

reason why we should not finish on Thursday next at the very latest.

Hon. H. CARSON (Central) [10.53]: Hon. members will recollect that on the motion for the extension of sitting days and hours I suggested that the House should adjourn on Thursday—that is, to-day—whereupon the leader of the House stated that in all probability we would finish on Friday. The hon. gentleman said that an endeavour would be made to close the session this week, even if the sittings extended into Saturday. For several important reasons I was most anxious to proceed to my district by to-night's train; and now I am unable to get home. The train service to my part of the Central Province will not allow me to reach my home until Tuesday week. I sympathise very much with the Minister, because I know the strain on him is very heavy and he would like a rest for the remainder of the week. But I think it would be possible to finish the business before the House by sitting to-morrow and on Saturday, and therefore I consider we should sit and try to be finally done this week.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East—in reply) [10.54]: I assure Mr. Carson that I sympathise with him entirely, and that although we have had quite enough this week I would be very willing to sit until Saturday in order to finish; but I am not going to ask the House to pass the several important measures that are still undecided, including the taxation measures, in a rush manner. Therefore I should be only deceiving members if I said that there was a prospect of finishing this week by sitting on, since we could finish only by rushing matters, and that, I know, would be contrary to the wishes of the House. Thus my present motion is in conformity with the assurance I gave hon. members at the outset, that we would not sit on Friday unless there was a reasonable chance of finishing the business this week.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 10.56 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 23rd May, 1918.

The SPEAKER took the Chair at 3.0 p.m., and read prayers.

[For "Questions no Notice" see "Votes and Proceedings."]

QUESTION—FREEZING WORKS, FREMANTLE.

Hon. J. MITCHELL, without notice, asked the Minister for Works: Will the hon. gentle-

man, before the closing of the session, make a statement of the Government's intentions as to erection of freezing works at Fremantle?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: The position with regard to the subject mentioned by the hon. member is that plans were drawn in anticipation of their being required by the Public Works Department. Those plans have been ready for some time. Whether the Government will erect the works to which the plans refer, or whether they will avail themselves of such offers as private individuals may make, is a matter that is under consideration. The Premier and the Colonial Treasurer will return to Perth to-morrow. It is believed that during their sojourn in the Eastern States they will have made themselves further acquainted with the subject under review. When Cabinet has met and discussed the subject, it will be possible for the Premier, if he thinks necessary, to make such a statement as the circumstances may suggest.

BILL—LAND TAX AND INCOME TAX.

Third Reading.

Order of the Day read for the third reading of the Bill.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. T. Robinson—Canning) [3.12]: Before the Bill is read a third time, it is necessary that an amendment be made in the Title, consequential on the omission of the clause imposing the super tax, Clause 2. Standing Order 284 enables me to move a consequential amendment at any stage; and I now move—

"That the Title of the Bill be amended by striking out the words 'and, for the year ending the 30th June, 1918, an additional income tax.'"

The Bill has been reprinted with this consequential amendment, and it bears the certificate of the Chairman of Committees that the clerk has noted the consequential amendment of the Title.

Amendment put and passed.

Bill read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

MOTION—ORDERS OF THE DAY, TO POSTPONE.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. J. George—Murray-Wellington) [3.14]: I move—

"That Orders of the Day, Nos. 3 to 12, inclusive, be postponed until after consideration of Order No. 13 (Vermin Bill)."

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [3.15]: I must offer a protest against this method of arranging the Notice Paper. Every Order of the Day is to be postponed, right down to the last one. I would remind the Minister that consideration of the business before the House involves a considerable amount of work for members, especially for myself, and I have not time to make myself acquainted in one day with every item of business on the Notice Paper, so that I might be able to take up the discussion on any one item that may come forward. I make it a rule to look at the Notice Paper in the morning so as to be ready to take up the dis-

cussion on any of the first few Orders of the Day. Now I find that all but one are to be postponed so that we may get on to the last one, the Vermin Bill, which, being at the bottom of the list, I did not expect would come on to-day. The Minister ought to have known last night that he was going to do this.

The Minister for Works: I could not know it last night.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not see any insuperable difficulty. The Government should have known whether it was their intention to go on with the consideration of the Orders of the Day in the order given. It is a slipshod way of doing business, and totally unfair to members.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS Hon. W. J. George—Murray-Wellington [5.17]: I am sorry if I have caused the hon. member any inconvenience. The adjourned debate on the Vermin Bill is to be taken by the member for Kanowna, and I understood from that hon. member two days ago that he was ready to go on, and I conclude that he will take up the debate now. The Bill is practically an amalgamation of two Bills, each of which has been already discussed, and it is essentially a Committee Bill. It is an important measure, and I feel sure that every member is desirous that we should make it a thoroughly good one. I have no desire to put the leader of the Opposition to any inconvenience, but I would like to go forward with the motion.

Question put and passed.

BILL—VERMIN.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 21st May.

Hon. T. WALKER (Kanowna) [3.18]: I quite agree that this is essentially a Committee Bill, but I also agree that it is an exceedingly dangerous Bill to pass. I know that members on the cross benches are expecting a Bill that will give effective relief, especially in the agricultural districts. I am aware that the rabbit pest is a serious one; but it has been serious for years. I anticipated that the new phase of the spread of this pest would have sharpened the minds of those dealing with the problem that was imminent, and that they would have given us something which would suggest some measures that were new, or at all events, not of the stereotyped character already in existence in the State. I have gone through the Bill. It comes from the hands of the select committee, and I have been astonished at the absolute lack of originality in it from start to finish. True, the select committee has succeeded in amalgamating two measures. That was a very slight work, however long it took to accomplish. I would be sorry to censure the select committee, but I cannot close my eyes to the fact that if we pass this measure we shall be pledging the country to the continuance of that method of dealing with this pest which has been demonstrated a failure. We have already a rabbit department, that is to say, a vermin department. We have a chief inspector. We have no fewer than three fences. I believe we have spent over £400,000 in erecting fences, and we have spent a considerable sum in patrolling those fences and maintaining the staff of in-

spectors. Yet, so futile has that method been that we are confronted with the necessity of passing an urgent measure for the stopping of the spread of rabbits in the inner agricultural districts. We have already tried to stop them as it were at the gates of the State, and after they have passed through one gate, we have erected another and still a third, and carried our fences to the north. If after we have done all that we still find the pest at our doors, a most in the proximity of the metropolis, surely should be a suggestion that the methods we have been trying are not successful.

Mr. Thomson: Do you mean to suggest that the select committee should have been able to solve all that?

Hon. T. WALKER: No, I do not think they had any other work than that of amalgamating the two measures. I am not complaining of the select committee, but I am complaining of the Minister on whom the responsibility rests. The select committee might possibly have gone a little more deeply in the examination of the methods to be adopted but it was not particularly their function. However it is the absolute duty of the Minister to come down here with something of an effective nature. We have had Bills dealing with this question as far back as 1883. (The statute-book now we have no fewer than five measures dealing with the rabbit pest.

Mr. Piesse: This repeats the others.

Hon. T. WALKER: I am going to show how it repeats the others. We have these several measures; one in 1883, one in 1885, one in 1902, one in 1909, and an amendment of the latter in 1915, all dealing with the spread of rabbits. All those Acts are of an experimental nature. True, they were worked from Perth that is to say, the central office was in Perth—but the methods suggested were precisely those that are now incorporated in the new Bill. There is not a new feature in the Bill. The very wording of the Bill is practically the wording of the Act of 1902. The only thing that we have now in this measure relieved the central department, and we put the onus upon the districts. We tried to do that in the case of the Gascoyne by the Bill of 1909, and by an amendment of 1915. Every member knows what an absolute failure that experiment was. I believe there is some £60,000 now owing under that measure. The amount of money spent on that last venture, the creation of boards, demonstrated the futility of that method of combating the evil, but we have that system incorporated with the 1902 Bill. Substitute the Gascoyne board for the boards to be established in the various districts, and we have all there is to the new Bill.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): In the one case they were spending Government funds; in the new case they will be spending funds collected out of their pockets.

Hon. T. WALKER: Perhaps that is a distinction.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): A very great one, too.

Hon. T. WALKER: So it may be, but it is a distinction that is going to the more demonstrate its futility. If, with the Government hind it acting directly, the Gascoyne board

could not collect—and they had to collect, they had to do what these boards will have to do; in the 1909 Act, the Gascoyne roads board was authorised to levy a rate up to 2s. per 100 acres amongst the pastoralists. No money was collected.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): Why?

Hon. T. WALKER: There may be reasons which would apply to some of the boards existing now.

Hon. J. Mitchell: It was the fault of the Act.

Hon. T. WALKER: Even if it was, we have that Act incorporated in the Bill. If it is a fault there, it is a fault now in the Bill. It has been demonstrated a failure. It will not act. In order to try to make it act, in 1915 we amended the law and lessened the maximum amount of rate which might be levied to 1s. per 100 acres. Still no money came in.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): Do not say no money.

Hon. T. WALKER: Well, we are not getting an adequate return; and, what is more, on that rate we can never pay off the obligation.

Mr. Maley: They are all wealthy people up there, too.

Hon. T. WALKER: If amongst the wealthy, if where such conditions are to be obtained, where it is indispensable that the vermin should be checked, the scheme is unworkable. I ask what better prospects have we when we multiply that same machine all through the State?

Hon. P. Collier: Multiply inefficiency by energy, and you get efficiency.

Hon. T. WALKER: I would draw attention to the interjection of the Minister in charge of the Bill, when he stated that the money to be supplied for the purpose of checking the in-roads of the pest under his Bill would be the people's own money. Presumably it was that in the case of the Gascoyne, for there is no new principle adopted here. Just in the same way as the Gascoyne Vermin Board could levy their rate, and make the people concerned pay and had full powers under the Act to enforce it, so will the various vermin boards in this State, when they are created in the agricultural centre, possess this power.

Mr. Thomson: You could use the same argument against the roads boards.

Hon. T. WALKER: Will the hon. member compare the two?

Mr. Thomson: This Bill is on the same lines as the roads board legislation.

Hon. T. WALKER: In some respects it is. There is a great deal of difference, however, between the work and necessities of a roads board, and those of a vermin board. The Honorary Ministers says in one case that it was the people's money—the State's money—supplied to the vermin board for the purpose of erecting that expensive fence, which is still a burden upon the State and represents some part of our deficit. This Bill has to do with the advancing of money to every vermin board which may be created under this Bill. The money has to be advanced, and a sum of money

has to be appropriated by Parliament. Once appropriated by Parliament it can then be loaned out to the various roads boards or vermin boards, for the roads boards will become, most of them, vermin boards. It then becomes an obligation on the part of the roads board, or local governing body, to pay that money back to the State, and so the same principle exactly applies. Just as the Gascoyne Roads Board could rate, so these new vermin boards can rate when they are created. What change is there?

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): The conditions are not the same.

Hon. T. WALKER: The conditions are precisely the same, and therefore we are applying what has been demonstrated to be a failure on a wider scale, and saddling under this measure many struggling settlers. I do not use the words "struggling settlers" for effect, but as a demonstrable truth, which could be ascertained by reference to the records of the Industries Assistance Board and those existing in the Lands and Agricultural Departments. The settlers are struggling, and it is upon them that we are to put this burden. I wish to test the sincerity of the Government in respect of this measure. What provisions have they made for carrying it out? What anticipations have they made for a measure of this kind becoming law? In this measure the roads boards will be able, if they so desire, to order the construction of a fence. Although the properties, and the land at the border, may be called upon to take their ultimate share of it, the first original expense is upon the vermin boards when they are created. They are to get the money from this Government. Have the Government anticipated anything of the kind in their Estimates which have only just been passed?

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): Those were last year's Estimates, and next month is June.

Hon. T. WALKER: They have anticipated nothing in that respect.

Mr. Griffiths: They cannot spend money in regard to fences at present.

Hon. T. WALKER: I want this information. What is proposed to be done? If there is to be any good done it should be done now. If this Bill is to be of any service to the settlers it must become law without any delay.

Mr. Thomson: You do not think any vermin board would erect a fence now, with the present price of wire netting?

Hon. T. WALKER: It is compulsory that certain settlers, if they are possessed of any netting at all, shall fence their dams and reservoirs or such places where the vermin could obtain access. What efforts have the Government made in anticipation of this necessity—it has been known for some time—by way of getting in a stock of wire netting of the kind required?

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): It has been done.

Hon. T. WALKER: I am informed from some source that there is not the amount of netting available, and that it is all at prohibitive prices.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is cornered. I have word that one man, a journalist, has made a fortune out of it.

Hon. P. Collier: He is not a journalist.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Then, the boss of a journalist. The Government should inquire into the matter.

Hon. T. WALKER: Possibly. At present, I believe, at Fremantle, where the netting could, some time ago, be obtained at from £18 to £20 a ton, it is now costing £97 a ton, and is in limited quantities. Its supply cannot be guaranteed at Fremantle. The farmers in the Eastern districts could not land wire netting upon their properties for anything less than £100 a ton. If we take the cost of labour at present we can see what it would come to to put up a little fence.

Mr. Piesse: It is not compulsory.

Hon. T. WALKER: It may be compulsory where the water is. If nothing in this Bill is compulsory, of what value is it?

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): It would not cost £100 to fence round a well.

Hon. T. WALKER: It may be necessary to fence round a reserve in some cases. At Trayning there is a well about $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles away from the township, where there is also a reserve and other unalienated Crown lands. There are farms on the borders of these lands. It is absolutely impossible to check the vermin upon these occupied properties, whilst no attention is paid to the reserve and to the unalienated Crown lands in the neighbourhood.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The reserve has to be dealt with under the Bill.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): It is not to be fenced.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It has to be cleared of vermin.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): That is a different thing.

Hon. T. WALKER: How are we going to do that without a fence?

Mr. Thomson: Are you doing it now?

Hon. T. WALKER: That is another point. By this Bill we should have to do it the same way continuously, as we have been doing it, and we should be having to pay rates for nothing more than we shall accomplish under existing circumstances. We should gain no advantage, but create a body of officers.

Mr. Thomson: Have you any idea how much has been spent and is being spent in connection with rabbit extermination?

Hon. T. WALKER: I am informed that it is a fair sum. I know that efforts are being made by individuals, and it is costing me a pound or two on my holding.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They will have the holding next.

Hon. T. WALKER: That is exactly the danger. I submit that this Bill is in some respects reaching the level of absurdity without being original. So long ago as 1902 we had an instruction given that—

Any inspector or other officer or authorised person may, on the production of his authority (if such production is demanded by any owner or occupier), from time to time enter any land with or without assist-

ants, dogs, horses, and vehicles in order to search whether any rabbits are on such land, or to examine and inspect land, or for any purpose whatsoever under this Act, and may remain thereon so long and do all such things as may be necessary or reasonable. "Authorised person" means a person having authority from the Minister or from an inspector, and such authority may be a general authority. Whenever an inspector finds evidence of the existence of rabbits on any land, he may give to the owner or occupier of the land notice in writing to take such steps and adopt such means to suppress and destroy rabbits as may be specified in the notice.

That is the original Act. How has it been incorporated in our measure? It has been done in this way—

Every owner and every occupier of a holding shall, at all times, and at his own cost and expense, destroy all vermin upon such holding, or upon any roads bounding or intersecting the same. Penalty, on a first conviction: ten pounds; on a second or subsequent conviction: fifty pounds.

The farmer is under a penalty of £50, which is absurd, to destroy all vermin, and if he does not destroy all vermin, not only on his own land but on every road surrounding it, or intersecting or bordering upon it, he is liable to a penalty of £50. What is the use of passing absurdities like that in the name of law? In the old Rabbit Act there is to be given a notice that this shall be done, and we have rendered that notice more absurd in the proposal we are now making. Any roads board may give instructions and fix a day, or the Minister may do it. I want it to be noted that, all the way through, it may be the Minister or the board.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): Do you object to that?

Hon. T. WALKER: No; I am only drawing attention to it. Paragraph (a) reads—

The Minister may by notice in the "Gazette" specify a date or dates on or before which the owners or occupiers of all or any holdings shall respectively commence the work of suppressing or destroying vermin on such holdings, and upon the roads bounding or intersecting the same; and the period or periods during which the said work shall be continued and systematically carried out.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): That is concerted action.

Hon. T. WALKER: A sort of working bee or a rabbit bee.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): It has had good results in America and in the Eastern States.

Hon. T. WALKER: We have Clause 91 which says that every occupier shall at his own cost and expense destroy all vermin upon his holding or upon any roads bounding or intersecting the holding. Therefore concertedly or otherwise it must be done.

Mr. Maley: Read Subclause 2 of Clause 93.

Hon. T. WALKER: Subclause 2 reads—

The Minister or a board in respect of holdings situated wholly or partly within its district may cause to be served on the

owner or occupier of any holding, notice in writing to take such steps and adopt such means to suppress and destroy vermin on his holding as may be specified in such notice.

Mr. Maley: There is no necessity to advertise that.

Hon. T. WALKER: I am showing how the paste and scissors have been used in cutting out these clauses from existing laws without regard to efficacy or value. If what Clause 91 says is imperative, Clause 93 is absolutely unnecessary.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): In one clause you have to work as an individual and in the other you have to work collectively.

Hon. T. WALKER: Under Clause 91 all vermin must be destroyed. If vermin is found on a man's property that man is liable to a penalty of £50. We have got them all dead in Clause 91 and yet in Clause 93 a kindly notice is written and a man is told how to kill all the dead rabbits.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): According to your argument if you have destroyed all vermin on the 31st July, there will be no vermin there on the 1st August.

Hon. T. WALKER: Under Clause 91 a man is still obliged at his own expense to destroy the vermin without inviting the neighbours to help him. I am drawing attention to the scissors and paste method of trying to satisfy the farmers. There is no sense whatever in Clause 93 because we have Clause 91. Clause 93 does not of necessity mean that concerted action shall be taken. It does not express that. It is a multiplication of the means we have had in the past for the eradication of the pest.

Mr. Griffiths: We expect to get the same results as in the Eastern States where similar measures have been in operation.

Hon. T. WALKER: We shall never get similar results as have been obtained in the other States until we get population. If we are going to deal with this matter effectively we must treat it as a national matter. It would be absurd to expect people like those out at Trayning, so well known to the member for Toodyay, to cope with the inroads of rabbits when for hundreds of miles there is nothing but open bush surrounding the settlers. How can a settler keep down the pest on Crown lands?

Mr. Thomson: By fencing in their own blocks.

Hon. T. WALKER: How can that be done when there is no wire? The Government cannot supply it and we cannot buy it, and even if it were to be bought, the price would be absolutely prohibitive. Let the hon. member consult the books of the Agricultural Department and let him ascertain how the Industries Assistance Board is constituted with regard to the settlers, and he will see that they are on the verge of giving up their holdings. Now we are going to place upon them another incubus, for the new boards will be able to tax up to the limit but not beyond the roads board tax. The struggling farmer will not be able to

stand it. He is already taxed and bled to the last drop. The farmers have had to contend with numerous difficulties. They are building up the country; they go out into the forest and the burden is upon them to clear the forest, and it costs money, sacrifices and energy. Now these people cannot have more put upon them. If the Government are in earnest and really desire to check the evil, they will recognise that it does not alone affect the farmer or the pastoralists. If the evil increases ever, business firm in the city will suffer. If we drive the people off the land by the excessive burden we put upon them and by the difficulties of nature which they have to contend against, then I say the stability of the country will be weakened. When the goldfields and the agricultural areas have ceased to exist, what will become of Perth; what will become of the country itself?

Mr. Troy: They do not worry much about the goldfields now.

Hon. T. WALKER: They do not think much about the goldfields or even seriously about the farmers. If there be a danger by the inroad of a pest of this kind, it is distinctly a national matter to attend to it. The whole of the burden of the extirpation of the pest should not be put upon the individual holder or owner; it should be done from the national exchequer. The farmers themselves are alive to the evil and to the danger of it. They themselves will take action.

Mr. Teesdale: Without being compelled?

Hon. T. WALKER: Yes.

Mr. Teesdale: No.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): The man who can do it will do it.

Hon. T. WALKER: And he does it. But we are liable to have these evasions of duty. Under the Bill which we have before us we will have to create a larger staff. Every roads board will have their new inspectors, their paid clerks and their men at work and the cost of that is to come from whom?

Hon. J. Mitchell: That is the real disadvantage.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): It is really the objection to decentralisation.

Hon. T. WALKER: It is that that I am objecting to, and on that account I intend to vote against the second reading of this measure. The evil being manifold and everybody being concerned in the prosperity of this primary industry of agriculture, and in pastoral pursuits as well, the whole of the State depending upon the prosperity of those industries should take this upon its shoulders as an obligation to its own people and assist, not only by funds, but by organising proper methods, or compelling the owners to do their share of the work without plunging them into this inexplicable debt which must be created under the Bill. If we make the responsibility theirs, I will willingly vote for the measure, although it is mostly scissors and paste. It is merely a repetition of old experiments. I am not desirous of delaying the House. I desire to impress on members who are going to vote to think of the obligations they are placing on themselves and their constituents, and what it

will mean to the poorer sections of the community.

Mr. Thomson: Is there not power to compel a man to destroy vermin on his property now?

Hon. T. WALKER: Undoubtedly there is that power. There is not any very special effort being made. But this effort should be a national one; it is for the benefit of everybody, because the whole of the State will reap the advantage. But as the matter stands in the Bill, it will place a burden on the farmer.

Mr. Thomson: He has it to-day.

Hon. T. WALKER: But it is the last straw that breaks the camel's back, and this Bill seems to be of that character. It will have a tendency to give the whole of the country over to the rabbits and drive the people off.

Hon. J. MITCHELL (Northam) [4.2]: I am glad we have an opportunity of considering this proposal to deal with the rabbits. It is perfectly true, as the hon. member said, that we have spent a considerable sum of money already in the erection of rabbit-proof fences, and I think the fences must be recognised as very useful. They have done considerable work in checking the rabbits, and they will do good work still. The rabbits have given trouble between the fences, but they are dying there. They have died there even this year, and in many places the rabbits have disappeared altogether. In the hot weather, the poison carts have done a good deal of work, so that in many places we find there are few rabbits indeed. There is no doubt about it that the taxation which the farmer has to stand is very heavy already. I think it is very wrong to give any power to the boards to compel an owner to erect a fence at the present time. When netting can be bought cheaper it should be erected. Every farmer on a good holding in the back country will be prosperous in no time when the rabbits have disappeared, because he will be able to run stock, and I think certainly a couple million sheep more could be run there than will be found in the back country to-day. Wire netting is costing £20 a mile to-day, but it would be a very good thing to fence the country if the netting could be obtained cheaper. Anyhow, the Government should purchase the netting and sell it to the farmers on extended terms. They could pay for it in a number of years. The advantage of the fencing will be great; there is no doubt about that. I do not believe in the fencing of each holding. I believe each holding should be fenced for stock, but as far as the rabbits are concerned, the present fence with two or three cross fences and poison carts going continuously, will soon eradicate the rabbits. The Minister for Works has made 100 carts which are in use to-day, and doing good work, and I am sure we can keep the rabbits in check by that means. In dealing with rabbits, fencing is not the most important thing. A farmer can be ordered to eradicate the vermin on his holding, and we know if it is possible for the farmers to do that they will, but four-fifths of the land is in the hands of the Crown. Under this Bill we place the whole of the burden to deal with the rabbits in the south-western division on the shoulders of the landholders, and the Gov-

ernment are relieved of any burden whatsoever.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): Would it not be absurd to put a clause in the Bill saying the Government should destroy the vermin?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: No, but the owners of one-fifth of the land should not do the whole of the work. The Minister evidently thinks the Government should do nothing towards the destruction of dingoes or vermin on Crown lands.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): How could we insert a clause stating that the Government should do certain things. We cannot do it.

[The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Stubbs) took the Chair.]

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I have seen many Bills that said that the Government should do certain things, but what we can do is to see that, of the expenditure incurred by the board, a certain percentage should come from the Government. We must realise when we are talking of the main fence that it was designed to protect the whole of the State, not only those who are to be taxed, and we must remember that we are talking of the destruction of the rabbits that are on the holdings, because the fence has not stayed the inroads. It is proposed under the Bill that the Government shall be relieved of the whole of the burden of responsibility. Members coming from agricultural districts should remember that whilst they have the power under the Bill to conduct their own affairs, appoint boards, inspectors, secretaries, collect money and spend money, the district itself will have to find every penny of the expenditure in the future. That is understood. It must also be understood that the benefit is an acreage benefit. We should not give power to the boards to collect more money than they ought to have. The maximum amount is 2s. per thousand acres. That, with the amount of the roads board tax against each individual owner in the south-western division, is considerable. We are empowering the boards under the Bill to impose very heavy taxation indeed.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): Is it not frequently found that roads boards get into trouble because they levy insufficient rates? I do not think they will overrate themselves, but underrate.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The House is giving the boards power to levy this rate. The farmer pays for the cost on his own holding. I have often asked members to take into consideration when passing legislation, that the legislation should be given effect to, and I hope the Minister will agree to alter the tax, because I do not think it will work fairly, and I hope members will realise that this is an acreage tax. We recognise that in the North at the present time, and we should recognise it in the South-West. I hope the Minister will agree to empower the boards not to compel any owner to fence now. I think that the clause should be deleted and introduced when netting is cheaper, or a proviso might be inserted that an owner is

entitled to appeal to the Minister if he is ordered to fence. An owner having other owners surrounding him might be compelled to fence. Of course an adjoining owner may be compelled to pay by his neighbour. An owner adjoining a road has to destroy the vermin on the road, and I think that is a right provision, if the road happens to be fenced on both sides. If it is not, it will work very harshly. The Minister said, in introducing this Bill, that it was a Committee Bill. I hope, in regard to fencing, there will be some safeguard, and that boards will not compel owners to fence at this time, when wire-netting is £100 per ton. There is no need to give that power now, because it will be a long time before wire-netting will be available. The rabbit pest ought to be dealt with at once. It has been dealt with in the Eastern States, where they have similar legislation. It can be dealt with by small holders without much fencing. There should not only be continuous effort, but effort by everybody on land where rabbits are to be found. I believe the great majority destroy. Still, the few must be made to follow suit.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): We have always to legislate against the few.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: There is no doubt that fencing of water supplies is necessary, but I think the Bill goes a little too far, because it provides that the board shall have power to compel the fencing of all water supplies. In the South-West, of course, the rabbits can get water anywhere, and that applies even in the eastern districts. The position is different between the fences. This Bill also deals with the dingo pest, which represents a very serious menace to our stock owners. In the back country an immense quantity of stock can be carried. I venture to say that millions of stock will find a home in the back country. Sheep will do well there. In Committee I intend to ask the Minister to agree to certain amendments. I want the rate of taxation reduced very considerably, and I want the Minister to recognise at any rate the responsibility of the Government in this connection. Some time ago the Honorary Minister in charge of the Agricultural Department said that in Victoria, where there is very little Crown land, the Government recognised the responsibility because the acres in their hands are few. He added that our Government could not be expected to take the same course, because the acres in their hands are extremely numerous. But that is just the very reason why the Government's responsibilities should be recognised. I know, for example, of isolated farms of 1,000 acres surrounded by thousands of acres of Crown lands. In many respects this Bill is a good measure, and I believe it will result in considerable benefit.

Hon. T. Walker: But the Government must take their responsibility.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The rabbit plague is a national responsibility beyond doubt. I think it will be found, when the Bill is in operation, that until experience has been gained no better results will be obtained in

the destruction of rabbits than hitherto. The Chief Inspector of Rabbits is a very capable man; and so long as he is furnished with sufficient money to employ the necessary number of inspectors and men on the work of destruction he will probably do that work very much better than the boards can possibly do it. But of course the Chief Inspector cannot be everywhere, and the time has come when the farmers must accept more responsibility than they have accepted up to date. It must be remembered that whatever expense is incurred by the boards will be additional to the expense of the actual work of destruction.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): The money has to be found whether the work is centralised or is decentralised.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: If the Minister were to come to this House with a request for a special tax on the farmer to meet the expenses of the Rabbit Department, he would not get much support, if any at all. I hope the Minister will allow us to modify some of these proposals in Committee, and I trust that when the opportunity offers, he will take into consideration the erection of cross fences between the two existing rabbit-proof fences. That is more important than anything else the Government can do. This measure is really a Committee Bill, and in Committee we can make it the measure we want. I am extremely glad that it has been brought down, for I realise the danger to the country from the rabbits since they have got inside the fences, and also from the dingoes, which are a very serious menace to our stock owners. I shall support the second reading.

Mr. PIESSE (Toodyay) [4.24]: As chairman of the select committee, I may say that I recognise this Bill is not a perfect measure; and for my part I shall welcome any amendments tending to make it more workable. I fail to understand the opposition of the member for Kanowna (Hon. T. Walker), knowing that his farm is situated within an area badly infested with rabbits, and also knowing that the hon. member must be aware of the good work in the way of rabbit destruction being done by the Ninghan roads board at the present time. Two or three hon. members have stressed the need for information as to Government policy on this subject. For the information of the House I may say that, as regards my electorate, I have found the last two Governments very sympathetic indeed. Excellent work has been done there in rabbit destruction. Farmers in my electorate have written to me and have also stated verbally to me that the poison carts have almost completely eradicated the pest within their sub-districts.

Hon. T. Walker: Who supplied the poison carts?

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): The poison carts are supplied at cost price.

Mr. PIESSE: It is idle to hope that any Government will deal with this matter from a national standpoint. It would be almost impossible to achieve satisfactory results if the subject were dealt with by a staff of Govern-

ment paid men. Better results will accrue from establishment of vermin boards.

Hon. T. Walker: Let the boards do the work; but will the Government find the money?

Mr. PIESSE: Undoubtedly it is the duty of the Government to deal with the pest on Crown lands. Whatever Administration may be in power will, I am sure, recognise their obligations in that regard. The Government are to-day supplying free poison and running as many as seven poison carts in one electorate. That is my electorate; and I venture to say the same thing will be done in other electorates. Within the last two years a total sum of £4,185 has been expended in dealing with the pest in my electorate. A sworn valuator who, when visiting the district some six months ago, was amazed at the number of rabbits then to be seen, quite recently, two months ago, told me he was satisfied that we had nothing to fear from the pest because when travelling over the same road latterly he had been struck by the almost complete absence of rabbits. He informed me that the rabbits were lying dead not in tens but in hundreds, and he ventured the opinion that if only the settlers and the Government would unite in poisoning with phosphorised pollard, there would be very few rabbits in those areas.

Hon. T. Walker: It is a strong argument against the Bill that this can be achieved without creating rabbit boards all over the country.

Mr. PIESSE: Rabbit boards are absolutely necessary to ensure that every settler shall do his share in dealing with the pest. The day before yesterday I introduced to the Government a deputation consisting of the chairman of the Ninghan roads board and a member of that board and the secretary. Those gentlemen, speaking individually as settlers, stressed the point that they were quite satisfied to deal with the pest on their own holdings if only the Government would give an assurance that they would deal with the pest on Crown lands and on reserves. This Bill makes it compulsory for those who have authority over reserves to deal with the rabbits; and that is quite right. I am hopeful even that the Government will go further and realise their obligations to that part of the country lying between the two fences. I trust that when netting becomes cheaper the Government will construct cross fences—one in particular north of the Cowcowing lakes, which would cut off the great area of settled country north of the lakes and of Mt. Marshall. That fence would prevent the influx of rabbits, and would enable the settlers to eradicate the pest more speedily. I venture the opinion that at no distant date—provided boards are constituted under this Bill—the country lying between the two fences will be freer from the rabbit pest than any other part of Western Australia. It can be more easily coped with because of its dry character, and I am sure that if only that one cross fence is erected, the pest in that particular district will give us very little trouble. But I venture the opinion that without the fence the rabbits will there assert themselves in no unmistakable fashion. Many hold the belief

that the rabbits we now have in the Eastern agricultural districts are identical with the rabbits that were here years ago. That is not so.

Hon. P. Collier: But they are the direct descendants, are they not?

Mr. PIESSE: I believe they are. The present rabbit is fully acclimatised and is capable of sustaining the most severe hardships. But I have no fear of the rabbit becoming in this State anything like the menace it is in the Eastern States, because we have the experience of the people in the East to profit by, and we have evidence to-day of the result of efforts made only three months ago. We have proof positive that the pest can be dealt with and dealt with cheaply. Those gentlemen who composed the deputation that waited on Mr. Baxter, the Honorary Minister, the other day did not ask that the State should do the whole work of eradication itself; their object was that the Government should realise their position and destroy the pest on Crown lands.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Hon. T. Walker: If they did that the settler would easily do the rest.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): It is a pretty hefty proposition.

Mr. PIESSE: I have seen fields which the rabbits have eaten right out. The assistance given the people by the department has been of material benefit. In one district alone 722 cases of poison were distributed free to the settlers, together with 2,151 bushels of phosphorised pollard. We have occasion to be well satisfied with the work of the department in this respect. The member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) stressed the point that under the Bill settlers would have to eradicate the rabbits on the roads. We all know that there is very little prospect of the rabbits establishing themselves on the road. A rabbit will take good care to seek some more secluded place. As a settler, I fully expect that we shall have to deal with the pest at Toodyay; in fact they are there to-day. It is the same at York, and they are to be found even as far as Kojonup, and at Jarrahdale, showing clearly that they are well within the No. 2 fence. If I am compelled to poison rabbits on my holding, what additional trouble will it be to me to deal with the few that may be found on the short length of road which my holding fronts? Nothing has been done on the roads by the settler, but the rabbit department has been doing its best in this regard. I again assert that there is little to fear, provided the settlers and the Government unite in a concerted effort to cope with the pest. The member for Kalamunda (Hon. T. Walker) declared that Clauses 91 and 93 duplicated each other. He ridiculed Clause 93 in particular. But the clause will be of service where there is not a board in operation. It is easy to criticise and declare that there will be duplication of authority by the boards, but Clause 93 will become very useful if the inspectors do not call upon the settlers and instruct them to destroy the pest. I again assert that the

poisoning of the rabbits is being successfully carried out, in particular by the Ninghan board. It is in the best interests of the State that every district should be compelled to deal with the pest, because the sooner the roads boards take the work in hand, the better for the farming community.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex) [4.40]: I regret that a broader view was not taken when the measure was being framed. It seems to me the object of the Bill is to throw the onus of eradication of the pest on the vanguard of settlers. I am not in accord with that. I have been interested, more or less, in the extinction of the dingo pest, and was chairman of the committee of the Farmers and Settlers' Association. We found from experience that any voluntary or disjointed effort was futile. I take it the same thing will apply in respect of the rabbit. We found it futile for different districts to form separate vermin boards, and we concluded that the only course was to declare the whole area of the South-West a vermin area. And on the passing of the Act so declaring it every roads board should be declared a vermin board, a low rate should be levied on the whole area, and the Government asked to contribute pound for pound on the rates levied. It seems to me that was a broad and liberal proposition. We realise that it is not fair that those on the outskirts of settlement should be forced to bear the whole burden of combating the pest. The member for Kanowna has pointed out that not only are the farmers concerned in this, but that every business proposition in the State is affected. It is evident that, if we want to treat the measure in a proper way, we must make it as far-reaching as possible, and there must fall on the Government the onus of providing adequate funds. There is in the Bill some provision for the creating of funds, but there is nothing laid down as to the distribution of such funds. In this respect we should take into consideration the areas of alienated and unalienated land in every vermin district, and the rate levied, and the money should be given where the pest is at its worst. We must try to place the burden as evenly as possible on the shoulders of those concerned. I am quite sure that if the Government meet the farmers on a pound for pound basis on a levy over a large area, the farmers will be prepared to contribute their share. The conditions appertaining to the area between No. 1 fence and the sea, as opposed to the pastoral areas, are quite different, and it would have been better if that fact had been realised when the Bill was being framed. There is the question of dual control. I went to some trouble with a view to overcoming this question, insofar as I went down to the Parliamentary Draughtsman to see if I could get some amendment to Clause 6; and the amendment which I propose to move when in Committee is by adding a proviso as follows:—

Provided the Minister shall not within any district exercise the powers conferred on a board unless the board shall fail or neglect to exercise its powers or to perform its duty,

or the Minister has been appointed by the Governor to act as a board for this district. It may be that this amendment, which would do away with dual control, might seriously affect the exercise of the controlling power of the Minister. But the board should be competent to deal with these measures as far as their powers permit. In regard to the election of boards, I think that most roads boards' representatives will agree that the proper method is by the ward system. This should be specifically laid down in the Bill.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): Suppose you have six boards in one vermin district?

Mr. PICKERING: Well, each board could be declared a ward. Again, there is the question of the absence of members from meetings.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): How are you going to manage that with six wards in one vermin board area.

Mr. PICKERING: Declare the ward a board in that case. There is the question of the absence of members from board meetings. Under the roads board Act three absences would constitute a sufficient reason for vacation of office, but under this measure it is two. Then there is the election of chairman. Under the roads board Act it is provided that two-thirds of the members of the board must be present before the chairman can be elected. Under the Bill it provides that so long as three members are present, the chairman can be elected. In a case of that sort the members of the select committee might have been prepared to profit, and be guided, by the experience obtained by roads boards. There is also the question of the issuing of notices for rates, which I will go into later in Committee. Clause 43 provides for the appointment within the vermin district of roads boards. I contend that instead of the appointment resting with the authorities, the boards should themselves of their own volition be enabled to request that they should be formed into a vermin board.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): So they can.

Mr. PICKERING: I intend to move in Committee in that regard. There is a clause of which I can scarcely see the necessity, dealing with the misappropriation of funds by the board. Surely it should not be possible for this to occur. We are not going to form boards into vermin boards which are going to misappropriate funds, and I regard this as a reflection on the local authority.

Mr. Thomson: It is possible for the secretary to misappropriate the funds.

Mr. PICKERING: Then that should not be a ground for the abolition of a board. I am opposed to increasing the maximum rates on pastoral areas, because I think the charge as at the present is high enough. Where boards take over a fence from the Government it should be a condition that the fence, when taken over by the board, even at their own request, should be in a sound and substantial condition at the time of handing over. I view with serious distrust the provision in the Bill, which can enforce fencing upon the settlers. It is all very well for members to say that it is not likely that the measure will be enforced, but

the possibility is there. I ask anyone to say if it is reasonable at this present juncture to request that people should obtain loans from the Government for the purpose of fencing with rabbit-proof netting. We know that after the war is over and normal conditions are resumed the security upon which the Government have advanced, say, £100, will not be worth £25 to the State.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): Do you want to cross out the provision for the Minister to supply wire netting?

Mr. PICKERING: There should be no compulsion about the matter.

Hon. T. Walker: It should be supplied at a fair cost, and without any stipulation such as the Bill imposes.

Mr. PICKERING: If it is supplied at the present cost the settler cannot afford to pay it. If the Government force these settlers to procure this netting, the only alternative for the settler is to move off his land at once. I am opposed to the penalty clauses in regard to the destruction of vermin. We find under the Bill that for the first offence a man shall be fined £10 for a thing which may be only a technical breach. In another clause we find that there is £100 penalty without the option for non-compliance with gazetted instructions. In contradistinction to this, we find that where a man deliberately puts a rabbit over, or through the fence, or does anything to spread the pest, there is a provision for a fine which shall not exceed the sum of £50. If there should be any preference in the matter it should surely be for the man who is honestly trying to eradicate the pest, and has not been able to do so.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): There is an imprisonment penalty provided, too.

Mr. PICKERING: I should also like to say something in regard to Clause 10, which deals with the question of not permitting the sale of rabbits westward of the fence. It is recognised that for at least three months of the year poisoning would be futile. We find that rabbits that are imported can be sold, notwithstanding the fact that for three months of the year it is impossible to poison in this State. Our own people are, therefore, prohibited from making any livelihood out of this pest.

Hon. T. Walker: Even though they may be catching them themselves.

Mr. PICKERING: Yes, catching them on their own property.

Mr. Griffiths: How is it that we were able to do it last year?

Mr. PICKERING: This Bill will prevent it. I am going to move an amendment in Committee to add the words "except during the months of June, July, and August" in this particular section.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): All they have to do is to get a license.

Mr. PICKERING: I would also like to deal with the question of giving notices. It would be easy to insert a subclause dealing with that particular section, because so much depends upon being able, as nearly as possible, to prove the delivery of such notices, to the

effect that if they are not delivered, they must after the expiration of seven days return to the vermin board. Then there is the question of the prohibition of rewards for extermination of rabbits. I hope that some hon. member who framed this particular section will be able to justify it. It seems to me that if I, as an owner of land, am prepared to reward people for exterminating the rabbits on my holding, I should not be penalised. I should be taking over an additional burden, which I am not obliged to do under the Bill, and for that reason I am to be penalised. I am not in accord with the schedule in regard to the fences. I understand that Part I describes the general vermin fence. This was a very expensive fence, and so far as dingoes are concerned, if it is meant to apply to that pest in any way, it is a more expensive fence than any other with which I have come in contact in this State.

Mr. Thomson: It is in the South Australian Act.

Mr. PICKERING: That is no reason for our endorsing it here. I regret that in framing the measure the select committee responsible did not realise how much rested on the whole State and upon the settlers who were going to bear the burden. They did not recognise that the responsibility should be distributed as evenly as possible on the shoulders of those who would benefit by the fence. Many farmers have on different occasions expressed their willingness to bear a proportion of the cost upon a reasonable basis, and the Committee should have taken some steps to meet the wishes of those able to judge the position.

Mr. GRIFFITHS (York) [5.5]: The last speaker said he regretted that the Committee had not looked at this measure with the idea of making the treatment of this pest a national matter. This was discussed by the select committee and I have an amendment here which I think would give some assistance in so far as the treatment of Crown lands is concerned. I raised my voice emphatically in this House when the Rabbit Bill was being discussed, to the effect that this was a national matter. I have always maintained that the treatment of rabbits on Crown lands was a matter of national policy. The amendment I have in view is in connection with Clause 9, which gives the Minister power to deal with rabbits on Crown Lands as far as advancing the money for the purpose is concerned. The member for Kaunonia (Hon. T. Walker) has voiced the opinion that the pest should be treated on a national basis. I have argued in that way myself, and have felt that it merely required an amendment to the Roads Board Act to make all roads boards on the coast, or in the agricultural areas, or the pastoral areas, deal with the vermin, or impose rates, so that both the coast and the inland areas of the State should take their equal share of the burden.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): Our dingo pest in the extreme south is just as detrimental to our advancement as the rabbits are elsewhere.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: When in conversation with the chief inspector I put this aspect before him. He told me that the coastal districts

would have to take their share of combating the pest, because the rabbits were already there, and that vermin boards were being formed right along the coast line and the rabbits had to be tackled by them. In southern Queensland they had the same position existing as we have in regard to our wheat belt here. The wheat belt is protecting the coastal areas. I have been seeing what could be done to spread the burden over all the affected parts of the State. It is maintained that it is not right that the wheat areas should bear the whole brunt of the onslaught upon the rabbits, whilst other parts of the State are not doing anything towards it. So far as Crown lands are concerned, this map is a specimen of the country in the neighbourhood of Danberrin, where there is an enormous extent of Crown lands. The settler whose block is here shown is surrounded by unalienated lands. This man in conversation said to me when he was in Perth a little time back that he was simply providing a repatriation scheme for the Government rabbits. He added that as fast as he killed them they came in from the Crown lands. I will have more to say in regard to the policy of the Government in this respect when the Bill is in Committee. The member for Kanowna (Hon. T. Walker) emphasised the fact that we should have a sort of centralised authority here, that we should have a Minister for all office work.

Hon. T. Walker: I did not emphasise that.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Now in regard to Government control I will show what has been done with regard to the destruction of rabbits in the Eastern States. Under such control in Victoria the expenditure on rabbits in the first year amounted to £1,284, and that rapidly increased to £20,000 per annum. The outcome was that the pest became worse than ever. In South Australia half a million was spent in the attempt to destroy rabbits on Crown Lands, and then the attempt was abandoned. In New South Wales in 7½ years immense sums were paid, beginning in the first year with £489, and running up to as much in one year as £210,593. The total amount spent in 7½ years was £331,000, and that was independent of what the squatters themselves spent. Over a million has been thrown away in that State in scalp money and in fruitless endeavours to cope with the pest in seven and a half years. On no fewer than 16 stations in New South Wales in the year 1892, over four million rabbits were destroyed; after all this destruction, in 1895 seven millions acres of land in process of alienation were thrown back on to the State on account of the rabbits. This shows that the attempt by the Government to deal with the pest by the payment of scalp money was an utter failure. The experience in all the States has been similar. The pest has only increased as a result. Only last year in Victoria they removed the poison conditions so as to give the rabbit industry a chance, but this year those conditions have been re-enacted. One hon. member said that scissors and paste had been freely used in the framing of this Bill. I might inform that hon. member that the select committee had before them two original Acts,

two Bills, an amending Act, and two amending Bills. In fact, altogether the select committee had ten measures to handle in the framing of the Bill now before the House, and if there should happen to be any errors in phraseology or anything of that kind, it will be for members, when the Bill is in Committee, to rectify those errors. At any rate, the members of the select committee should be given credit for the trouble that they took in framing the Bill, and their conscientious attempt to try and make a good measure of it for the consideration of the House.

Mr. LUTEY (Brownhill-Ivanhoe) [5.5]: There is one portion of the Bill which I shall attempt to have amended when the measure is in Committee. That is Clause 110, which deals with trapping, and the sale of rabbits. At the present time it is necessary for a person to get the permission of the Minister to kill and offer for sale rabbits in Western Australia.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): Only west of the fence.

Mr. LUTEY: For my part I cannot see why a bona-fide farmer should not be allowed to trap and sell rabbits at certain seasons of the year without asking permission.

Mr. Thomson: The Minister can give permission to anyone now. Previously the permission was confined to a farmer.

Mr. LUTEY: I consider that the farmer should be allowed to get some revenue from this source without having to seek permission. There might be a Minister in power who might refuse to grant that permission, and there will be no recompense for the individual for the many hours of work he has put in on his area. It is necessary also to get permission to trap rabbits on the east side of the fence for the purpose of selling. It should be made quite clear that there should be freedom so far as trapping rabbits on the waste lands on the east side of the fence is concerned. At the present time we find that a huge contract has been let to all the other States for the supply of 19 million rabbits for the United Kingdom. All the States excepting Western Australia are participating in that, and here we have millions of rabbits and millions of acres of waste lands, on which those rabbits can be trapped, and we have any number of returned soldiers wandering about who could earn a living in this way and with little expense. If the Government were alive to the position they would see that some occupation was found for a number of people in this direction. So far as the farmers west of the No. 2 fence are concerned, I notice that some are rather careless about the destruction of rabbits. The member for Toodyay told us that they were not taking effective measures to get rid of the rabbits on their holdings. It is essential that the Government should come down drastically on those people. It is interesting to notice in this evening's paper that in New South Wales several land owners in the Hay court were charged with failing to destroy rabbits, and fines were imposed ranging from £4 to £30 with costs in each case amounting to 30s. If the department came down severely on those people in places where there are a few rabbits, and made the people realise the importance of devoting attention to the destruc-

tion of the pest, something would be done in the direction of preventing the spread of the pest. When the Bill is in Committee I intend to amend Clause 110 in the direction I have indicated.

Mr. THOMSON (Katanning) [5.10]: I will not say, as one of the members of the select committee, that in drafting the Bill which has been presented to the House, we imagined that we had created something which was perfect. As the member for York pointed out, a considerable number of Bills had to be dealt with, and we have to admit that to a certain extent scissors and paste were used. The member for Kanowna had ample opportunity of going on that committee and giving the benefit of his experience, and he could have had all his ideas embodied in the Bill. We endeavoured as a select committee to make the Bill as simple as possible, and to make the burden upon the people as light as possible. The member for Kanowna voiced the opinion that this should be a State responsibility. Unfortunately, that is not likely to become an established fact because in no part of the Commonwealth is it entirely a matter of State responsibility. So far as I am concerned I certainly prefer to have local administration every time, and when it comes to a case of administration by the local authorities, I am satisfied that the men living in the localities, elected by the ratepayers of a particular district, the settlers can rest assured that they can get a better deal from such a local board than they would from the Chief Inspector of Rabbits. I do not wish to detract from the good work which the Chief Inspector of Rabbits has done. I give him credit for being sincere in his desire to overcome this pest. The select committee had not only to deal with rabbits but with vermin as a whole, and certainly the measure has been improved in that respect. We have provided that if a vermin board so desire, they can include birds—eaglehawks, for instance. The member for Greenough mentioned sparrows. The Bill gives the boards power to include sparrows as well. The member for North-East Fremantle stated that we were giving the Minister power to override the boards. As a matter of fact that is a power which is in existence in every Act on the statute-book of Western Australia to-day. The Minister has the power to override any road board under certain conditions, and we have laid down those conditions. Then again, he stated that we were giving the Minister power to dismiss the boards, and also that we were going to give the boards power to dismiss a member from a vermin board. It shows that the hon. member did not study the clause. Our desire is to give the board power to remove the chairman if they think that he should be removed. In the Roads Act there is no authority to remove a chairman. Once he has been appointed for a period of 12 months no power exists by which he can be removed. What the select committee had in view when they embodied that in the Bill was that it was quite possible to have as chairman a large land holder. The board might pass certain work to be done and he as chairman might not see that it was carried out. Therefore it is only a

reasonable proposal that if the Vermin Board were desirous of having a fresh chairman, a majority of the board were entitled to elect one. I think a similar clause should be embodied in the Roads Board Act. The member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering) considered that a roads board by its own volition should become a vermin board and he quoted Clause 43. The mere fact of a roads board of its own volition saying, "we are desirous of becoming a vermin board," that can be done. We have provided that where a number of boards may decide to unite, say seven or eight, and are desirous of becoming one board they can nominate one or two members from each board and constitute a vermin board. For instance, in the Katanning district we have five or six roads boards and if they are willing to become one vermin board, that can be done, and it will lead to economy in administration. The select committee want fair and just criticism. I do not say that we have brought in a measure that is par excellence and that there is no room for criticism. If the select committee were able to do that, then we would have reached the millenium, because no Bill has ever been brought before the House which is perfect in every detail. That is the reason why Parliament is in existence. If perfect Bills were brought forward Parliament would soon go out of existence because we are continually amending legislation. Some members have dealt with the question of rating and I think it should read, "not exceeding 2s." As far as the roads boards' valuations are concerned I think it would be quite possible for roads boards that have become vermin boards to add to their notice papers when they are sent out, say one-sixteenth of a penny if it were considered sufficient for administration. Speaking as a member of a roads board for many years, I am satisfied that the roads boards will never place a higher charge on their district than is required. For instance, we have been continually up against the Works Department, which say that we do not place a sufficiently high rate on the people and they have deducted the amount of subsidy which the roads board would have got under ordinary conditions. I admit as far as this Bill is concerned, we have not made provision for the Government to provide funds by way of subsidy. That is a matter of Government policy and in my opinion—unless the House decide otherwise—I am prepared to have it embodied in the Bill. There is nothing in the Roads Board Act which says the Government shall pay a subsidy, yet the Government have been paying the roads board subsidy for years past. Therefore I think we can with confidence, especially after hearing the figures quoted by the member for Toodyay, rely upon the Government, and especially after the sympathetic treatment the farmers have received from the Government. I am prepared to say the Government will give the vermin boards a fair deal. I trust when the Bill is in Committee members will exercise their privileges and if they can improve the Bill, speaking as one of the select committee, I shall be only too pleased, because as far as we are concerned it was an honest endeavour to do what we thought best for the agricultural and pastoral community.

Mr. MALEY (Greenough) [5.20]: I think I have some interest in the work of the select committee responsible for the amalgamation of these two Bills from the fact that I was a member of the original select committee that dealt with the rabbit pest. In that connection I do not think the present committee have embodied in the Bill some of the recommendations of the former committee. We recommended that subsidy should be provided by the Government for the eradication of the pest, and most certainly there were recommendations as to the trapping and marketing of the product. I want to say in relation to the marketing of the product that there is a very illuminating answer in this morning's paper from the House of Representatives in regard to what is known in the East as the rabbit pool. It was stated in the Press this morning in answer to a question in the House of Representatives that the rabbit pool had made a profit during the last 12 months of £250,000 in the matter of skins. If an industry will grow to that extent I do not know why it should not be encouraged here with proper safeguards, marketing the rabbit also as a source of food. I intend to move in Committee an amendment to that effect. One objection in regard to the constitution of the vermin boards and a serious one, will be similar to that existing in connection with the only vermin board in the State created by special provision of Parliament. That is the Gascoyne board. That original vermin board was not constituted from the people mostly concerned in the extermination of the rabbits in the Gascoyne district. Only one or two representatives of the pastoralists were on the board, which was composed mostly of storekeepers and residents, and that is what I believe led to the gross mismanagement which occurred originally in connection with that board. Another recommendation that the former select committee made was with regard to the size of the mesh of the netting. We recommended after much evidence on that point had been taken, that it would be safe to have a maximum mesh of $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches, but I see according to the second schedule of the Bill in relation to the description of a vermin or rabbit fence, that the maximum mesh allowed is to be $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches. We know that the mesh, when strained, becomes extended, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch mesh may be extended to such an extent that young rabbits can get through. It is proposed by the Bill to create a new industry in this State, because if members will look at the schedule they will see that it states in connection with a description of a vermin fence, "a barbed wire with barbs not more than three inches apart, $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches above the netting, hung with S hooks three feet apart, a second barb wire hung with S hooks $11\frac{1}{2}$ inches above the other barb wire." If fencing is to be made compulsory and that principle is adopted, a new industry will be created. Why should there be S hooks when the practice is to adopt lacing wire? Another provision in the Bill is enforced by a penalty of £100 or six months imprisonment. That is for passing through a gate in any fence and leaving the same open. It includes every gate erected on a private person's holding. To think that anyone visiting another and casually leaving a gate open is subject to a penalty of £100 or six months is

very severe. It is all right in regard to what is termed a Government fence. According to one clause, any person who kills any animal or bird which is declared to be a natural enemy of the pest is liable to a heavy penalty. Very often a person engaged in the destruction of vermin such as rabbits and dogs by means of trapping may injure or destroy certain animals such as cats or other natural enemies of the pest. I think the penalty is rather severe. I say that, in the absence of netting, to check the pest any means that come to our hands to get rid of them should be employed. The objection to the bonus in respect of rabbits, which is allowed for other vermin, does not appear to me reasonable. We have to get rid of the rabbit pest somehow, and netting is at present unavailable. The offer of bonuses practically means the making of a contract for the destruction of rabbits. The landowner who offers a bonus practically offers to employ others to destroy rabbits on his property on contract. As regards the fencing of water supplies, I wish to point out that some of the artesian bores produce as great a flow of water as is to be found in many water courses, and that to fence some bores would be almost as difficult as to fence certain of our rivers. Compulsory fencing represent a very drastic proposal, and I have been greatly exercised in my mind as to whether it is altogether practicable. In this connection I am reminded of the compulsory fencing of properties within the boundaries of municipalities. In what sort of order are those fences maintained? And in what sort of order will the compulsory fences under this Bill be maintained throughout the State? Is it even practicable to see that they are maintained in effective order? Another point to which I desire to draw attention is the proposal that "any inspector or authorised person may enter any holding and use such means and take such measures as may appear to him necessary." The power is a very drastic one indeed to be placed in the hands of the individuals contemplated. I observe that in framing this Bill the select committee have been good enough to delete all those powers from the chief inspector and the proposed sub-inspectors. When the measure is in Committee I shall move that the word "him" be struck out and "the vermin board of the district" substituted, so that the clause will read, "and use such means and take such measures as may appear to the vermin board of the district necessary." Landholders will feel more satisfied if they are under the control of the board in that matter, than if they are in the hands of a single individual.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There is a provision that vermin boards need meet only once in two or three months.

Mr. MALEY: But the roads boards, who will form the majority of vermin boards, meet monthly; and it is quite competent for them to hold an extraordinary meeting of the vermin board after the meeting of the roads board. Thus, vermin matters could be dealt with in the intervals between ordinary meetings of the vermin boards. I observe that this Bill contains certain provisions from the Roads Act as to election of members. Some of these provisions are most objectionable, even as applying to roads boards. I refer to the postal voting provision

more especially. The sections of the Roads Act providing for voting in absence represent an absolute scandal, and I propose to take steps to have this Bill amended in that respect, when it is in Committee. I congratulate the select committee on the result of their work; and I hope we shall be able to knock the Bill into shape, such as will satisfy the people who are asking for the measure.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Clauses, 1, 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Interpretation:

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

“That in the interpretation of ‘holding the words ‘or under a sawmilling permit’ be struck out.”

The holders of sawmilling permits have no control over, or interest, in, the herbage; and every sawmilling permit that I know of is held also as a pastoral lease. It would be utterly unjust to levy rates under this measure on the holder of the sawmilling permit. A sawmilling permit, I should add, is quite a different thing from a sawmilling concession such as Jarrahdale, which is a timber lease. Timber lessees will still pay if my amendment is carried.

[The Chairman took the Chair.]

Mr. PIESSE: Would not the words “or other lease” include areas held under sawmilling permits?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I have made inquiries in the right quarter, and I learn that the interpretation as it stands permits the rating of sawmilling permit areas.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Honorary Minister is consistent in moving the amendment, because Crown lands are excluded. A sawmilling permit is really a lease under another name; it permits the cutting of timber on a certain area. Really, it represents payment of royalty in place of payment of rent. I hope the Honorary Minister's consistency will be maintained.

Amendment put and passed.

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

“That in the interpretation of ‘holding’ the words ‘or as a public reserve or otherwise’ be struck out.”

On the face of it, to ask a public body to pay for the extermination of vermin, and particularly rabbits, on a commonage surrounded by Crown lands is utterly ridiculous.

Mr. Broun: Not always.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Many of them are unfenced, and it is a matter of impossibility for any local authority to keep them clear of vermin in their present condition.

Mr. Hickmott: That would come under the jurisdiction of the Government.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: But they do not, and unless they are fenced in it is impossible to keep them free from vermin.

Mr. HARRISON: In my district there are in particular two reserves, one under the local authority and the other under the Central Board of Health. Both are infested with rabbits, and the land all round them is held by settlers. I would like the Minister to tell the Committee what the position is in regard to those two reserves.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I must object to the amendment. These public reserves must be cleared of vermin. They are under the control of the roads boards to-day, and the roads boards are responsible for keeping down noxious weeds on them. We simply say that a public reserve shall not be permitted to become a breeding ground for rabbits. The reserves are there for the public good, and are not rateable under the Bill. If the amendment is carried, nobody will be responsible for seeing that rabbits do not breed on the reserves.

Hon. T. WALKER: What the Minister has now said serves to justify the course I took on the second reading. Under this provision the settlers have to pay for keeping these reserves clear of vermin, and sometimes they are very extensive areas. Close to my own holding there is a well with a large reserve. The land around the well is extremely fertile, and after rain much water lies in pools among the rocks. The whole place presents an ideal ground for rabbits, while right away north stretches thousands and thousands of acres of Crown land, separated from the well by only the enormous Government reserve. To expect the settlers to provide the cost of keeping that area free from rabbits would be altogether unjust.

Mr. MALEY: I would like from the Minister an opinion as to whether “public reserve” includes a public reserve outside the No. 1 fence. I cannot find in the Bill any definition which applies to merely one portion of the State. Clause 6 provides that the powers conferred on the Minister may be exercised throughout the State. This would appear to bring a reserve at Kalgoorlie or at Eucla within the Bill.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: This is a Vermin Bill, and does not specifically refer to rabbits. If the Minister is not to have control east of the fence, how is he to deal with such pests as sparrows and foxes? The very fact that men are trafficking in rabbits east of the fence to-day proves that we are not dealing with reserves to the east of the fence at least not so far as rabbits are concerned.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I should like hon members to read the interpretation of “public reserves” on the next page. The Commissioner of Railways is an official and agent of the Crown. There are thousands of water reserves throughout the State, vested in the Water Supply Department. The member for Avon pointed out that in his district one reserve is held by the local authority and another by an agent of the Government. Under the Bill it makes all the difference in the world. Why should we compel the local authority to

clear their reserve, while the adjoining reserve, because reserved for water for the Government is exempt? Is it fair because the local authority has an area in its district, either large or small, that it should be compelled to clear it when the Government have a reserve adjoining and do not clear it?

Mr. PIESSE: I hope the Committee will allow the interpretation to stand as it is. There are many reserves in a district surrounded by freeholds, and the fact that these are breeding grounds for rabbits is justification for asking that the board should keep them clear.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. BROWN: I move an amendment—

“That in the definition of ‘holding’ after the word ‘otherwise,’ in line 6, the following be inserted:—‘All land repurchased by the Government and used for State farms.’”

The CHAIRMAN: All these amendments should appear on the Notice Paper. Next session I shall insist that all amendments to Bills shall be placed on the Notice Paper. It is the only fair way for hon. members, and the only way that a member has a chance of considering an amendment.

Mr. MALEY: What chance have we had in connection with this?

The CHAIRMAN: I admit that this Bill is an exceptional one, and that the session has been exceptional. I should like hon. members to assist the Chairman in future by seeing that all their amendments appear on the Notice Paper. I should be glad if they would make a note of this.

Mr. BROWN: My reason for moving this amendment is owing to the previous experience I have had with a State farm in my district. This State farm has been responsible for the spread of noxious weeds in the district, and the same thing will apply to the spread of rabbits from this and State farms in other parts of Western Australia. I want to give the local authorities power to force the State farms to eradicate rabbits.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know why we should make exception with regard to property owned by the Crown, because it happens to be in the form of a repurchased estate. Why should we make any distinction in this way? The member who moved this amendment should either make it apply to all Crown lands, including repurchased estates, or leave this clause as it is. I must oppose the amendment.

Mr. MALEY: The object of the hon. member is to place the Crown on the same footing in regard to farming pursuits as private persons are placed. If State farms have not to contend with this pest in the way in which the farmer has, it is not fair that the farmers should have to carry out this work.

Mr. PIESSE: We met with the same difficulty as we did when the Committee tried to include Crown lands within a certain radius. It was pointed out by the Crown Solicitor that we could not enforce an Act or rate against the Crown. The amendment cannot be entertained, in my opinion, for that reason.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: The Government cannot agree to this, and cannot embody in the Bill any provision to rate Crown lands. As soon as land is purchased by the Crown it becomes the property of the Crown, and cannot pay rates and taxes. I appreciate the remarks of hon. members with regard to State farms spreading noxious weeds, as it is alleged. I would point out so far as rabbits are concerned, however, that on the Yandanooka estate, to give an instance, steps were taken to eradicate them as soon as they were reported.

Hon. T. Walker: On a point of order, I hold that the amendment proposed by the member for Beverley is out of order, as it proposes to bring Crown lands under the jurisdiction of roads boards for the purpose of taxation. This cannot be done except by a specific Bill.

The Chairman: I must uphold the point of order raised by the member for Kanowna, and rule the amendment of the member for Beverley out of order.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Amendment put and passed.

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

“That in the interpretation of ‘public reserve’ the words ‘not being an official or agency of the Crown’ be struck out.”
I maintain that a body which is acting for the public should see that their reserves are kept clear of vermin and any reserve within a rabbit infested area should also be kept clear of vermin.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: If these words are struck out it will mean that the water supply reserves will come under this interpretation, and those reserves are to all intents and purposes Crown lands. The effect would be so far reaching that I would like hon. members to consider the amendment carefully before agreeing to it.

Mr. Harrison: Do you not realise that these would be more likely to be the best breeding grounds?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: Are we going to say that all these reserves should be under the jurisdiction of the various boards? Is it desirable that the Minister for Water Supply should be subservient to these boards? It would be a most dangerous thing to do, and I am surprised at the amendment coming from the hon. member who himself has been a Minister of the Crown. It would be not only inadvisable to carry the amendment, but absolutely wrong.

Hon. T. Walker: What is wrong with it?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: Making a Minister subservient to the board.

Hon. T. WALKER: These reserves are vested in the Crown although they may be in the hands of trustees. North of the old goldfields road in the Trayning district, there are hundreds of acres of the best breeding places for rabbits for miles around. We should not make one kind of reserve and provide immunity for another reserve.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: If we pass a clause such as this we must assume that the Government will deal fairly by the local authorities. If I believed for a moment that the Government did not intend to contribute anything towards the destruction of vermin, I would oppose the Bill altogether. The Government must assist. Parliament would not agree to place the responsibility for the destruction of all vermin over all lands in the South-West division on the shoulders of local bodies. These reserves ought to be reduced at once to a minimum consistent with the requirements and convenience of the people of the district and the remaining reserves should be handed over to the local authorities. They are the proper people to control the reserves.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: These dams and wells are put down by the Government for the benefit of the settlers. Nothing is charged to the settlers in the district for the use of the water. Having provided the capital and installed the supply, it is not too much to expect the local authority to keep them up. Only last week, owing to representations made, instructions have been given for six dams to be constructed at a cost to the State of £6,000, and when these are handed over to the local authority the Government will not get one penny from them. Wherever the dams are put down they should be made as vermin proof as possible. If this amendment is carried the Government will have to consider, however necessary a dam may be, whether it should put it down.

Mr. PIESSE: If a man is placed in charge of a water reserve, he would be there as agent for the Crown and the Crown cannot be rated.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Minister is trying to intimidate country members. There are thousands of blocks which are reserved by the Water Supply Department as water reserves and on which no dams or wells are sunk. If one of these reserves is handed over to the roads board, the roads board would have to keep the reserve clear out of the local rates. But if the Water Supply Department has one reserve only a couple of miles away, the vermin can run there as they like. The Bill provides that if a person does not clear his area of vermin the board can step in and do it and charge the person for doing it. I want to see fair play all round. Members must admit that if a reserve or dam is placed under a roads board, they have to keep the area clear. There are hundreds of blocks reserved for future use and it seems fair and just that the Government should keep these areas free from vermin. The Government should bear their share of the responsibility in keeping reserves clear. I want fair play all round. If semi-public bodies pay, the Government ought to pay.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: It is quite true that there are numerous reserves in this State, but it is equally true that the Minister for Lands has given instructions for the inspection of every reserve with a view to its being thrown open for selection, either wholly, or so far as can be done without taking away from the people land that is really required for a reserve. Undoubtedly, at present we have far too many reserves. Is it

likely that if Parliament instructs the Government what to do, the Government would shirk their duty as regards keeping down vermin on the reserves? The Government have been doing their duty in that respect, as is evidenced by the statement of the member for Toodyay this afternoon. Ministers are fully aware of the necessity for keeping down the dingo and rabbit pests, so far as the funds of the State will permit.

Mr. HARRISON: I am rather with the member for North-East Fremantle on this matter. The outlying farmers are the buffer for the other farmers. In connection with this clause I should like, if I may, to forecast a subclause that I intend to move when Clause 9 is reached. That subclause I think will meet the present difficulty. It reads: "All Government land within a radius—of a certain distance—of any freehold or conditional purchase area within the No. 1 fence shall be cleared of rabbits by the central administration." I shall speak to that amendment later.

Hon. T. WALKER: I can well understand the zeal of the Honorary Minister in championing this clause, but I cannot understand the zeal of the member for Toodyay. The Country party need to make a distinction between ethics and law. The Honorary Minister's utterance is merely ethical; it amounts to this, "We have been good, and we are going to be good, to Toodyay." However, the farmers are bound by black and white; and we want the Government bound by black and white. Where the Crown is mentioned in an Act of Parliament the Crown is bound, bound just as much as a subject. The question is not one of merely fencing in a few dams. That is done now. Most of the dams are well fenced, and vermin proof. But the trouble is as to the reserves, the areas where the water is caught. I want the Crown to be responsible for keeping those areas clear of vermin. That responsibility should not be put on the farmer.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause, as previously amended, agreed to.

Clauses 4, 5—agreed to.

Clause 6—Exercise of powers by Minister and boards:

Mr. PICKERING: I have already forecasted an amendment to this clause, and I have consulted the Crown Solicitor on the matter. Boards resent any undue interference with the performance of the duties entrusted to them. The Minister ought not to over-ride the board, or interfere with them as proposed by this clause. All through the Bill there is duality of control. I move an amendment—

"That the following be added to the clause: 'Provided that the Minister shall not within any district exercise the powers conferred on the board unless the board shall fail or neglect to exercise its powers or to perform its duties, or the Minister has been appointed by the Governor to act as the board for the district.'"

Hon. T. WALKER: Now I have to support the Honorary Minister. To begin with, the proviso is absolutely unnecessary. The Bill defines the functions of the Government, and the functions of the Minister, and the functions of the board, from stage to stage. There are

places where a board cannot be got, or where it would be inconvenient for a board to operate. Again, there are localities, on the goldfields for instance, where it may be necessary to take action, since the rabbits are coming through from South Australia enormously. The powers conferred on the Minister may be exercised throughout the State, but powers conferred on a board can only be exercised within its district. When the board is exercising that power the Ministerial power will not be exercised. The amendment is altogether unnecessary.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I quite agree that there must be central administration. Last evening the member for North-East Fremantle drew attention to what he termed the dual control. I find that on 28 pages of the Bill "Minister or board" appears. If the hon. member will read Clause 6 in conjunction with Clause 44 he will see that the Minister does not overlap the board.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I have always held that when we have local government, local government should be given a free hand. Right through the Bill there is to be found provision for dual control.

Hon. T. Walker: It is alternative, not dual.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Even with a board in existence the Minister can make an order on the advice of his officers, and without any consideration at all for the board. So long as the board is carrying out its duties the Minister should not interfere with it.

The Minister for Works: Who is to be the judge?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Minister can suspend the board, and with the approval of the Governor carry on the work himself in that board's district. The intention of the mover of the amendment is to obviate dual control, which I also am opposed to.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It is clear that the Minister must have extraordinary powers. These boards will not be formed over the whole of the State. In a district where there is no board occasion may arise for the exercise of certain powers. It is there where the Minister will come in. The amendment restricts the Minister.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: No, it does not.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: But it will be found that it does. I am told that the sparrows are thick at Balladonia. If that is so, it will be necessary for the Minister to send an officer down there to combat them; for of course there is no board in that district.

Mr. THOMSON: I hope the Committee will not accept the amendment. If we are not in a position to trust the Minister, he has no business to be there. Under Clause 44 the only conditions under which the Minister may exercise his power in a board district is when the board refuses to perform its duties. Apparently the mover of the amendment overlooked Clause 44, and is now seeking to duplicate it.

Hon. T. Walker: In the wrong place.

Mr. THOMSON: The object of the amendment is already provided for.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I consulted the Crown Solicitor as to the proposed amendment,

and I was told that it was unnecessary and dangerous. Therefore I propose to vote against it.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Clause 44 provides that a board must be suspended before the Minister can exercise his powers. The member for Northam said there are large areas in which no boards exist, and that the Bill provides for the Minister coming in in such areas. But the amendment provides that where a board is in existence the Minister may under certain circumstances exercise power.

Mr. MONEY: I think some confusion has been caused. Clause 6 provides for the Minister acting, not at the expense or detriment of the board, but to the assistance of the board, and I cannot conceive those who are anxious to combat this pest desiring to avoid the help of the Minister, which he may give under Clause 6. Under Clause 9 the Minister has certain powers to dispense moneys independently of the rates collected by a board, and it may be necessary to exercise those powers in an emergency. Clause 6 would not in any way give powers to the Minister to act as a board. If the Minister is stepping in and taking the place of a board, the powers for so doing would be found under Clauses 44 and 45. I think the Minister can only step in and act fully as a board under clause 44.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 7, 8—agreed to.

Clause 9—Application of funds.

Hon. T. WALKER: I move an amendment—

"That a new subclause be inserted after Subclause (c) as follows:—for defraying the expenses incidental to the destruction of vermin on all Crown lands, public reserves, and all vacant areas adjacent to private holdings."

Clause 9 provides for the appropriation of moneys.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott: Why adjacent to private holdings?

Hon. T. WALKER: I do not want to reach away back on the border of the Northern Territory.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott: What about getting rid of the sparrows far out in the country?

Hon. T. WALKER: There are cases of a thousand acres which are situated in the middle of Crown lands, and we cannot expect the holders of such areas to pay the expense of keeping cleared all the surrounding country.

Point of Order.

Mr. Thomson: I rise to a point of order. Is the hon. member in order in moving a subclause of this description? Early in the evening the member for Beverley wished to add to the interpretation the words "all land repurchased by the Government and used as State farms." That was ruled out of order on the ground that it was incurring expenditure. Standing Order 387 provides that it is not competent for a private member to move to incur expense. If this amendment of the mem-

her for Kanowna is carried it will mean that a considerable increase in the expenditure of revenue, which is not provided for in the Bill.

Hon. T. Walker: The hon. member would be right if I asked the House to appropriate the money. The clause deals with the power of Parliament to appropriate money, and does not say how much shall be appropriated.

Mr. Money: I submit that the Standing Order mentioned has nothing to do with the point of order, for it deals with a Committee only of Ways and Means.

The Chairman: The member for Beverley moved that after the word "otherwise" the following words be inserted:—"All land repurchased by the Government and used as State farms." I ruled that the effect of the amendment would be to impose a tax upon the Crown, and therefore would not admit it. If the amendment of the member for Kanowna does not increase the total amount of money mentioned in the clause, but merely affects the distribution of a given sum, it must be allowed. The same point has often been raised in Bills before the House, such as the Agricultural Bank Act Amendment Bill. The clause assumes that a certain sum has been appropriated by Parliament, and provides for the distribution of that sum for certain purposes. I therefore rule that the amendment of the member for Kanowna is in order.

Committee resumed.

Hon. T. WALKER: Subclause (d) is practically consistent with my amendment, but is not definite enough. I wish to make the clause clear, that it shall be part of the duty of the central department to attend to these public reserves. It is absurd for the holders and for the roads boards to be put to the expense of keeping Crown lands free from vermin.

Mr. MONEY: I support the amendment. It would be futile to make provision against the rabbits if we are going to have breeding grounds all over the country. The amendment emphasises the fact that Parliament, in passing this clause, looks to the Government to eradicate rabbits from Crown lands adjoining settlements. It is advisable to give the Government this power. After all, it is only discretionary.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: The proposed amendment is for defraying the cost of the destruction of vermin on all Crown lands and public reserves. The Government are responsible for the destruction of all vermin on all Crown lands.

Hon. T. Walker: What nonsense; it says nothing like that.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I think it means that funds are to be provided to deal with all vermin on all Crown lands, and the work of the extermination all over the State is thrown upon the Government.

Mr. HARRISON: The farmers outback are to be the buffers for all those nearer the settled areas and they, by their exertions, will protect those farmers who are closer to the coast. Therefore, is it not up to the Government to help to protect those outside farmers because their areas are surrounded by the Crown lands which have been refetred to, and they have their water supplies on lands which contain the

most succulent food to enable rabbits to breed rapidly. My suggestion is that we should limit the area to be cleared to the extent of a mile or 80 chains. Then we should be doing only what a farmer does. If it devolved on the Government to keep that area under control, it would meet the position. I think the Government should do their part to protect the cleared and cultivated areas outback.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I cannot see that the Government can accept the amendment. On the occasion of a recent visit to Emu Hill I passed through a lot of land which was unoccupied, and it was simply swarming with rabbits. I do not desire to minimise the danger, but I can understand that farmers who have Crown lands around them will be visited by the rabbits which are bred outside their holdings, but if this amendment passes it will entail upon the Government enormous expense.

Hon. T. Walker: No.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Government having settled the people on these lands and taken payments from them, they should, therefore, deal with the rabbits on the lands outside the areas which have been taken up. At Emu Hill I saw conditions which I had no idea existed, but at the same time I can hardly see how it is possible for the Government to undertake what the amendment will involve. We all know that unless a man has rabbit-proof fence around his property, an inspector may see rabbits on that property which were never bred there, and there being penal clauses in the Bill the inspector will see that the man is punished. But how are the Government to be punished? The member for Avon pointed out that the farmers who were far out were really working to keep the pest from the farms which were closer to settlement, but that is one of the things those people must have taken into consideration when they took up their land.

Hon. T. WALKER: If I were to read the amendment as the Minister for Works and the Honorary Minister have read it, I should certainly vote against it myself. I do not know how the hon. members could have read into it what is not there.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott: It is plain to the naked eye.

Hon. T. WALKER: It is not. The amendment is that "whatever money is appropriated by the House the Minister may apply that money for defraying the expenses incidental to the destruction of." If there is any expense incurred in the destruction of vermin—

The Minister for Works: On all Crown lands.

Hon. T. WALKER: Yes, but not all vermin on all Crown lands. The Government could not destroy all the vermin on all the Crown lands if they had the wealth of the Rothschilds. My amendment does not seek that. It is a sort of direction to the central department that they shall attend to the Crown lands and give protection to the outlying settlers referred to by the member for Avon. If an inspector has spent money in destroying vermin adjacent to a settlement, the Minister

can bear the expense from money appropriated by Parliament. I want it clear that it is obligatory on the Crown to look after their lands.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Government should say what they really intend doing; if I thought the Government would not do anything at all I would not take a hand in passing the Bill. If the Government take their responsibility and contribute a fair amount for the destruction of rabbits on Crown lands that would be reasonable. The Government cannot take the responsibility of destroying vermin on all Crown lands, but in the South-West they should take a hand in seeing that no vermin over-run settlement. The Minister might state the intention of the Government.

Mr. Harrison: What is really asked for by the amendment is that the Government should help the farmers in outlying districts where there is a danger of losing the growing crops.

Mr. PIESSE: This clause is inserted for the purpose of giving the Government power to deal with the pest, and I am in agreement with the member for Kanowna in his desire to have Crown lands defined, but there is a want of trust in the Government, and even if the amendment is carried it is discretionary with the Minister as to whether he would do anything.

Mr. PICKERING: I support the amendment. Coming from a portion of the State affected, I think the Minister should give an assurance as to what means will be adopted by the Government. If the amendment is not carried, I shall move an amendment to the effect that in deciding the amount to be distributed to vermin boards it should be done on the basis of the ratio that alienated lands bear to unalienated land and lands in process of alienation.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I move an amendment on the amendment—

“That the word ‘all’ appearing in two places in the amendment be struck out.”

Hon. T. Walker: I have no objection to that amendment.

Mr. JOHNSTON: No one desires to embarrass the Government or to ask for anything unreasonable. The moneys appropriated by Parliament can be expended in the various ways stated. Recently I spent a week in the district where the rabbits are most prevalent and it appears even with the amendment and much greater assistance than the Government are likely to give the settlers are up against an almost hopeless task in getting rid of the rabbits. No one suggests that the Government can get rid of the rabbits on all Crown lands. If so there would be an end of the difficulty, but we are justified in inserting the words to show the desire of the Committee that some money should be devoted to get rid of the rabbits on Crown lands on the eastern fringe of settlement.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I view the amendment of the member for Kanowna as a very serious one, so serious that I am not prepared to accept the responsibility in connection with it. If the Committee can postpone the consideration of this clause until I have

had an opportunity of consulting Cabinet, I shall agree. If not, I must ask that progress be reported.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am surprised at this dramatic turn of events. Should a simple amendment like this bamboozle the hon. gentleman? Surely we can decide the question without either postponing this clause or reporting progress. I view the amendment as really conferring no greater powers than the Bill confers, and as conferring on the settlers no added benefit in regard to the eradication of rabbits on Crown lands. The only thing, really, that the amendment will do is to convey, by inference, that the Parliament which enacted this measure considered that steps should be taken to eradicate rabbits from Crown lands. To me it seems a matter of perfect indifference whether the amendment is or is not carried. In fact, the amendment is a mere expression of opinion, a mere pious wish.

Hon. T. WALKER: I am astounded at the suggestion of the Minister for Works that this simple amendment should be postponed.

The Minister for Works: Why not postpone the clause?

Hon. T. WALKER: I would not for a moment suggest that the Committee are incapable of dealing with such a simple amendment. What is Parliament coming to? In point of fact, Subclause (d) would enable us to do all that is wanted. I ask the Committee to take the responsibility of passing the amendment.

The Minister for Works: The matter is too serious.

Hon. T. WALKER: Surely the Committee are not to be bluffed in that way. We are being treated as school children.

Mr. THOMSON: The appeal of the member for Kanowna that the Committee should not allow themselves to be treated as school children is amusing, in view of the fact that when his party were in power the attitude of their Lands Minister on a Bill affecting all the settlers was “Take it or leave it.” The hon. member himself has said that the object of his amendment has already been provided for. I trust the Committee will not take the conduct of business out of the Government’s hands.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: This is not a Government Bill, but a Committee Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: I will ask hon. members to confine themselves to the question before the Chair.

Mr. THOMSON: The member for York was desirous of having a provision somewhat similar to this amendment included in the Bill, but we were assured by the Crown Solicitor that such a provision would be inoperative. I am prepared to accept the Crown Solicitor’s opinion in preference to that of hon. members who are, quite honestly, advocating this amendment, which seems to me dangerous. The proposal is that money should be appropriated to be spent in the administration of this measure. But the vermin boards to be created will have power to levy rates on landholders in vermin board districts. If a considerable proportion of the funds is to be earmarked for Crown lands, the vermin boards will not have much money.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They will not need it, if the rabbits outside are killed.

Mr. THOMSON: I believe in local administration, which is the object of this Bill. We give the local authorities power to administer the Bill, and the more money we can give the vermin boards by way of subsidy the better will that money be spent. The Scaddan Government spent thousands of pounds in clearing roads by Government labour. They would have got much better value had they given the money to roads boards to have the work done.

Hon. P. Collier: I rise to a point of order. I think we should get back to the Bill, and not discuss the clearing of roads and the question of departmental versus contract construction.

Mr. THOMSON: I want to show the Committee the danger there is under an amendment like this. I trust the Committee will reject it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am sorry that members should have misunderstood my attitude. I asked them as a matter of courtesy to agree to the postponement of the clause. The amendment, if carried, will put a big responsibility on the Government, and I desire to consult my colleagues. The postponement of the clause is merely to give me that opportunity. This is not an unreasonable request. To me the clause seems dangerous, and with the object of consulting my colleagues before agreeing to it, I propose to move that the consideration of the clause be postponed.

The CHAIRMAN: I cannot accept that. We are now in the middle of a discussion. Until the amendments shall have been disposed of, I cannot take the motion.

Hon. J. Mitchell: The amendments could be withdrawn.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I merely wish to postpone consideration of the clause until later on in the evening.

The CHAIRMAN: If those members who have moved the amendments withdraw them, it could be done.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If the amendments are withdrawn it will be possible for me to move for the postponement of the clause, and the amendments can be reinstated later on.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I am quite agreeable to the withdrawal of my amendment, and I hope the member for Kanowna will withdraw his.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The amendment does not appropriate any money. It merely means that if Parliament should grant money for the purpose of destroying vermin, portion of it shall be used for the destruction of vermin on Crown lands and public reserves. The member for Katanning said this money should be given to the vermin boards. The hon. member is trying to rob the farmer and let the Government go free.

Mr. Thomson: That is not so.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The amendment gives fair play to all. It asks the Government to destroy vermin in such a manner that not the whole responsibility will be thrown on the men whose holdings adjoin Crown lands. The hon. member wants the man adjacent to Crown lands to pay the whole cost.

Mr. Thomson: Nothing of the sort.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That is the whole spirit of the Bill. If a man does not clear his land of vermin, the board can do it at his expense, and in addition that man still has to pay his rates.

Mr. Johnston: Why not meet the acting leader of the House by withdrawing the amendment?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Because if this had been a charge on the expenditure of the State or if it provided for the appropriation of money, the Minister might find it necessary to consult his colleagues; but the amendment is merely an indication of how we should like the money to be expended when Parliament votes it. Moreover, this is not a Government measure, but a Bill made by a select committee.

Mr. Griffiths: Is there not a matter of policy involved?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No, none whatever. How can we get rid of rabbits without destroying them on Crown lands? This is a policy for the country to deal with and not for any Government. Can any member of this Chamber move for an amount to be placed on the Estimates for this purpose? The only thing he can do is to move that in the opinion of the House the amount should be placed on the Estimates for such a purpose. The Government have to do this afterwards. If they do not desire to do it there is no need for them to do so.

The CHAIRMAN: I must ask hon. members to confine themselves to the matter before the Chair, which is the amendment moved by the member for Williams-Narrogin.

Mr. PIESSE: If this word "all" is deleted the amendment will read in such a way that it cannot be accepted by the Committee. The words "vacant area" make the whole thing too wide. Further on in the Bill there is provision to enable the Government to deal with vacant land, or any other land, and therefore these words are unnecessary.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Let us act like sensible men and not like a pack of school children. The proceedings of the Committee for the past hour are such as would reflect upon the intelligence of a fourth class schoolboy. We propose to adjourn the House, and to postpone consideration of this clause because of an amendment of this description. If members think that it is a dangerous clause let them vote it out.

The Minister for Works: I ask that consideration of this clause should be postponed.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I say we are writing ourselves down as asses before the country if we postpone a clause, because we meet with an amendment like this.

The Minister for Works: The procedure is quite in order.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am opposed to taking up any such idiotic attitude.

The Minister for Works: You are simply supporting it because you know it is dangerous.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Minister has no right to say that. If I am supporting it, it is because I recognise that it would be only tinkering with the question of rabbit destruction to leave out that dealing with Crown lands.

We might as well throw the Bill into the waste paper basket, unless the Government are going to give attention to these lands. Believing that, what are the Government afraid of in an amendment like this? I am indifferent as to whether it is carried or not, because I am convinced that it places no particular obligation upon the Government.

The CHAIRMAN: I have already called members to order for discussing matters outside the question before the Chair. The amendment of the member for Williams-Narrogin is now under consideration.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Would you, Sir, define the area around which a speaker may circle in this matter? If I repeated the word "all" for half an hour would I be within the Standing Orders?

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is discussing the attitude of the leader of the House in asking that the clause should be postponed. I have already told the leader of the House that I cannot allow him to move that progress be reported at this stage. Let us deal with the business in a proper manner. I have no desire to burke discussion.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Then I support the amendment to strike out the word "all." That should meet the wishes of the Government. The word seems to have evoked terrors in the mind of the Minister for Works.

The Minister for Works: Nothing of the kind.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Minister is afraid of it because he thinks there would be an obligation on the part of the Government to destroy vermin on Crown lands.

The Minister for Works: It would affect the whole of the Bill.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If that were the effect of the amendment it would be foolish to pass it, but it is not so. If we strike out the word "all" what is there left to find fault with? I am going to vote for the amendment of the member for Williams-Narrogin because it simplifies the position and makes it clearer, and indicated that it is imposing no special obligation upon the Government.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: This is the most important amendment which we are likely to deal with in connection with the Bill. It indicates clearly that the House wishes the Government to deal with rabbits on Crown lands. I hope, however, that the amendment will be withdrawn and that the Minister will be given an opportunity of stating what the Government intend to do.

Hon. P. Collier: Have they not already announced that it is their policy to destroy rabbits on Crown lands so far as funds will allow?

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott: And we are doing it every day.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: We ought to agree to the withdrawal of the amendment and postpone the consideration of the clause until a more convenient time. It is a pity Ministers are not prepared to state definitely their policy with regard to this matter, but since they have asked that the consideration of the clause should be postponed, why not grant the request?

Mr. MALEY: To be consistent I am going to support the amendment of the member for Williams-Narrogin. This House entrusted to a committee the work of framing a Bill to consider the best means of combating the pest and one of the recommendations was—

The Government subsidy to be paid to the boards on account of unalienated lands or abandoned farms which may have reverted to the Crown, such subsidy to be based on the work of destruction done or to be done instead of a pound for pound grant.

It is only logical that having been one of the committee who made that recommendation I should vote in favour of the amendment.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I move—

"That progress be reported and leave asked to sit again."

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

Ayes	..	..	..	..	22
Noes	..	..	..	..	13

Majority for 9

AYES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Mitchell
Mr. Broun	Mr. Money
Mr. Brown	Mr. Pickering
Mr. Davies	Mr. Plesse
Mr. Durack	Mr. H. Robinson
Mr. George	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Thomson
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Veryard
Mr. Johnston	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Maley	Mr. Hardwick

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Munsie
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Roche
Mr. Collier	Mr. Troy
Mr. Holman	Mr. Walker
Mr. Jones	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Lambert	Mr. O'Loghlen
Mr. Lutey	

(Teller.)

Motion thus passed.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]
Progress reported.

BILL—HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT.

Message received from the Legislative Council stating that it had agreed to amendment No. 5 as set out in the schedule of Message No. 19 from the Legislative Assembly, subject to amendments set out in the schedule.

House adjourned at 10.15 p.m.