

(Mr. Pilkington) said that at the end of next year there would be a deficit of £1,000,000. You cannot stop people manipulating figures. I remember some years ago in this House, to a very good old friend, I said, "It is no good talking, there are the figures, they cannot lie," and he replied, "No, but some of my friends who are liars can figure." The member for Perth talked of the paying of the extra fees under the Arbitration Act, £39,000; he said we can make £250,000 from drink, £150,000 by a reduction of the education vote, and then there was the £225,000, which I expected to get from taxation, and then my deficit was to be wiped out. When he sat down, I woke up. Given any reasonable chance the deficit I say will be closer to £500,000 at the end of the next financial year than £900,000. That is unless I am going to be up against some awkward proposition. I hope next year that there will not be £10,000 for elections, that there will not be £32,000 loss on cattle, £52,000 loss for floods, and many other things which this year have been crowded on us. That is assuming the revenue keeps up to what it is this year, but it may be a wrong assumption. If members are going to criticise how I am coming out, they can only criticise on assumption, and I am assuming that I get the same revenue next year that I get this year, but no one can foresee. There may be a shortage in many directions. If there is a shortage or we get strikes, then I do not know where I shall be, nor would anybody else. As to the question of the railways, it comes to this: We think that unless something serious happens, we shall be able to provide the increase for this year without altering the total amount of our expenditure. We have to look into all these matters, and we cannot keep going and stay here all night and work all day. We have no hope of going into these things unless we have time, and therefore I ask members before I sit down—and I am sorry I have had to keep them here to-night for this reason—not to make long speeches, not to make speeches of an hour and a-half. I do not deny the right of any member to make speeches, and I do not want to be hypercritical, but I do say that a speech of an hour and a-half is too long. I hope when we are considering the details of the Estimates, members will say all they have to say, but unless they can suggest some item about which they can tell me something, there is no necessity to waste time. Members have made all the remarks they wish to about the Estimates, but where they see an item of which they may have some knowledge, I hope they will let us know about it. I thank the Committee for their courtesy in listening to me at this late hour.

Progress reported.

## BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1. Apprentices.

2. Public Education.

Received from the Legislative Council.

## BILLS (2)—RETURNED FROM THE COUNCIL.

1. Industries Assistance Act Continuation.
2. Sewerage Works Validation.  
Without amendment.

House adjourned 1.21 a.m. (Friday).

## Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 5th March, 1918.

The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

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

### BILL — ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and returned to the Assembly with an amendment.

### BILL — VERMIN BOARDS ACT Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 28th February.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL (Metropolitan) [4.38]: It is my intention of course to support this Bill, but I regret that there should be any necessity for introducing it in this country, which has to a very marked extent for many years past, been free from the pest which the Eastern States have had to deal with. The time, however, must come to any country when, by the natural process of nature, pests which exist in one part of any continent such as Australia is, must spread to the other parts unless definite, drastic, and well considered preventive steps are taken. This has not been done in Western Australia. Of course, people, secure in the lack of knowledge of how terrible a scourge the rabbit pest would be, sat back some 20 or 30 years ago and laughed at the prognostications of visitors who had had experience of the ravages of these animals, and said that such a thing as an invasion could never happen in Western Australia. Time has proved that these people were wrong. Personally I am convinced that if 24 or 25 years ago a rabbit-proof fence had been run 300 miles north of Eucla, and then turned eastward, and if that fence had been provided with what are known as yard traps at distances of one mile, traps which would have added to the cost of the construction of the fence to the extent of only about £5 per mile, I am perfectly certain that rabbits would not have entered this State. And I

say this not without some knowledge of the subject. Sir Edward Wittenoom said, in the course of his remarks, that he had never had any practical experience of rabbits. I have. For about a year or so in my somewhat checkered career I was engaged in rabbiting in New South Wales, and I used to do very well at it, making as much as £15 to £16 a week. As a matter of fact, all rabbits in New South Wales made so much that it was absolutely impossible for them and the squatters to live. The result was that the squatters went first and the rabbits are still there. The Honorary Minister is right when he says that trapping by paid rabbiters will never have the effect of exterminating the pest. It will have the effect of bringing them down to a certain level, to that level when nothing but rabbits can live in the country. So trapping is not of much practical benefit. With regard to the Bill before the House and the parent Act, I am sorry we have no more information as to the definition which has been drawn between vermin and other classes of pests. In the present Act the only animals alluded to as vermin are rabbits and wild dogs, and that Act goes on to say, "Any other animals which the Government may declare to be vermin for the purposes of this Act." I do not think we have had put before us a list of what has been declared vermin in this State, and I hope that when that list is laid before us, the wishes of some of my friends will not be carried out, but on that I will touch later. I think it would have been better in the interests of good legislation if the Government in this Act, as in other Acts, such as the Game Act, had followed the practice of adding a schedule containing the names of animals, birds, etc., which it was proposed to class as vermin. For instance, I would be extremely interested to know whether the Government have yet classed sparrows as vermin. I would also like to know what steps the Government are taking to stop the threatened and almost certain invasion of sparrows to this country. Some six months ago, acting on information which I knew was absolutely true, I called the attention of the Premier to the fact that sparrows were working westward from South Australia, that they then existed at Nullabor station and inevitably would come to this State, if steps were not taken to prevent them. I received the usual postcard to say that the matter was receiving the consideration of the Government, and so far as I know that is where it stopped. I have seen since in the daily Press a communication from Mr. White of Beltrous, of whom there is no better authority on ornithology in Australia, saying that along the route he followed he had not traced sparrows, so far. Unfortunately, there are two ways by which sparrows can come to this country, one along the coast road and the other along the Transcontinental road. Let me tell the Government this: With regard to the seriousness of the pest, farmers, orchardists and town dwellers would all be consulting their own interests if they all urged upon the Government the necessity for combating it. Whether in the orchards, in the wheat fields, or amongst the town dwellers,

the sparrow is a pest of the first magnitude. Once these sparrows get past the sparsely watered country in which they are now found, and come to the better watered parts of the State, it will be goodbye to the homesteads and the farms. People have been after them in the Eastern States for years past, but all that they have been able to do is to keep them down to what amounts to an inconvenient minimum level. I hope the Government will take the warning I have held out to them with such good intentions, but which was treated, I would almost say, with such lack of courtesy. I do not suppose it was intended by the Government to treat my warning in this manner but it is, to say the least of it, discouraging, when anyone attempts to serve the country in any way at all, to find that his efforts have met with such little response at the hands of the Government.

Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister): The matter is now being dealt with.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: It is about time, for the Government have had six months' notice. With regard to the rabbits, I understand that the method which is to be adopted is that of wholesale poisoning. I hope the Government will see, when they go in for this wholesale poisoning, that they will not in any way destroy what is generally known as the balance of nature. I do not know that the Government have in any department a naturalist who is sufficiently skilled to give advice upon this matter. Probably if they had had such a man his services would have been dispensed with before this, on the grounds that he was a scientist or an expert. If the present Government can find a specialist who has been in the habit of carrying out special duties in any department, they will at once sack him. That has been our experience in the past. When the Government are poisoning rabbits in a wholesale manner, such as is necessary, of course, in dealing with the pest, it is possible at the same time to poison birds and animals which play a far greater part in the scheme of nature than we, with our lofty disregard for the principles of science, are ready to recognise. This has always been the case throughout Australia, but it has never been accentuated to so great an extent as in the case of the present Government. When any scientific subject is brought before Parliament or the Ministry, the fact that it is a scientific subject is enough to condemn it utterly in their eyes. I know members of the Ministry to-day—not in this House—who, if one suggests a scheme and says that it is based on scientific grounds, at once condemn the whole business. No doubt many hon. members know the gentlemen to whom I am referring. I beg the Government to consider this matter, and the Honorary Minister to make such inquiries as he may be able to make with the resources at his command, his officers and so forth, to see that the balance of nature is not upset, and that in destroying this particular pest he does not bring upon the orchardist or the farmer a greater pest than even the rabbits. A great deal of care must be taken in respect to this matter. To go back to the danger of des-

trying the balance of nature, I would point out that in some of the other States this rabbit question has been in some instances very successfully treated. There was a gentleman called Rodier in New South Wales, who evolved a scheme which he put into practice on his own country. I have seen that country and know the most admirable results which he obtained. The system of this man was as follows—he captured rabbits in traps and destroyed the female rabbits and allowed the male rabbits to go free. By destroying the balance of sex he found he could absolutely and effectually exterminate the rabbits on his property. I do not propose this plan for adoption by the Government, but it is worth while any farmers, or any community of farmers, who have wire netting round their places, and yard traps attached to the fences, to put this Rodier system into operation and leave nature to do the rest. From what I saw on Mr. Rodier's own place and from the contrast which was offered from the pasture within the wire netting and the grass-bare country on the other side, there seemed no doubt that this was a most admirable way of combating the pest. I am not quite in accord with the attitude of the Government with regard to the trapping of rabbits for food. I think it is quite wrong. I do not think there is the least danger of raising up a class of people which will disseminate the rabbits throughout district after district. At all events, what I would advise the Government to do would be to allow these persons to trap for food upon land which the Government are about to neglect. Sir Edward Wittenoom made a telling point when he said that against any legislation of this sort the Government are bound to be the biggest offenders. Whilst we have Government reserves and vacant land acting as breeding grounds for this pest, we will never succeed in exterminating it. If it is a national question they should set to work to clean up their own country, and keep it clean. Unless they do so what hope have the farm dwellers for many miles around in this country, with these vast areas of unallotted land, of ever keeping their holdings clear when, immediately the rabbits are cleared off, they are supplied again from the Government lands? One may cause a pest to be destroyed on private property but one's efforts are unavailing unless the Government help by keeping their property clean as well. Until that is done they can pass all the rabbit and vermin Acts they like, but will never get very much more forward; and these Acts will be not only so much waste paper, but be inflicting hardship on those who keep their land clean, when they know that the supplies they take off will be replenished and renewed both beneath the fences and through the fences from the Government land. I was speaking about the distinction which has been drawn between vermin and useful creatures. I was surprised and grieved to hear Mr. Sommers say that, in his opinion, the kangaroo should be classed as vermin, that the only place for a kangaroo should be the Zoo, and that it

should be exterminated throughout Western Australia. I do not think he gave the subject that thought which he should have done, and usually does, before giving this pronouncement. He spoke slightly of those persons who eat kangaroos. Perhaps he is not aware that during the last year there were nearly 1,200 permits granted to take the kangaroo for the purpose of food, that these permits were granted only after the most exhaustive inquiries, on the part of the officials of the department under whose administration the Game Act comes. The bona fides of every applicant is first inquired into before these permits are granted, and probably these 1,178 permits, to be exact, which were granted, presumably to the heads of families, represent about 5,000 people who are drawing at all events parts of their meat supply from this source. It is a serious thing to contemplate killing off these animals and totally exterminating them. Unless the department, through the police, is fully satisfied that the person applying for a permit really needs the kangaroo for food, and will use it for that purpose, the permit is not granted.

Hon. H. Carson: All skin dealers send out licenses to kill to the farmers.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: The hon. member must be absolutely and entirely misinformed. Does he make that statement seriously?

Hon. H. Carson: Yes.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: Then it will go into "Hansard" that the skin dealers send out licenses to kill to the farmers.

Hon. H. Carson: They have done so.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: They have sent them to the hon. member?

Hon. H. Carson: Yes, to my family.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: That is a very interesting statement indeed.

Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister): That is outside the restricted area.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: That makes all the difference. The hon. member lives north of Geraldton. Quite so. That accounts for the matter, and he can kill as many kangaroos for food, or for other purposes, as he may desire. Permits are not necessary outside the protected area, the northern boundary of which is Perth and Geraldton, and includes the whole of the South-West. These permits are granted to people who are not in a position to keep such stock as would lead the person making the inquiry to suppose that they would be able to live on their own meat. That being so, I venture to say it is a very useful thing that these permits should be granted. Not alone is it a useful thing that the permits should be granted, but it is very useful if we are to keep in existence an animal which does so much directly and indirectly to supply food for the people of the country as the kangaroo does. A great deal of the damage which the kangaroo is alleged to do is done by what is known as the brush kangaroo, which is not protected and which anyone can shoot whenever, however, and as often as he pleases. It would be a pity, however, to destroy the animal which is the basis of a large and thriving industry in this country. I have here some figures relating to

the volume of trade in kangaroo skins. It will be interesting to members to know that the trade runs from £69,000 in 1906 in varying amounts to £61,399 last year. This trade, which Mr. Sommers lightly proposes to do away with in Western Australia by the extermination of this animal, brought into the State no less than £61,400, in round figures, last year. I would point out that this is not mere guess work and is not simply an estimate, but that it is absolutely the minimum represented by that trade, because this is the value of the skins upon which royalty has been paid. There undoubtedly have been a good many more skins sold than have been paid royalty on, but there is no doubt that no skins were paid royalty on which were not sold. Therefore, these figures may be taken as the absolute minimum. Persons are always complaining, the hon. member is always complaining, about the properties that are being damaged by the ravages of kangaroos. Section 21 of the Game Act of 1912—and I speak of what I know, because it gave me a great deal of pleasure to draft and frame the measure—is as follows—

The Minister may, in writing, authorise for a stated period any person or the servants of any such person to kill or destroy any imported or native game found on his property and committing any damage or injury. Provided that the Minister is satisfied that such injury is likely to arise through the presence of such game.

There is the obvious remedy for persons who wish to destroy kangaroos without doing damage to property. It is a strange thing people do not take more advantage of it because the Act is explicit on the point. As long as the Minister is satisfied that the animals are causing damage there is no case of licenses being refused. The number of licenses was practically small last year, only nine being granted, and I can only put that down to the fact that persons are not being so damaged as they claim to be or that they are not aware of the section of the Act. This section was put in the Act to protect farmers who were suffering from damage through the ravages of kangaroos, or any animal, and to give them a measure of relief. There is the measure of relief if they care to take it. I hope I have said enough to cause hon. members to pause a moment before including animals such as the kangaroos which are a particularly fine source of food supply to about 5,000 settlers on the prohibited areas and which provide a trade of £60,000 a year from the skins. I hope for many years to come the kangaroo will be a feature of our native fauna. It is futile for me to appeal to the hon. member on the ground of sentiment because he is a gentleman of particularly large utilitarian views, but I would point out to him the importance of the kangaroo as a means of food supply and as a skin producer. I hope this will cause him to re-consider the statement which he has made and not to act so harshly at these innocent and harmless animals. I have not much more to say about this Vermin Bill. I should like, if I am permitted to do so, to make an appeal on behalf of the society of which I happen to be the President, the Acclimatisation Society of Western Aus-

tralia. Included among the vermin should be cats and crows, which are destroying all the native fauna in every part of the State. They are making it impossible to acclimatise ground game such as partridges and pheasants and in time they will start to kill them.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: One Government sent cats out to Eucla to kill the rabbits.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: Yes, it was a kind of comic opera Government and I remember at the time commiserating with a number of old ladies who had lost their domestic pets. The cats were taken to the "Grace Daring" at Eucla and delivered to the Captain at 2s. 6d. per head. There is a number of domestic cats which have gone wild and it is supposed that they kill the rabbits, but I may say that cats and rabbits live in the same burrow and breed there together.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: They did at Eucla.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: The cats became acclimatised to the rabbit and lived and bred in the same burrow. People who have seen the way in which rabbits increase, will understand that it will require a large number of cats to deal with the rabbit pest in this country. This is a method of dealing with rabbits which is not to be thought of at present. There is one animal which is a great destroyer of the rabbit, the iguana or monitor lizard. This iguana will eat, if it gets the chance nothing but the heads of the young rabbits. One iguana will do more to exterminate rabbits than 100 cats. We used to look on these lizards as our natural enemies, because when we came to a nice fine rabbit burrow, we would find it surrounded by the carcasses of young rabbits, nipped in the bud so to speak. We did not retaliate by killing the iguana, because there was a £50 fine for killing an iguana, therefore we were unlikely to do damage in that direction. There are three or four species of iguana, but whatever the species, they all kill rabbits and are well worth preserving, and I hope the Government will commit that to mind when dealing with this matter. I shall content myself by saying that I have much pleasure in supporting the Bill in the hope that it will be reasonably and well administered.

Hon. J. A. GREIG (South-East) [5.7]: This Vermin Board's Bill takes me back some 25 years when I was in South Australia, and when this question was being very much discussed. Twenty-five years ago in South Australia, I was actively engaged in fighting the rabbits in what was then their western front. To-day rabbits have advanced between 1,000 and 1,500 miles over practically disputed territory every inch of the way. Where the rabbit has not been interrupted by man, it has had nature to contend against, but the rabbit advances like the Germans. It goes forward and then digs itself in and gets re-inforcements by breeding up and sending out its forces again. When I arrived in Western Australia, 17 years ago, I was induced to look at some land east of the Great Southern. I saw there good land for the purpose for which

I required it, but I said, "Once in a lifetime is enough for a man to be compelled to fight the rabbits," and for that reason I was prejudiced against that land. I went west of the Great Southern where I knew there was an area of native poison plant to protect me, and now I do not expect any serious trouble from the rabbits, although a few days ago a rabbit was killed some ten miles west of my place. It has been said I think by the Honorary Minister that the rabbits were being brought in and let go.

Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister): Not in all cases, in some cases.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: Probably in some cases, that may be correct. That is what has taken place in this instance. I have been surprised that the rabbits have not reached Western Australia before now, there must be something about the country and the scrub that does not suit the rabbits as well as similar country in South Australia. The Honorary Minister stated that the people out east have been crying out about the rabbits and by so doing have reduced the value of their holdings.

Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister): I was referring to the people in the city.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: It is not the crying out that reduces the value of property, but the rabbits themselves. To me it seems that those people in the outskirts of land settlement in the agricultural areas, are in a bad position indeed especially as wire netting is out of the question altogether. Where I was situated in South Australia, I was in an unfortunate position. I had farms adjoining me on one side, and a sheep station and unoccupied land on the other. The rabbits were marching westward. I could keep the rabbits down in the winter time by poisoning and digging out and trapping, but when the grass got dry, they came on in thousands. To get some idea of what the rabbits are like, when they are coming on to holdings, I may tell members that the tracks of an ordinary bullock team can be obliterated in one night, so thick have the rabbits been in crossing the country. I have estimated that one can poison as many as 10,000 rabbits in a day single handed. That is a conservative estimate and the number may be 20,000 or 30,000. That is done by laying poisoned pollard by night and without the use of the poison carts which we have to-day. People have been asking in this State what the Government are going to do. My experience is that the Government can do very little to assist. If the Government supply the poison and probably the poison carts, to the settlers on easy terms, that is about as far as they can go. It is impossible for the Government to eradicate all the rabbits on Crown lands and to keep them down. The cost would be more than Western Australia can stand. Many of the farmers out east who had their crops destroyed by rabbits this year did not know what to do. They had had no previous experience with the rabbits. The Minister says that he requires more power and seeks to get it by this Bill and that he intends to enforce the measure

without fear or favour. On looking through the Bill, from what I can see, if the Minister gets the power he is asking for and enforces it, the best thing that settlers out back can do is to get off their holdings immediately and not stay to fight the rabbits. With regard to the advance of the rabbits and the rabbits which the Minister thinks are being distributed in the western portion of the State, years ago rabbits were let go on the Williams river and in various portions of the State, and became extinct. I think that the matter of dealing with the rabbit pest in that country will not be difficult for this reason: the winters are so wet it is impossible for the rabbits to nest. The ground becomes water logged except on the hills. There they can be dealt with. The Minister said he does not approve of any particular date being fixed on which to start poisoning. He holds that the settlers should poison all the year round. As a man of practical experience I am convinced that it is impossible to poison rabbits all the year round. There are some poisons which they will take better than others. I think toxa is the best when any green feed is about. This toxa is practically apple jam containing poison, and if the Government could arrange to purchase the refuse apples from the fruit growers at Mt. Barker and other centres, and have this toxa cheaply made it would probably assist greatly in the reduction of the rabbit pest.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: Is toxa the same as S.A.P.?

Hon. J. A. GREIG: I understand it is very much the same. The Minister said that some people thought the poison plant would kill the rabbits, but gave it as his opinion that the rabbits would get rid of the poison plant. Some 12 months ago I was one of a party which went to Wyalcatchem to discuss the rabbit question. When we arrived, there were no rabbits to be seen. The people said "There are none here, but 10 miles north or 12 miles south we could show you thousands." I said, "You have had them here; where are they?" and they said "Yes, in the winter; but there is no water for them now." I said "There is some other reason for it, because rabbits would live on this country without water." The next day I walked around the district to discover, if I could, the reason for the disappearance of the rabbits. I concluded that the York road and box poison had killed them. I found rabbit carcasses in the bush and on some young poison plants I found teeth marks. I have noticed on the eastern belt that the rabbits are in patches, being thick in some places, and invariably those are places not infested with poison. The rabbits thrive in the poison country during the winter, because they do not then eat the poison, preferring the green grasses; but as soon as the grasses dry off the rabbits then turn to the green poison and are killed. The Minister referred to the way the people of the Lake Grace district had poisoned rabbits. The Lake Grace settlers are in this fortunate position: they have there an area of good country with little or no

poison. Rabbits thrive on that area, but the country surrounding it is very inferior and infested with poison. The result is that if those people poison rabbits in the summer in that good country they will not have much trouble with them in the following season. I say we must have a fixed day when people can go in for simultaneous poisoning. Rabbits will increase during the winter, and will flock in from the back country in thousands. It is of no use asking the Government to attempt to eradicate them in the back country, for the cost involved would be enormous. We require one common day on which the people will be compelled to start poisoning. After that day, any man found with rabbits on his property should be fined for not having eradicated them. That has been the practice in South Australia for years, and it has proved to be the only practicable way of dealing with the rabbits. The rabbits increase very rapidly during the latter part of the winter, when it is impossible for any man to keep them down. I suggest that the Government should not spend large sums of money in trying to eradicate rabbits on Crown lands and abandoned farms. The Government could more wisely save the money that this would cost until they can again purchase wire netting and supply it to the settlers on easy terms. That is the only practicable solution of the difficulty. Some people are of opinion that if the Government took a firm stand and passed a Vermin Boards Act which would compel every settler to kill rabbits on his property, and if in addition, the Government took drastic means to kill rabbits on Crown lands, the pest could be exterminated altogether. That is a totally wrong idea. We shall never eradicate rabbits from Western Australia. We may get them down and hold them in check, but that is the best we can hope for. In all the Eastern States to-day they are holding the rabbits in check as the result of bitter experience. The people of this State will have to be taught the severe lesson learned by the people in the Eastern States. Practical experience is the only means of teaching them. People will never learn by being told; they must try for themselves. Many people will have a bitter experience in dealing with rabbits during the next two or three years. But when they have learned how to handle the pest they will then be able to keep it in check. I would like to know from the Minister whether the roads boards are to be declared vermin boards, and be compelled to strike rates, and if so, will those rates be used for the eradication of dingoes as well as rabbits? Again, if a certain board has neither rabbits nor dingoes in its district, will it be necessary for that board to strike a rate? I would also like to know how those rates will be spent. Will the board itself have the spending of those rates in eradicating rabbits on reserves and Crown lands within its boundaries, or will the Government claim the rates or a portion of them from the roads boards and use the money to eradicate pests in the districts of other boards? There is a clause in the Bill providing that a member of the board may be appointed an inspector under the board. I do not agree with that. I maintain that the in-

spector should not be one of the board. He should be a paid servant of the board, under the control of the Board.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: The provision is permissive, not compulsory.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: I presume the clause means that any member of the board may be appointed an inspector, and may still hold his seat on the board as a member. The inspector should not have a seat on the board nor any voice or vote in the proceedings of the board. Coming to the means of destruction of rabbits, I call attention to the fact that throughout Western Australia there are many open burrows ready to receive the rabbits when they arrive. I refer to the old booby holes. Down in the South-West the boodies were in hundreds 15 years ago, but to-day they are practically extinct. I have not seen one for years. The burrows have become grass-grown, but they are still there, and some of them are of a depth of eight or nine feet. When the rabbits come along all they will have to do is to take possession of those holes. I suggest that those holes should be filled in before the rabbits come. In the Eastern States we had large warrens, some as large as this Chamber. One method we adopted was to plough them in with a dam-sinking plough behind a team of bullocks. We would open up in the midst of the burrow and plough the whole of the ground to a depth of 18 inches. The rabbits would then make to the shallow end of the burrow, where we would kill all that came to the surface. Those that remained underneath would come up through the soft ground during the night, and of course it was impossible for them to get back again. The next day we went over the country with dogs—I myself had a pack of 23 which I kept for the purpose—and those dogs would catch all the rabbits that were out of the burrows. As soon as they were started they would run for the old burrow, and it was then easy for the dogs to catch them. That is one way of dealing with large rabbit warrens. There is another question: At the present time, the exportation of rabbit skins from Western Australia is prohibited. Mr. Kingsmill just now referred to the value of a kangaroo skin. At one time kangaroo skins were considered of no value whatever, and were destroyed. To-day we are destroying rabbit skins. I am of the opinion that there is really a valuable asset here if properly handled. Probably the Federal Government could do more than the State, but I think the State Government should move in the matter and endeavour to get the Federal Government to advance, say, 1s. 6d. per dozen against full-grown rabbit skins, until the war is over. I feel sure those skins will be worth 3s. or 4s. per dozen after the war. The point is this: we do not want to start a trapping industry, but if bona-fide farmers were allowed to sell rabbit skins to the Government at 1s. 6d. per dozen the price, while it would not be good enough to induce farmers to leave their holdings and go rabbiting, would provide them with sufficient funds to pay for the reduction of the rabbits at present threatening the wheat-growing industry of the farmers. Mr. Kingsmill referred to sparrows. I wrote to the Government on this

question six or seven years ago, when it was reported to me that sparrows were following the telegraph line through to Esperance. An outstanding difference between sparrows and rabbits is that the rabbit is a pioneer. He will go out on his own into unknown land, whereas the sparrow will not leave a beaten track. The sparrow will follow a telegraph line, or a wool track to a back station or even to a boundary rider's hut; but when the track ends the sparrow stops. The sparrow is no bushman. Recently when travelling through Tarcoola, which is about 300 miles this side of Port Augusta, I heard that there was a small colony of about 30 sparrows established there. I was also informed that the Government were employing a man at £4 a week to eradicate those sparrows. That was his job while I was in Tarcoola. I say that if it costs £4 per sparrow to destroy that colony, it will be good business. Mr. Kingsmill also referred to the Rodier system for the destruction of rabbits. That system is quite practicable when adopted in enclosed paddocks. The other day I saw a new invention for exterminating rabbits by charcoal gas. In my opinion that should be one of the best exterminators for rabbits in burrows. We know that charcoal gas is one of the most powerful of poison gases. The difficulty with all other exterminators that I have come in contact with is the cost. From what I read of this one, however, it should be cheap. I believe that at a cost of about 4d. for fuel two men can work this machine all day at suffocating rabbits in burrows. I regret that I have not had more time to compare the Bill with the principal Act, but I hope that the Minister, when he has had the powers under this measure conferred on him, will use them with discretion and judgment as regards settlers who are isolated on the eastern fringe of our wheat belt, because, if this measure is put rigidly into force, and if those settlers are compelled to abide by it absolutely, they will have no time at their disposal to do anything but kill rabbits.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY (Central) [5.20]: I desire briefly to support the second reading of the Bill, because I realise the grave necessity for doing something effective to eradicate or at least minimise the rabbit pest. I also wish to say a few words, in anticipation, concerning a pest which is bound to come along sooner or later. That pest has been referred to by Mr. Kingsmill. It is the sparrow, which must come along as connection is established between Western Australia and the Eastern States. At the present juncture, however, our greatest anxiety is the rabbit menace. In my travels during the last few years I have had opportunities of noting, especially in our back country, the rapid progress which the rabbit has made. As far back as 10 or 12 years ago, I think, I brought across to Western Australia the first pair of ferrets introduced to the Murchison; and even at that time the rabbits were fairly plentiful. Since then I have had opportunities of studying the progress of the pest in the more populous farming centres around Northampton, and towards the coast and Shark Bay, and on the Greenough and

Irwin flats. I fully agree with the opinion expressed by Sir Edward Wittenoom, that in the first place we must decide for ourselves whether the rabbit is a pest or not. I think there can be no two opinions on that point. Then we have to decide upon the best methods for the eradication of the rabbit. We can achieve eradication only by united effort and constant co-operation. It will mean much hard work, and much enthusiasm put into the work, by the people in authority, and by the inspectors of the various roads boards and vermin boards throughout the State. My experience of the rabbit in Victoria, where I spent a number of years, has convinced me that the greatest menace to settlement in that State was the rabbit, and, next, the sparrow. We have now to consider what is the best thing we can do in the interests of this State. To my mind, for quite a time we have been living in a fool's paradise in Western Australia. In spite of the experience of the Eastern States, and in spite of our knowledge of what must inevitably follow here, we were quite satisfied and content to sit back so long as there were a couple of rabbit-proof fences across Western Australia. The inevitable result has come. The rabbits have been knocking at our door for years. Unfortunately, we have been asleep for the greater part of that time, and have made little or no effort to help ourselves. In fact, we have been caught napping. That we find ourselves in our present position is absolutely and entirely our own fault. Whilst I appreciate, and sympathise with, the efforts of the Government, and sincerely trust they will be successful, I consider that somebody is to blame, though I blame no particular Government in this connection. I do, however, appeal to the present Government not to be too drastic in the steps they take. It must be remembered that in these times the settler finds it a pretty hard job to pull through at all. If the clauses of the Bill introduced by the Honorary Minister are put into full effect, the result will be, as pointed out by Mr. Greig, that many men on the wheat belt will be occupied looking after rabbits and doing nothing else. If a man will not help himself, he deserves no assistance; but, if a man shows willing, then he should be helped, and afforded every opportunity to make good. That being so, I appeal to the Honorary Minister and the Government to see that if every fair and reasonable effort is made by the settlers for the eradication of the pest, the Government in return will endeavour to assist them and to see that they get a decent chance and a fair deal. At the present juncture the settlers are not doing too well; and if the powers under this measure are applied against them to the full immediately, they will be in exactly the same position as a man who has been drinking for 20 years and who is suddenly taken by the neck and told, "Your drinking will have to stop from this day forwards." That would be the position of those settlers if the drastic powers under this measure are put into operation against them immediately. Having decided that the rabbit is a pest, we have as our next

task that of finding ways and means to put the pest out of commission. I listened with careful attention to the observations of the Honorary Minister in introducing the Bill. I have also perused with interest the correspondence in the Press on methods for eradication of the pest. I must confess, however, that absolutely nothing has been suggested that is new to me, after my experience in the Eastern States. This, of course, is hardly to be wondered at. To my mind it appears that the only methods which have been suggested are poisoning, clearing, trapping, and netting. Netting at the present juncture is undoubtedly out of court. We saw this thing coming, but what preparation did we make? Netting is admittedly the most efficacious means of dealing with the rabbit. I say that as one who has had considerable experience in that direction. I have travelled all the Victorian country which was described by Sir Edward Wittenoom, and also other parts of the Eastern States; and I say unhesitatingly that the real key of the situation is wire netting. After wire netting a property, one can go on and take charge by poisoning and other means of eradication. But really no effort has been made by us in Western Australia, although we have seen the pest coming for a number of years. To-day we find ourselves in the awkward position that, owing to the war, we are unable to obtain netting. We have no hope of relieving the difficulties of the farmer by a supply of wire netting. Possibly, out of evil good may come. Necessity being the mother of invention, the Government may be induced to make some effort to import a shipment of wire netting, or the Commonwealth perhaps will try to secure wire netting from America. Indeed, the Commonwealth might go even further and endeavour to do what is infinitely better—that is, establish the wire netting industry in Australia. If we continue to rely on other countries for our necessities, we may find ourselves eventually in even a worse plight than to-day. In this connection there is an opportunity of establishing a new and promising industry, and at the same time furthering the interests of repatriation. The industry is one which may be suitable for the employment of returned soldiers. As regards clearing land and digging out burrows, these methods have proved very effective in the Eastern States. I have seen many large holdings freed of rabbits by them. The practice is to clear the land, and to burn all hollow logs and rubbish. This process, however, takes time and money; and it has to be done methodically, or it will not prove effective. To poisoning there are certain objections, though it is, in fact, the most efficacious method, and one which must appeal to all interested. Mr. Kingsmill has sounded a note of warning as regards the possible results of rabbit poisoning on bird life. He has pointed out that in poisoning the rabbits we may run the risk of destroying some of our very best friends. Those of us who have had experience of country life in the Eastern States and in the back districts of

Western Australia, know well that a good deal depends on the bird life, and that we should be most careful lest in attempting to eradicate the rabbit pest we destroy the bird life. There is a simple device in this connection which appeals to me very much. It is the use of the common house-gutter for the distribution of poisoned water. Such guttering is not high—just high enough for the rabbit. It must be remembered that bunny comes out a good deal at night, when the gutter troughs could be left open for him to drink; and they could be covered up again in the morning. In other respects, too, the greatest care must be exercised as regards poisoning. The device I have mentioned, however, seems to be very effective, and it certainly minimises the danger of poisoning birds. References have been made to the question of commercialising the rabbit. I am of opinion that a great mistake is being made in Western Australia by not following this course. It is to be remembered that there are only certain seasons in which rabbits can be poisoned, although some people attempt to cary on poisoning all the year round. My experience, however, is that that is a waste of time. When there is an abundance of green feed about, it is hopeless to expect rabbits to take poison. That being the case, other methods have to be adopted, and I would advocate trapping and rooting out burrows. If this were made an industry areas could be proclaimed close to the railway line and to roads wherein the rabbits could be secured, and the effect would be, to a certain extent, to keep down the pest. I have in my mind districts such as Geraldton, Northampton, Upper Chapman, Irwin, and the Greenough Flats, adjacent to the railways, where the work of trapping could be carried on. There are many holdings in these places and rabbits are in abundance there. I would not go so far as Mr. Greig as to say that trapping should be restricted to the vermin on the holdings, but I would give permission to trap rabbits anywhere and convert them into a commercial product. It may be pointed out, as an argument against that, that there is no shipping available to permit of the export of the rabbit. That is the case, but we hope that that will not always obtain. At the same time, if permission were given for trapping within certain distances of the railway line and roads, the rabbits could be brought to Perth and sold. The rabbits caught in the Geraldton district could be treated at the Geraldton freezing works, when they are in operation. In the meantime temporary provision can be made for treating them. I would point out that if we never try we will never succeed and what will obtain in Geraldton will obtain in other parts of the State. Already a syndicate has been formed in Geraldton and I am satisfied that it will take the lead in this State in the direction of treating the rabbits, and there are all the prospects of success being attained. It must not be forgotten that, while this business is being made an industry, farmers and others will derive hard cash from it, and they will be able to



some extent to pay off liabilities incurred in other directions. I admit that we cannot trap and poison in the same areas because of the fact that experts tell us that there is a possibility of poison being retained in the rabbit and being communicated to the progeny. But if certain areas were set aside for trapping only, and the responsibility were placed on the people trapping in those areas, good results would follow. This kind of thing has been in operation in many parts of Victoria and there is no ground for the fears expressed that rabbits would endeavour, by certain devices, to assist the rabbits to multiply by only killing a certain sex. I think that amounts to a reflection on those who are charged with the supervision of the work. Of course there are those who in every branch of industry will always transgress, but we must not destroy an industry because one or two people are likely to offend. If there are the usual safeguards I do not think we shall have anything to fear. The risk to be incurred should be such that people will think twice before doing any wrong. Very few members have had more experience than I in connection with this matter, and I have no hesitation in saying that, with co-operation, we shall get the desired effect. We must, however, have co-operation and enthusiasm, and the work can only be successfully carried out on areas which are in close proximity to the railways. The effect would be not merely to help to destroy the pest but it would, to some extent, bring about a reduction in the cost of living. I entirely agree with what Mr. Greig said regarding the Crown lands. I can see no legitimate reason why a private individual should be asked to do certain things whilst no action is proposed with regard to adjoining Crown lands. The same thing applies to noxious weeds. We have the box thorn and instructions are issued year after year for the eradication of this pest. At the same time, on Crown lands—and I am speaking of the Geraldton district with which I am familiar—the pest just overruns the areas there. During a recent trip I had along the back country at the head of the Greenough River, I came across huge warrens on Crown lands and on deserted holdings, and rabbits were as numerous as I had ever seen them in the Eastern States. If the Government do not take steps to deal with the pest in those areas it is not justice to ask the settlers to exterminate them from their own holdings. I protest strongly against a settler being asked to do this while the Government do not propose to do anything so far as the Crown lands are concerned. I entirely agree with the proposal that Mr. Greig made with regard to the appointment of a member of a board to the position of inspector. I admit that men with local knowledge will make efficient inspectors, and I think they would be in a better position to act than inspectors sent from Perth or elsewhere. At the same time those men should resign from the positions they occupy on the board. Fancy a man holding a position on a board and assisting to make regulations for his own guidance! When the Bill is in Committee I intend to move an amendment in the direction of endeavouring to see that certain areas

within easy reach of the railway lines shall be kept apart for trapping purposes, and that more effective means for eradicating the pest than are at present suggested may be taken.

Hon. E. M. CLARKE (South-West) [5.55]: To my mind this matter resolves itself into the question we should ask ourselves as to whence do these rabbits come? Unquestionably the answer would be, from Crown lands. The Government are exempt in every case, and can we therefore conscientiously expect the settlers to free themselves from the pest when they are coming in in such numbers from the adjoining lands which are the property of the Crown. There is nothing that can be done to compel the Government to take steps in the direction of preventing rabbits from swarming on to private lands, and it is the same thing with regard to water. A river may run through Crown land, then through settlers' land and through Crown land again, and yet the settler is held responsible. Why should the Crown always be exempt? Again in connection with the Noxious Weeds Act, the Government reserves may be covered with noxious weeds and no man can compel their eradication; yet the settler alongside those lands must keep his property free from the weeds. To my mind there is only one way of dealing with the rabbit pest and that is to commercialise it. The rabbits should be trapped and converted into money. The Bill will be an absolute farce because it will not be possible for a settler to keep his land free from rabbits when swarms of them will surround him on Crown lands. Some other way will have to be found out of the difficulty. Mr. Kingsmill and Mr. Sommers have referred to the kangaroo, but I would inform the House that those gentlemen are not the only experts on kangaroos. I think I know nearly as much about it as both those hon. members put together. I have shot them by the hundreds and have seen them by the thousands, and with the exception of one place which has been mentioned, namely, Nannup, anyone can walk for miles without seeing a kangaroo. I speak from knowledge gained by travelling through the bush where at one time there were thousands and where it was possible to shoot two at a time. Where are they now? One can go over the same country to-day without seeing one. I consider it is necessary that the kangaroo should be protected, for this marsupial is a valuable asset. I will not vote against the second reading of the Bill, but I do hope the Government will view the position from a common-sense standpoint and will see how futile it is to expect private holders to exterminate rabbits from their holdings while nothing is done to exterminate the pest on adjoining Crown lands.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [6.0]: I marvel somewhat that it has not been possible to incorporate the Vermin Bill and the Rabbit Bill into one measure. I rose to call the attention of the Honorary Minister to the existence of an anomaly in the Vermin Boards Bill. I trust that in his reply he may be able to hold out some hope that an amendment will be made in committee with regard to the clauses affecting the votes which will

be credited to those who have to pay the taxes. This has been overlooked in the Bill. In the original Act we have section 13, in which the taxation amounts to 1s. per hundred acres, but in this Bill it is proposed that this should be again increased. There is a provision referring only to pastoral holdings, large holdings up to 10,000 acres and 100,000 acres. We are now in this amending Bill treating very much more closely with the smaller holdings, which are to come under the Roads Board ratings, on a basis of so much per acre, and in many instances these smaller holdings are rated up to £2 and £3 an acre. The Board is, in fact, allowed to rate up to 3d. in the pound, whereas if it were a pastoral holding of, say, 10,000 acres the amount would be a matter of £5. If a man happened to own 5,000 acres of freehold country, he would be paying on the roads board rating on a valuation of 35s. per acre, and, at the rate of one penny in the pound, he would have to pay the board £31 5s., and notwithstanding this would only have one vote. Many of those in the same district would be paying, perhaps, on a minimum of 2s. 6d. or 5s. as the whole of their rating, and would have an equal voting power with the other man. I look upon that as rather extraordinary. Evidently it has been overlooked in this amending measure. We have to safeguard the interests of those who are likely to be heavily hit by this form of further taxation. We all remember the trouble which was caused in connection with the Carnarvon district when the parent Act was passed. Small station holders and those who had no interest in stations at all became members of the board and they placed the rates upon those who held the large stations, with the result that the funds collected were injudiciously spent because the members of the board were not personally interested in the localities concerned in the expenditure. The small holder, however, had just as much voting power as the man who had to find the whole of the money. I think it would be a mistake for us on this occasion to allow that to go by without very careful consideration. I, therefore, ask the Honorary Minister to look into this matter, and trust when we get into committee that we will have some amendment made which will put the matter right. I also appeal to the Honorary Minister with regard to the boundaries of the road boards in districts where we have the main rabbit-proof fence running right through the country. This fence has probably divided one section of a roads board district from another. All those outside the fence are permitted to trade in rabbits, but those inside the fence are not allowed to do so. They come under different clauses of the Bill. There will be a great danger in the elections which will take place for membership of the board, that four members will be selected from outside the fence and two members from inside the fence, thus bringing about a considerable conflict of opinion. This position may create a great amount of trouble and mischief in the future. I do not know if the Honorary Minister has taken that point of view into consideration. It might be advisable in con-

sidering this measure to determine whether it would be wise to allow these road boards to become vermin boards in those districts along which the rabbit-proof fence goes. That is a matter for administration rather than for legislation. I only mention the matter in order to draw the attention of the Honorary Minister to it, and, otherwise, have much pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES (North) [6.7]: I intend to support the second reading of the Bill and do not propose to say much on the question because in another place there is a select committee dealing with it. I would like to draw attention to clause 14 and to the second paragraph in it which reads:—

Such rate shall not exceed for a pastoral holding 2s. for every 100 acres of the holding, and for any other holding the maximum amount of the rate which may be levied on the unimproved capital value of the holding by the road board of the road district in which it is situated.

As this is worded, a man holding 1,000 acres pays 10s. in the pound, but on the unimproved capital value of the holding being arrived at, we take 20 times the rental value which is £10. The maximum rate which the roads board can strike is 3d. in the pound. If a pastoralist was taxed to the same extent as the other holder, he would only pay 2s. 6d., but under the clause as it now reads, he is liable to pay £1 as the maximum amount. That is an injustice to the holders of big areas in this State. When in committee I intend to move an amendment to have the amount reduced from 2s. to at least 1s. If it is reduced to 1s. the pastoralist will then have to pay 10s. as the maximum, as against the holder of land in other portions of the State paying only 2s. 6d. I merely rose to point this out to the Honorary Minister, and have pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN (South) [6.10]: I merely desire to point out that in another place there is a select committee sitting consisting of members representing the various parties in Parliament, who are inquiring into the whole of the question regarding rabbits. I would suggest that the recommendations of that committee would be of very great service to us in dealing with the Bill, and also another Bill in connection with the same matter which is coming before us. I know the recommendations of the committee will not be before us officially but the committee was to have brought in its report this week. I do think it is a pity, therefore, in view of the number of intricate questions involved in this matter, and in view of the fact that the committee will devote a considerable amount of time to dealing with the question, that we should not have the benefit of its suggestions in an informal and unofficial way, before disposing of these particular measures. I trust that the Government will see their way, at any rate before these Bills are dealt with in committee, to our having an opportunity either through the newspapers or otherwise of reviewing the decisions arrived at by that select committee. One or two of the members of the House have given evidence be-

fore that committee, and some of the speeches which have already been delivered upon this Bill have put forward suggestions which I am quite sure the committee would be very glad to consider, and which would assist members very materially in connection with the decisions they are endeavouring to arrive at. A duplication of work sometimes occurs not only in connection with Government departments, but even in connection with this Parliament. After we have passed these Bills, if we do so before the report of that committee is available, they will go to another place, and that committee will in the meantime have brought forward suggestions which may completely upset the work of this House. With reference to the opposition expressed by Mr. Greig to the clause by which an inspector might be a member of the board, to my mind this would be a most inadvisable thing. I would suggest to that hon. member or to Mr. Hickey, or to any other hon. member to propose an amendment to the effect that any inspector who is also a member of the board should carry out his duties without payment. There may be occasions when it is advisable that a member of the board should act as an inspector, and if it be necessary that this should be done he should not receive payment. With the addition of a slight amendment adding the words "without payment" to that clause, this could easily be provided for. I trust the Honorary Minister will accept such an amendment because it would probably remove the objections, and they are strong objections, to the appointment of an inspector who would also be a member of the board.

On motion by Hon. H. Stewart debate adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 6.12 to 7.30 p.m.

## BILL—RABBIT ACT AMENDMENT.

### Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 21st February.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [7.31]: I regret that this measure and the Vermin Boards Bill could not have been combined, because both deal with the one subject. One, I understand, is a Bill specially dealing with Ministerial administration, and the other with roads board administration. It is rather complicated for members because we have again to deal with the one subject and go over the same ground that the Vermin Boards Bill treated with. With regard to the question of rabbits, I was closely connected with the erection of the original rabbit-proof fence, from the southern portion of the State right through to the North, so as to cut off the rabbits when they began advancing. The work was proposed by one Government and another, but until the advisory board on agriculture strongly urged the Government to proceed with the work it was not taken in hand seriously. Many people have claimed that it has been a huge waste of money and at that time a number of people said that it would be folly to erect the fence. It was urged by the board that it would be a wise proceeding to erect the fence, although it would not stop the rabbits from encroaching on the western areas. It would stop a great wave, certainly, from coming in on the settlers like a

swarm of locusts entirely demolishing orchards and crops on this side of the fence. All the Government areas are breeding grounds, those eastward of the rabbit-proof fence. There are millions of acres containing an enormous number of rabbits, and when the dry season comes on it drives the rabbits westward, so that, as long as this fence stands intact it will be the means of stopping a great wave which would be likely to do much damage. I have met a number of people who have said that the fence is of very little use because rabbits will climb over it. People have told me they have seen rabbits climbing over the fence, that they can climb as easily as a cat.

Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister): Where had they been the night before?

Hon. W. Kingsmill: That is "over the fence."

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I believe this to be a bona-fide statement, and members must have seen rabbits enclosed in small areas making a rush against the wire and climbing up it. If they can do that in enclosed places surely it can be done along the rabbit proof fence. Personally I have not seen rabbits climbing, but I am assured by settlers that they do climb. I am assured by a squatter who knows what he is talking about, and who is right among the rabbits, that the rabbits have been here for the past ten years. The squatters do not fear much from the rabbits, and I am told that the rabbits are no worse to-day than they were ten years ago. I am assured that the rabbits were in the Ashburton district ten years ago. An inspector was sent there, but what he did or did not do I am at a loss to know. Still, I am assured that the rabbits were there ten years ago, and a considerable distance inside the rabbit-proof fence. The Honorary Minister has told us that in many cases the gates are left open enabling the rabbits to pass through, and that in consequence the settlers outside the fence think that they are being neglected, that they are not getting a fair deal from the department, and that it is only when the rabbits become a menace to the settlers that they receive any assistance to enable them to deal with the pest. Numbers of people advocate the pulling up of the No. 1 fence, because they say the No. 2 fence will answer the purpose that the No. 1 fence is now performing. I do not agree with that idea, although many claim that a better use could be made of the wire netting by settlers fencing their holdings. I think it is as well to retain the double barrier. It would cost a great deal to pull up the existing fence, and the wire that has been in the ground would have rotted considerably and would not be of much value. The small holders between the fence will be in a good position. They have a protection which will stop a wave of rabbits from either east or west. The rabbits cannot attack them from either side. Still, there is no doubt the rabbit is encroaching in the areas to the westward of the fence. We hear of them in small numbers right from Albany in the south to the Murchison. They are distributed throughout the State. I have

heard members referring to the poison plant, and I think it will be the means of poisoning the rabbits. The department some years ago had a number of rabbits under experiment for something like six or eight months. They fed them upon the poison plant, and the result was that the poison plant would not kill the rabbits until the plant was in bloom; when it was in bloom and the rabbits ate it they died. The poison plant would only bloom once or twice in the year. On one or two areas rabbits have been found dead, and on each occasion it has been proved that the rabbits died from eating the poison plant. I think it would be as well for the Government to fence in patches of poison plant and not attempt to eradicate it entirely. It would be easy to put a fence round patches of poison, so as to keep the stock out. Then the Government could experiment with the closed in areas of poison. I think it would be worth while experimenting in this way, although the department were not successful in killing rabbits when they experimented previously. If the department is desirous of making a trial I can take all the rabbits they like to bring along and place them on patches where the poison plant is growing fresh, and I think that after eating this poison not many rabbits will remain alive, especially when this plant is growing in such a succulent crop. The rabbit has been extremely destructive in the eastern wheat belt during the last year or two. This season crops equal to six bags to the acre have been destroyed. One man had in 160 acres of such a crop, yet when he was able to strip it, there were only 70 acres left, the remainder having been demolished by the rabbits. It is extremely hard for some settlers who have successfully used the poison cart on their holdings that those holdings should be surrounded by Crown lands which provide excellent breeding grounds for the rabbits. As fast as those settlers poison the rabbits on their holdings they are again stocked up by the rabbits from the Crown lands. It is necessary that the Government should do all they can to clean their own areas. The Government claim to have been doing a lot in providing poison, but I think they should do everything possible to exterminate the rabbits everywhere. Several settlers have informed me that the rabbits will climb up a bag of wheat and eat the wheat from the mouth of the bag. Again, I learn that they will cut holes in the bottom of the bag so as to allow the wheat to trickle out. The Minister told us that the department has sent poison carts into several districts, where they have been very successful. I notice that Clause 4 of the Bill amends Section 31 of the Act. Section 31 provides that poison shall not be used unless notice has been given to the occupier of the land of the intention to use poison. This provision is to be repealed by Clause 4. I think this would be incurring a very grave danger. If we omit to give the settler notice of intention to lay poison it might easily result in considerable damage being done to

his stock. It is only right that when any poison is to be laid, notice should be given to the owner of the property. Several of the poisons used are of a sweet taste, and it might even happen that the settlers' children would get hold of the poison. The safeguard of giving notice as provided in the Act should certainly be retained. There is a marked difference of opinion in the community on the question of rabbit trapping and of trading in carcases and skins. Undoubtedly, the rabbit can be made a source of revenue. This is shown by the experience in the Eastern States. It has been said that if we make an industry of the rabbits, it will lead to a depreciation in our flocks of sheep. Yet to-day Australia is producing as much wool as ever before, so apparently the trade in rabbits which has sprung up in the Eastern States has not had any detrimental effect upon the pastoral industry. In the winter months when the rabbit is able to get good feed everywhere, the settler cannot poison, and he might just as well be allowed to trap the rabbits at such a time and make as much use as he can of the carcases and skins. Settlers on the eastern side of the fence can trade in rabbits to-day, and it will not be long before we have those on the western side clamouring for the same privilege. Of course, all settlers would do their utmost to poison the rabbits in summer time, and I think that in the winter time, when poisoning cannot be effectively carried on, trapping should be permitted. In view of the experience of the other States, there is no fear of the rabbit trapper succeeding in building up an industry in this State. We have the rabbit with us, and we should make what profit we can out of him during that part of the year when he declines to be poisoned. I have not been able to understand the attitude of the department in refusing poison to settlers. One settler who had prepared water troughs in the corners of his paddocks where rabbits from Crown lands were crawling up his fences, tried to obtain poison for the water in the troughs. He appealed to the department, but was refused on the grounds that the department was afraid of his destroying birds and iguanas. I understand that poisoned water has been utilised by the department itself, and why they should have refused to allow the same expedient to a settler who had expended money in providing troughs for the purpose of destroying rabbits coming off Crown lands, I cannot understand.

Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister): The Department cannot distribute poison indiscriminately.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: They were not asked to distribute indiscriminately. When a settler has gone to the expense of putting in troughs and making all necessary arrangements, his application for poison should be favourably considered.

Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister): He can get poison through any local body.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I trust that that was explained to the settler at the time. The reply he received from the department

was quite of a contrary tenor, and he is absolutely disgusted with the department. There are numbers of other settlers who are equally disgusted with the department. The settlers have been only too anxious to help the department, and have gone to expense in that endeavour. Another case I may bring to the attention of the Minister is that of certain settlers who approached the department with the object of obtaining assistance in eradicating rabbits which had destroyed 300 acres of wheat. These settlers applied for poison carts, and were told that there was no hope at all of getting one. The settlers thereupon sent to the Eastern States for a poison cart; and when it arrived here they went to the department to see if they could get some help in the direction, possibly, of reduction in the cost of railing the cart to their district. An officer of the department said to them, "What on earth did you want to buy this cart yourselves for, when we have 30 or 40 carts and could have supplied you?" The settlers are not being treated on a fair and equitable basis. To discover after buying a cart that one could have been supplied by the department is an extremely unfortunate experience. The department have woke up very late in the day to the necessity for doing something for these settlers. Those on the eastern borders of the rabbit-proof fence, it is said, have deliberately left the gates open and helped to let the rabbits through to the western side. It is stated they have said that the sooner the western side of the fence was stocked up with rabbits, the sooner would the settlers on the western side help those on the eastern side in making representations to the Rabbit Department. Probably, had I been in the same locality and suffering under the same pinpricks, I might have been one of them who adopted that course.

Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister): Do the settlers admit having left the gates open?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: That is a suggestion put forward in the locality. It has arisen out of the administration of the department, I do not say to-day, but in the past. The settlers on the eastern side say they have battled to long with the department and have had so little encouragement. In many cases where the rabbit is just showing himself now, just coming into evidence, the settlers are nervous as to notifying the department, because of the spirit in which the department receive such notifications. It is the same spirit as that in which the report of Mr. Sommers was received. Instead of being given help or suggestions in a kindly spirit, the settlers are met with orders backed by a statement of pains and penalties, and all sorts of dreadful things which will happen to them if they fail to do this, that, or the other.

Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister): Mr. Sommers referred to kangaroos.

Hon. C. Sommers: Not in that instance.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I am referring to rabbits. There are several clauses of the

measure to which I shall have to refer in Committee. I congratulate the Honorary Minister on the manner in which he introduced the measure.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM (North) [8.6]: I am not disposed to trespass on the time of the House for more than a few minutes, because, in speaking on the Vermin Bill, I said that, to a large extent, I was dealing also with this measure. I stated that I thought remarks applying to the one Bill would probably apply to the other. After giving the matter careful consideration, however, I find that such is not the case. In the few words I have to say I will explain the differences. The Vermin Bill, to a large extent, deals with the eradication of vermin and with the establishment of vermin boards. But the amendments under the present Bill deal almost entirely with fencing. They are practically confined to the matter of keeping the rabbit-proof fences in order, and to various details in connection therewith. The first amendment provides that for any advances in the shape of rabbit-proof netting made by the Government under this measure the rate of interest charged will be six per cent., instead of four. Another important amendment is that in the past no proof was required from farmers or other owners of land that rabbits existed on their properties, if that fact was established to the satisfaction of the Chief Inspector of Rabbits. If that officer stated that rabbits were on the land and that the necessary measures were not being taken to eradicate them, the fact was considered proved. Now we find that the powers of the Chief Inspector of Rabbits in this respect are to be delegated to the sub-inspectors. It is, of course, impossible for the Chief Inspector of Rabbits to visit holdings in all parts of the country at the same time, and therefore his authority is delegated to the sub-inspectors. The next amendment refers to compulsory fencing of water supplies. The Government take power to instruct that any owner of land shall fence in his water supply. The memorandum I have placed against this provision of the Bill is, "Where will we get the netting?" At present, of course, netting is unobtainable. Further, the Government may declare any area of land rabbit infested, and may require any owners of land in that area to wire-net water supplies. The point is one which will be highly useful in carrying out the intentions of this measure, but at present it is impossible to observe owing to the entire want of netting. Next, there are provisions as to payment of rent when Government fences are made use of by private individuals. If I happen to have a farm or a location which abuts on the Government rabbit-proof fence, and I join on to the fence, there are certain conditions under which I have to pay. The Bill also makes arrangements for the ring fencing of properties. People may ring-fence a number of properties under an agreement, and by this Bill the Government will have power to advance those people the necessary rabbit-proof netting. But the agreement must

be made in the form required by the Government. The agreement has to be drawn up in a very strict manner. The next point is with regard to cattle trespassing on the Government rabbit-proof fences. The Honorary Minister in introducing the Bill pointed out that sometimes advantage is taken of the half-chain strip along the fence to drive a mob of cattle. We know that in wet weather, when heavy bullocks are pushed into the fence, they tread it down to such an extent that the four inches underground becomes exposed; and thus the rabbits can get under it. The only other point in the Bill refers to stealing water from tanks. That may not, to some hon. members, appear a very dreadful thing; but my knowledge of the circumstances enables me to say that it may be very serious. One man may be patrolling the fence for a distance of 100 miles. His living water is contained in tanks, which catch it from the roof of his humpy. If people steal this water, or waste it, the man may be subjected to terrible risks through want of it. A case was quoted by the Honorary Minister of one of these men, crawling in after an accident, finding not a drop of water, though fortunately a traveller happened along to assist this unfortunate man. The water is there specially for the supply of the men connected with the fence, and no one has a right to take that water except, of course, a man who is absolutely famishing from thirst; and in that case, "Necessity knows no law." So far as I can see, there is nothing very objectionable in the Bill, though the provisions will have to be very carefully considered in Committee. There is one most important point which I omitted to mention in speaking on the Vermin Bill. It was, however, touched on by the Honorary Minister; and I take this opportunity of emphasising it—that is, the financial position which will arise in rabbit infested areas. I happen, fortunately or unfortunately, to be connected with certain financial institutions; and I am in a position to state that the first question which is asked nowadays of anyone who wants an advance is, "What about rabbits?" I need hardly tell the business men of this Chamber how many institutions would advance money on a rabbit-infested property. Therefore, in the interests of the whole State, in the interests of production of every kind, it is our duty to do everything we possibly can and all to work together. If we cannot eradicate the rabbits, at all events let us do our very utmost to control them. I desire to emphasise once more that this can be done only by the cordial co-operation of all parties. It is no use indulging in the fighting spirit spoken of by Mr. Hamersley. If the trouble emanated from the department, then the department need to be a little more diplomatic. If it began with the settlers themselves, they must all recognise the advantage of which the department can be to them. We cannot hope to control the pest except by the cordial co-operation of everybody. Let us recognise the rabbit as a pest, and let us recognise the best method of getting rid of it, of getting it off our runs and farms as soon as possible. I can assure hon. members that very little

money will be advanced against any property which is infested with rabbits. In conclusion I would simply remark that a select committee is inquiring into the invasion by rabbits. That committee is composed of hon. members of another place and has been sitting for the past two or three weeks, and it would be premature to arrive at any conclusion in connection with the Bill before we learned what decisions the committee will arrive at. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES (North) [8.17]: As Sir Edward Wittenoom has pointed out, a select committee of another place is dealing with the rabbit question and in the course of a little time will submit recommendations which it may be wise to embody in the measure.

Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister): It is not intended to proceed with the Committee stage until the select committee have presented their report.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I am glad to hear that. In the Bill before us the Government seek powers in addition to those already provided by the original Act. But what is difficult to understand is that the power which the Government did possess, and it was a drastic power too, was never enforced. The Chief Inspector of Rabbits—and I am open to correction if what I am stating is incorrect—was never allowed to act up to the full extent conferred on him by the statute in force. Minister after Minister, I understand, prevented this officer from carrying out his duty; why, I do not know. Probably the Honorary Minister when he replies will be able to make some explanation on this point. The Government desire the House to give them additional power, but it is useless doing that unless the Government propose to take similar action so far as the Crown lands are concerned. Sir Edward Wittenoom referred to co-operation in this matter, but it would be fatal for the House to give the Government power to harrass settlers, while the Government, who own large areas of unoccupied lands which are infested with rabbits and which are apparently being used for breeding purposes, should not themselves take action. If the Bill becomes an Act the Government will have to make up their minds that they will deal with rabbits on Crown lands in the same way as it is proposed to insist a private holder shall act. We have evidence of the necessity for such action in the introduction of the Bill by the Honorary Minister. He mentioned the fact that an inspector had gone to private holders and insisted upon them dealing with the rabbits on their property and had been ordered off the premises. Anyone who will look at the matter logically and reasonably will know that the settler takes up this position. He will say "Why do you come on to my area and insist upon my carrying out the conditions of the Rabbit Act, when the Crown on the adjoining areas are using those areas for breeding purposes and for the purpose of stocking up my land with a fresh lot of rabbits after I have exterminated those which are already on my property?" It will thus be seen that all the trouble between the inspector and the settlers in the past has been due to the fact that the Government expect the settlers to do all the

work in connection with the extermination of the pest while they themselves do nothing. Unless the Government deal with this aspect of the question, unless we make provision that the Government shall be treated in the same way as the private owner, I do not think that much good will result from the passing of the Bill. Reference has been made to fencing. It is only right to express appreciation of the action of the Government who were in power in years gone by and who authorised the erection of the rabbit-proof fences. It was a wise step which they took because it had the effect of keeping the rabbits in check for a great number of years. Now it seems as if we shall only be able to successfully cope with the pest by erecting fences around the holdings. The difficulty of course is to get wire netting. It is recognised in all the Eastern States that once an area is fenced in, it is possible then to deal with the rabbits which are in that area, but unless the areas are so fenced in, it is hopeless to expect to be able to get rid of the rabbits if the breeding grounds which are adjoining are allowed to remain untouched. I think we could get over the difficulty by providing that power should be exercised over Crown lands in the same way as it is exercised over land held by the individual. Subclause (1) of clause 5 sets out that the Governor may by proclamation declare that any area therein defined is rabbit infested and that all owners of land therein are required within a time specified to surround and enclose completely with rabbit-proof fencing all water supplies on such land. By adding the word "Crown" before "land" we would thus compel the Government to fence in the water on Crown lands. That would not be an injustice.

Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister: The Crown has already done that.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I am pleased to hear that.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: But rabbits can live without water.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: If the Crown have done that I will assist the Government to get all the power they want to compel private owners to do the same thing. I have nothing further to say except to support the second reading, and I hope that the select committee will be able to make recommendations which can be embodied in the Bill and which will make the Bill workable. If we compel settlers to exterminate the pest from their holdings we should in common justice insist on the Government doing the same.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister—East—in reply) [8.27]: As I stated by interjection, I have no intention of proceeding with this measure beyond the second reading stage. But I propose to wait for the select committee to present their report and it can then be dealt with by hon. members when the Bill is in the Committee stage. The question has been raised regarding the liability of the Crown and references have been made to unoccupied Crown lands. Mr. Hamersley quoted the case of a selector who made free use of a poison cart on his holding, and notwithstanding that fact was invaded by rabbits from adjoining Crown lands. Mr. Holmes has stressed the point as well. It

would be quite impossible for any State to take up a position in connection with this matter such as that suggested by the hon. member. It simply could not be carried out. Mr. Hamersley also made reference to the question of trading in rabbit skins. For the information of the House I desire to say that it is intended to strike out paragraph (b) of Clause 43, which will have the effect of removing the embargo placed on rabbit skins at the present time. That will permit of trading in skins. But not very much can come from this trading with the present price which is offered for rabbit skins, something like 11d. a dozen. So far as poison not being supplied to the different settlers is concerned, the Government cannot indiscriminately distribute poison. The attitude in the past has been a wise one, that is, to send a supply of poison to local bodies such as roads boards, vermin boards, or farmers' organisations. Since I have been in office there have been numerous applications for cyanide. The department would not take the responsibility of sending cyanide to any person who may wish to apply for it. It is more than we would dare do. I would like hon. members to supply me with the name of the settler who made all his preparations and was refused on the plea that it meant the destruction of all small animal and bird life. I have time and again told settlers that they would have to apply through some local body, and that we would not supply poison to individuals. That is the only attitude we could take up. If the hon. member will give me particulars I will inquire into the matter. He further referred to persons who wished to secure a poison cart, but said that they had sent east for one. In all the cases that I have had to deal with people have approached the department for a poison cart, in most instances free of charge. The department is not an exterminating department, but one to see that the Act is carried out. We have neither the power nor the money to start out exterminating on a large scale. With reference to freights the department has taken the matter up in conjunction with the Railway Department. I do not know whether they have come to a decision in the matter, but I have urged the Railway authorities to carry these poison carts at the same rate as they do agricultural vehicles, which means a difference of something like one-third of the cost. I have no doubt that this will be carried out. I am surprised to hear that settlers have been deliberately leaving the gates open and letting the rabbits through in order to arouse other people to urge the department to take action. The department has been most lenient in not compelling people to exterminate rabbits on their properties. I should be pleased if the hon. member could have a report sent to me, for if we could get a case against some person or persons I do not think that it will be necessary to take any such action. The hon. member said that some people in the outlying districts had been there for two years without receiving any encouragement from the department. What encour-

agement do they want? They have been supplied with free poison and the use of Government poison carts working in the neighbourhood, and have even had poison delivered at their doors. This poison was distributed, and yet the settlers asked that someone should go along to lay the poison for them. No other Government in Australia have gone as far as the Western Australian Government have gone. The only fault lies in the amount of leniency which has been extended by the Government to these people. That possibly was misplaced, because if we had compelled the settlers to live up to the Act thousands of pounds could have been saved which will have to be spent now on the eradication of this pest. I am pleased that Sir Edward Wittenoom favours the Bill, because these amendments are most necessary for the satisfactory working of the Act. Both Sir Edward Wittenoom and Mr. Holmes referred to the fencing in of water supplies. The Government water supplies have all been fenced in. Unfortunately, however, too great a care of these Government water supplies has not been taken by the settlers because they have left open the gates leading to them. During the last month we have been able to procure five miles of netting, and this has been sent out to the Dowerin and Ninghan vermin boards, with a request that it should be supplied to those settlers who are desirous of fencing in their water supplies. We have, therefore, gone even further than Sir Edward Wittenoom asked. We have not only fenced in our own water supplies, but we have done what we could to supply netting to other settlers, so that they, too, might fence in their water supplies.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: I am speaking of that part of the country where no water supplies are mentioned.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): Mr. Holmes asked why the inspector was not allowed to proceed with legal action when the department already possessed a certain amount of power under the existing Act. Proceedings were taken in some cases, and a fine inflicted, but there was such a storm of indignation that the then Minister gave way and was lenient to these people. The result was that the inspector was asked to stay his hand.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: It is better to have a storm of indignation than a storm of rabbits.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): I quite agree. The Government of the day have taken up the stand that they are going right ahead with the Act, and are grappling with the situation. We are determined to carry out the Act as far as possible in its entirety, and feel that this is the only way to control the rabbit invasion.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Then why not deal with your own land first?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): Let me ask hon. members if they have ever thought what this would cost. It is an amazing task they are asking the Government to undertake. Where will the Government commence, and where will they end? Is it sug-

gested that we should sweep the country from here to the South Australian border? The rabbits come in waves from the eastern goldfields, and owing to the indiscriminate manner in which people have left open the gates along the fence, they have got right through. If this is suggested, how are we to finance the proposition? I cannot myself see any way of making any recommendation to the Government to this effect.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Is it not possible to deal with the rabbits on Crown lands inside the fences?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): There is a tremendous area of country between the two fences. Mr. Hamersley referred to rabbits being on the Ashburton River some ten years ago. There is an old rabbit settlement in the Lynton district. The rabbits there have been brought over from the islands.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: They are on this side of the Murchison.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): These rabbits have spread right through as far as Fremantle. The rabbits coming from the Eastern States became acclimatised and so got across the country and spread. Those, however, which landed from the islands did not become acclimatised at first, but after a while they settled down to their new surroundings and, as I say, have spread as far down as Fremantle.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

## BILL—FRIENDLY SOCIETIES.

In Committee.

Hon. W. Kingsmill in the Chair; the Colonial Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 12.

Hon. J. E. DODD: I have made some endeavours to obtain information from the various friendly societies in regard to this Bill, and I find that they are fully in accord with this clause.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

## BILL—HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Hon. W. Kingsmill in the Chair; the Colonial Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1-19—agreed to.

Clause 20—Insertion of new section between Sections 142 and 143—Registration of places of public entertainment:

Hon. J. E. DODD: This clause deals with the licensing of public buildings. It is rather a drastic clause because it applies to church halls, workers' halls, agricultural halls, etc., Wherever there is a lecture given an annual fee of £5 has to be paid.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The hon. member does not object to the principle of the clause as it applies to places of entertain-



ment generally. Before the erection of any public building plans and specifications have to be approved of by the department and the completed building approved before it can be opened. As to theatres, picture halls and concert halls, it is necessary to maintain supervision because minor alterations are frequently made, such as the rearrangement of the seating accommodation and the gangways. Alterations and additions are made in connection with electrical installations and it is considered for the safety of the public that there should be constant supervision and a fee is imposed with the object of recouping the department for the supervision. The point is raised now as to whether these conditions should apply to buildings used for lectures and readings. But provision is made by which they need not be called on to pay the £5 fee.

The CHAIRMAN: The clause is partly italicised; I think it would be well to treat it as wholly italicised.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I think that the consideration of the clause might be postponed and we can deal with the whole clause when it comes back to us.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: As far as this clause is concerned, there is nothing in the select committee's report dealing with it.

The Colonial Secretary: It is largely a money clause.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Why should not the clause be discussed now, leaving out the financial question? This is a question of the registration of minor halls. Has an agricultural hall to be licensed or is it licensed now for public entertainment? What is the object of postponing the clause?

The Colonial Secretary: I wish the clause postponed to make further inquiries into the point raised by Mr. Dodd.

Clause postponed.

The CHAIRMAN: I shall treat the clauses partly italicised as if wholly italicised. Members will have an opportunity of discussing them when the Bill comes back from another place.

Clauses 21, 22, 23, 24—agreed to.

Clause 25—Amendment of Section 167:

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Will this registration without fee apply to all places where refreshments are sold?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It is not considered necessary to impose a fee because already a license fee has to be paid.

Hon. A. Sanderson: There is no license fee for a lemonade shop.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Restaurants have to pay a fee.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: There are dozens of places all over the country where a person can get a cup of tea and a biscuit or a glass of lemonade. Do these places pay a fee?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Small places such as the member speaks of do not pay a fee nor is it intended to charge them but they should be registered for the purposes of supervision.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 26 to 32—agreed to.

Clause 33—Amendment of Section 187:

Hon. J. DUFFELL: This clause should be struck out. That is part of the recommendation of the select committee. The question of patent medicines has occupied the attention of those interested in the matter to a considerable extent and some hardship exists owing to uniformity throughout the Commonwealth in regard to the law dealing with patent medicines not existing. It is desired that there should be a conference held of those persons interested to deal with the question of uniformity.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: For the reasons given by the select committee I do not intend to press for the retention of this clause. I think the clause is desirable; we have not uniform legislation throughout the States and therefore to some extent the object of the clause may be defeated. At the present time the Commissioner of Health has power to prohibit the sale of any patent medicine that is deleterious to health or likely to be dangerous, but the bulk of the patent medicines do not contain anything likely to be dangerous to anyone. Therefore the clause is not likely to be used but there is a number of patent medicines sold at a high price containing nothing that would do any good. It is desired to prohibit the sale of these to prevent the public from being plundered. One case came before the court in connection with a microbe killer. The department prosecuted for publishing a false statement as to the medicine, which was stated to be a cure for all diseases. The prosecution was entirely successful. The defendant pleaded guilty and agreed to withdraw the false statement, but there was nothing to prevent the agent writing a new pamphlet which the department could not prosecute him for publishing. An analysis of the microbe killer sold, showed that it contained 99½ per cent. of water, a little more than a trace of sulphuric acid and it was sold at 5s. a bottle. There are other medicines at the present time of no greater value. I mention this to show that it was in no frivolous spirit that the Commissioner asked for power to deal with these medicines. I recognise that there should be uniformity in legislation of this kind but I do not press the clause.

Clause put and negatived.

Clauses 34 to 41—agreed to.

Clause 42—Amendment of Section 242 (c):

Hon. J. E. DODD: I notice that the last line of the clause reads "and every such person shall follow, as far as possible, the advice given by such practitioner." I think that in the original Act the penalty for a violation of this provision is £20. Although that penalty may not be too drastic for other provisions on the clause, it certainly seems to me rather drastic to apply to a person who shall not follow, as far as possible, the advice given by such practitioner. Not all practitioners are alike. Some of them are rather dictatorial at times, yet, unless the patient follows the advice given, he is liable to a penalty of £20. I move an amendment—

"That all words after 'days' in line 10 be struck out."

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I think the amendment would destroy the efficiency of the clause. The £20 penalty provided is a maximum, and it is altogether improbable that any court would impose a fine of £20 because a man did not exactly follow the advice of his practitioner. I do not think there is any likelihood of the words causing hardship to any person.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Some amendment is certainly required, because there is no provision that the advice given shall be in writing. Either the words objected to by Mr. Dodd should be deleted or we should add the words "in writing."

Hon. C. SOMMERS: I am inclined to agree with Mr. Dodd. One might carry out the advice of the practitioner as far as possible and yet might find it altogether impracticable to exactly carry out that advice.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The leader of the House said that when he came to these contentious clauses he would report progress. I received the report and evidence of the select committee only this afternoon, and I have not yet had an opportunity of looking into it. I do not know what this clause means. If the Minister is going to rush the clauses through I wish to enter a protest against this haste. I have no idea as to what the effect of the amendment will be. I hope the Minister will carry out his undertaking to report progress.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I intended reporting progress on Clause 44, which I regarded as the beginning of the contentious clauses. However, I am prepared to do it on this clause. The words proposed to be struck out are not new in the Bill, but are contained in the existing Act. The only respect in which the clause alters the provision of the Act is that it strikes out "once in every four weeks," which is regarded as being entirely inadequate in a number of cases. I have no desire to rush the Bill through.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I am inclined to support the amendment. A patient might consult one medical practitioner and, not being satisfied with the treatment, might consult another, whose advice might be totally opposed to that of the first practitioner. Which advice is to be carried out?

Hon. J. E. DODD: I find, as the Colonial Secretary has said, that the provision is in the existing Act. I was not aware of this. However, it seems to me a big power to place in the hands of medical men who are, after all, only human.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 9.14 p.m.

## Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 5th March, 1918.

The SPEAKER took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

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

### BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Council with an amendment.

### ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1917-18.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 28th February; Mr. Stubbs in the Chair.

Vote—His Excellency the Governor, £1,573—put and passed.

Votes—Executive Council £45, Legislative Council £929, Legislative Assembly £1,748, Joint House Committee £3,895, Joint Printing Committee £5,039, Joint Library Committee £400—agreed to.

Vote—Premier's Office, £1,714:

Item, Clerk £240.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I notice a new position, that of a clerk at £240. It appears that there has been a Treasury clerk in the Premier's Office doing work for the Premier's Office. But now that work has passed away from the Premier's office. Therefore, I move—

"That the item be struck out."

Mr. SMITH: I support the member for North-East Fremantle, as there has been no increase in the work of the Premier's Office. The Secretary to the Premier, it appears, is receiving a salary of £550 under this vote; and I believe he obtains an additional £200 or so from other departments. I think hon. members will agree that, considering the times, the Secretary to the Premier is very well paid. Instead of increasing the expenditure of the Premier's Office, we ought to be cutting it down.

The PREMIER: The work of the Premier's Office in this State has not decreased. On the contrary, like the work of all the Premiers' offices in Australia, it has increased. The item of £240 for a clerk is an item which has been on the Estimates previously, but was then included in the Treasurer's vote, although the clerk was really doing no Treasury work.

Hon. T. Walker: He did some Treasury work.

The PREMIER: He simply dealt with matters which came to the Premier from the Treasurer. The Premier's Office, however, still continues to do a good deal of work for the Treasurer, who has no clerk and no typist. All that work is being done for the Treasurer by the Premier's Office. Although hon. members might believe that the work of the Premier's Office has not increased of late years,