and outside the metropolitan district to Chidlow's Well, also south and east as far as Mundijong, Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie, and Kookynie; these being the only places where swine fever has developed. In the past, inoculation experiments have been made by various persons working on a scientific basis; but the results have not been very satisfactory. I am glad to say that Mr. Weir, without taking the temperatures, has made several inoculations, with some degree of success. He inoculated about 20 pigs, and all of these cases have gone on splendidly. He inoculated some pigs for Mr. Dixon, and two of them died, and Mr. Weir is of opinion that they were suffering before inoculation, and consequently the mortality is not to be wondered at. The number of pigs which have been inspected for swine fever totals 9,148, and they are confined within 230 piggeries. The total deaths reported have been 920 pigs; the Chief Inspector's opinion is that a large number of the deaths reported as due to swine fever are caused by lung trouble; and he assured me, in conversation to-day, that if only those

persons who have piggeries would take the precaution to house their pigs well, and so escape the lung trouble which has annually devastated the piggeries of this State, a great deal of the mortality among pigs would be avoided. He does not anticipate that swine fever will be much trouble in another six weeks' time. Hon. members may have seen in the Press the other day a statement that Mr. O'Grady denied that certain of his pigs had been quarantined. I asked Mr. Weir to report on this matter, and he says Mr. O'Grady has 115 pigs, that out of this number the deaths were three, and that the others have been isolated. I understand that to mean quarantined. I mention this in order to clear the minds of hon. members regarding what may have appeared to be a conflicting statement appearing in the Press. The member for East Kimberley (Mr. Connor), in criticising the department and its administration, made three charges. First, that Mr. Stevens was dismissed, and a friend of mine appointed in his place. [MR. CONNOR: That is not true.] I have answered that charge. The second was, that the hon. member was the first witness to sign the evidence at the inquiry. [MR. CONNOR: That is not true either.] That charge is answered by the documents. The next charge was that Mr. Buchanan, of Kimberley, had by readjustment of boundaries been shifted back for a distance of nine miles. [MR. CONNOR: The three statements are all incorrect.] I want to show in this particular instance, and in order that we shall be clear on the point at issue, and that my department shall not be accused of doing for Mr. Copley what it would not do for the member for East Kimberley or any other pastoral lessee, that I called for a report on the question, and I did so because the integrity of the department had been impugned by the member for East Kimberley, and because by his expressions in this House he is a supporter of the hon. member who moved this motion of censure. Mr. Buchanan was supposed to have been robbed of his territory and shifted back nine miles. I have checked the records of his statement, in which the member for East Kimberley said that Mr. Buchanan had been shifted back nine miles. This is what the

Under Secretary for Lands says on this matter:—

With reference to Mr. Connor's statements respecting alteration of the boundary between this State and South Australia in the Kimberley Division, and the consequent alteration of pastoral leases in which it is alleged Mr. Copley was given undue preference, I forward the files bearing on the subject herewith, but I am afraid they will not throw much light on it. I have had, however, a litho, prepared in which the red lines show the former arrangement, and the black lines the alteration made after the survey by Mr. Crossland. Instead of the boundary having been altered nine miles, the alteration is about 45 chains.

2 You will notice that the leases affected stand, some in the name of Osmand, and some in the names of Gordon, Buchanan, and Cahill. As to whether Mr. Copley is interested in any of them or not I am unaware.

In order to make assurance doubly sure, I sent for the officer of the drafting division who should be able to deal with it. Mr. C. Y. Dean came to me, and after I explained the point he said: "I know all about it." I said: "Write a minute for me explaining it;" and he did so in the following words:—

1. After the survey by Mr. Surveyor Crossland of Sturt Creek, and the determination of the east boundary of the State, it was found necessary to amend the leases to the north and south of the creek.

2. The boundary of the State was amended to a position of about 45 chains farther east.

3. Mr. Osmand's leases to the north of Sturt Creek start from the N.E. corner of P.L. 71/115 (owned by him), and take up the country between this lease, the south boundary of P.L. 71/118 (also owned by him), and the boundary of the State; and as the State boundary was moved a little to the eastward the lessee obtained an increased area to the extent of 19,700 acres.

4. Messrs. Cahill, Buchanan, and Gordon's applications start from the intersection of the Sturt Creek with the boundary of the State. Their leases have therefore been moved about 45 chains farther east, though practically they hold the same land as hitherto.

I submit this to the House without comment, to show that the Department of Land and Surveys is not at least that corrupt institution which that hon. member would lead us to believe it is. There was no reference made to the fact that in September, 1902, the revenue of my department was only £35,000, and in September of this year it had increased to £43,000. There was no reference to the fact that the revenue for October, an off month, increased from £8,000

to £10,000. There was no reference to the increase in matters of survey and inspection; to the bank advances under the Agricultural Bank Act. There was no reference to the growth of new business and the additional settlement which has taken place within our borders. There was no reference to the increase of business, and arrears of my predecessors for years past. There was no reference to these matters or to the advantages accruing to the State by the newer methods introduced. There was no reference to any of these things, but the hon. member chose the most nominal point, probably the most insignificant offshoot of my administration, to criticise it without the slightest knowledge or regard to the true position of affairs. Members have frequently in this House complained of the repurchasing of large estates, when practically they have said there was Crown land available within the State which lent itself to improvement. I went into that question and took up a deal of my time and dealt with the Hamel Estate, and only to-day I received a letter which winds up in this way:—

I may here state as far as the new settlers are concerned, all seem pleased with their surroundings, and feel grateful to the hon. the Minister for the scheme he devised to assist and put them on the land.

I did not want to trot this out, but it is a new departure and stands unparalleled in the history of any Lands Department in Australia, and I invite members to go to Hamel and see for themselves. They can get copies of the contracts, they can see what is being done, and then they can judge of the merits of the estate established there by myself in accordance with the wishes of members—the improvement of Crown lands instead of the system of repurchasing estates. In connection with contract No. 3, rabbit-proof fence, we hold in hand £3,891 5s. I stated in the House, and I repeat it, that the fence erected is answering for the time being as a suitable barrier, preventing the influx or invasion of rabbits from the other side; but the fence has not been built in accordance with the specifications under which the contract was let, and I wish to take the opportunity of saying in connection with the contract that, until the fence is built in accordance with the conditions laid down in the

contract and signed, the remaining amount of money, £3,891 5s., will not be paid to the contractor. That is the position I have taken up, and I want to make hon. members clear on that point.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Is it effective at present?

THE MINISTER: At present it is effective, but if a serious test was made by the rabbits I believe they could go under easily; but so far as I see the fence is acting and filling its purpose, inasmuch as rabbits have been trapped along that fence. I am speaking from reports which have reached me a fortnight ago, and whether the contractor has remedied the state of affairs and put the fence in order remains to be seen. There was an officer by the name of Warnecke engaged by the Rabbit Department, and a little later on some person complained of Mr. Warnecke; and Inspector White, in dealing with Mr. Warnecke, states he is highly pleased with the work. Later on Mr. White recommends that Warnecke be dispensed with, and the Director of Agriculture did not even refer that matter to me, his Minister. He said: "If what you say is true, sack him," and the man was sacked. The other day, after this trouble arose—the more recent developments—Mr. Warnecke came to my office and wanted to see me. I refused to see him. I refused on the ground that he had been dismissed for not carrying out the duties intrusted to him; but I stated that if he had anything to submit he could do so in writing. He submitted his case in writing. I read it casually through. There was only one thing which struck me in it, wherein he complains that it was very hard to be dismissed on White's word without being given a chance to clear himself over a few short posts he never passed, when White had allowed Cocking to cut thousands of his standards. That was a serious allegation, saying Mr. White had allowed Cocking to cut standards instead of driving them into the ground. I wrote this minute to the Director of Agriculture:—

I have refused to see Mr. Warnecke, and as a result he has forwarded the attached letter. Too much reliance cannot be placed on a dismissed officer; nevertheless I would like to know if there is anything on record to justify the statement that Mr. White permitted thousands of standards to be cut.

The Acting Director of Agriculture advised me on the 25th :—

Mr. F. James came in yesterday and said the first day he was on the fence Mr. White told him that he could allow the contractor to cut off nine inches of the iron standards in places where it was necessary to use the crowbar. This bears out Warnecke's statement.

Members will observe I submitted that distinctly and honestly, and that I did not refer to any information, nor did I interrogate Mr. Warnecke as to what his views were. I was perfectly satisfied to work out the problem surrounding my office without the aid of those persons dismissed, and I believe I am still capable of doing that. I have laid a number of papers on the table for the attention of members, but there are one or two papers which I hold in the interests of the State, and which are confidential. They more particularly refer to the question of allowances and the claims made by White. I hold that these are confidential papers. Members will have an opportunity, if they wish, of perusing any of them if they advise me of it, but I decline to lay them on the table so as to make public papers referring to a matter in which a large sum of money is at stake. It is said that White was dismissed without an inquiry, and that the Minister could have called on Mr. White for an explanation. As a matter of fact the file read in this House, and perused by the member for Dundas, showed that Mr. White was guilty of the grossest insubordination. I say this without fear of contradiction, that an officer of the department is not able to flout his Minister and tell him "I have no intention of coming to you; if you want me I am not coming; there is my resignation." Have we reached that stage?

MR. THOMAS: He had resigned.

THE MINISTER: There is a Masters and Servants Act in this country, and due notice should be given before a resignation is tendered. Had I not acted when that gross insubordination took place, the hon. member opposite might very well attack the Government for their administration, and have done so successfully. White first refused to give information; he affirmed the fence was bad; he complained he had not had travelling allowances, and from that period advanced various other reasons, each day developing a fresh one. I

have always insisted in the management of my private business, as I am sure every member would insist in the management of a department, that the first essential is discipline, and without discipline there can be no successful management. There was no discipline, and I took the only action open to me, and that was to order the immediate dismissal of Mr. White and the supervisors responsible for the supervision of that contract. Mr. Warnecke was dispensed with on the recommendation of Mr. White without any reference to the Minister: he got no inquiry. Mr. James was reported, and as a result an officer by the name of Crane was sent up to take James's place. These files I intend to place at the disposal of those interested. Mr. White, instead of allowing Crane to take the place of James, sent Crane up north, and allowed James to go on the length that he was then on—the junior officer in charge of the most important contract at that time. Since that time the annual report of the Rabbit Department has been presented to myself, and laid on the table of the House. In the light of later evidence, may I ask if that report conveyed to the House a true conception of the position? The member who leads the Opposition attacks the Government because the report is not correct. I had a strong feeling that that report did not convey the information that it should.

MR. PIGOTT: Then why place it on the table?

THE MINISTER: I had nothing to back me up. I immediately made inquiries, and as a result of the inquiries which I made, and as the result of what has taken place since, I am satisfied to say that whilst occupying my position I have clearly shown that I had no desire to shirk the responsibility which rested on me. Mr. White was the officer in charge. Our files clearly show that. The other officers under him took instructions from him. I reiterate that. The other officers under him took instructions from him. He frequently communicated with these officers directly, and there is no copy. Mr. White had nothing else to attend to except the fence.

MR. THOMAS: Then you have not looked at the files?

**THE MINISTER:** The hon. member will tell us that Mr. White was an officer of the Stock Department. It is a remarkable thing that the Stock Department are at a loss to know what he did for them.

**MR. PIGOTT:** The Minister has just read out one of his reports on ticks.

**THE MINISTER:** His observations about a camel. That must have monopolised a great deal of his time. Probably Mr. White felt strongly on the subject; but I do not hesitate to state that his Minister felt pretty strongly when confronted with such a piece of gross insubordination. The Minister did not hesitate to act; for his action he is prepared to accept full responsibility, and his colleagues have sufficient faith in his administration to accept the same. A complaint has been made that Mr. Wilson has not been dispensed with because of that report, and of the finding of rabbits since, I suppose at Wyola, which fact seemed to carry a conviction that there was not a due appreciation in the mind of Mr. Wilson of the position with regard to rabbits on this side of the fence. It is said that Mr. Wilson is the brother-in-law of a former Minister for Lands.

**MR. PIGOTT:** I may say in explanation that I interviewed the former Minister for Lands, and he told me that I was misinformed on that point.

**THE MINISTER:** I did not want it said that I refrained from dispensing with Mr. Wilson because he was related to a former Minister. Such relationship would not weigh with me. If Mr. Wilson were related to the Governor, what odds would it be to me?

**MR. FOULKES:** To which Minister are you referring?

**THE MINISTER:** As Mr. Sommers made the appointment, I assume that the members in question thought that Mr. Wilson was a relative of his. I may say I know the majority of Mr. Sommers's relatives, and went to school with his wife; and I could not understand how Mr. Wilson could be a brother-in-law of Mr. Sommers, though I did not think fit to contradict the statement. I now find that the statement is not correct. But even if Mr. Wilson was a brother-in-law of Mr. Sommers, surely we owed him justice; and it is in vain to say that I dis-

played any impetuosity in dispensing with either Mr. White or Mr. James. When I ordered the dismissal of the supervisors I was not aware who they were, and I did not care. If any supervisor has permitted the construction of a fence in any way other than in accordance with the specifications, the proper thing to do is to dispense with him. Members will realise that this fence is far back in the interior, away from the immediate observation of members and of Ministers; and unless the very strongest action is taken in cases of this kind, it is manifestly impossible to secure that supervision and that management which are essential if we are to have that fence erected according to the specifications. As members know, on Sunday last I had brought to my house three rabbits captured at Wyola. Since that time Mr. George writes: "Four more rabbits found in same place this morning by the same person." There were seven rabbits found in a burrow by the permanent-way gang at Wyola, five miles West of Tammin. We have this indisputable evidence that although the rabbits are on this side of the fence they have burrowed. It was said the other day when I sent ferrets out on the west side of the fence, that no burrows would be found. Here is testimony to the contrary, not by an interested officer of my department, but by responsible officers of the Railway Department. Wyola is 71 miles this side of the rabbit-proof fence, and 44 miles from Northam. It has been stated in the debate that Inspector White has been most unfairly dealt with in the matter of his travelling allowances. May I read an extract? When the appointment was offered to Mr. White he expressed his willingness to accept. That was on 9th November, 1900; and he was willing to start within seven days, and suggested that three parties of two men each be employed, with him as leader. The Under Secretary for Lands immediately asked the Minister: "Is the salary of £350 for the leader (White), and £250 respectively for the assistants, to include cost of living and finding their own horses?" I wish the member for Dundas (Mr. Thomas) to listen to this. Cabinet replied: "Yes. We consider the salary covers all." Inspector White received the appointment at £350 a

year in 1900; he is admittedly not a rich man; but for some considerable time no claim for travelling expenses is made. But we find that on the 8th July, 1903, he submits a claim for travelling allowances from January, 1900, up to date. That, for a man who is not particularly "flush," is rather an unusual method of doing business. Of course, I can readily conceive that when such a claim, covering such a large sum of money (£401 12s. 6½d.) is made, the Minister would be very popular with his officers if he immediately passed it and similar claims for payment. Mr. Wilson received this claim and sent it on. He states:—

I beg to forward hereunder Mr. Inspector White's letter and account of his travelling allowances for you to deal with. As Mr. White wishes this to be put forward before he leaves town to-morrow, I have not been able to check the account. The account has not been provided for as yet on the Estimates, though if £500 was transferred from the item "fencing," which I now find will be rather over-provided for, to travelling expenses, it would cover it.

Mr. Craig, who has been retired, writes a letter from his private house, 641 Murray street, Perth. I have not yet ascertained, but shall be interested to find out, how this private communication from a retired officer finds a place on this file. Next Mr. Crawford writes to Mr. Paterson, the late Director of Agriculture:—

This account was sent in in your time. Do you think it should be paid?

Mr. Paterson replies:—

I know nothing of the appointment, and therefore will not say whether Mr. White should be paid; but I will advise seeing the original agreements.

Mr. Crawford writes:—

1. As to the men who went out under the leadership of Mr. White in the first instance, to cope with the rabbits, did their salaries cover all they were allowed, or did they get a separate sustenance allowance?

2. When Mr. White was employed at £200 by the Stock Department, was he granted travelling allowances, or did that salary cover everything? Have you the papers referring to Mr. White's first appointment? If so, please let me have them.

Mr. Malcolm writes:—

They were engaged as itinerating inspectors at a salary. They received no separate sustenance allowance. Mr. White's original appointment was as inspector of rabbits in the Esperance Bay district. His salary of £200

covered everything, as he was living at home, and only occasionally went into the back country for the purpose of keeping the head office posted with information as to the progress of the rabbits. Papers herewith.

Mr. Crawford writes:—

Mr. Rabbit Inspector White's claim for £401 12s. 6½d. for your consideration, jacket 24/03. Mr. White's original agreement, jacket "Stock," 213/99; "Rabbits," 36/01. Present appointment, jacket 66/01. Rabbit Department, pp. 3/12. See also Mr. Malcolm's reply to my minute, jacket 24/03. There seems to have been no idea of paying sustenance or locomotive expenses originally; nor is there anything to show that it was intended to pay them at any future time. No allowance was made to other members of the party of which Mr. White was chief; so it is evident that it was not intended to pay Mr. White either. The salary paid for the work was a high one (£350), higher than the secretary of the department was receiving; and from that it seems that the high salary given was to include all charges and expenses. As the amount is such a large one I do not care to act on my own responsibility; and I submit all the papers for your consideration and decision.

I immediately wrote:

Under Secretary for Lands.—Will you please peruse and advise?

The accountant writes, in a minute to the Under Secretary for Lands:—

To assist you in framing a reply in connection with the account enclosed, I can only suggest that Mr. White has taken an unusual course in delaying the rendering of the account. I have inquired of the Stock and Rabbit Departments if they have created a precedent in any way by paying a subsistence account for White, which they have not done. No such account has been paid by us when dealing with Rabbit Branch accounts. What is much against the claim is the fact of provision being made in all these cases for subsistence, where it is known that an officer will be required to perform considerable duties away from headquarters; and I think, if it had been intended to give Mr. White an allowance, his case would not have been an exception. I have interviewed the Treasury, giving these particulars; and they cannot quote a parallel case, or anything like it.

That is signed by Mr. Hamersley, the accountant. I of course recognise that the reading of these papers is perhaps rather wearisome; but it was said the other night in the House that I had been so ungenerous to Mr. White that he had good reason for resigning. I wish to read these minutes, to ventilate not my own opinions but the opinions of officers on whom we can rely as being

at least unbiased. The Under Secretary for Lands writes:—

I have looked into this matter as requested by you, and have also obtained the accountant's views, which are given on the preceding page. The fact that no mention was made of any travelling or subsistence allowance in the original appointments goes to prove that no such was intended. At that time (1900) it was not the practice, nor has it been since, to grant a subsistence allowance to officers in any departments under the Minister for Lands who are practically always in the field, as these inspectors would be; and had it not been intended that the salary should cover everything, I feel sure a fixed allowance would have been granted and inserted in the Cabinet minute recommending the appointment. In my minute on page 5 of Rabbit File 66/01, I called attention to the proposed salaries of the additional inspectors as being high, but went on to say that "I suppose these men will supply their own horses." And on this the Premier wrote: "Ministers think £250 a year, to find horses, forage, rations, etc., fair pay." Though the minute just referred to does not specially refer to the chief inspector, it is unreasonable to suppose that he should receive £100 a year more salary than the others, and a subsistence allowance in addition. Moreover, Mr. White could never have thought it at the time; otherwise he would not have allowed his claim to remain in abeyance for so long. I fear Mr. White's claim cannot be substantiated.

I wish to read from another file bearing on this claim for allowance. There is a minute here from Mr. White himself, dated the 12th April of this year, before he rendered the account. He writes:—

I have fully made up my mind that unless some provision is made me in the matter of fodder allowance and use of camels when and where necessary (I cannot use horses or mules owing to scarcity of water and feed), to tender my resignation, but will not place the department under any difficulty or inconvenience from too short a notice.

Now I submit that no officer would have written in that strain on the 12th April if he felt at the time that he had a legal claim against the department for the expenses for which he has billed us. The member for Dundas (Mr. Thomas) referred to Mr. White's being left off the Estimates. Mr. White's name was omitted from the Estimates, and I have here the explanations from the manager of the Stock Department and also from the Director of Agriculture, which I do not think it necessary to read. I will simply say that both statements clearly show that Mr. White was left off as the result of his own overtures; that

it was proposed later on to retain Mr. White for some time longer; and that when the proposal was submitted to me I immediately approved of it, and never thought of calling it in question. A statement was made that Mr. Wilson had insisted on Mr. White signing progress payments in the office which had only been certified to by a sub-inspector. I submitted that question, and I have this answer in writing:—

In reply to the above, I did not insist on Mr. White signing any vouchers for progress payments.—H. M. WILSON. 23/11/1903.

I am pointing out that this is only another instance which shows how necessary it is for myself, or whatever Minister may have charge of the department, to have this matter farther investigated. Other statements have been made, answers to which I have here, but I do not think those matters are of much importance. There is a minute here by the Acting Director of Agriculture, in which he sets forth replies to certain statements that were made; but in regard to these, also, I need not go into them in detail. The Chief Inspector of Stock tells me that Mr. White was appointed on 1st July, 1902, that the last report received from him was dated 1st July, 1902, and that the Acting Chief Inspector is not aware of any duties having been performed on behalf of the Stock Department between 14th July and 7th August last. No report has been received. Perhaps the most serious aspect of the motion of no-confidence which has been submitted by the leader of the Opposition is that the Government have done nothing for preventing the invasion of rabbits; that when the question of a rabbit-proof fence was first proposed in this House, because I criticised it and endeavoured to get some description of that proposal, the Government since I joined it have sat down and done absolutely nothing. That was the charge; but what was really the position? In 1902 there were 50 miles of fencing erected, and since I have been in office an additional 300 miles of fencing has been erected. How do these facts bear out the statement of the leader of the Opposition, that simply because I came into office nothing has been done in regard to the rabbit fence?



MR. PIGOTT: I said the Government had done nothing to prevent the invasion of rabbits; that you wake up when everything is too late.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: As hon. members know, before the session began I had the Stock Department inquiry, I had various other problems connected with the department, all which had been left to me as a legacy from the previous Administration. Since I took charge of the department we have worked hard, and the result is as I have stated, that 50 miles of fencing were erected last year, and this year up to date 300 miles have been erected. [Several interjections.] The rabbit-proof fence is completed from the south coast to the railway line; the next contract for 25 miles north from the railway is finished; the next two contracts, totalling 225 miles, are in progress; and from that point to the east end of the surveyed line is a distance of 100 miles, for which plans and specifications are now being prepared with a view to inviting tenders for the construction of that 100 miles of fencing, and it is intended to proceed with that work at once. From that point north is a distance of 550 miles to what is known as the Ninety-Mile Beach on the North-West coast. Mr. Canning, as members know, has recently returned from the North, and he tells me there is an admirable route for the fence; that, remarkable as it may seem, there will be a good water supply, and in fact he says there is one rockhole he discovered in which the largest ship afloat might be launched, and this in a country said to be an inhospitable desert, without any water supply. The aborigines in that country told him of two water supplies, but said they were inhabited with devils, because they were never dry. Mr. Canning had a very hard time on that trip, in which he lost several of his camels; and the work northward is not being proceeded with until the rains fall there in the summer months. There are certain squatters who have country there; they visit it periodically, and they will inform him when the rains come. The fence will run along to the head of what he terms the salt spinifex country. He relates seeing some cattle which came into the stations at, although that country is said to be

so inhospitable; whilst those cattle he saw on the properties were very poor. My reason for drawing attention to this is to show that if rabbits do get there, they can go through to the North-West without any difficulty. Those squatters will advise Mr. Canning when the rains fall, and he will then go on to finish his work, completing the line to the Kimberley Ranges and the North-West coast.

MR. PIGOTT: How are you going to save the Kimberley country?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is one of the problems which the hon. member would do well to direct his attention to, and by doing so he would confer more benefit on the country than by trying to oust the present Government. My attention has been directed to this question of the survey in regard to the North-West country, and although there is no immediate apprehension of the rabbits going up to the fence there, yet I believe we are justified in believing that the fence will have to be continued to the coast, and that this can be done before the rabbits reach that country. The next question is, how to protect Kimberley. We may have to fence the line surveyed, and it is a question whether we ought not to complete that line of survey and be in readiness to erect the fence whenever the time should arrive for doing so. The difficulty in the meantime is that the leader of the Opposition has stated it is no good putting up a fence to the North-West coast, because he says the fence will inevitably be swept away by floods coming down the rivers. My impression is that we ought to go on with the survey for a fence in order that if the rabbit invasion is threatened there we shall be in a position to invite tenders and have the fence erected without loss of time. The aborigines inhabiting that part of the country assured Mr. Canning that there are no indications of rabbits yet. In speaking the other night I am reported as having said we had 160 miles of wire netting on hand. What I said, or what I ought to have said, was that we had 260 miles of netting on hand. We have also to land by January next 300 miles of fencing, and 84 miles more by the next month. So we shall have a total of 660 miles of wire netting; and out of that we shall require 100 miles for the fence at present, and that will leave

560 miles of wire netting available for supplying to settlers. Although it was said the other night that we have no power by law to supply wire to settlers, yet we are in a position to supply it and at the present time one of our surveyors is inspecting properties in the Esperance division with a view to supplying wire netting to the settlers there. The regulations which were made under the Rabbit Pest Act were gazetted on the 2nd October, 1903, and under those regulations we are prepared at present to supply netting to any persons requiring it for fencing their holdings against rabbits. The regulations were forthcoming before any inquiry was made for netting by the settlers, and surely those settlers should be the first men to raise the question. One hon. member interjects that we should make no prosecution. Was there a need for prosecution? If so, Inspector White never brought the need for it under the notice of the Government. Although the Act came into force before I took office, can it be said that I should have digested that Act and asked officers of the department whether inspectors under the Act had been appointed? As a matter of fact I have not made any inquiries to ascertain whether inspectors have been appointed. I have had matters of great moment engaging my attention, and of course a thousand side issues can always be brought by persons who might say "Have you done so and so?" My reply might be, "I have not done that, but I have done other things that are far more important." Immediately my misgivings were aroused as to the presence of rabbits west of the fence, I authorised a new survey to start from the south coast and run north to Meckering or Doodlakine or some point along that country. A proposal was also made to go north from Yalgoo to North Murchison, and from there to the present fence, and that recommendation was submitted to the advisory board. I believe the erection of a second barrier fence is absolutely necessary, and also that the necessary surveys should be entered into for the protection of the Kimberleys, as I have explained; and if carried out it does not matter whether the fence is ever used, it will still be of value to pastoralists, and will have the effect of opening up new country,

and in that way be worth the money expended in carrying out the survey. The estimated cost of the new surveys in connection with this work is set down at from £3,500 to £4,000. I requested the advisory board to meet and go into this question, and I am sorry to say that through the pressure of business in my office I was unable to be present at the meeting of the advisory board, and they discussed the matter in my absence. They decided that the fence should go in between the Gardiner and Pallingup rivers, and to go forward somewhere north to Meckering or Waeel, and from there to Yalgoo, and thence eastwards to the rabbit-proof fence. I think this is a question members ought to devote some attention to, and I shall be glad to hear expressions of opinion from them. I suggested going from Yalgoo north to Scrubby Range and Mount Murchison, and from there going slightly north of east to the Kimberley Ranges and joining the present fence; but the advisory board say the fence should stop at Yalgoo and turn at right angles and go to the rabbit-proof fence. Day Dawn would be on this side of the fence, and although I believe the conviction stands that there are no rabbits at Day Dawn, I mention this so that members may thus feel disposed to express their opinions on the point. There is a proposal also that a rabbit-proof fence should go from County Peak to Glenelg Hills and then to the fence. These are the proposals, and I am in this position, that we know the rabbits are on this side of the fence. I want to say that, unlike the leader of the Opposition, I am not an alarmist.

MR. CONNOR: You used to be.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: Ministerial responsibility has calmed him down.

THE MINISTER: I understood the leader of the Opposition to say:—

No greater disaster could have ever befallen this State than we are confronted with at the present time. Anyone who has been in country where rabbits are plentiful knows how terrible a scourge they are to any district they infest. I have passed through some of the fairest country in Australia, and have again passed through it a few years afterwards when it was rabbit infested; and not only was there no grass in it, but all the scrub was eaten down, and what is worse, the timber was killed. But years ago the people of Western Australia did not seem to recognise that there was danger to be apprehended from the rabbits;

though none can now deny, when the scourge is practically upon us, that it is very doubtful whether, instead of the State being able to progress in the grand and magnificent style in which it has progressed during the past few years, we shall not be struggling almost in our death agony in combating this fearful scourge.

I think those are the words of the hon. member. My friend Mr. White, speaking in the Queen's Hall the other night, made use of similar language. I will read his remarks:—

In Coolgardie the other day I saw Mr. Hewison. He told me that he had bought the whole of Mr. Graham's horses, and that the country from Eucla 200 miles in was bare; nearly every tree was dead; and a kind of mallee only left. Although there had been a splendid rainfall there was not a blade of grass to be seen. It was possible to take a stick there and kill 150 rabbits in two or three hours. Graham's land has already been thrown up—

I commend this to members.

Montrabella has been closed, and the stock sold. That run has been held for Kenny and McGill, but it has been thrown up and deserted by them. Then there is another serious matter. You are taxpayers. There is an enormous expenditure going on in the way of procuring water by boring. With regard to the Trans-Australian Railway, it is claimed that it is going to open up a magnificent stretch of pastoral country. I say if you get water there it will never pay to fence it; it is too far from the market. It will take 30 to 50 acres to carry a sheep. If the Minister thinks they are going to fence a travelling stock route for 500 miles wide—why, the country would not listen to it. It is absurd. That country would be utterly useless, because it is too far from the markets at the present time.

Is it not a remarkable instance that we should have these alarmist statements from the leader of the Opposition, who should have the interests of the country at heart, and these statements from Inspector White, when only to-day I received a letter from Talbut, Budge, and Anderson, of Montrabella station. Mr. Talbut is a well-known man; I believe he was one of the three who tracked Bayley and Ford into Coolgardie. He is personally known to me, and only recently he was arranging with me for wire netting to fence his runs. In his letter, addressed to the Premier, he says:—

Montrabella, Eucla.—To the Premier. Sir,—I beg to bring before you the following matter:—Two bores have lately been put down in this district, both excellent for stock,

that which is designated bore No. 1 particularly so. I understand a reserve is or will be proclaimed about site No. 2. I wish to take up grazing country in the vicinity of the aforesaid reserve.—

That is the man who is clearing out.

to have the use of the surplus water not required by the Government from the bore, and am willing to pay rent for same when the bore has become useless to the Government for development purposes. I offer to lease it outright together with engine, pump, tank, etc., engaging to keep same in good order and condition. If grazing country can be had I beg to apply for 40,000 acres, the north boundary of which to coincide with the north boundary of the reserve

This is the gentleman who is leaving the country, who has been eaten out by rabbits.

MR. THOMAS: That is not the man.

THE MINISTER: Mr. Talbut's letter goes on to say:—

The block to be twice as long as broad, and its east and west boundaries as near and quite distinct on either side of the bore. I do not stipulate that any of the aforementioned conditions be dependent on each other, but I wish them to be considered at the earliest convenience.

MR. HAYWARD: Where is that written from?

THE MINISTER: From Montrabella Station, and it is dated November 14th, 1903.

MR. THOMAS: That is not the man who is clearing out. It is Graham who has sold out.

THE MINISTER: I am merely recounting the statements made by Inspector White and the leader of the Opposition. That goes to illustrate—and I am sure we are glad to hear it—that there is no need for this feeling of distrust which is supposed to agitate the minds of the community. It is said I take no interest in the question. Some time ago I wrote to some relatives of mine living on the border of Queensland. They replied to me from Gunyerwarildi, that is the name of the station, and the letter is dated November 1st, 1903. The letter is as follows:—

Gunyerwarildi, via Warialda, November 11th, 1903. Regarding rabbit-proof netting, you cannot do better than fence as you propose, but look after your fence when it is erected, and don't do as they did in this rotten State with their barrier fence—left it to look after itself, when of course this negligence nullified all the good that otherwise would accrue. Under separate cover I am sending you a copy

of the *Pastoral Review*, wherein you will see an article by Featherstonhaugh on the pest, every word of which I can indorse.

Mr. Featherstonhaugh is a man highly capable of expressing an opinion, and the people who wrote this letter are known by repute to the leader of the Opposition. He knows they are reliable people. Mr. Featherstonhaugh is a relative, if I am not mistaken, of Mr. Isdell, and is known to the member for Mt. Margaret, who comes from Queensland. This is the article on the question of rabbits and how to cope with them in that part of the State; and in order that the public mind may be set at rest, I think it is proper that I should read this article, because it is stated we are threatened with an invasion which is going to cause the name of the Government to go down to perdition. Considering these alarmist statements I think it is proper that I should read this article, in order that publicity should be given to the article attributed by this gentleman to the *Pastoral Review* of October 16th, 1903. The article is sent to me for information. It is on the rabbit-pest in New South Wales, and is as follows:—

The Rabbit Pest in New South Wales: by C. Featherstonhaugh.—I need hardly remind some of your readers that some twenty years ago I was rather importunate "in season and out of season" in urging upon my fellow pastoralists the paramount importance of endeavouring to prevent the advance of the rabbit pest into the Central Division. I then advocated the use of netting chiefly as the best means to be adopted. However, nothing that could be said or done at that time seemed to avail. The bulk of landowners appeared to be quite satisfied that the pest would not reach their particular holding, or, if it did, that the rabbit would not make any headway. As to the pest making its way into the Eastern Division that was out of the question. What is the position to-day? In 1876 I saw, I believe, the first wild rabbit killed on the New South Wales side of the Murray, when one of our Canally boundary riders brought in a rabbit he had killed on the Balranald town common. To-day the whole of New South Wales is infested, and I am informed that rabbits have been killed within four hundred miles of the waters of the Gulf of Carpentaria. I need not expatiate on the devastation caused by the pest in the Western District and on the immense sums of money expended, for the most part in vain, in endeavouring to cope with the pest in both the Western and Central Divisions. It is, therefore, with great satisfaction that I now draw attention to the very satisfactory results achieved in Southern Riverina during the last twelve years in

dealing with the pest. As I intend to put only facts observed actually by myself before your readers, I will confine myself to that portion of Southern Riverina which in the course of my duties as Government assessor of land values I have personally visited, a piece of country which I have carefully inspected, and which I have traversed no less than four times during the last seven months. The country under review lies between the Murray and the Billabong, and extends from near Deniliquin to some distance east of Urana, and contains about a million acres. This area is comprised within the boundaries of some ten or twelve large holdings, interspersed among the boundaries of which are a number of smaller properties. Some years ago this area of land was heavily infested, and about two-thirds of it consists of heavily timbered forest country on which the timber has been killed for years. During a careful inspection of the million acres of land under notice, I only saw one rabbit. I do not say there were no rabbits, for I saw scratchings, but they were so scarce I only saw one. It may be said, as has indeed been said to me, that I inspected this piece of country immediately after the severest drought experienced for sixty years, and that if I now went back over the same land I would give a different report. Well, I had quite lately to go back in the course of my duties, and although there was in some parts luxuriant and succulent pasturage I did not see one rabbit, and I was assured that there had been no increase of the pest. At the same time on some holdings not yet netted, and where the pest has not yet been dealt with in a stringent manner, there were plenty of rabbits.

MR. PIGOTT: All that country was fenced.

THE MINISTER: I am coming to that. The article continues:—

A very notable success has been achieved, and achieved too where one would least expect it, viz. in heavily timbered country and on holdings embracing from 30,000 to 180,000 acres. That rabbits should be reduced to a minimum on netted-in holdings ranging from 2,000 to 5,000 acres would not surprise anyone, but that rabbits can be reduced on holdings of so great an area and on timbered country, cannot but inspire landowners in the Central Division with good hope, and, let us trust, with determination to get the pest down and to keep it down. Before getting any farther, I wish here to repeat that I am only dealing with that portion of Riverina which came under my own personal observation, and that I am quite aware there is a large area of land north of the Billabong, on which landowners have been equally successful in dealing with the pest; in fact, one large holding on the Yanco, which was netted in early in the spring, has, as I understand, never been infested. This by the way. The means that have been adopted with such notable success are very simple indeed. When rabbits are

thick, poisoned water and poisoned pollard, and every other means that can be adopted, will, of course, be brought into force, and in order that there shall not be an influx from the land of careless owners, travelling stock routes, Government reserves and town commons, every owner who is determined to get rid of the pest will, of course, net his boundaries; this goes without saying. In spite of what a few owners may say as to netting being unnecessary, I find that nineteen out of twenty landowners, small and large, are unanimous in advocating the necessity of netting. But the first thing a landholder has to do, even before he nets his holding, is to clear off all harbour, logs, heads of trees and brush, etc., and then dig out, or, at any rate, destroy all burrows.

This is what I particularly wish to call attention to:—

When this is done, it will be found that the cost of dealing with the pest has been reduced to a mere item, and by item I mean a cost of, say, about 30s. per 1,000 acres. It is by these simple means that the land under review has been cleared and kept clear of the pest. A rabbit, with a pack of dogs to, say, every 50,000 acres, is all that is now required, and on one large holding of 100,000 acres I found that not even one rabbit had been required for the last twelve months.

"With a pack of dogs." I was criticised for sending out dogs as an experiment.

As to the cost, it need not be great. The manager of almost the largest holding in Riverina, comprising nearly 200,000 acres (part of the land under notice), very kindly allowed me to take from the station books the cost of coping with the rabbits for 12 years prior to the present year, and the figures are as follows:—1891, £203; 1892, £125; 1893, £110; 1894, £279; 1895, £424; 1896, £454; 1897, £393; 1898, £261; 1899, £318; 1900, £311; 1901, £443; 1902, £328—or an average of £304 per annum (about 30s. per 1,000 acres). It will not cost much over 15s. per 1,000 acres to keep the pests in check in future. The above includes all expenses except burning off dead timber and netting the holding. These expenses are not included because burning off pays for itself, and a netting fence "makes such good neighbours," and is such a valuable boundary fence, that most owners of large holdings are glad of an excuse to erect it. At any rate until all owners burn off harbour and dig out burrows, and deal trenchantly with the pest, netting is indispensable. I have not alluded to the Western Division, but if it would pay to do it, and if all would join, and if there were no abandoned country, then I have no doubt that even in the Western Division the pest could be reduced also to an "item." How rabbits are to be dealt with in rocky, mountainous, well-watered country is a problem I cannot pretend to solve, but all men agree with me when I say that it was almost criminal to allow the pest to effect

an entrance into the Eastern Division, and only landowners themselves are to blame. If any of your readers think I am too optimistic as to what has been and what can be done in getting rid of the pest, I refer them to the managers of Tuppal, Hartwood, Coree, Wonnamurra, S. Yathong, Gum Swamp, Nowranie, Mahonga, etc.; these gentlemen will, I am certain, confirm all I have said. The new Rabbit Act if well administered and its provisions faithfully carried out should be a great help in getting rid of the pest in the Central Division. With regard to netting, 19 out of 20 landowners, small and large, say it is absolutely necessary. If all owners would clear off harbour and dig out burrows, etc., if T.S.Rs., reserves, and town commons were kept free of the pest, netting would not be required, but the millenium has not yet come. Before concluding I may state that last year I inspected and valued holdings comprising some 4,000,000 acres in the land district of Tamworth and part of Moree, and I did not see 50 rabbits; but the drought was very severe, and this country had never been at all heavily infested. It is very much to let landowners in districts that have not yet suffered much know how notably owners in Southern Riverina have succeeded in dealing with the pest that I send you this.

I submit that the letter written by me to New South Wales, the communication received, and the indorsement of Mr. Featherstonhaugh's words, will be accepted with some gratification as a set-off against the alarmist statement of the leader of the Opposition. I might have given a *résumé* of the history of the Rabbit Department from 1896, when Mr. Mason was sent out by the then Commissioner of Crown Lands, Mr. Richardson, to inspect the country as far as the South Australian border; and he reported that Eyre's Sandpatch was the farthest point westward at which rabbits had arrived. I could remind members that in 1898 the Commissioner of Lands approved of £10,000 being placed on the Estimates for a rabbit-proof fence, which sum was never spent. In 1898 there was a report of the presence of rabbits at the Eucla station. The dryness and the hardness of the country were at that time deemed to be a barrier against their advance; and from Twilight Cove a party went south into the bush, and suggested a rabbit-proof fence from Point Dempster to 150 miles north. The matter was inquired into subsequently by Mr. Throssell, when Commissioner of Lands in 1900; and he stated he was under the impression that lightly-

equipped parties should be despatched with a view to check the rabbits. The Chief Inspector of Stock recommended that Mr. White should be appointed leader, with headquarters at Norseman and an increase of £150 per annum. Mr. White was appointed, as well as parties to go with him. From that time onward the history of the work done by the department is well known to members. I have to express my personal regret at having so long occupied the time of the House, from before three o'clock until after six; but in fairness to my colleagues I felt called on to place at the disposal of members all the information which I had at my disposal. This I have endeavoured to do. I have shown that although I am charged with being negligent and with not hurrying on the work of fence construction, yet during last year 50 miles of fence were authorised and during this year we have constructed 300 miles. Then we have made arrangements for the completion of the fence to the farthest point north to which the survey has been completed; we have everything in hand to complete the survey and to complete the fence from coast to coast; the Government have authorised surveys for an additional barrier, such as the other states have found necessary; and we have adopted every means in our power to cope with the pest. I say without fear of contradiction that never in the history of this State has any Minister worked harder and longer in the interests of his department than I have endeavoured to work in connection with the rabbit invasion, with the stock inquiry, and with the other branches of my department. And in doing that work I have been actuated by only one desire, to clear up the existing difficulties, and if possible to place my department and its various branches upon a solid basis. I appeal to all members who view these questions not from the point of view of a party politician, but as I do, with no desire to serve any interest other than that of the State; and I say that which the Premier knows full well, that when I joined the present Ministry I made personal sacrifices, as did the Premier himself. That is a fact clearly established.

MR. JACOBY: You sacrificed your opinions.

THE MINISTER: I made a personal sacrifice, not of my opinions but of monetary earnings. With all due respect to the member interjecting, I reiterate that statement. From the very beginning I have been actuated by the one desire to do the best I could for the State. I have worked hard and long in its interests; and I am glad, so near the end of this Parliament's existence, to be able to say that I have not the slightest hesitation in submitting my work to the public and the country. And with due respect to the leader of the Opposition I may say, without fear of successful contradiction, that while it is perhaps as well that he should separate parties before Parliament prorogues, there is not one scintilla of evidence to support the attack made on my department—an attack which I resent, and an attack for which there is not the slightest justification.

MR. A. E. THOMAS (Dundas): I think I am really entitled to ask the House to consent to an adjournment, in order that I may have an opportunity of perusing the papers to which frequent reference has recently been made during this debate. But notwithstanding that I have been refused access to those papers, I intend to go ahead with my case. I regret that the Minister has seen fit to go into such elaborate details in connection with the case of Inspector White; because I shall have to follow the Minister into those details. But before proceeding I should like to remind the House as to those papers, some of which have been laid on the table this evening, that on the 12th November, in debate, certain charges were made against Inspector White by the Minister for Lands in replying to a speech of the member for West Perth (Mr. Moran). I then sent a telephone message to Mr. White to get certain particulars, as I considered it my duty to defend a much-maligned man. I then asked whether the Minister would officially lay on the table of the House those papers which he had in his desk. He told me then, and it is recorded in *Hansard*, that he would. I then stated that I would go through those papers next day, instead of leaving for the goldfields, and would make myself thoroughly acquainted with them. I came to the Chamber on

Friday morning, expecting that the promise would be carried out; but the papers were not at my disposal.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS:** The hon. member knows that the absence of the papers was due to the illness of the Premier, to whom I transmitted the files in the ordinary course of business; and the papers were laid on the table as soon as I received them again.

**MR. THOMAS:** I will come to that directly. I am talking about as far back as the 12th November, when the Premier was not ill, and of Tuesday, 17th November, when the Premier was not ill, and of Wednesday, the 18th, when the Premier was not ill. The Premier was not reported ill until Friday. The question was again brought up in this House and debated on Tuesday, and again on Wednesday, when the Minister said he would publicly and officially lay the papers, for which I was asking, on the table of the House so that members could go through them. On the 20th November I received this letter from the Minister:—

Dear Mr. Thomas,—In accordance with the promise made in the House, I will be glad to lay on the table a list of files as desired. Please send along the list at your convenience.  
—J. M. HOPKINS, Minister.

On the envelope it is carefully noted that the letter was delivered to me in the Assembly at 11:30 o'clock in the morning. I then went through as quickly as I could the books and papers of Inspector White, and formulated a list of files I required in order to answer the attacks made by the Minister, and I wrote the following letter in reply:—

I am in receipt of your note of even date, asking what files I desired to be laid on the table. It is, of course, somewhat difficult for me to define each file, but I am pretty sure that the files you had on your desk the other day will be all that I require. I desire the following:—1, File dealing with contract No. 1, August 2nd, 1902 (Brady); 2, File dealing with contract No. 2, November 29th, 1902 (Cocking); 3, File dealing with contract No. 3, December 4th, 1902 (Cocking); 4, File dealing with contract No. 4, February 10th, 1903 (Dwyer); 5, File dealing with contract No. 5, August, 1903 (Dwyer); 6, File dealing with Dwyer's contract for sinking well 90½ miles north of Burracoppin; 7, File dealing with instructions to White to proceed north to examine country from 250 to 369 mile post; 8, Files dealing with presence of rabbits west of proposed line of fence; 9, Files dealing

with faulty material and construction of fence; 10, Files dealing with White's sustenance and allowances; 11, Files dealing with White's dismissal; 12, Files dealing with Benzley's appointment, work, provision of outfit, and reports; 13, Files dealing with appointments under Rabbit Pests Act (December, 1902); 14, Files dealing with Warnecke's dismissal; 15, Files dealing with James's dismissal; 16, Original files dealing with the necessity of fencing and decision of routes; 17, Files dealing with progress payments. Some of these, of course, may be on the same files. I want to go through the papers if possible to-morrow (Saturday) afternoon and Sunday.—  
A. ERNEST THOMAS.

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES:** Did you send a hand-cart for them?

**MR. THOMAS:** I found out afterwards, in going farther into the charges made by the Minister on the floor of this House, that there were even other files I had to ask for to be laid on the table to refute the charges the Minister thought fit to make. In reply to the direct charge made in the House when the Minister challenged me, the member for Dundas, to go through the papers and to hold an inquiry along with the Director of Agriculture and Inspector White, I took up the challenge, and when the Minister wrote to me I sent him the list of files I wanted, but I was not able to get them. On the 23rd November I wrote a letter in the morning to the Minister:—

The files asked for did not come down on Saturday, so that I could not go through them as desired on Saturday afternoon and Sunday. When can I expect them? In addition to those asked for in my last note I want to see the files dealing with—1, The charges made in the debate on the Estimates on Thursday, 12th November; 2, Warnecke's appointment; 3, James's appointment.

The Minister then wrote to me:—

These files have been delayed owing to not being returned to me from the Premier, no doubt due to his illness. Will make farther inquiries.

I then wrote again in the afternoon:—

The files asked for by me have not yet come to hand. Of course I am in possession of White's papers, and know his side of the case, which naturally I want to check with the official files. Your officers have taken one week to ten days to go through them, and it is rather hard to expect that I shall be able to master the official rabbit papers between now and to-morrow afternoon, under twenty-four hours. I hope you noted the additional files mentioned in this morning's letter.

I then could not get the papers. On 24th November I wrote to the Minister :—

On 12th November in debate you promised that the rabbit papers should be officially laid on the table that night. This was done, and I had no opportunity of seeing them until the following Wednesday, 18th November, and then only on your desk. In debate on Wednesday I distinctly asked you whether you would then officially lay them on the table, and you promised you would do so. On Friday morning you wrote me a note asking what files I desired, and I gave you a list, stating that I would go through them on Saturday afternoon and Sunday; but no papers came to hand. Yesterday I asked twice for them, but without result, and I now ask again: When can I have them? The House meets in a few hours, and you presumably expect me to do in two hours what it has taken the Premier, your officers and yourself two weeks to do, namely looking through all the papers.

Yesterday I came into this House and gave the Minister for Lands notice that I would ask a question without notice; but the Premier refused to allow his colleague to reply to a question put straight to the Minister for Lands, and said he would not give the papers to me, and stated that I had first of all to prove my case, and that he then would place the papers at my disposal. I am now left with nothing else to do but to take one side of the case. I wanted to come into the House and say I had checked White's statements by going through the official files, for then I could have given the House a thoroughly unbiased opinion on the matter, or at any rate I could have given them the data from both sides, if the Minister had fulfilled his promise in laying the papers on the table. I cannot understand why the Premier of this State should stand up in the House and deliberately break a promise which one of his colleagues had given, which was recorded in *Hansard*, and which was confirmed by letter delivered to me from the Minister. That is of itself rather a grave charge to be able to level at any occupant of the Treasury bench. Charges have been made before that promises of Ministers have not been carried out. We have seen in other public matters that charges have been made in the country that Ministers' promises have not been carried out. Is it not reasonable to believe that many of these charges are correct, when members see that promises made in this House in open debate and repeated in a letter are repeatedly broken and trod

on by the Premier himself. Later on I will be going into the full details of the rabbit case in reply to the details which the Minister has given us this afternoon; but first of all I would like to most heartily congratulate the Minister on his feat of endurance this afternoon, although I cannot congratulate him in regard to the case he made out for the Government. I admire his close attention to the details of the two cases which he submitted, and we admire the way in which he weakened the case for the Government of the State in this matter. In regard to the Stock inquiry, I would like to take the House through some of the Minister's statements, and then at any rate as far as my charges against the Government are concerned, in support of the charges made by my leader I will sum up what I consider the position after listening to both statements. In regard to this inquiry the Minister states openly in this House that if a board were appointed consisting of one man nominated by Forrest, Emanuel, & Co., one nominated by the Chief Inspector of Stock (the challenged party in this matter), with an arbiter appointed by the Government, it would not be an independent tribunal and no account would be taken of the report which would be sent in by it. In other words, the Minister says that it would not be an unbiased committee. I would like members to understand that this is the Minister's opinion of a tribunal which the country otherwise would look upon as as fair as possible. The Minister, however, took good care not to touch on the subject of Commissioner Roe, and took good care not to mention that gentleman's name in connection with this inquiry. I would like to point out what did occur. First of all it was suggested what should be done. It was suggested in a minute from the Premier that certain individuals should be asked to go into the matter. The name of Mr. Morgans was first mentioned, and also the name of Mr. Loton in the Upper House. Mr. Morgans was written to, and upon the files appears his answer declining to act. Mr. Loton does the same. Afterwards the Premier puts a minute on the file saying that Mr. Roe should be appointed to act. A letter was written to Mr. Roe asking him to act. Mr. Roe stated his readiness to do so in



the letter read by the leader of the Opposition last night. The papers were sent to Mr. Roe's office, and they were on his table apparently under consideration. Without any rhyme or reason, for there is no trace on the files to show what cropped up, these papers were taken from Mr. Roe's office, and suddenly it was decided that the inquiry should be held privately in the Minister's office. The man then who was threatened with this inquiry, and who was to have serious charges made against him by a big importing firm against whom he was paid to protect the country, asked that the evidence should be taken on oath, and that notes of proceedings should be taken by Mr. Bull, the shorthand expert of the Supreme Court, and said that if the Government would not pay Mr. Bull he himself would pay him. Mr. Craig was denied counsel. A man advancing in years, an old man, had to stand in an inquiry with a Minister hostile to him from the start and with the Premier declaredly against him, if those files can be taken as true. That old man was supposed to go into that inquiry, denied counsel, denied having the witnesses put on oath, and denied the services of a shorthand writer to keep him informed as to what was going on; and at the end of his life he was to take his place against younger men putting him on trial. That is what is called an honest trial of Mr. Craig. Shame to any Government that indorsed the action of a Minister in a hole-and-corner inquiry of that sort! As was stated by the leader of the Opposition, we (the Opposition) are not advancing in our charge against the Government the contention or point as to whether Mr. Craig in his actions against Forrest, Emanuel, & Co. was right or wrong. We attack the Government on the rottenness of the inquiry they made into the matter, and I think that the country at any rate, when the public get the full details and read the speech of the leader of the Opposition, in which he made the charge that it was a prejudiced trial, will condemn the action against a man who spent his whole life in the service of the country, against whom not one single breath of suspicion could be raised, and against whom no one had anything but words of praise to say. Mr. Craig did more for the stock in this country than

perhaps any man in Australia, and is a man who, now he has retired from the service, can say that he left the stock in this country as clean if not cleaner than the stock in any country on the face of the world. This man was ignominiously kicked into the gutter. In this connection I would appeal to my friends on the Labour bench. We know the history of strikes in England and America; we know of strikes which have repeatedly taken place because certain unions considered that one of their members had been wrongfully dismissed from employment. I would appeal to Labour members to look into this matter and to go through these files before they give their vote on this motion, and then I would ask them, if this man appeals to us for protection, to say that he will not appeal in vain, and that we will grant him justice. At any rate, if my friend the leader of the Opposition occupies the seat that the leader of the House at present occupies, we know full well that an inquiry would be held instantly. If by some unfortunate circumstance the present Government remain in office, I then appeal to members of this House that, after they have heard the case put forward by the leader of the Opposition and by myself and by others also, they will see their way to insist on an independent inquiry being held into the Stock and Rabbit Departments.

At 6:30, the DEPUTY SPEAKER left the Chair.

At 7:30, Chair resumed.

MR. THOMAS (continuing): I have dealt with Mr. Craig's case in connection with the Stock Department. The Minister for Lands saw fit, in his reply to the leader of the Opposition, to go farther into the matter than was necessary for the charges made, and took this House into the full details regarding the charges made against Mr. Craig and everything in connection with that inquiry from start to finish. He took the House through the whole of the details of the report which he submitted to the Cabinet. Since he has gone into those details, it will be necessary for me to follow him into some of them, and to correct what I think may be a wrong impression some members may gather from his statements.

He tells us that, as far as the inquiry was concerned, he had no power to swear the witnesses, and for that reason the witnesses could not be examined on oath. We know full well the Minister for Lands has no power to administer an oath to the witnesses he was examining, and for that reason I charge him with being neglectful in the matter. I assert that he had no business to make that inquiry, knowing that he could not put those men on oath. He should have allowed the inquiry to proceed with Mr. Roe, who had ample time to attend to it. There was no statement made, as the Minister implied, that the inquiry was unfair, and that we practically charged the Minister with being dishonest in connection with the matter. As far as I can gather from the statement of the leader of the Opposition in regard to that matter, he simply charged the Minister with being the wrong person to inquire into the question, telling him he had no business whatever to undertake it, and that the Premier and Government had no right to allow him to undertake it, because it could not be practically an unbiased inquiry, seeing that the Premier had shown prejudice against Mr. Craig. It is on record on the file that Mr. Craig had pointed out to the Minister that as they were both implicated in this matter it was unfair for him to make the inquiry personally. As regards the charge—I do not know whether it was No. 2 or No. 3—about hay, in which matter a court case had taken place in Fremantle, I maintain that this charge should not have come under the scope of that inquiry held by the Minister. That had already been adjudicated upon. The Minister has spoken a good deal in reference to that matter, and if he believes what he told the House, I want to know if Mr. Fairbairn still occupies a position on the magisterial bench of this country; because if the Minister's statements were correct, Mr. Fairbairn should not remain on the bench. The Minister said that it was not an impartial trial. Mr. Fairbairn tried the case fairly, and imposed a fine of £25 on the man brought before him, or two months' imprisonment. We have been getting away from the point of that inquiry, or rather the original charges made against Forrest, Emanuel, and Co. We know

full well that a considerable amount of trouble had been experienced by Mr. Craig in dealing with that firm. From memory I cannot give all the details I would wish, and since the Minister's speech necessarily I have not had time to check with the files which I have already looked through, but at any rate the statements I make are in the main correct, although perhaps some of my dates may not be in sequence. The main charge going to be made against them was in connection with cattle which they landed at Fremantle and which had been sent on. There were other charges. Apparently Mr. Burnside thought that one charge would not hold water unless fresh evidence could be gathered; but there were plenty of other charges. After due deliberation the Cabinet and Executive Council decided that Forrest, Emanuel, & Co. should be proceeded against. Without any rhyme or reason as far as I can see the Premier places a minute on the paper that they shall not be proceeded against, but that Mr. D'Arcy Uhr, in Coolgardie, should be proceeded against in this matter. I assert that is where the original mistake was made. The case should have gone on as Mr. Craig asked against Forrest and Emanuel, the whole of the charges he levelled being dealt with. The Minister made a big point in reference to the permit, and brought in Mr. Nathan's name in connection with that matter. I interjected and asked him whether Nathan had sent a wire. We know full well that Mr. Nathan's evidence before Mr. Hopkins was totally contradictory to the wire he had sent his chief in reply to a communication Mr. Craig sent to him; so that I think we may entirely dismiss Mr. Nathan's evidence, and not take it into consideration for a moment, although the Minister made a strong point of it. As regards the request for the cattle to be sent back to Fremantle, that was not on account of tick, but because it was believed that those cattle had tuberculosis. I am not aware whether it was Inspector Weir or Inspector Stevens, but one of them examined the cattle and stated that he wanted about 20 of them turned back. They claimed that it was too late to do that, but they would see that these animals were weeded out before the cattle were sent forward to the fields.

The inspector said, "At any rate I want one weeded out." This one was taken apart and killed, and found to be full of tuberculosis, and I think that as the diagnosis was correct in that one case it is a fair inference that the rest of the 20 cattle had tuberculosis. At any rate the cattle went to the fields, and if there was a request to send them back, it was for that reason, and not because of the tick. I think Mr. Craig has been treated in a scandalous manner by the Government in reference to this inquiry. I do not intend to follow the Minister into any farther detail regarding stock, because if necessary other members on this (Opposition) side will deal with that, for between now and to-morrow they will have had an opportunity of going through the files to get exact dates of everything. As far as swine fever is concerned, we charge the Government with being negligent in that matter. We know that for some time after an outbreak had started here the present head of that department had diagnosed it as influenza. We know, because we have it on record, that Mr. Craig was the man who diagnosed that correctly, and, if his recommendations had been carried out, we should not have had the trouble we have had lately in connection with that matter. On the 22nd August the steamship "Wingfield" brought a big shipment of pigs to this State—some 400. The prohibition against pigs from South Australia dates from the 17th September. It is reasonable to suppose that this is the shipment which brought the swine fever into Western Australia, because we have heard hints in the papers and letters that when the swine fever outbreak was suppressed in South Australia the man where the outbreak took place had shipped a big shipment to some other part, presumably Western Australia. At any rate, if any of these 400 pigs were sick, it would have been shown in from one to three weeks, and those pigs then should have been thoroughly examined when they landed in Fremantle. But I would point out to the House—and Mr. Craig's case and Mr. White's case come into the matter here—that these officers had been doing their best to see that contracts were carried out. Mr. Craig was doing his best to see that the stock

was examined when they came into the country, but we know that examinations were made at 9 o'clock and 10 o'clock at night. If we find the head of a department now dismissed—and we know he is dismissed practically for harassing a big firm for breaches of the regulations under which that officer has to act—who is supposed to see that the regulations are carried out, finds that if he complains of people committing breaches of the regulations he is dismissed, then officers will not take too much care in examinations at Fremantle or anywhere else. That is where I bring the dismissals of Mr. Craig and Mr. White home to the Government. We cannot expect, if men without rhyme and reason are dismissed, that those who take their places are going to carry out their duty with due diligence.

MR. GORDON: Was Mr. Craig dismissed then?

MR. THOMAS: Call it dismissal, call it retirement, call it what you like.

MR. GORDON: Are you sure he had always done his duty?

MR. THOMAS: The facts and the figures have been placed before members, and I leave it to the House to decide whether he did his duty or not. We know that for 31 years in this country not a word has been said against him. The man has gone out of the service with an absolutely unblemished character. I do not know that anything was ever brought against him except that he has done his duty by insisting that firms should not break the law and should not carry on as the firm in question has been carrying on for several months. The Minister for Lands made a strong point of the fact that the revenue of his department was increasing. I give him all credit for the energy which he has displayed, but the credit for the way in which the land has been settled and the agricultural resources of the country have been developed are not due to the member for Boulder, but to the member for Northam, who initiated and put into force the liberal land laws we have in this country. The member for Northam sowed the seed, and the present Minister came in and displayed the utmost energy in the working of his department; but I object to that Minister claiming the whole of the credit when it is not due to him, except credit or the

energy displayed in carrying out the work initiated by the member for Northam. I wish, before proceeding farther, to make an apology in advance to the House. I have, of necessity, to go later on into the full details of the rabbit matter, because the Minister has seen fit to go into the fullest possible details of the question of the fence and dismissal of Mr. White; but I wish to leave that matter until the conclusion of my remarks on the general question. The next point I wish to touch on, and which I claim is a charge against the Government, is the question of the permanent survey made from the goldfields to Esperance. I do not want for one moment to touch on the merits or demerits of the question of the railway.

MR. GORDON: What railway?

MR. THOMAS: The Goldfields-to-Esperance line. I do not wish to touch on the merits of that railway, but to deal with the question of the survey. No matter whether there should be a railway from Collie to Narrogin or anywhere else, or a railway to Jandakot, the fact remains a survey was authorised by the House. I moved for a return showing the date on which the permanent survey of the Goldfields-Esperance railway was started, and I find it was started in May, 1902. The distance surveyed to 31st July, 1903, was 145 miles, and the Government anticipate the survey will be complete in January. The cost to the 31st July has been £5,105 9s. This amount includes wages, equipment, salaries, etc., of both trial and permanent surveys. The time occupied in surveying the railway from Southern Cross to Coolgardie was from 17th August to 14th October, 1894, and the survey of the Kalgoorlie-Menzies line occupied from February to June, 1896. The Southern Cross-Kalgoorlie survey took just over two months to complete. That was a distance of 110 or 115 miles, I think 110 miles, and that work was completed in a little over two months. The survey of the Goldfields-Esperance line, for a distance of 145 miles, has taken from May, 1902, to July 31st, 1903, that is practically 15 months, whereas the Southern Cross-Coolgardie railway survey took two months to complete. The Kalgoorlie to Menzies survey, and presumably that includes the survey from Coolgardie to Menzies, took from Feb-

ruary to June, a little over four months to complete, and the distance is known to everyone. The charge I make in connection with this matter is that the Government have been dilatory in carrying out the work which was authorised by Parliament. The charge I make also against the Government in this connection is that they have used over £5,000, and they anticipate spending altogether about £10,000, money which they have taken from loan funds to be spent on what they know to be and they believe to be a political survey. I will not touch for one moment on the merits of the railway or anything connected with it, but I say if we take £10,000 from the Loan Estimates to be spent upon a survey, the least we should expect is that due diligence should be exercised in carrying on that work. If the Government did not believe in the justice of the work, they should have ceased incurring any farther expenditure in that matter. I made a charge once before here, that either the Government had used this survey as a political job, that they had issued secret instructions to delay that work, or that the surveyors employed by the Government on the job were utterly incompetent to carry out the work. I have spoken to many surveyors on that point, and they have told me that there should be no difficulty whatever in the work being completed in six months. We know that it has taken 15 months, and it is going to take another six months to complete. I object to work of this sort being done in the way that it is being carried out by the Government of the country; and I repeat the charge which I made previously in that connection, that either the Minister concerned issued secret instructions to delay the work because it was a political job, or that the surveyors employed on the work are incompetent to carry out the instructions given. The leader of the Opposition has dealt fully with the Point Sampson Jetty business, and has criticised it almost as a job. He has made a direct statement in connection with the Minister for Works in that matter, and he has pinned the Minister down to the fact that he let a contract for £16,000 odd and told the House that the total cost was £12,000 odd. That is a charge deliberately made by the leader of the Opposition, and

must be deliberately answered by the Minister for works when he replies.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Have no fear on that score.

MR. THOMAS: In regard to the Attorney General's Department, I have given notice to-day that I shall move that certain papers be laid on the table of the House, showing the number of briefs given to members of the legal profession to appear on behalf of the Crown in any case, arbitration or inquiry, also the fees they have had for pleading in chambers or giving opinions. I make this statement knowing full well what I am speaking of, because I have consulted some of the best authorities in this country. The payments made to Mr. Pilkington, who is a partner in the firm of James and Derbyshire, are absolutely illegal. I say, without fear of contradiction, the majority of the work since the present Administration have occupied the Treasury bench, the majority of the legal work done on behalf of the Crown has been given to Mr. Pilkington. If briefs go outside, they should be fairly distributed amongst different members of the profession. I have followed the cases in the courts, and we know that Mr. Haynes is a K.C., and he is accustomed to a large amount of work in the courts; he conducts big cases. Mr. Harney is a rather prominent member of the bar, but I have never seen Mr. Harney's name in connection with any Crown case except perhaps on one occasion, and I have never seen the name of Mr. Haynes at all. There are many other names of leading members of the bar which I could give who have never received a brief from the Crown.

MR. MORAN: The member for South Perth says "Wait until they get into Parliament"—of course on the Government side.

MR. THOMAS: I say unhesitatingly the Government have no right to brief Mr. Pilkington in the way they have done since Mr. James has been the Premier of this country.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: What is the inference?

MR. THOMAS: Exactly what I said. I stated that Mr. Pilkington was a member of the firm of James and Derbyshire, and Mr. Pilkington has had more briefs given to him than all the other legal

firms put together. That is the charge I make, and I am not afraid to make it. I have asked for a return to show—

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I only wanted you to make the charge, not by inference but straight out.

MR. THOMAS: I do not think I minced the matter at all. I stated before that Mr. Pilkington was a member of the firm of James and Derbyshire. I stated that Mr. Pilkington had received nearly all the Crown briefs, and it is not necessary for me to say what the inference is. I make the deliberate statement that Mr. Pilkington is a member of the firm of James and Derbyshire, and has received more briefs than perhaps nearly all the rest of the profession put together. In regard to the Occidental Syndicate, I do not intend for a moment to go into that matter except on the general charges we make against the Government for maladministration, and we must of necessity lay stress on the main points, scandals in some cases and maladministration in others, brought before the House during the last two sessions of Parliament. We are not in possession of all the files of the department. True it is that some Ministers place all the files at the disposal of members when they are desirous of looking through them in connection with various matters; but I say that during this debate papers have been refused. I asked for some papers to be laid on the table, but hardly any that I want have been laid before the House. In regard to the Occidental Syndicate, we know a statement was made publicly and we know articles have appeared in the *Morning Herald*, and I do not think there is any member in this House who has given such close attention to that matter as the member for the Murchison (Mr. Nanson), and I cordially invite that member not to allow the debate to close without putting before the House a clear statement in reference to the Occidental Syndicate, and giving a summing up of his inquiry and the articles which he has written in the *Morning Herald*. I think it is necessary that matter amongst others should be investigated by us, and it should be borne in mind by members when they are called on to give their vote. I may say in connection with the Occidental Syndicate that practically

a vote of want-of-confidence was passed on the Government of the country by members in another place; and if the members of another place saw fit to pass a vote of no-confidence in the Government over that matter, surely the allegation is serious enough to be taken into account when we are asked to vote on the present motion. I cordially invite the member for the Murchison (Mr. Nanson) to give the House the full facts and figures in connection with that syndicate before this debate closes. As to the faulty administration of the Government, I feel that we need turn to only one little matter in order to prove in a few words the charge that the administration has not been what it should have been, and that the Government have failed to properly grasp opportunities. I refer to the Midland Railway question. For three years the Government have been in power. During the first session of this Parliament we were told that they intended to deal with the Midland Company at an early date. From that day to this practically nothing has been done except the subsidising of the "Julia Percy" to carry goods from Fremantle to Geraldton. Opposition members have time after time charged the Government with dilatoriness in connection with the Midland Railway question, and I think the charges have been sheeted home; because, after three years of waiting, we are no farther forward than we were when the Ministry took office, and boasted that they would soon have the matter settled. As to their vaunted claims of economy in administration, I do not think we need pay much attention to them, because we have seen the Estimates, and I for one fail to perceive any move on the part of the Government to carry out the promise that they would economise in the public expenditure. The leader of the Opposition dealt pretty fully with that matter, and gave instances to prove his case. I come to the civil service. Every session for the three years they have been in power the Government have told us they intend to deal fully with the service. The House went so far, by cancelling the Public Service Act, as to give the Government authority to do as they liked in that regard; but the Government have been continually doing nothing. They appointed a Royal

Commission which is giving us progress reports; and we have had it hinted by the Treasurer, the Premier, and other Ministers, that very little attention is being paid by the Government to the reports of the Commission, which are costing the country thousands of pounds; and during the debate on the first item of the Estimates the Premier stated that when the present Royal Commission have finished their labours the Government will appoint another, and that Ministers will refuse to take the responsibility of classifying the service. The Minister for Lands has told us that we have an absolutely contented civil service; but for the seven years during which I have been in this country, this is the first administration which has necessitated the calling of a public meeting to ventilate civil servants' grievances. If we have an absolutely contented civil service, if the officers are satisfied with the present occupants of the Treasury bench, why have those officers to hold a public meeting to protest against their treatment by the Government--a meeting which the newspapers reported as being one of the most enthusiastic ever held in this country? Why have civil servants to proclaim their grievances and demand their rights from the Government? I say the Ministry have absolutely shirked their duty in that regard; and so long as we allow them to occupy that bench they will shirk responsibility, and will not carry out the instructions of the House, given them time after time. We charge the Government with maladministration; and moreover, it was their own policy to classify the service and make it contented, proper, and efficient; but they do nothing to give effect to that policy. One other matter in connection with the Stock Department before I pass to the rabbit question. The Minister saw fit to drag into the debate the report of Mr. A. J. S. James on liberating tick-infested cattle in the South-Western districts. I consider this transaction one of the most scandalous I have ever come across since entering Parliament. These papers have just come into the House; I have roughly gone through them; and I think members will agree that the treatment meted out on this occasion was as scandalous as could be

meted out to any man. The file shows, roughly, a letter of 17th March, 1903, written to Mr. A. J. S. James, a veterinary surgeon, by the Minister, reading as follows:—

1. Tick-infested cattle are now allowed to land at Fremantle in quarantine, and are there confined in quarantine yards until slaughtered, except certain portions of the consignment, which may be trucked to the Eastern goldfields for slaughter. 2. By the files you will notice it is desired that the store cattle in each consignment should be distributed to small holders in the South-Western portion of the State. Is it in your opinion safe to do so? What safeguards do you recommend? 3. There is an objection to dipping whole consignments at Wyndham (we have no dip there at present), because the fats are slaughtered on arrival here, and it is not thought wise to put them through a dip which may cause them to fret and waste considerably. 4. We have a dip at Fremantle; and I therefore think before reporting on the files and answering the above queries it would be advisable for you, in company with the chief clerk, to visit the quarantine yards and dip at Fremantle, making a careful inspection of the same. You could then in your report submit any proposals you deem expedient bearing on these arrangements. 5. Will you please treat this as strictly confidential and not give any information that is likely to make your mission known?

Mr. James makes his inquiries. He is instructed on the 17th March to commence the inquiry, and he makes two reports on the 20th; and I think I am safe in saying that although I am not a stockman I have read the greater part of this information before. Looking through the file I come across an account: "Dr. to A. J. S. James, 220 Beaufort Street." The dates are from the 17th to the 20th of the month, and the charges are as follow: "Railway fare to Fremantle, 1s. 3d.; cab fare to quarantine station, 15s.; report on bundles of papers re ticks, and as to the advisableness or otherwise of forwarding Kimberley cattle for distribution to small holders after passing through quarantine, and the trucking of undipped cattle to the Eastern Goldfields, £5 19s. 9d.; total, £6 6s." This is, in the opinion of the Minister for Lands, a celebrated expert, who is called in to give a strictly confidential report to Cabinet on one of the biggest questions this country has ever had to settle. We find that this celebrated expert charges at the rate of £2 2s. a day for his service; and I leave members of the House to

judge what sort of an expert he must be. As soon as this finds its way to Mr. Craig's department, Mr. Craig writes a minute:—

I know nothing of this account, and cannot understand its being brought to me to certify. However, I should very much like to see Mr. James's report, as I am always anxious to learn something fresh in connection with the tick trouble. Can you obtain it for me?

The Director of Agriculture replies to the Chief Inspector:—

As the hon. the Minister has approved of the account being paid, you had better certify to it. In the meantime I will endeavour to obtain the report referred to.

The next minute, to the Minister, reads:—

The appended account has been paid by the Stock Department. As you will see by the Chief Inspector's minute, he has expressed a desire to see Mr. James's report. I should be glad if you would forward it to him, as we cannot have too much expert evidence on this subject.

The Minister then writes to the Director of Agriculture:—

The report referred to is an independent and confidential one, obtained for Cabinet. It deals with (a.) The risk of admitting tick-infested stock after dipping; (b.) The safeguards desired to avoid any risks to clean country, based on Eastern experience.

I have said this gentleman is such a great expert that he is content with about £2 a day for the service of confidentially advising Cabinet on an important matter; and I will show what is this celebrated Eastern expert's experience of which he is possessed, and to which the Minister refers in his minute to the Director of Agriculture. The wires I am about to read are contained in this file, which file was presumably submitted to this expert for his report; for he charges in his account for looking through a bundle of papers, and deals with a number of matters mentioned in the file. The first wire is dated the 29th August, 1903, when presumably the said Mr. A. J. S. James was seeking a billet in the Stock Department. It is addressed to F. R. Gordon, Esq., Chief Inspector of Stock, Queensland:—

Require inspector for Kimberley with experience of tick and dipping cattle. Can you recommend Arthur James, Texas, in your employ? Reply confidential.—J. M. Craig, Chief Inspector of Stock.

To that the reply is:—

Do not know Arthur James Texas. Is there a mistake in name?

The next is a copy of wire sent from Perth on the 1st September, 1902 :—

Wire refers Arthur James of Texas, Queensland.—NORMAN MALCOLM, for Chief Inspector of Stock.

The following reply was sent :—

Brisbane: James not employed in this department. Try New South Wales Stock Department.—H. R. GORDON, Chief Inspector of Stock.

MR. MORAN: Why did they send the wire to Queensland?

MR. THOMAS: I do not know. This is the most important one. They found out their man, and sent a wire from Perth on 3rd September, 1902, to Mr. Alex. Price, Chief Inspector of Stock, Sydney:

Require inspector for Kimberley with experience of tick and dipping cattle. Arthur James, of your department, applying. Can you recommend? Reply confidential.

This reply was then sent from Sydney to the Chief Inspector of Stock here :—

Inspector James has not, that I am aware of, any experience in the direction you require, nor would I recommend him.

It was in September, 1902, that Mr. Arthur James, a cousin of the Premier of this State, put in an application to be allowed to go into the department. Mr. Craig then said "I will make proper and stringent inquiries"; and he wired to the Chief Inspector of Stock in New South Wales, who replied that he was not aware of Mr. James having any experience in the direction required, nor could he recommend him. I claim that that is open to only one construction; but in the face of that, in March of this year the same man, who in the meantime had landed in this country, was employed by the Minister of Lands to give a confidential report.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: And paid six guineas.

MR. THOMAS: I maintain that a charge of this sort is a serious charge against a Minister. The Minister should have found out whether the man was competent, and if he had looked into the files in his office he would have found the confidential report I have read, saying that the man knew nothing about the work, and that so far as the Inspector of Stock in New South Wales was concerned he could not recommend him. Yet in the face of that report, Mr. James was employed to give a confidential report on this matter, and

these wires which should be claimed to be confidential were standing upon the file and were given to this man, Mr. Arthur James, when he was asked to report on the bundle. He was asked to report on a communication from his previous chief in New South Wales, and on condemnatory wires in regard to his capabilities. Now in regard to the rabbit question, of which the Minister has made so much, it will be necessary for me to deal perhaps somewhat in detail with the direct and deliberate charges which the Minister has made against Mr. White and the other officers of his department in connection with this rabbit question. I am going to back up to the fullest in my power the charge—[MR. BURGESS: The bad advice you gave Mr. White]—made by the leader of the Opposition of criminal neglect on the part of the Government in dealing with this question. I have no desire at this stage to weary the House with the history of the rabbit question in Western Australia. I simply want to deal with the question since the present Parliament opened; but prior to that date motions were moved in Parliament in connection with the matter. Mr. Hassell on 3rd August, 1893, moved the adjournment of the House, and read a letter from Mr. Beere giving particulars as to the existence of rabbits and advocating a fence six miles east of Eucla. Traces were then reported at Malliby shed, 90 miles east of the border. On 28th July, just prior to the motion for adjournment of the House Mr. Hassell received a wire from Mr. Beere stating that they were 36 miles from the boundary. Mr. Canning urged that immediate action be taken, but Sir John Forrest deprecated any scare, just as the Minister for Lands now deprecates any scare. On 6th August, 1894, Mr. Hassell asked several questions as to the rabbits approaching Eucla. On 19th October, 1896, Mr. Harper asked a question as to what steps were being taken. Sir John Forrest was not prepared to answer. On 23rd October, 1896, Mr. Harper moved :—

That in the opinion of this House it is desirable that immediate steps should be taken to resist the invasion of rabbits from the Eucla district.

Mr. Richardson, then the Minister for Lands, advocated the expenditure of £50,000 in erecting a fence. On 8th



December, 1897, Mr. Connolly, who was my predecessor as member for Dundas, moved :—

That in the opinion of this House it is of the utmost importance that immediate and rigorous steps be taken to stay the inroad of rabbits along our southern coast.

Mr. Throssell deprecated needless expenditure or excitement over the matter. On 24th August, in the same year, the Hon. Mr. Burges asked a question in another place. On 19th October, 1898, money was provided on the Estimates to start the work of dealing with the rabbit question, and Mr. Throssell then said that the present officer recommended cats.

MR. BURGES: Tell us who it was?

MR. THOMAS: If you are referring to Inspector White, you are mistaken.

MR. BURGES: I know who it was.

MR. THOMAS: I do not know. Mr. White had never given evidence in this State, and had not been employed at the time.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Be fair. It was not Inspector White; it was Mr. Craig.

MR. THOMAS: I do not care who it was. Whether it was Mr. Craig or not, cats were recommended. On 9th August, 1899, the Hon. C. A. Piesse asked an important question, and the Government owned then that traces of rabbits had been found at Mt. Ragged, 330 miles from Albany, and it was stated that the Government had sent out 200 cats which were liberated. On 6th August the Hon. C. A. Piesse moved :—

That in the opinion of this House the near approach to the more settled portion of the colony of the dreaded rabbit pest necessitates the adoption of most stringent measures to prevent farther incursions.

He advocated individual fencing. On 13th November, 1899, in discussing the Estimates Mr. Throssell stated that an inspector of rabbits had been appointed at a salary of £200 per annum, that the rabbits had not increased, and that the State cats were doing excellent work. I may explain that these were domestic cats turned out in the middle of the desert in a dry season, and that thirty of them died in one day shortly after they were landed. The Estimates of 1899 showed that £700 was voted for this rabbit pest, and Mr. Throssell did not anticipate that this huge amount would

be required. Mr. Septimus Burt advocated that £50,000 should be put at the Government's disposal to go on with the matter straight away. On 28th August, 1900, Mr. Hassell asked a question about rabbits being found at Norseman. On 19th September, 1900, Mr. Illingworth asked a question, and he was informed that 2s. 6d. bonus was given for each scalp, and that the inspector was empowered to appoint men to exterminate any new colonies. On 25th September, 1900, the Hon. C. A. Piesse moved :

That in the opinion of this House the Government should take prompt measures to prevent the farther advance of rabbits into this Colony.

On 31st October, 1900, Mr. Mitchell asked what steps were being taken. Mr. Throssell stated that lightly equipped parties were being organised. On 14th November, on the Estimates, the urgency of the matter was pointed out by Mr. Phillips and Mr. Piesse, and at that time Mr. Throssell made a statement to the House, in which he said that Inspector White recommended that a fence 1,000 miles in length, to cost from £80,000 to £100,000, be immediately put up. On 27th November, 1900, the last that was done before the present Parliament assembled, the Hon. R. G. Burges moved :

That in the opinion of this House an honorary Royal Commission should be appointed to inquire into the rabbit question, to consider the best means of effectually dealing with the rabbit plague, and to devise some measures to stop their advance into the settled portions of this Colony.

That Commission was appointed, and presumably sat during the recess. At any rate, early in the history of the present Parliament we had the report laid on the table of the House. The report was dated 21st March, 1901, and was presented a few days after the House met. We are now going to see what our present Government has done.

MR. DIAMOND: No; that was the Leake Government.

MR. THOMAS: It is all the same thing, Leake or James Government. At any rate, I will give the late Mr. Leake this credit, that he did try to do something. On 28th June, 1901, in the Governor's Speech it was stated that the incursion of rabbits from the eastward

had unhappily commenced, and that the House would be asked to consider the best means to check it.

MR. DIAMOND: Is the motion before the Chair the delinquencies of the present Government? I have listened to a long disquisition on the enormities of the Forrest and Throssell Governments, and now we are to have the Leake Government. Are we discussing the enormities of the past Government, or of the present Government?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. member is quite in order.

MR. THOMAS: Perhaps the member for South Fremantle will want to make a few more speeches during the course of this debate. I give these dates because they can be looked up in *Hansard*, and I want to show the tremendous number of times this matter has been raised in the House. On 3rd July, 1901, Dr. Hicks asked a question whether any communication had been entered into with the Pasteur Institute. Mr. Leake said on the same date that the Government would ask for £30,000 authorisation to construct a fence. In the first speech I made in this House I made a lengthy statement as to the incursion in my own constituency, knowing all the details of those who were affected at the time, and I urged the necessity of acting immediately, pointing out that it would be too late to wait until the rabbits were reported at Broome Hill or Albany, and I said that when they were there the Government would put up a fence, as the present Government are now putting up a fence to keep the rabbits from running back. On 11th July, 1901, Mr. Harper moved:—

That the Government be authorised to carry out the recommendation of the Royal Commission to report upon the best means of stopping the incursion of rabbits.

Mr. Hastie wanted the motion postponed. Mr. Butcher supported the motion. The debate was adjourned, and on 18th July Mr. Illingworth strongly supported the motion, and urged the necessity of taking immediate and prompt action; and again on that date I urged the necessity of taking prompt action, and I advocated also that immediate provision should be made for settlers to have netting granted to them to fence their own holdings. Mr. Nanson also urged action being taken. Mr. Hopkins

said the fence proposed was too costly; that the annual cost would be roughly £12,500; also that the fence would not be an asset and would not enhance the value of the country. He moved an amendment to stop the work and advance the money to settlers. He said he did not see any reason for this wild rush to complete the fence, and he concluded his remarks with the words, "There is no guarantee that the rabbits will ever come here." Mr. Kingsmill supported Mr. Harper, and Mr. Gardiner. The late Mr. Leake, in his speech as leader of the Government, said he assumed the House gave the Government full power to act. He had £30,000 I take it from the loan Estimates and £12,000 from the ordinary Estimates, and he took it that the House gave him power to spend more money if required in order to cope with the pest. On 31st October, 1901, I asked a question. On 6th November, 1901, I asked if rabbits were 63 miles east of Burracoppin and 130 miles north-east of Ravensthorpe. On the 16th January, 1902, I asked if rabbits were west of the proposed fence, and the answer was that they were reported near Nannine. On the 30th January I spoke about fencing for settlers, and asked whether rabbits were west of the proposed fence. It was denied that they were west of it. On the 3rd February I again asked *re* subsidiary fence. On the 11th February Mr. Burges asked when tenders were to be called for in order to cope with this matter. On the 19th February I asked a question *re* subsidiary fence. On the 28th January Mr. Hopkins again opposed this fence. On that date I spoke strongly, and again on the 30th January. On the 6th August I urged that a cable should be sent and that we should get fencing anywhere possible in order to make a start. On the 24th July I asked a question. On the 27th August Mr. Butcher asked an important question. The reply he received was that since June, 1901, the amount expended over the incursion of rabbits was £3,276 3s., the salaries to officers £1,676 16s. 11d.; amount expended in fencing material £1,367 12s. 7d., amount still available £9,054 17s. 11d. That was in August, and I had already months previously asked the then Minister for Lands

whether they would not hurry up and get all the fencing available. We find that during that time the Government spent only £1,367 in acquiring rabbit-proof fencing. On the 9th October, 1902, Mr. Harper reported to this House that the Government, to whom full authority had been given to spend as much as they thought fit, and who were not to be bound exactly by the report of the Royal Commission, had been successful in completing 12 miles in 12 months. On the 12th November, 1902, the second reading of the Rabbit Pest Bill was moved. On the 18th November, 1902, Mr. Moran pointed out the necessity of doing something on that date. Mr. Hopkins again spoke against the fence, and reported to the House he knew from actual experience that rabbits would climb trees six feet high. That was his expert knowledge. On the 9th December Mr. Gardiner stated that a contract had been let for 120 miles north and south to the coast from Burracoppin, and that he was calling for tenders for 500 miles of netting. In the first session of the present Parliament prominent attention was given to this matter in the Governor's Speech. It was thought seriously of at any rate three years ago. As far as I could see the Governor's Speech in the last session of Parliament contained no reference at all to this important question, and when we met this session, when we had made so strong a case last session urging the necessity of prompt action on the part of the present occupants of that bench, we found that the incursion of rabbits in the State of Western Australia was thought so little of that no mention was given to it in the Governor's Speech. I referred to the subject in strong terms in my speech on the Address-in-reply. On the 20th October Mr. Wallace asked for a map showing the route and length of the fencing erected to date, together with a plan or description of fence and cost per mile. The Minister replied that he would put the same on the table, but so far as I have been able to see the information asked for is not yet available in the House. We gave them full authority to do anything they liked to deal with this pest, and I think I have shown in quoting those dates that the matter has not been allowed to rest for more than a

few days at a time in this House, and that the Ministers have been constantly urged to take prompt action, and questioned as to the progress made. A statement was made by the Minister in this connection that it was not necessary for us to worry the House over the matter, and that he did not see any cause for alarm. I do see cause for alarm. The Minister read a letter from Talbot, Budge, and Anderson, dated the 14th November, in which they say they are going to take up some land if they can get it on reasonable terms. He leads the House to infer that this is the station which Mr. White referred to a little while ago as having been abandoned, and in relation to which I repeated Mr. White's statement when speaking on the Estimates a fortnight ago. This matter is becoming so serious that I have received two letters, from which I will quote extracts. I may add in explanation before I do so, however, lest a wrong construction may be put upon it, that it is impossible for these men to have read the reports of the debate or to have heard anything about the debate which took place in this House a fortnight ago when an alarm was raised about the near proximity of the rabbits; so that the debate would not cause them to write these letters. Messrs. Talbot, Budge and Anderson write to me from Mandra Bella station :—

We would respectfully call your attention to the high rents now being paid by us and other pastoralists in this district. Since the ingress of the rabbits the carrying capabilities of the country are reduced by quite half.

This shows the rabbits are coming here, because settlers are using the fact as an argument to get rents reduced. The letter proceeds :—

In the Fraser's Range district the rents are £2 10s. per 20,000 acres lower than here, and we respectfully ask you will bring this matter before the House. The rabbits are in millions, destroying the cotton and other bush sheep and cattle are dependent on during the summer months. We respectfully ask that you will give this matter your early attention.

I also received a letter from Mr. Brookes, of Balbinia, in which he states that the rabbits are giving him a tremendous lot of trouble, and he will have to take up twice as much country to carry the number of sheep being carried at the present time. He asks me to bring the

case before the Minister so as to get the rents reduced at least a half. The case I referred to last week about people leaving their station was that of Graham. Mr. Anderson has a large butchering establishment, and he tells me that within a year or two the rabbits are going to clear him off that station, and he will not be able to run any cattle or sheep. He has his own sheep and stock, and he would be able to make plenty of money in two or three years, but he is satisfied that then the rabbits will have become so numerous that the station in that district must be abandoned unless fencing is adopted. If they had land, would it be possible to drive their stock to market, when the whole country between that land and the market had become devastated?

MR. GORDON : If he makes that money, he can afford a fence.

MR. THOMAS : What is the good of a fence? I referred to fencing the other night. I have information given to me that where it is possible to run a few sheep to the acre you can erect a rabbit-proof fence because it may pay. But I appeal to any pastoralist, where you have five or ten acres to the sheep—[MR. BUTCHER : Twenty]—would he be mad enough to fence such land as that with rabbit-proof fencing? What is happening now is only a forerunner. These men are asking for a reduction of rent. We have seen the letter which the Minister referred to, and which, had I not replied, would have placed the House under a misunderstanding. It is stated in that letter that this man was applying for fresh country. He is, however, doing so in order to keep alive the sheep which he has at the present time. It is only a question of a year or two. As everyone knows, the Eastern pastoralists asked for a reduction of rent, and walked off. Graham has walked off, and all the rest of the pastoralists in that district will have to do likewise. The rabbits are coming ahead. They have come west of the fence. I ask, what is going to happen in the North when the rabbits get to the pastoral country? And what is going to happen if they get to the Kimberley stations? I stated the other night that rabbits had been found in the 18th parallel in Queensland. If they are there, we do not know but that they are in the interior of South Australia. We

have heard the Minister, to show how seriously he takes the position, telling us to-night that he intends putting up other fences, and to make a survey away up North. I suggested the other night, and also several days previously to the Premier when I went through the map with him, that the fence should go in from somewhere south of Broome, be carried to the South Australian border, and then up to join the sea on the north to protect that stock country. We now have the Minister telling us with seriousness that he is going to make a survey, and when the rabbits come close enough the Government will take into consideration whether they will put a fence up. Unless they erect this subsidiary fence, get all the fencing available in any part of the world, and put as many men on as can be obtained for the purpose, inside of a year or two they need not trouble to do anything at all. The charge we are levying in this matter is that the Government have, during the last three years, been criminally negligent in dealing with the rabbit pest. Unfortunately, the Minister, instead of dealing with this question generally, dragged in all the details in connection with Inspector White's case, which necessitate my fully dealing with the defence of Mr. White. I do not intend to read the whole of the letters, but to read such letters as I think justify me in my defence of that dismissed officer. The Minister has taken us into all the details of those files, and of necessity I must follow him into these details. First of all I will take the question of the rabbits being west of the fence. We have heard the Minister telling us that when he came into power he heard rumours from different people that rabbits had been reported west of the proposed line of fence, and that in order to verify this statement he intended to send out a man of independent means to give him a confidential report as to the truth of the statements that rabbits had been found there. If he had looked at the files he would have found any quantity of statements regarding this matter. I note in this connection the Minister, after seeing fit to level all the charges that go through the papers, does not stay in his seat to listen to the defence of the other man. I can only draw one conclusion

from that, namely that he knows he has done wrong in dismissing Inspector White, and he is afraid to sit in his place to hear me repudiate the charges against Inspector White. I do not intend to read any letters that I do not consider absolutely necessary, but I will give the Minister the dates of the letters, which he should be able to find on his files. I would like to remind the House again that I have been without the official files to go through, and I have had to wade through two large books in order to pick out my case amongst a mass of private letters which do not concern this question. The Minister has moved that certain papers do lie on the table, and has placed on the table rabbit files; but I find on looking into them that there is scarcely one file which bears on the question. I have not the files here to see if the letters which I am going to quote are there or not. I know that the Minister has owned to the fact that some of the reports which Mr. White has written are not on the files and are not in his possession. On 25th July, 1901, a nest of four rabbits was obtained at Ghooli, about 60 miles east of starting point near Burracoppin, and White told the Minister he might expect rabbits on the fence line within 12 months, for during the last two years they had travelled about 70 miles a year. On May 4 Sub-Inspector Geier returned to Burracoppin after having killed two doe rabbits at Nannine, evidently taken there when small in a box, as a box was found near the place with battens nailed across it. On June 30 or July 1st traces of rabbits were found at Emu Rock, about a mile and a-half west of surveyed line; also careful examinations of country made. I will give the pages of the book, and I think the House will take them for granted. I shall read the more important letters, and I do not intend to go into the details of every letter. When I give the actual pages of the books members will understand that the letters do exist in the books from which I have taken my evidence. I think the House will grant me the privilege, and not expect me to weary myself or members in quoting unnecessary letters. I shall confine myself purely to the dates. Reports were sent to the department which should appear on the files, but many I fear do not. These reports

are given in the books which I have here in pages from 126 to 130. On 14th August no fresh traces at Emu Rock, page 143. On 16th September Sub-inspector Geier caught one rabbit at Darling Range. Report rabbits close to fence at Starvation Harbour. On 17th October White wrote Larkin to keep a sharp lookout for rabbits at Burracoppin, as Graham had reported them 45 miles west of fence at Glenelg Hills. On September 26 Sub-inspector Geier caught four rabbits (two bucks and two does), both heavy in young, at Glenelg Hills, about a mile west of surveyed line. On October 30 Geier, Dunn, and MacMenaman inspected country at Emu Rock and west along Broome Hill road. Rabbit killed in Maritana street, Kalgoorlie, on this date. On November 17 Geier and Dunn report on country around Emu Rock; report *re* traces seen by Graham in October. On January 15, 1903, rabbits reported west of fence eight miles from Ravensthorpe. On February 6 rabbiters Dunn and MacMenaman caught a rabbit near Ravensthorpe. On April 27 White found numerous traces half a mile to a mile and a half east of line, about opposite the 131-Mile post. April 28, rabbits at Starvation Harbour. On August 14 rabbits were caught by Dunn at 134-Mile post, two trapped, 200 baits taken in one night; no more fresh tracks. On August 26 report as to existence of rabbits west of fence in several places. I do not think it necessary to read these others, but this letter-book can be taken as evidence, as it would be taken in any court of law. Members may trust me that I do not read what is not in the book. I want to show that this man, who the Minister said was so entirely negligent of his duty that it was found necessary to appoint Benzley from Boulder to go out and report that rabbits existed, was doing his duty. Mr. White wrote to the Secretary of the Rabbit Department on 26th August as follows:—

I regret to say that since my last visit of inspection I find the rabbits have made great headway, and traces are now visible all along the completed portion of the eastern side, and there are, unfortunately, traces of small numbers in places to the westward which have evidently got through the gaps before the fence was erected. These fresh traces are at 38 miles, where Sub-inspector Geier caught three and Sub-inspector Warnecke one several

months ago, and there are evidently a few still remaining. There are also traces of two or three west of fence, opposite 43-Mile Rocks and 76-Mile (King Rocks), and also along the Gap uncompleted between the 128-Mile and the 136-Mile, and at the 134-Mile Rabbiter Dunn caught two within 100 yards of the line, the skins of which I have submitted to you to-day. There were also old droppings found at the 114-Mile Rocks and 92-Mile Emu Rocks and to the west of there about seven miles. At these two latter places I made a very careful examination, as I had the rabbiters trapping and poisoning here several months ago, since which time I can find no traces although they are numerous outside the fence to the east, and two have been caught in the 92-Mile netted trap. One was also caught at the 114-Mile trap the night it was completed. I have left Sub-inspector Geier and Rabbiter Dunn to trap and poison at those places where fresh traces exist, and also to examine the country carefully from north to south, running parallel with the fence and distant from it to the west about 20 miles. I would strongly recommend that two more men be immediately put on to assist in the extermination of those to the west. I have also to report that in no instance so far has any animal dug under the fence or got through below the netting and out the other side. Although the grass is green and plentiful the rabbits will take phosphorised pollard pretty readily, and it would be advisable to provide a small breast plough or two for running small furrows for the distribution of the poison as being much more speedy and effective and economical than distributing broadcast or digging furrows with spade or shovel.—J. W. WHITE, Inspector.

We find in that letter of 25th August, 1903, he reports that in nine places rabbits exist west of the fence, and he asks the Minister to be allowed to appoint two men as rabbiters. He gives the names of these men to the Secretary of the Department when he is in Perth, and a recommendation is sent in by Mr. Wilson to the Minister that these two men, Reynolds and Dryhurst, shall be appointed. White receives this letter on 3rd September :—

Pending farther inquiries on the part of the Minister, the appointment of the two rabbiters Reynolds and Dryhurst has not been approved by him; all other appointments are approved.

The point I want to get at in that connection, to defend White against the charge of laxity, is that as far back as August it was necessary to do something by putting men on to try and poison and trap the few colonies of rabbits that existed on the western side of the fence, but the Minister refused White the right to put the men on. White wrote a re-

port giving the men's experience, telling what they could do, and these men were fully qualified as White had known them from ten years' experience in South Australia; but the Minister writes that these men are not to be appointed. Afterwards the Minister sends out Benzley, this man of independent means, and Benzley comes back and confirms the report which Mr. White had all the time placed on record.

MR. BURGESS : As to the fence too ?

MR. THOMAS : I am coming to that; I am simply dealing with one charge at a time. Benzley reports eleven places where rabbits existed. Inspector White had reported nine of these a month before. The Minister has been telling the country what a magnificent fellow Benzley was; yet this man had camped on the top of rabbit droppings and knew nothing about them. This man Benzley who had such a vast amount of experience had to be taken by Geier and Dunn and shown where traces of rabbits existed, or he would never have been able to find them for himself. I think I have shown that White was not negligent in the matter at all. The Minister, after having refused to put the two rabbiters on at the request of White, stands up and takes credit for his prompt action, and I notice he has put on six rabbiters since Benzley came back confirming every word White stated. On October 13 boundary-rider McPherson also reported by letter addressed to Secretary Wilson and handed by boundary-rider Stewart to Mr. Benzley to give to Mr. Wilson when Benzley was sent south with special despatches from Minister; but Benzley did not deliver the letter to Secretary Wilson with other despatches at Jerdicutup Creek, but left it back along the line at one of the boundary rider's camps; so Secretary Wilson told White that he did not get the report until on his way back to Burracoppin. This would be the tenth case in which rabbits had been found by boundary rider MacPherson, and he reports it in a letter addressed to the secretary, who is on the track farther down. This letter was given to Benzley to hand to Mr. Wilson, but Benzley leaves it on the track, and Wilson does not obtain the letter until he comes back. Members can draw their own inference. Benzley

knew that nine cases had been reported, and did not want the tenth to be taken from him, so he leaves the letter on his road down, and secretary Wilson does not get it until on his way down. On 8th October White reports—and this is rather an important letter—as follows:—

Having just returned from a visit of inspection extending from Burracoppin to 180 miles south, I beg to report as follows:—I find the rabbits are rapidly increasing right along the barrier fence, and I also find that owing to my recommendations not having been acted on promptly by putting on competent men who were available with plant on the spot at a salary of £4 per week to endeavour to eradicate the rabbits to the westward of the barrier fence.

That amount should be £3 10s.

I now find from information supplied by Sub-inspector Geier and Rabbiter Dunn that three colonies have travelled in their opinion still farther westward, and in my opinion rabbits may be expected to be reported at either Narrogin or Broome Hill within 12 months from date. I also beg to report having passed the camp of a man named Benzley and his assistant at the 80-mile post (Wheeler's Down-fall) on the 25th ultimo on my way south and passed their camp again on the 3rd inst. on my return at the 91½ mile Emu Rock or 11½ miles further south than when I passed down. These men reported they have been engaged by the Minister to verify or otherwise my statements as to the existence of rabbits to the westward of the barrier fence. I regret that this should have been considered necessary, as any report, statement, or recommendation I have ever made to the Department I am quite prepared to prove. In this particular case the two rabbits caught in the gap in the barrier fence, and the skins of which are now under your table at the Stock Office, Perth, were trapped by Rabbiter Dunn in the presence of Sub-Inspector James, whom you may personally interview on your visit of inspection south, and I think I shall be able to prove to you by ocular demonstration that my report is correct. I farther wish it recorded (as it is now publicly known) that I enter my protest against the absolute waste of money in the employment of incompetent men like these in destroying rabbits, and who, I understand, are engaged at a salary of £13 10s. per week, more than 50 per cent. above the amount at which competent men are and can be employed at. As an instance of the utter incompetency of these men I have to report that they pitched their camp at Emu Rock (91½ miles) within 12 yards of numerous old rabbit droppings and buck heaps and lit their fire within four yards of same and were camped here for three days constantly walking over the droppings and traces of rabbits and yet failed to see them until Rabbiter Geier and Dunn showed them they were absolutely standing on rabbit droppings. I am also informed that the ferrets

with which these men are supplied cost £2 each, whereas they might have been purchased by an officer of the department at current rates, viz., 30s. per pair. It is also a known fact that ferrets are a failure in eradicating rabbits, and, moreover, where the rabbits, as in this case, are not burrowing or living in dugite holes, but simply living in the bush and travelling, ferrets are useless, the only likelihood of destroying being by trapping and poison. That ferrets are useful for purposes of sport where holes or warrens abound I will admit, but the department aims at extermination, not sport. In addition to this there is considerable discontent amongst the employees of the department at these men receiving a much higher rate of pay than anyone in the service, and in many cases not doing half the work.—J. W. WHITE, Inspector.

I showed that in the case of Mr. Craig a man was called in to give a confidential report to Cabinet—a man who, in the opinion of the Chief Inspector of Stock for New South Wales, was utterly incompetent; and we now find that a man of independent means is sent out by the Minister to give a proper report, and camps for days on rabbit droppings and does not know of them till they are pointed out to him by the rabbiters of the department.

MR. BURGESS: It is one man's evidence against another's.

MR. THOMAS: No; we have additional evidence. If the hon. member needs farther details of the evidence, he will have them in a moment. On the 31st October Inspector White writes to the Minister:—

As advised by telephone, I arrived here this morning and now await instructions. I enclose herewith an extract from *Kalgoorlie Miner* of yesterday.

He goes on to report about rabbits being down east in large numbers. I have already informed the House of that report.

MR. HOLMES: Was that written before Mr. White was dismissed?

MR. THOMAS: Before Mr. White resigned. He resigned on the 2nd November. This is the last report he writes.

MR. HOLMES: Two days before he resigned?

MR. THOMAS: Yes; but in it he gives the Minister some specific information, at the Minister's request.

MR. HOLMES: I thought your charge was that the Government "sacked" White?

MR. THOMAS: The hon. member cannot have been in the House during the speeches of the Minister for Lands, the member for West Perth, or myself, or during the Minister's speech to-night. It is well known that Inspector White resigned on the 2nd November, and that the Minister dismissed him on the 7th. The member interjecting will have ample opportunity when I resume my seat of going farther into the matter if he likes. I am dragged into too much detail as it is. I wished to deal generally with this question; but the Minister drags into it every detail of these files, which he would not give me an opportunity of going through. He drags in all these details of the charges against Inspector White; and having the information now in my possession, I must, if I can, refute those charges in detail which have been made in detail. The next charge is as to adverse reports being made on material used in the fence or during its construction. On the 16th September, 1902, there is a letter from White:—

*Re No. 11, Black wire.*—This appears to have been in stock a long time, and badly coated with tar; and a good deal of it is rusted, and with tipping on the sand and rain and dew for a couple of nights, I am afraid a lot of it will be unsuitable for putting into fence. It was taken out of the hold dry, and was lying on the top of a cargo of timber, so could not have got damaged there.

On the 6th October Inspector White writes to the secretary, on Mr. White's arrival in Perth, concerning the unsatisfactory quality of No. 8 galvanised wire for the coast end of the fence; and again on the 9th December Mr. White reports as follows:—

The wire is terribly bad. At least one-fourth of the strained wire is broken. Wire is too hard, and will not even stand the spacing or turning to tie, and there is no doubt will be a constant source of trouble in repairing. Alexander tells me he thinks the standards useless. He says the twist in them reduces the strength, and a strong wind will bend them. You cannot drive them in the soft sand on the beach without their doubling up.

On the 15th January, 1903, White writes:—

Reynold's contract would have been completed long ago were it not for inferior wire.

On November 18th, 1902, he writes:—

The netting they are now using (I presume Lysaght's) is very inferior; and I have no hesitation in saying that the first wire netting

is worth at least £2 per mile more. There is a want of finish about the rolls, and also considerable waste, the netting not running the full width; and in some cases 15 or 20 feet and even more has been cut off each roll, and left lying, as it is not the width—42 inches—and it is impossible to make a good job of the hanging, no matter what time is taken over it. If you remember, I told you when returning from Fremantle last week, that I thought the rolls in places were not the full width; and now it comes to be hung this is easily detected. It is questionable whether it is policy to have the other 83 miles, or in fact any more of it, of this sample; and it would be as well to advise Lysaght at once of the inferior condition of same.

On the 26th August, 1903, White writes again:—

*Re netting.* I found in some cases that the netting was not the required width, being in places from 1 to 1½ inches too narrow, and in one or two instances even more.

I should like to state that in the first session of this Parliament the present Treasurer (Hon. J. Gardiner) and I fought hard in this House for a better system of buying goods at Home and in the State, so that there might be closer inspection by a proper tender board. But now it is rather sickening to find that, presuming goods are carelessly passed by the famous Mr. Carruthers in London, we have no one at Fremantle who will faithfully inspect them. The netting to complete this fence is passed at Fremantle; and we find that Inspector White, who is travelling night and day, is left to discover that the netting supplied to the contractors is totally unfit for the purpose. I do not propose to deal with the question of subsistence and travelling allowances, because I claim that the facts of the case show that White on the face of it should be paid the money he asks for; and I may point out that in one of the Estimates which I saw there is a column for salary and a column for "allowances if any." I find the salary is stated at £350, and there is no mention of any allowances. But as to travelling and subsistence allowances, White has been travelling night and day. I have here a complete list of his travels from the 28th January till the 24th October, 1902, during which period he travelled with his own plant, which he paid for, with his own fodder, and with black-bays whom he paid, 12,498 miles, and with Government camels 350 miles. This mileage does not include rail, coach, or



boat journeys. Let any member work out the daily average, and he will ascertain how hard this man must have worked in order to cover so much ground. If he did nothing else but travel, he did a fair day's work each day in getting over so much country.

MR. FERGUSON: Through what firm did the fencing wire come here?

MR. THOMAS: I do not know; but the material was passed by someone in Fremantle, and White reports dead against it; yet the Minister says White has been absolutely negligent, has put bad material into the fence, and has never protested.

MR. FERGUSON: Did the wire come from London or from Sydney?

MR. THOMAS: Possibly some came from each place; but I do not know. But whether or not Mr. Carruthers passed the wire, it was inspected at Fremantle, and was sent to the fence in such a state as to be unfit for putting into the job; and on account of that the completion of the contracts was delayed. Now in regard to Warnecke, I have a whole series of dates. This man got appointed in January, 1903. This is another charge which the Minister makes, both in regard to Warnecke and James. I have looked into the files, and find that this man Warnecke, who I am credibly informed was dismissed from the police force, was recommended for this job on a minute from Hon. Walter James, and was appointed on 18th January, 1903. That is, he received his official appointment from Inspector White to act as his agent, as White was compelled to do under the regulations. White then wrote to him a full letter of instructions, telling him exactly what he had to do, to pay particular attention to these contracts. He went to work, and his work apparently was satisfactory. By the way, the Minister promised to give me the date of the letter in which White reported so splendidly on this man. I have asked three times for that letter, but have not got it. On 16th March, in a letter written to Warnecke, Inspector White tells him to hold himself in readiness to remove to Dwyer's contract, No. 4. On the 18th of same month Mr. White replied to a letter on the condition of the fence written by the secretary in relation to standards being bad and bent,

and sent on to Warnecke for a report. The secretary writes and considers the explanation satisfactory. On 17th April Warnecke was appointed as agent on Dwyer's contract, No. 4, and White gives him full instructions to pay particular attention to this contract. On 30th April White wrote to Warnecke saying that the work was entirely unsatisfactory. On 19th May he writes in exactly the same strain. At this stage I would like to state that the Minister carried me into these details, but he is afraid to remain in the Chamber and face the answers I am giving to deliberate charges made against Inspector White. The Minister compels me to weary myself, and unfortunately to weary exceedingly my hearers who follow me into these close details, in order to reply to these deliberate charges he has thought fit to make against one of the most competent officers the country has had to serve it. On 25th June Inspector White wrote to the secretary of the Rabbit Department:—

*Re contract 4, being carried out by J. F. Dwyer under the supervision of Sub-inspector Warnecke, I have to report as follows:* When travelling through from Burracoppin north to the 250-mile post on the 30th and 31st ult., I inspected the work being carried out under above contract, and regret having to report that in some respects the sub-inspector was carrying out his duties most unsatisfactorily. The greater portion of the fence was completed as far as the 46 mile-post, and although I found a few defects, such as incorrect tying or attaching of netting, a few posts badly cut at the top, and the trench in a few places badly sunk (the seven inches required), still there appeared to be no serious defects more than required to be pointed out to the sub-inspector (which I did) on arrival at the contractor's main camp, where I found the sub-inspector located on the 31st ult. I found, however, after leaving the camp and proceeding north, that upwards of five miles of posts had been laid along the line, 75 per cent. of which I should not hesitate for a moment to reject, being from four to five inches too short and badly cut at the bottom and to a point instead of square. To square these posts properly so as to make them fit for erection would farther reduce their length from two to three inches, so that when erected they would not be in the ground above 12 or 13 inches instead of 21 as is required. You may possibly consider that I have condemned these posts prematurely, as in all probability the sub-inspector would have condemned them before erection; but when I tell you that I was assured by Sub-inspector Warnecke on more than one occasion that he

was passing all posts at the stump and before carting, you will see either that his statements to me are untruthful, or that he has allowed them to be carted knowing they were unfit, and when once erected would entail endless time and expense in examination. I found also that Sub-inspector Warnecke was boarding and feeding his horse at Dwyer's main camp, which in itself is unsatisfactory. I have, therefore, in the interests of the department to recommend that Sub-inspector Warnecke be suspended, or dismissed, or given the opportunity of taking on the position of boundary rider, and that one of the other inspectors be transferred from the southern contracts to take on Sub-inspector Warnecke's duties.

That disposes of the Minister's charges in connection with Warnecke. I now come to the appointment and the work and dismissal of Sub-inspector James.

MR. HOLMES: What happened to Warnecke after that?

MR. THOMAS: I have not the least idea of what happened to him afterwards.

MR. HOLMES: He was sacked?

MR. THOMAS: Yes; he was dismissed.

MR. HOLMES: Why did you not say so?

MR. THOMAS: I thought everybody knew it. The Minister told us he was dismissed, but he was not dismissed for anything the Minister found out by means of secret inquiries behind his back, but on the straightforward reports given in official reports to the Minister by Inspector White. Now as far as Sub-inspector James is concerned—

MR. MORAN: Which James?

MR. THOMAS: This is not the cousin; this is the brother—on 23rd March, 1903, general instructions were written to Sub-inspector James, and in addition Mr. White drove down 38 miles along the fence to point out any defects in it, and told him that if there was anything he did not understand he was to ask about it; and then he sent Warnecke down another 12 miles to where work was going on to give James a fair start. White then appointed Sub-inspector James as agent under the Act on 23rd March, 1903. This will come in directly, if members will keep it in mind, when I come to a farther stage in these proceedings. Inspector White then tried to go north 250 miles with horses, but was compelled to return. He filled in progress payments after coming back to

Perth on the definite instructions of the secretary, and upon the reports which he had in his possession from James, one or two of which I will afterwards read to the House. He then returned to Burracoppin and got on to the contract on 18th April. On the 19th he sent for James. This was the first time he had seen the fence after James was appointed, and he reported to the secretary of the department in his official report of the trip as follows:—

After leaving Glenelg Hills I carefully inspected fence erected along contract No. 3 since my last visit, and found the trenching as passed by both inspectors Warnecke and James very unsatisfactory. I am writing the former, and have interviewed the latter and impressed on him the absolute necessity for seeing the conditions were carried out to the letter in accordance with the specifications. I found that the rain had washed away the earth from the trenching for upwards of two miles between the 52 and 53-miles and between the 53, 54, and 55-miles, in addition to a mile reported by Laffer between the 46 and 47. In some places the trench was not more than four inches deep, and had the earth been properly rammed or tramped down, in my opinion there would not have been so much washaway. On arrival at the 64-mile I found about a mile of the trenching open, which had been inspected and passed that day by Inspector James, and in some places it was not three inches deep, and the netting being turned up, and this in good sinking. I camped there that night, and next morning walked back along the line with the sub-contractor, and told him he would have to go right along and complete the work properly, and I sent a native on ahead into King Rock to tell Inspector James to come out and meet me at Wheeler's Downfall, 180 miles, that same afternoon. I also found the straining posts being cut under size, and the same being tarred just when being put into ground.

MR. MORAN: That is very like Mr. Benzley's report.

MR. THOMAS: The letter continues:—

I pointed out all these, and told Inspector James to be firm and insist on their being done properly, and believe he will in future attend to it. The fencing in other respects is satisfactory.

He goes on to give full technical details that one does not want to read, and he also goes on to deal with rabbit traces, and says that the standards are unsatisfactory. It is a full detailed report of his inspection. At any rate, I would like to impress this upon members in connection with the James matter, in connection with which a big charge was made by the Minister. Inspector White put him on on 28th March, and then went north.

On 18th April he came down again, and found that the work on the fence was unsatisfactory, the work supervised both by Warnecke and James. He brought James in, gave him a severe rap over the knuckles, and asked him to insist on the work being done better, and wrote to the department to that effect, saying that he thought that after what he had done the work would be satisfactory. On the 30th April Inspector White wrote a letter to Cocking, the contractor, on the condition of the fence :—

I found, on coming down, that the men hanging the netting were scamping the work terribly, some of the trenching in soft sand not being four inches deep, and the netting turned up. I have instructed the sub-inspector to insist on the conditions in every case being carried out to the letter, and must, in future, be personally assured by having the trench opened that it has been sunk to the full depth before I can sign any more progress payments, as I find the sub-inspectors have not seen that the conditions are complied with. I also found the earth has been shovelled in loosely and not rammed or even tramped down, which defect has caused over two miles of the earth to be washed out, which would not have occurred in many places had the trench been the proper depth, and filled and rammed properly. Strainers to wire being dumped in, tarred anyhow. The tar put on cold instead of hot, and not allowed to dry even for a second. I consider 15 miles of the work will have to be gone over again. Please communicate with Larkin at once.

THE TREASURER: Was a copy sent down to the secretary?

MR. THOMAS: Here is a man in the bush, and how is he to make a copy of that correspondence?

THE TREASURER: Would he not report that to the department?

MR. THOMAS: He has reported this fully. On the 27th April he reported to the secretary. I have said that he talks about James. He reports the work as unsatisfactory. On the 30th April, three days afterwards when he has a little more time to spare, he writes to Cocking, the contractor, pointing it out, but he had previously given the whole of the particulars to the secretary. Then he writes to the contractor saying he will insist upon this contract being carried out to the letter. On the 19th May he writes to James *re* strainers, and on the 14th July he writes a letter *re* local timber for the gates. On the 12th July, when presumably things were going on all right,

he had written. He is away travelling. He had been up to Starvation Boat Harbour, away to Esperance and to Norseman to make reports, and he had to go to Coolgardie to buy camels, and then to go north, doing some thousands of miles of travelling. He gets to the fence on the 18th August, and when he has travelled down along the fence he finds that everything is entirely unsatisfactory. On the 19th August he writes a letter to Sub-inspector James :—

I find the standards right along the line very badly erected. Wherever the ground is at all hard, instead of a hole being dumped down with a bar the standards have been driven in on the slant a few inches below the surface and then bent so as to appear in an upright position above ground.

I take it the hon. member will not dispute that these letters were written, as he can see I am reading from a copying book. One can take that as evidence.

I also find the strainers in many cases are two to four inches too high out of ground, which means they are not down the depth, as being cut by the cut-man they are hardly likely to have been cut too long. The netting in many places is not down four inches and in several places I opened turned up.

He goes on to make detailed complaints of Sub-inspector James over this matter. On the 26th August he writes a letter to the secretary of the department in which he states :—

*Re* barrier fence between Starvation Harbour and Burracoppin. Having just travelled this line I beg to report as follows :—Coastal netting hanging contract, Chapman's: I find the work has been completed satisfactorily, but as some of the posts are badly bored (the third wire being too high from the ground), the hanging, though effective, is not as neat as it should be. Coastal fencing contract No. 2, Messrs. Walsh and Genily's: This work has also been completed satisfactorily with one or two exceptions. Some of the small sandplain scrub is left which should have been cut, and one of the floodgates is very roughly fitted. The kangaroos are very bad along these two sections (45 miles), and are continually breaking the wires and occasionally tearing the netting ties of the top selvage, and it will require constant supervision for some time to come. *Re* contract No. 3 (H. Cocking's), I regret to say that this work is not proceeding at all satisfactorily, and as the time for completion is considerably—

Passing over a line I cannot clearly read, the letter continues :—

—fine of £10 per day for every day he is behind time after that date, as up to the

12th inst. there was 32 miles of the contract uncompleted. In addition to the contract time being considerably overdue the work has been badly executed. Iron standards, where rock has been met with, instead of being let into a hole jumped down with an iron bar, have been either cut off or bent over, and are in many cases not in the ground (perpendicularly) more than six (6) inches. The strainers in some instances are too high out of the ground, and I therefore fear not the required depth. Re wire netting, I found in some cases that the wire netting was not the required width, being in places one to one and a half inches too narrow, and in one or two instances even more. I also found it in places not more than four inches below the surface of the ground, and where such was met with and the netting turned up, not a sufficient quantity of stone or gravel placed on top of it. The tying has been in places carelessly done, and the ends of ties not turned in. The floodgates in nearly every instance are hung too low below the surface of the ground, and the posts to which they are hung are not properly filled around and packed with stones. The three large and two small gates are badly hung and will all have to be altered and fitted more closely. Holes have also been dug out for filling in the trench with on the clearing on the eastern side of the fence six to nine inches deep, and will afford every inducement to rabbits to start burrowing unless filled in.

This is the important point of the letter :—

In view of these above discrepancies I am reluctantly compelled to suggest that Sub-inspector James be transferred to some other work than that of inspection, as he has evidently not displayed that firmness in seeing the work was carried out in accordance with the specifications that he should have done. Before, however, taking this step I should much prefer if you could personally inspect the work and decide as to whether the above decision is warranted.

This letter is dated the 26th August, and is sent to the secretary of the Rabbit Department in Perth. It is an official letter from White, practically asking in a diplomatic way for the dismissal of James. Knowing the position, he did not like to ask for the man to be dismissed, but he put it that way. He regrets to say that James is totally unfit for that position, and he asks for that man to be transferred to something else. I have been unable to get the files; for 12 days I have been asking for the files, and have written letter after letter, but have not obtained the files yet. I cannot get them, and I suppose I never shall.

MR. MOHAN : Part of that letter is on the file.

MR. THOMAS : I am inclined to think I saw it on some files the Minister has on the table there. I know it is not on the files I have here. These are files dealing with about the year 1890 or something of that sort. Mention was made by the Minister for Lands of a man called Crane, and he urged that if Inspector White objected to this man James it was very strange that when the man Crane was sent out to go on the job as sub-inspector, he did not then send James away to some other work, dismiss him, and put this man Crane in his place. I must have mislaid the paper, but I can quote it practically from memory, though I would like to have turned up the letter in connection with it. I have read the letters here and have seen everything in connection with this matter, but I would say that this man Crane was sent out with definite instructions to have Dwyer's contract under his careful supervision, after White writes in to the department asking for Warnecke's dismissal. Warnecke is dismissed, and a man, I think called Macpherson, is sent out. He had to supervise the contract Dwyer had in hand north of Burracoppin. Definite instructions are issued to White to put Crane on to relieve this man who was a boundary rider, and who was only temporarily employed. That disposes of what the Minister has to say about Crane in this connection. I have dealt with the appointment and dismissal of these two men, on both of which accounts serious charges have been made by the Minister, and I now get to White when he reaches the fencing. Apparently the man has done nothing, but the Minister for Lands has found out everything during the few short weeks he has been in the department. On the 5th February, 1901, White starts to advocate the fencing going up. On the 6th March he is called to give evidence before the Royal Commission, of which Mr. Bush was Chairman. I will only deal with some of the questions that are put to him. Question 585 :—

Is it your opinion that unless the rabbits at present here are checked, they are already sufficiently numerous to form the nucleus of a devastating pest?—Yes. I assume that in

five years the Balladonia and Fraser's Range stations will have to be abandoned unless they are fenced, and rabbits will be fairly thick about Perth at the rate they are travelling.

Unless they are stopped?—Yes.

Question 656 :—

Have the parties sent out by the Government accomplished the object in view?—Answer: They are checking them, but will never eradicate them unless enclosed in a small radius. I pointed that out at the time these parties were appointed, and I also pointed out what it had cost the adjoining States.

By Mr. Richardson: Is it your experience that the increase of rabbits invariably results in the increase of wild dogs?—Answer: Undoubtedly. I had a very strong experience of that. There was some country held on the Murray for 20 years before the rabbits got thick, but after the rabbits got thick the country had to be abandoned, and it was not an uncommon thing to see three or four wild dogs together. The pup can catch a young rabbit, and can get enough blood out of it to quench his thirst and keep him alive for a few days.

By the Chairman: Do you think this State is adopting, at the present time, the best methods for checking the rabbits?—Answer: I do not think so; I should think the only method is fencing.

Could you advise us as to the line of fence, at all events in the Southern portion of the State, to check the immediate advance of the rabbits?—Answer: I should recommend starting somewhere about Starvation Harbour.

Could you advise us as to the line of fence, at all events in the Southern portion of the State, to check the immediate advance of the rabbits?—Answer: I should recommend starting somewhere about Starvation Harbour. Personally, it would suit me if it went the other side of Esperance, but I could not recommend that; the first time I went down to about Point Culver I found there were rabbits there; and I thought it would be advisable to strike across country 55 miles to Balladonia, but in coming back I found rabbits along the route. I recommended that the line should then go from Fanny's Cove, then along the railway line, because it could be kept in repair so easily. My object in doing that was to protect the agriculturists and small settlers in the country. Now the rabbits have got so far that I think the fence should be erected, starting at Starvation Boat Harbour. There are some rich mineral fields there and good agricultural country.

By Mr. Wittenoom: Where is that?—Answer: Down by the Phillips River. There is some good garden land there, about five or six thousand acres, enough to keep the population going in vegetables and hay.

By the Chairman: Let us have your opinion?—Answer: I suggest that you should start from Starvation Harbour, and if you run it from there you would have to keep to the

back of a range of hills, and you would get good fencing country. I have been out there.

It would be all good fencing country?—Answer: Yes, and you would only have about a mile of sand hills at Starvation Harbour. You would meet a few sand hills further on; it is sand plain country a little west of north in about that direction. That would run you to a good deal north of Coolgardie.

By Mr. Loton: Where about do you cross the railway line?—Answer: You cross it to the east of Southern Cross about 10 miles; thence running north to about five miles west of Mount Jackson.

That is as far as you could advise?—Answer: I could not advise as to what the country is like there. I have not been through that. With the object of saving expense I recommend that.

You only care to advise as far as the railway?—Answer: As far as the railway.

By Hon. R. G. Burges: Have you ever been over that line of country from the railway?—Answer: No; I have only gone back 50 miles from the coast. It is only with a view of saving expense I recommend that. I could not give an estimate of the cost of fencing without seeing it, and I do not think anyone could. There may be a scarcity of timber.

He was then asked some hundreds of questions about it; but the gist of the matter is this, that he tells them that the only thing he can suggest to cope with the pest is to fence, and they must go right through. Then he was asked a question :—

Have you had any experience of losses (your own personal losses) from rabbits?—Answer: Yes; on the Murray, in the hundreds of Lindley and Eba. There the rabbits were blocked on the east side by the Murray. Then, again, we had at Overland Corner 600 square miles of pastoral country, and the rabbits were blocked by the Murray. They ate everything edible for sheep; ate back for 90 miles. Then they got back into a better country into Eba and Lindley, and they ate that out. You would see grass waving three feet high. You would go up there a day or two afterwards and you would see it was as bare as the road. They had eaten it out straight off the face, just as though you had cut it off with a scythe almost. There would be a few stalks. Those coming behind would finish them.

By Mr. Loton: They are numerous?—Answer: I have poisoned 2,000 at a small dam with these sandalwood trees or sugarwood trees in one night.

By the Chairman: Do you think that in the past the people of Western Australia have been fully seized of the national danger to which this State has been exposed through this incursion of rabbits?—Answer: No; I do not think they have recognised what it has caused people in other States. I do not think they have had an opportunity.

Do you think the people in this State are fully alive at the present time to the danger to which this State is exposed?—Answer: They are beginning to wake up now, but it will be too late if they do not do something very shortly.

That is the first time Mr. White started to urge fencing on the Government. Then on April 1st, 1901, the Government said they did not recognise the importance of it, and he then points out that the Government must do something.

MR. BURGESS: There must be a mistake.

MR. THOMAS: He is examined by the commission on March 6th. Then he writes a letter, for he is an inspector of the department by this time. He had given evidence before the commission of which Mr. Burgess was a member, and he writes a letter on April 1st. Lest members should be misled by an interjection of the Treasurer, I may say the elections did not take place until April of that year, and nothing could be done until Parliament met, but something could be done by the Government as a start. Both Houses authorised the appointment of the commission, but Parliament had to wait until the commission reported, and until Parliament had voted the money. On May 13th White asked to be allowed to remove the parties from rabbiting on the extreme east in order to cut a line from the coast to the railway. On June 26th he writes a letter, and he has gone on writing from that day to the present urging the importance of carrying on the fence at a rapid rate. After strong recommendations the House gave the Government £30,000 to carry on the work, and gave the Government a free hand also. I would like to say a word about the fence to correct the Minister, who stated, in speaking the other night, that the wire netting in places was only two inches under the ground. Inspector White reported the same thing. But the Minister tells us that he himself knows everything about this matter; that he has given it study, and he recommends the House what to do to deal with the question. He says there are wooden posts every 200 feet and no iron standards in between; that the wire netting is only fastened on to the wires. This shows that the Minister has been badly advised or

not advised at all by someone in his department when he says that posts should be erected 300 feet apart to carry the netting, for that would not be a satisfactory fence. I do not suppose anyone is fool enough to think it would be. I may tell the House that in this fence at every 100 yards there is a straining post of wood, and that straining post is to be not less than 10 inches in thickness, 3ft. 6in. in the ground, and four feet out of the ground. Every 12 feet iron standards 1½in. by ½in. are erected. Where there is soil, a trench has to be dug seven inches deep; it is a triangular trench towards the east, so that the netting can be dropped into it six inches deep and properly rammed. There are three lines of wires, one eight inches above the ground, the next 14 inches, and the next 14 inches; and the next one is a cattle wire 10 inches above that. On to the top wire the netting is tied every three feet; on the middle wire it is tied every four feet, and on the bottom wire every six feet. That is done regardless of the straining post. It has been stated by the Minister that one fault he had to find with Inspector White was that in the straining posts holes were bored through the centre: nothing of the sort. Instructions were given by Mr. White and by Mr. Wilson, and it was agreed by everyone that there should be a hole bored as near the side as possible, the wire passed through it and around the post. That is how the fence is being done. Where rock is struck it would be an absurdity to blast the rock to put the netting down, and that is where the Minister is wrong in some of his information which he has given to the House. The Minister stated that the netting was not two inches below the ground in some places, and that it was lying on the ground in other places. I admit that. Where there is rock it is no use blasting out the solid stone to put the wire netting into the rock. The specifications distinctly state—and the Minister evidently by his remarks has not read the contracts or specifications—I have them here; and the specifications state that in places where rock lies close to the surface and cannot be removed by pick and shovel the wire netting is laid on the top of the stone and then rubble placed on the top

of the wire for four inches. The wire is laid on the top of the rock and four inches of rubble are put on top to keep the wire down on the rock, and an extra piece of netting is put on the top straining wire—the cattle wire above—which makes a better fence. As for the standards being cut, Inspector White has reported time after time. Members have heard it recorded in some of the letters which I have read to-night, in which Inspector White says in a letter to Cocking that there are 75, or 35 per cent. of the standards cut. The charge has been made against White that he allowed some of the standards to be cut. He did allow some of the standards to be cut when on the rock; but that was done after consultation with Mr. Wilson and the contractors, and everyone else. It was agreed that where there was solid rock, instead of blasting the rock it would be better to drill a hole into the rock one foot deep and put the standard into the hole for one foot, and cut off nine inches of the standard. But the standard was never to be less than one foot in the rock. Those were the instructions given in the letters which White wrote to James and Warnecke. White lays particular stress on the fact that when the standards were to be put in a hole in the rock, these men were to see that each standard went down 12 inches; but he allows 9 inches to be cut off. That is fixed on as a more satisfactory way of carrying out the job. In regard to the statement that some of the standards were less than 12 inches in the rock, some of the letters show that Inspector White inspected some of the standards and found, by pulling some of them up, that the holes were not 12 inches deep. There had been defective supervision on the part of James and Warnecke, which led to their dismissal. Reports were sent in dealing with faulty standards, and then the Minister gets up in the House and charges White with being responsible. As to the progress payments, a few moments ago I read a minute giving the amount of travelling, apart from coach, rail, or boat, which would run into thousands of miles, done by the inspector which showed that White had travelled over a thousand miles.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: To Esperance?

MR. THOMAS: Yes. If he was at Starvation Boat Harbour he had to go to Esperance, because that was where his headquarters were. He was instructed to keep his headquarters in Norseman. That brings me to a point which I am thankful to the Minister for leading me to. Originally Inspector White received £200 a year, but he was not expected to devote the whole of his time to the work. He was to make occasional trips to report on the rabbits east of Esperance, and to keep the Minister in touch with the progress the rabbits were making, and the destruction of them. Then White was transferred to Norseman where he had to make a separate home for himself, and he received an increase from £200 to £350 a year. And yet the Government claim that White was paid to keep his plant going, though he has as many as twelve horses of his own. He was to keep these in fodder out of his salary of £350. When receiving £200 a year he had to go for occasional trips only; but when transferred to Norseman he had to devote the whole of his time to the service. As regards the progress payments, he was travelling all over the country, and had to depend on sub-inspectors, as is shown by a file I asked for and have not received—a most particular file dealing with the progress payments, in respect of which the main charge is laid against White. The Minister says that the progress payment authorisations have to be signed. Both White and Wilson signed some of them on the sub-inspectors' reports. Wilson, when asked to explain, says that he must take his sub-inspectors' reports. But this is the sort of report which came to Inspector White:—

Sir, I beg to report fence complete 152M, stands 150½M, wired 150½M, strainers 150M. Strainer holes are, however, down to 147M, and erecting will start to-morrow. Owing to difficulty with camel men over carting them, gates only arrived to-night. Am putting two flood-gates in gully at 150½M (about).

That is signed Fred. James, sub-inspector. Another report reads:—

Fence complete, 143M., standards 139, ditto wired 139½, strainers 135½: large gate, one at 144½M.; small gate, one at 156M.; flood gate, two at 150½M. (about).

The report continues, giving particu-

lars of the work, which is stated to be progressing satisfactorily. Then James writes again on the 2nd May, that "the trench is now satisfactory." White was then travelling with horses, and was at a point 250 miles north of Burracoppin when this letter was addressed to him, and when he came back to Perth he had to sign for the progress payment. James's letter continues :—

After the heavy rain last week I found that a big rush of water runs off the rocks and down the gully at the 79M., and we will have to put six flood gates at least across it. I met Mr. Cocking on Saturday last at the 65M., but he did not stop but went on to 79M., where Mr. Larkin is camped. Material is not arriving fast enough, and there was a stretch of six days and not one team of camels came down. I hear the camels have been over the fence at the 58M. and broken down two panels. I don't know how to get at them, as they keep away from the fence if any one is about. I shall tell Laffar to try and catch them. Shall tell the Afghans when I see them that they will have to pay for repairs and are liable to be fined. One team of camels arrived yesterday with standards. Fence is netted to 72M. Standards to 74M. Wired to 73½M. Strainers up to 77M. Clearing, 88M.

The sub-inspector sends in these full reports; and if Mr. White is not on the job the contractors cannot be waiting while the inspector is travelling to other jobs. The inspector must sign for progress payments on the reports of his sub-inspectors, who are presumably competent men appointed by the secretary for the department. I cannot go through these contracts in detail, nor the progress payments in respect of which the Minister has charged Mr. White with neglect, for I have received the files too late. Those payments I have mentioned were signed for at times when Mr. White was travelling; therefore when he comes to Perth, if Wilson will not sign for these payments, Mr. White has to do so, because there is no option. I know that Wilson instructed White that he insisted on having these signed for. There is another letter from Sub-inspector James, dated the 31st May, 1903, to Messrs. Cocking and Co., No. 3 contract :—

At the request of Sub-contractor Hewitt I beg to state for your information that excepting gates the fence has been inspected and passed by me to the 80-Mile post.

Even if White did not feel inclined to sign for the progress payments, I think

the contractor could claim them when he receives such a letter from the sub-inspector, to the effect that the work is satisfactory. Here is a similar letter from Sub-inspector Warnecke, dated 2nd March, 1903 :—

I beg to state that Mr. W. Hewitt has completed 20½ miles of strainers, 19½ miles of standards and wire, and 13½ of wire-netting, with the exception of about nine miles of top wire, which he is waiting for, which I have passed.

I should like to show what Mr. White had sometimes to put up with when he went north. I know he put it on record that he protested against being asked to pass any progress payments for sinking a well. Here is his written statement :—

Well-sinking contract. Only one tender was received for this, that of Contractor Dwyer. Prices: Trial shafts, through soil, £3 5s; through rock, £7. Cutting down, through soil, £2 10s.; rock, £4. This tender was not accepted. It has since been arranged for Contractor Dwyer to sink a 4ft. x 4ft. well at the 90-Mile, at £3 15s., through soil, and £8 through rock; the well to be fitted with the necessary doors, etc.

Inspector White, in addition to his numerous other duties of which this can be taken as a fair sample, reports as to Contract No. 6, Burracoppin :—

The reports received of the advance the rabbits are making towards the Western Division render it advisable that as soon as you can reasonably arrange it, you should proceed to make an inspection of the country along the fence-line from the 250-Mile peg north to the end of the surveyed line, so as to enable the drawing up of specifications for fence erection along that portion.

The other night the Minister blamed White for trying to go north with horses, although White was instructed by Wilson to do so; and I hold in my hand the original instruction. Then White writes protesting against the price paid for sinking this well north of Burracoppin, and says he could get the work done infinitely cheaper by day labour.

MR. TAYLOR: Does the contract price include timber?

MR. THOMAS: Naturally; but I should like to throw up my present job and to take such a contract at any time. I have gone into these matters pretty fully, except one. I have here the Rabbit Act, which we passed on the 20th December, 1902, in order to give the Government full authority to deal with the pest. Mr. White reports that until



a recent date no regulations under the Act were in force, and that consequently the Act was practically a dead letter. Section 8 states :—

Every inspector and officer shall be furnished with a certificate of his appointment, and shall, if required so to do, produce such certificate to the owner or occupier of any private land he may enter.

Section 20 states :—

Any occupier or owner of land desirous of enclosing his land with a rabbit-proof fence may apply in the prescribed manner to the Minister for wire netting and other appliances. On such application being made, the Minister may, in his discretion, provide such wire netting and other appliances, and, out of moneys provided by Parliament for the purpose, defray the cost thereof delivered at the railway station or port nearest to the land of the applicant.

The Minister tells us he is now making arrangements for wire netting to be distributed to settlers so that they may fence their holdings, especially those east of the fence. That course has been advocated by me in this House for three years, and the Minister is not entitled to one tittle of credit, but deserves severe blame, together with his predecessor, for not making regulations under this Act; because the settlers concerned never knew, though some of them have written from time to time to ascertain the conditions under which they could get fencing material. The Act mentions the prescribed form; but there are no regulations prescribing any form. And then the Minister tells us he has done everything in his power to cope with the rabbits, though he leaves all the settlers east of the fence to be starved out of their country for want of regulations under which they could obtain fencing material. True, regulations were gazetted a week or two ago. The Minister, as an excuse, tells us he cannot be expected to go through all the Acts he has to administer; but the present Government came in as an administrative Government; and surely their first duty, if they were to administer the country, was to make themselves acquainted with the Acts they had to administer. Section 27 of the Act provides that every man who has rabbits on his land shall suppress and destroy them, and every such occupier shall immediately give notice to the nearest inspector. Any owner or occupier who

fails to fully and continually perform such duty and give such notice shall be liable to a penalty on first conviction of not more than £10, and on a second or subsequent conviction of not more than £50. Yet the inspectors have not yet been appointed. I asked for the production of a file showing the appointment of inspectors, and the *Gazette* notice under the Act, but these are not forthcoming. So far, no appointments have been made under that Act, and if breaches of the Act are committed, no one has power to take proceedings against offenders. I take it, the reason for the stringent conditions of the Act was that if a man found rabbits on his land it would naturally be to his interest to hide the fact in order to sell the land and clear out. Hence the heavy penalties for not reporting to the nearest inspector, so that the country in general and the man's neighbours might be protected. But nothing can be done against offenders, because inspectors have not been appointed. The Act farther provides that any inspector or other authorised person may, on production of his certificate of authority, enter upon any land, and that the regulations shall be published in the *Government Gazette*, and may provide for the enforcement of penalties. With reference to the final dismissal of White, I would quote Section 42, which reads :—

The Chief Inspector shall make quarterly reports to the Minister, and an annual report of the working of the Act and of all moneys expended thereon during the preceding year, shall be laid before both Houses of Parliament.

With reference to the quarterly reports I venture the statement that the Minister has never received the quarterly report to 30th September of this year from Secretary Wilson. If he had, that report must have had on it the recommendations of Inspector White relative to these dismissals and to the state of the contracts and everything else. The Minister would then have been in possession of the facts of the case; so I venture the statement, and challenge contradiction on it, that the quarterly report has never been given to the Minister. I would not swear to a statement that the report was not made, but I will say that if it were made the Minister's statement in this House conclusively proved that it was never read

by him. I have papers dealing with the continuation of Inspector White's services which had been dispensed with, which unfortunately I will have to touch on to a small extent. I dealt before with the matter of the dismissal of Inspector White, but I want the member for East Fremantle (Mr. Holmes) to carefully follow me in this, because I know he and others will say that this man had no right to refuse to see the Minister. I am appealing to members as unbiased men to say whether Inspector White did not have ample justification for the step he took. He certainly committed a mistake I agree; but the question is whether he did not have ample justification for the step he took. That man was travelling in the bush; he came down here in June; he was not allowed to appoint his own officials or his sub-inspectors upon whose reports he was forced to sign progress payments; and he found that a dismissed police constable was put on as one sub-inspector on the recommendation of the Premier, and that the Premier's brother was also put on as a sub-inspector. Then when he came down in June he found that he was practically dismissed from the service, and that there was no provision made for him upon the Estimates. He was not examined before the Royal Commission before the report was made on the point, although he was quite prepared to place himself in the hands of the Commission. He was retrenched from the service without apparently, as far as I can find, any rhyme or reason. He found no provision for him on the Estimates, which meant that he was "to get." He protested against his dismissal, and I read those letters on the official file when I spoke on 12th November, which letters members can see in *Hansard*. I ask members interested in the dismissal of good servants if they will kindly go through *Hansard* of 12th November and see what these letters were written about. On 23rd September the secretary to the department wrote to Mr. White:—

Referring to the matter of the continuance of your services under this branch, I received verbal intimation some time back from the late Director of Agriculture that provision was being made on the draft Estimates for your services for three months only of the current year, 1903-4

I could find no reference at all on the Estimates.

As this period expired on the 30th inst., I have made application for the retention of your services for a farther period; and have now to intimate that the Hon. the Minister has approved of the same up to the 31st December next.

This looks to my mind as if there was some league or other against this man to get him out of the service. I do not wish to make any imputation, but I will leave the public to decide. The Minister wrote to this man, against whom no charge whatever had been made, before even Benzley had gone up to give a confidential report to the Minister, to the effect that Inspector White would be allowed to stay on to the end of the year. This was a man against whom no charge was made, except that he was too zealous in carrying out his duties.

MR. MORAN: They wanted the billet for somebody else they had in their eye.

MR. THOMAS: That is the unbiased decision which one would arrive at. Inspector White found that there was practically a conspiracy against him. Here is another grievance: Mr. Wilson wrote on the 22nd November:—

In reply to your letter of the 1st inst., applying for six weeks' leave of absence, dated from 27th October next, I have to say that the hon. the Minister has not approved of the same, you having already had one holiday during the current year.

Inspector White had had one fortnight for the whole of the years he had been going on in and out, and he was absolutely run down and asked for a holiday, which was refused. He then went out to the bush and found that his recommendations were not carried out, that he could get no satisfaction, that in regard to the inspectors in the appointment of whom he had no say, his reports against them time after time were not carried out, that everything was going bad, that he was to be sent everywhere, all over the place, and that the department were trying to make him responsible for everything. Then they told him that at the end of the year, on 31st December, his services were to be entirely dispensed with. Next he got instructions to go north to Burracoppin. He naturally refused, and said "No; if I am to be dismissed, I am to be dismissed in civili-

sation and not in the desert some hundreds of miles from Burracoppin." Inspector White went to Coolgardie, and at the end of October had an interview with me and laid his case before me. I thought his case a serious one, and he told me that when he came down, if he could not get satisfaction, he would resign. He came down to Perth. One point I omitted to mention. He found also that the brother-in-law of the Minister was sent out to give a report, that he (Inspector White) was never advised on the matter, and that none of the officers of the department were ever asked anything in regard to it. Inspector White found that this man Benzley went out at double the salary at which the inspector's men were waiting to do similar work, and that Benzley was sent out practically, as Inspector White thought, to spy upon him, without any charges having ever been levelled against him. Would not any man be disgusted when he found a conspiracy of that sort, and when he found that he was left off the Estimates, and was told as a favour that he could stop on to the end of the year? He found all these things were going on behind his back, and I would like to know what sort of a man anybody would be who would not resent it and send in his resignation. Inspector White, as I said, went down to Perth. I have read what happened from the records of 12th November, as it has an important bearing on this question. I found then that it was true he refused to see the Minister. I will read again from the records.

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES:** You cannot read from *Hansard* of this session.

**MR. THOMAS:** I am not going to read *Hansard*. I am going to read the report. I am not allowed to have the files, and now you want to prevent me from reading a report given in *Hansard*.

**MR. JACOBY:** Gag!

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** Read it by all means. I am sure it will be most interesting.

**MR. THOMAS:** We know what the letter of resignation was; the Minister has given us that. Mr. White made a charge that he could not get his recommendations attended to, and that they had remained unattended to at that date.

This is a minute from the Director of Agriculture:—

On the 3rd instant Mr. White handed me his resignation, and as I knew you wanted to see him, I rang you up on the telephone and advised you that Mr. White was then in my office. According to your verbal instructions then given, I asked Mr. White to make out a brief report as to the condition of the rabbits on the western side of the fence at the present time.

He refused to write that report, and states that he had already given full reports. As I showed when I started, nearly every month he reported about these rabbits, and reported them at ten places out of eleven where Benzley found them. I have a statement from Mr. White dated 23rd November, 1903. I may say that Mr. White has gone now to his own home, and I find that the Minister asked him to go to the office later. Mr. White in writing to me says:—

On reference to *Hansard*, I see some of the conversations which are reported by Mr. Crawford as having taken place between that gentleman and myself are not correct. They were as follows:—On the morning of the 3rd inst. when I handed in my resignation to him (Mr. Crawford) at his office, after perusing the same he said the Minister wished me to prepare a plan showing at what places the rabbits were west of the fence, and also a report as to the condition of the fences, and that the Minister wished to see me at his office the following morning at 9 o'clock. I told Mr. Crawford my plans were at Burracoppin, and that I had already supplied the Minister with the information he asked for some considerable time back, that I could give no fresh information of the subject, and that since I last saw him I had been engaged in showing Mr. Wilson the defects in the fence which I had previously reported on, and that I had not since been west of the fence to report on rabbits there. I also told him I did not feel satisfied, in the face of events and having handed in my resignation, in giving any farther information. He (Mr. Crawford) then said, "You refuse," and rang up the Minister very excitedly. I replied, "I have no farther information to give." He (Mr. Crawford) then informed the Minister that I was in the office and did not feel disposed to give any farther information. The Minister's reply I did not hear, but Mr. Crawford turned to me and said, "Under these circumstances I don't think the Minister will wish to see you." My reply was, "Perhaps it is just as well," and I left. On the afternoon of the 4th I called to see Mr. Crawford, but he was out, so I saw Mr. Hooper, the chief clerk, and asked him to tell Mr. Crawford that I had called to suggest that it might be well to withhold my resignation, as an interview with Mr. Thomas, the member, whom I expected in

Perth daily, and the Minister, might result in my withdrawing my resignation. Mr. Hooper promised to tell Mr. Crawford, and I have every reason to believe he carried out that promise from what Mr. Crawford admitted to me on the 14th inst. The following morning, the 5th inst., I met Mr. Crawford in the street about nine o'clock, repeated the above to him, and he said it was too late, that the Minister had replied to him through the telephone "that ends it," and my resignation had gone to him, the Minister. I then told him, Mr. Crawford, that in justice to myself I must let the public know the facts of the case and in doing so should address public meetings. The next occasion when I saw Mr. Crawford was on Saturday morning, the 14th inst., when he told me he had been hunting for me and had left a letter for me at the "Grosvenor," and wanted to know when I could meet him in the office and endeavour to trace the necessary reports and letters which I had sent in. I replied, "Don't you think it just a little too late after the statements made by the Minister in reference to myself in the House on Thursday last?" He said, "Oh, well, if you take that view of it." I replied, "I offered you the opportunity when I asked for my resignation to be withheld, and you said it was too late," and referring to our conversation of the 5th disclaimed any knowledge of it, but admitted Mr. Hooper had told him of it. I told him I would see about it after I got his letter at the "Grosvenor," and he said, "I shall be in the office all the afternoon, if you ring me up." I went to the "Grosvenor," got the letter, and got a witness to attend at telephone when I endeavoured to ring him up to take down what I said, so there should be no mistakes, as I intended telling him I would see the Minister but would not discuss the matter with him, Mr. Crawford; but could not get him on the telephone or at his office. I then wrote a note to the Minister, and in that I said I would not meet Mr. Crawford for reasons I would not explain. I also wish to state that I think Mr. Crawford throughout has been prejudiced against myself and in favour of Mr. Wilson. The first occasion on which I met Mr. Crawford he said, "I understand you have a claim against the Government for a considerable amount." I replied "Yes," and explained that my travelling and subsistence allowances had not been paid, and he said, "Well, that is a matter that occurred before my time," and stated that if it was decided I should remain on he thought I should get what he used to be allowed where he found his own horses and plant, viz. £150 a year in addition to his salary. This I told him was practically what my claim amounted to. He also on this occasion told me that he considered Mr. Wilson's practical bush experience had been wasted or lost by keeping him in the office.

That is perfectly correct, too. I find Mr. Wilson wanted to go out and do some practical work instead of being on clerical work. I cannot help hearing an interjec-

tion by the Minister for Mines, which is decidedly unfair. I cannot help the time I have been dragging through this. I am going to defend a man whom I consider innocent. The Minister has given charge after charge, and I have not gone outside the deliberate charges made by the Minister. Yet now the Minister for Mines is inclined to try and gag me in protecting an innocent man against unworthy charges made against him by his colleague, who is afraid to sit in this House and listen to my repudiation of those charges.

MR. MORAN: He has been ordered out by Rason.

MR. THOMAS: I do not want insinuations of that kind from the Minister for Mines. I am telling the House this is a statement written out and given to me by Mr. White, which I intend to read to the House, and it is a statement which I am now reading myself for the first time. The statement proceeds:—

On a later occasion, after arrangements were made for Mr. Wilson to go out and I had been instructed to proceed north to examine the country from 250 to 369 mile post and received intimation by the same mail that my services were to be absolutely dispensed with on the 31st December, and that I would not be allowed any more holidays this year on the grounds that I had already had a fortnight (the only fortnight in three years), and after having been promised it in writing by the late Minister, Dr. Jameson, I again interviewed Mr. Crawford, and told him I thought it was manifestly unfair to treat me in this way. Before I could possibly start Mr. Wilson would be in the field, and I had to proceed to Santa Cruz to show Mr. Wilson defects in fence where water had been conserved and required conserving and other matters, and which would mean my being stranded 1,000 miles from my home where I was engaged at the end of my term, and finding my way home after that at my own time and expense, and losing my fortnight's holiday which had been promised. He (Mr. Crawford) then decided after considerable discussion it was not quite fair, and agreed to return me as far south as Burracoppin and allow me a fortnight's holiday on full pay out of next year, that was to 14th January, 1904. He also told me he understood it was the recommendation of the Commission that as Mr. Wilson's position as secretary was to be abolished I was to be retrenched to make room for Mr. Wilson's going out. This I contend was not so, and now, after he does go out I am selected to take on all the rough and hard work, spending my third Christmas in the bush whilst he, Wilson, although supposed to be doing the out-door work, would be enabled to enjoy his Christmas

holidays with his friends in Perth or elsewhere.

He refuses to see the Minister at that time because of the treatment which I have told the House he had been subjected to. He goes to the Minister afterwards, and the Minister so far as I can gather suggests that the resignation shall be temporarily withdrawn. "No," Mr. White says, "I cannot do that; you have dismissed me. If you will reinstate me, I will withdraw my resignation, and then we can go and thresh the matter out." This the Minister refuses, and there the matter ends. I assert that this man thoroughly believes there is a conspiracy against him; and after repudiating the Minister's charges and bringing charges against him, in addition to the repudiation, I say that this man is right in the assumption that there is a conspiracy by someone against him to get him out. I absolve the Minister from all blame in that particular matter, but there is a conspiracy in the department probably by men on the fence or something to try to get White off the job. That is conclusively proved by the letters I have read to the House. This man finds there is a conspiracy. He may be wrong in deducing this, but he finds the brother of one Minister is on the job and that the brother-in-law of another is apparently sent to spy upon him. That is what I am given to understand. That, however, does not matter a rap. I will say in regard to Mr. Hopkins that if he wants a confidential report he is right in choosing a man in whom he can place confidence. Inspector White believes this conspiracy is going on, and he says, "I am sick of the job and will go out of it." I appeal now to members. I have finished that subject once and for all, except when I ask the House to appoint a committee of inquiry. I will say this in conclusion in dismissing the subject, that no man who is worth his salt would not have resigned at the time White resigned after the treatment he received; and it is a marvel to me that the man remained in the service after June, after the way he had been treated. Before I conclude I would like to deal just for one moment with the charges which have been made. and I would like in my own mind at any rate to sum these up. The first charge is in connection with the Stock Department.

I claim that we have proved that a proper inquiry was not held, that Mr. Craig was denied counsel, he was denied a public inquiry, he was denied witnesses being placed on oath, he was denied the opportunity of having shorthand notes taken to protect himself. That has all been proved; and nothing has been brought against it by the Minister for Lands, who had the chance of refuting these charges. As far as the Rabbit Department is concerned, we have proved conclusively there has been criminal neglect on the part of the Government in dealing with the matter. Notwithstanding the authorisations they had, notwithstanding the scores of times they have been told to hurry on with the work, they have done absolutely nothing for a considerable portion of the time they have occupied the Treasury bench. As to the Esperance survey I claim what I said just now, that either there were secret instructions issued and that the work was a political job, or otherwise the surveyors employed were totally incompetent, which shows neglect in the administration of the department. With regard to the Point Sampson Jetty we have shown there has been neglect on the part of the Minister for Works, and no more direct or deliberate charge could be made by anyone than the charge which was made against the Minister by the leader of the Opposition. As far as the Attorney General's department is concerned, I have dealt fully with that. It is a charge the leader of the Opposition did not deal with. Since the James Administration has been in power a member of the firm of James and Darbyshire, Mr. Pilkington, has received more briefs than all the other firms put together. I went into the matter, which is common property, and I have sheeted the case home. If the Government claim that in regard to some of the briefs Mr. Pilkington was doing the work for nothing, then I say that he has robbed other barristers. As far as the swine fever is concerned, I think we have proved that there has been neglect on the part of the Government. In the matter of the classification of the civil service, there has been absolute neglect; there has been dillydallying for a considerable time. As far as the Occidental Syndicate is concerned, I hope the member for the Murchison will deal with

that question, because it is the most serious charge which can possibly be brought against the Ministry. As regards the Midland Railway, I have just touched on that point from what is common property. The Government have been asked so often on that point and they have neglected doing anything with regard to the Midland Railway. As to economical administration, which was a claim put forward by the Government, that has fallen to the ground. In any of these charges if we prove neglect on the part of the Government, it ought to be enough to dismiss any Government from the reins of power, but we know how they cling to the Treasury bench. Time after time resolutions have been passed and votes have been pressed, and the Premier has stood up and has said in the House that hon. members if they passed the motion knew what it would mean. The motion has been carried, and the Government still stick to the Treasury bench, they are still there. I do not know how they have the front to remain there after votes have been carried against them and after Bills have been thrown out, after Estimates have been cut down and Bills have been mutilated so that they cannot be recognised. The leader of the House has stated that if members voted in a certain way he would know how to take it: We have voted against the Government, and still they cling to the reins of government. Any of the charges I have brought, if proved, should be sufficient to turn the Government out. I wish to be clear on this point. In making charges against the present occupants of the Treasury bench we are not desirous for one moment of taking their place. We are going to send them to the country. They had a mandate from the country to give clean administration. The country rang with their statements that the Forrest Government were rotten and corrupt. Practically that is what they said. They said: "Wait until we come in and turn out the pigeon holes and administer the affairs of the country in a proper manner." What do we find? We have given them three sessions in which to do it. We are practically at the close of the Parliament, and we find they have not carried out their promise to the country to go in for proper administrative reform. We have

refrained from dealing with questions of policy, because every section of the House has a somewhat similar policy, differing in details it is true. We have stuck to the main points. The Government came into power to carry out a better administration of affairs, and they have lamentably failed to carry out their pledge. It is claimed that in bringing on this vote of want of confidence, we are doing so at a wrong time, that it was useless to bring it forward because if we are successful we cannot occupy the Treasury bench should we desire to do so. In all the charges which we have brought forward, a list of which I have read in my summing up, we claim we have proved what can be termed criminal negligence in some instances, and we have proved gross faults in administration. There has been faulty administration, as faulty as ever existed, and I for one am afraid to allow the Government to remain in power for the five months from the time we end the session until the elections take place. That is the position I take up. We shall not know until we defeat the Government to-morrow evening or Saturday morning what the procedure will be. But we are told by good authorities that if we defeat the Government—and I feel sure we are going to do so—then the Premier has a right to go to the country. That is what I gather. I do not know whether he has the right to go to the country: if so, that is where we want to send him.

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES:** You have no more right to make a threat than we would have.

**MR. THOMAS:** That is not a threat at all. I read in both the newspapers—and I suppose we must be guided by the leading articles in the newspapers, the *West Australian* and the *Morning Herald*—

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** Never mind the newspapers. What is it that you want?

**MR. THOMAS:** I read in the newspapers that although we may be successful against the Government, we ought not to have brought the motion because it means having a dissolution now instead of in May. As far as I am concerned that is what I want. I cannot in the ordinary course of events, if the motion is carried—and probably this House will

finish in about three weeks' time—allow Ministers to go on with their faulty administration until after May, that is until we come back from the elections. I could not allow that, after the faulty administration which we have proved up to the hilt. We could not allow the Government to remain in power during the recess. I want to turn them out at the earliest possible moment, and therefore I intend to support the motion moved by my leader.

MR. HIGHAM: I move that the debate be adjourned.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: It is the intention of the Government to-morrow to proceed with the motion until we come to a division.

MR. MORAN: We would like to make an announcement too, that we shall have a word or two to say about that.

Motion passed, and the debate adjourned.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at nine minutes to 11 o'clock until the next day.

### Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 26th November, 1903.

	PAGE
Bills (private, 2): Kalgoorlie Electric Power and Lighting Agreement Validation, first reading ...	2314
Katanning Electric Lighting and Power, in Committee resumed, reported ...	2314
Bill (public): Kalgoorlie Tramways Act Amendment, third reading ...	2314
Motion: Want of Confidence in the Government, debate resumed (third day); Amendment (to strike out words) passed, question negatived on division ...	2314

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER took the Chair at 2:30 o'clock, p.m.

#### PRAYERS.

#### PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the MINISTER FOR LANDS: Appointment and retirement of Mr. H. Smith,

recently tobacco expert of the Agricultural Department.

By the MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Alterations in Railway Classification and Rate Book.

Ordered, to lie on the table.

#### KALGOORLIE ELECTRIC POWER AND LIGHTING AGREEMENT VALIDATION BILL (PRIVATE).

Petition presented by Mr. BATH, praying that an agreement made between the Kalgoorlie Electric Lighting and Power Corporation, Limited, and the Kalgoorlie Roads Board be validated.

Petition received.

Bill introduced by Mr. BATH, and read a first time.

Select Committee appointed by ballot, comprising Mr. Atkins, Mr. Ferguson, Mr. Foulkes, Mr. Taylor, also Mr. Bath as mover; with the usual powers; to report on the 3rd December.

#### KATANNING ELECTRIC LIGHTING AND POWER BILL (PRIVATE).

##### IN COMMITTEE.

Resumed from the previous sitting.

MR. ILLINGWORTH in the Chair; MR. FOULKES in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 2 to end—agreed to.

Schedule—agreed to.

New Clause—Undertaker to supply regular and efficient supply of light upon application:

On motion by MR. FOULKES, the following was added as Clause 13:—

The undertaker shall supply all persons within such district with a regular and efficient supply of electricity for lighting purposes upon application, and on the same terms upon which any other person in such district is under similar circumstances entitled to a corresponding supply.

Preamble, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

#### KALGOORLIE TRAMWAYS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

#### MOTION—WANT OF CONFIDENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT.

##### THIRD DAY.

Debate resumed from the previous sitting.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. C. H. Rason): Before I make any