

found that the Bill was rather an improvement.

Question passed, and the amendment agreed to.

No. 2—Clause 3, strike out the clause: Amendment agreed to.

No. 3—Clause 4, strike out the clause: Amendment agreed to.

No. 4—Add the following new clause:

Section thirty-eight of the principal Act is repealed, and the following section is inserted in lieu thereof: 1, No person other than—*a*, A pharmaceutical chemist; or, *b*, A person or company registered under the Companies Act, 1893, or Friendly Society registered under the Friendly Societies Act, carrying on the business of a chemist or druggist or of a pharmaceutical chemist by and under the personal supervision of a pharmaceutical chemist; or, *c*, a legally qualified medical practitioner, shall carry on the business of a chemist and druggist or pharmaceutical chemist. 2, No person other than—*a*, A pharmaceutical chemist; or, *b*, a legally qualified medical practitioner, shall assume or use the title of pharmaceutical chemist, pharmacist, chemist and druggist, dispensing chemist, dispensing druggist, homeopathic chemist, or other words of like import, or use or exhibit any title, term, or sign which can be construed to mean that such person is qualified as a pharmaceutical chemist. 3, Any person who offends against the provisions of this section shall be liable, on conviction, to a penalty not exceeding fifty pounds, or to imprisonment for any term not exceeding twelve months for every such offence.

Amendment agreed to.

No. 5—Add the following new clause:

Section thirty-one of the principal Act and the amendments thereof contained in section three of the Pharmacy and Poisons Act Amendment Act, 1899, are hereby repealed, and the following section substituted therefor:—No person shall sell any poison unless the bottle or other vessel, wrapper or cover, box or case immediately containing the same bears thereon—(*a*), The word "Poison" printed conspicuously in letters not less than three-sixteenths of an inch in size; and (*b*), The name of the article, the name and address of the vendor, and the address of the shop or premises from which the article was sold. All such matter shall be so printed that the purchaser of the article can plainly see the same.

Amendment agreed to.

Resolutions reported, the report adopted, and a message accordingly returned to the Assembly.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at four minutes past nine o'clock, until the next Tuesday.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 12th November, 1903.

	PAGE
Questions; Murchison Goldfields Traffic ...	2055
Railway Ticket Regulations, Fines ...	2055
Leave of Absence, Dr. McWilliams, Dr. O'Connor ...	2056
Bills: Boulder Tramways, first reading ...	2056
Collië to Narragrin Railway, first reading (remarks) ...	2056
Supreme Court Act Amendment, third reading ...	2056
Election of Senators, third reading ...	2056
Fertilisers and Feeding Stuffs Act Amendment, in Committee, reported ...	2056
Annual Estimates resumed: Education postponed; Mines postponed; Lands estimates, Minister's general statement, debate ...	2057

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

PRAYERS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the MINISTER FOR WORKS: Papers relating to new Houses of Parliament, showing suggested extensions, etc. He explained that plans would be laid on the table before the next sitting.

Ordered, to lie on the table.

QUESTION—MURCHISON GOLDFIELDS TRAFFIC.

MR. HIGHAM asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Whether any special arrangements have been made for the granting of through waybills or bills of lading for merchandise sent from Perth or Fremantle to stations on the Murchison Goldfields railway lines by rail or steamer. 2, If so—1. By what company or companies. 11. If not by all steamers, why all are not placed on the same terms. 3, What is the nature of this waybill or bill of lading, and what concessions, if any, does it concede to consignors or consignees.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, No arrangements have yet been completed. 2 and 3, Answered by No. 1.

QUESTION—RAILWAY TICKET REGULATIONS, FINES.

MR. REID, for Mr. Daglish, asked the Minister for Railways: 1, What number of men have been fined for breach of ticket regulations at the loco. workshops from 1st January, 1903. 2, What is the total amount of such fines. 3, What is the maximum penalty inflicted. 4, To

what purpose such fines are applied. 5, Under what authority are such fines inflicted.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, 111. 2, £30 2s. 3d. 3, The maximum penalty inflicted up to the present has been one and a-half days' pay in case of a third breach of the rules. 4, Credited to the railway service benefit fund. 5, 51 Vict., No. 1, s. 2.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by **MR. HIGHAM**, leave of absence for one fortnight granted to the member for North Perth (**Dr. McWilliams**); and, on motion by **MR. QUINLAN**, leave of absence for the remainder of the session granted to the member for the Moore (**Dr. O'Connor**), both on the ground of urgent private business.

BOULDER TRAMWAYS BILL.

Introduced by the **MINISTER FOR WORKS**, and read a first time.

COLLIE-NARROGIN RAILWAY BILL.

Introduced by the **MINISTER FOR LANDS**. Motion made that the Bill be read a first time.

MR. C. J. MORAN (West Perth): It was to be hoped the Government would place before members at once the information which had been moved for concerning the probable traffic, also information which was collateral and bearing very directly on the question of the Collie railway, as to the fuel supply around the goldfields. Members ought to have the information on the table now, and not have it given by the Minister when moving the second reading. In other countries there was a Public Works Committee, which supplied information of this character long before the Bill was dealt with, and members in those places were enabled to give an intelligent vote on the question.

MR. W. ATKINS (Murray): The Minister might also give the result of the examination of the different routes.

MR. M. H. JACOBY (Swan): Full reports might also be made available for the House regarding the character of the land through which the railway was to pass, other than the reports which had been given by persons not experienced. It was to be hoped that for the satisfac-

tion of the House there would be comprehensive and expert opinions placed before members regarding the land, to help in coming to a decision.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (in reply): The Government had no reports, so far as he knew, bearing on the nature of the country from persons other than experts. The various reports sought for by members would be made available when the second reading was moved on Tuesday next, as he required the reports at the present time, not having finished taking extracts from them, and it was not likely he could place these reports on the table until he completed his task.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a first time.

SUPREME COURT ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

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

ELECTION OF SENATORS BILL.

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

FERTILISERS AND FEEDING STUFFS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

IN COMMITTEE.

MR. ILLINGWORTH in the Chair; the **MINISTER FOR LANDS** in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—Short title and commencement:

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. J. M. Hopkins) moved that in line 2 the word "January" be struck out, and "July" inserted in lieu. This amendment would allow existing contracts entered into to be completed.

Amendment passed, and the clause as amended agreed to.

Clauses 2, 3, 4—agreed to.

Clause 5—Publication of certificate:

On motion by the **MINISTER**, the words "Director of Agriculture" struck out of line 3, and "Minister" inserted in lieu.

Clause as amended agreed to.

Clauses 6, 7—agreed to.

Clause 8—Seller to give invoice certificate to buyer:

On motion by the **MINISTER**, the word "before," in line 3, struck out.

Clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 9—agreed to.

Clause 10—Warranty on sale of feed-ing stuff:

On motion by the MINISTER, the words "percentages of nutritive or other ingredients contained therein" inserted after "article," in line 3.

Clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 11—Deficiency in registered brands:

On motion by the MINISTER, the word "two" struck out of line 8, and "one" inserted in lieu.

Clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 12—Offences by sellers:

THE MINISTER recommended that this clause be struck out. The object of the select committee was to embody these provisions in the regulations; and if it were found necessary to make alterations in the percentages, these could be effected more easily by regulations.

MR. TAYLOR: Would the regulations be somewhat similar?

THE MINISTER: Yes.

Clause struck out.

Clause 13—Inspectors:

THE MINISTER: It was desirable that this clause should be omitted and another inserted in lieu.

Clause struck out.

Clauses 14, 15—agreed to.

Clause 16—Publication of result of analysis:

On motion by the MINISTER, the words "Director of Agriculture," in line 5, were struck out and "Minister" inserted in lieu.

Clause as amended agreed to.

Clauses 17 to 29—agreed to.

Clause 30—Regulations:

THE MINISTER moved that the following be added as Subclause (c.): "Prescribing standards of chemical composition or mechanical subdivision to be observed by any specified fertilisers."

Amendment passed, and the clause as amended agreed to.

New Clause:

On motion by the MINISTER, the following was added as Clause 12:—

The Governor shall appoint an inspector of fertilisers for the purposes of this Act, and may appoint one or more assistant inspectors of fertilisers.

Preamble, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1903-4.

IN COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY.

Resumed from the previous day; MR. ILLINGWORTH in the Chair.

COLONIAL SECRETARY'S DEPARTMENT (Hon. W. Kingsmill), estimates to be farther considered.

Education, £136,260—vote postponed.

MINES DEPARTMENT—Estimates postponed.

LANDS DEPARTMENT (Hon. J. M. Hopkins, Minister).

Vote—*Lands and Surveys*, £108,420 16s. 8d.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT, ADMINISTRATION.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS said: In asking the Committee to give their favourable consideration to the estimated expenses in connection with the Lands Department and the other divisions under my control, I fully appreciate the fact that our expenditure is considerably increased; but I have at the same time to direct attention to a large increase of business that has taken place in connection with the affairs of the Lands Department, and to the arrears of work that for years past have been allowed to accumulate. I do not hesitate to say that this accumulation of arrears and the delays which have taken place in connection with the inspection of conditional purchase lands and in connection with surveys of land taken up by people anxious to get on the land and to have their boundary fences erected, have all tended towards a feeling of dissatisfaction, and have added, as in the past, to the feeling of resentment towards the Lands Department. In framing the Estimates this year provision is made to bring the whole of these arrears up to date by the end of the financial year. It is only a person on the land itself, or one like myself who has had numerous cases brought before his notice, who can realise the absolute importance of having these arrears taken in hand and carried out with the greatest expedition possible. The reasons guiding me in the increased expenditure of £50,380 8s. 4d. may be

summed up in the fact that, apart from the whole of these arrears—an old story with which hon. members are conversant and with which I believe the State is also conversant—since February and during the last six months the business of the department has increased by 50 per cent. Hon. members must agree that if there were no arrears of work, half the increase of business of that volume must necessarily have led to increased expenditure. I desire to point out the net increase on the subheads for the current year, showing the increased expenditure on the various departments or divisions under my control, each of which, when we come to them in detail, I will endeavour to explain, I hope to the entire satisfaction of the House. In Lands and Surveys the increase is £40,456, in Agriculture there is an increase of £6,518, in the Agricultural Bank a decrease of £60, in the Rabbit Department an increase of £885, in the Stock Department an increase of £1,935, and in Woods and Forests an increase of £645. I wish hon. members to bear in mind that what may be looked on as a large increase is not due to an increase in salaries. From a return carefully prepared, I find that the increased salaries paid to my department only total £1,898, and that this is more than counter-balanced by several items struck out or reduced. We have had to put on new officers and provide additional sums for labour which always come under the item “salaries” in a department. This has necessitated an increased expenditure of £16,840. Speaking of the question of arrears, the Under Secretary in a minute says:—

Owing to the chronic trouble of want of accommodation and also because it seemed to be the impression outside the department that it was already overmanned, the appointment of additional officers necessary has not been pressed for as it otherwise would have been. I think the decision to clear off the delays is a very wise one, and I am very pleased with it. We can understand, I am sure, from the nature of the work of the Lands Department, where we have land selection before survey, that there must be more or less some arrears, because we cannot have a staff surveyor and his camp waiting to go on a block of land immediately some person has chosen to apply for it. Therefore I do not suppose the time will

ever come under the system of selection before survey when we will be, strictly speaking, up to date. I wish to draw attention to some of the arrears of work in connection with the drafting division of the department. If, in years past, clear returns had been placed before the House in connection with this department to show these accumulations and what was being done to overcome them, they would not have been allowed to reach their present stage. The number of 20 scale compilation maps has been reduced from 66 in May, to 29 in November; the number of duplicates from 435 in May to 379 in November, and the number of standard plans (80 and 300 scale) from 43 in February to two in November. Public plans (and these we look on as urgent) have been reduced from 40 in April to five this month. Diagrams to be charted on standard plans were 1,075 in arrears, but in November we reduced them to 620. Land agents' plans, which of course are always coming back to be brought up to date, have been reduced from 51 in arrears when I went into office to 14 to-day; and I do not mind frankly admitting that these are 14 too many. I mention these figures to show that there has been a healthy reduction of arrears in this department, and although the Minister has frequently to take serious exception to the work and to the amount of work being got through by a division, the fact remains, I believe, that from the time I asked the department to give the matter its serious attention the officers have been working hard and loyally, and when requested to stay overtime they did it willingly.

MR. PIGOTT: Were they paid for overtime?

THE MINISTER: In only one case, and I will explain it when I come to the item. From the figures I shall produce I think members will appreciate the position I took up. The diagrams to chart on compilations were 3,724 in arrears; diagrams 818 and original plans 88. Instructions to surveyors have been reduced from 631 to 391, showing a healthy reduction, but also with the instruction issued we still had, when this return was prepared, 391 arrears throughout the State. Of Crown grants 156 were in arrear. That was a nominal

amount so far as they are concerned, because they are easily worked up, and during the last three months we have had them up to date. Lease instruments for conditional purchases show that 5,984 remained to be prepared, and pastoral lease instruments numbered 1,728. On the question of surveys I may direct attention to the enormous increase in the work by stating that from the 1st July, 1902, to the end of July, 1903, the instructions issued to the various surveyors totalled £15,337, and in this year for the last three months from July to October the instructions issued totalled £15,688, an increase over those for the whole of the previous year. After all, in the past Parliament has controlled the funds, and if this department has had to suffer these disabilities, members will realise the question as to whether it was reasonable to expect that, without men or money, the department could make itself a popular department either with members of Parliament or with the country. It was altogether absurd to expect it, and perhaps for a good deal of the criticism levelled against the department in the past—and I was amongst the critics—Parliament was more to blame than the department. [MEMBER: And the Government of the day, whoever they were. The field staff of contract surveyors has been increased by 13 during the year, so that we have 22 contract surveyors doing work in the field at present. We have exhausted this State for surveyors, have been advertising in the East, and still have vacancies to fill; so that it has become a question of concern with the Surveyor General and myself to know whether we shall be able to fill these positions. The arrears still continue to increase in spite of the extra men put on. They are contract men, and work to the amount of £1,500 per month comes forward for them to do. On 1st June the instructions not completed by the surveyors in the field were valued at £6,039.]

MR. JACOBY: You do not give the figures.

THE MINISTER: This is contract work sent out to the men, and it is considered better for comparative purposes to take the value of the work. The arrears have gone back even though we have

appointed 13 additional contract men and certain additional staff surveyors; and we have accumulated from 1st June, when we had £6,039 worth outstanding to £14,000 worth on 5th November. I am sure members can appreciate this fact, that while every effort is being made at present to overcome these arrears, the enormous rush that is taking place in land settlement to-day, an increase of 50 per cent., is surely enough to disorganise a department without having all these arrears of the past to overcome. We have 23 contract surveyors employed on coastal districts, and 16 on goldfields districts, also 13 salaried officers on coastal districts, making a total of 42 surveyors in the field at present. Perhaps it may be said there would be no difficulty in rubbing up work with that number. I find that Mr. Angove has three months' work in front of him now, without dealing with accumulations coming in; Mr. Absolon has four months' ahead, Mr. Brazier three months' work, Mr. Crossland four months' work, and Mr. Chamberlin two months' work, while instructions have been issued to Mr. Denny for work which in ordinary course would take him nine months to do. As soon as I knew that, needless to say arrangements were made to discontinue issuing instructions to him, and additional salaried officers were sent to his district, and will be sent to similar districts to aid in working off arrears.

MR. JACOBY: Which district is that?

THE MINISTER: I will tell the hon. member when I come to details. I have a plan which is not in this return. Mr. Flynn has two months' work uncompleted, Mr. Hartung three, Mr. Lefroy five, Mr. Lymburn four, Mr. Mitchell four, Mr. Moss four, Mr. Nunn three, Mr. Ridley three, Mr. Russell four, Mr. Sainsbury ten, Mr. Turner four, Mr. Wilson seven, Mr. Waltham two, Mr. Weeks six, Mr. Watt four, and Mr. Watkins five. The total value of the work of these contract surveyors in hand at this moment is £14,056. I mention this because I do not wish members to contemplate any cutting down of the survey vote, which has already been submitted to the Treasurer's pruning knife and will not stand any farther curtailment. If I am not wearying

members, I should like them to be in possession of certain other facts. I have made it clear to the Surveyor General that the House will hold him responsible, as will the Minister of the day, for having those arrears cleared off by the end of the financial year; and it is hoped that he will succeed. And unless this information is given to the House, and members are put in a position to take a comparative view of the figures for this year, next year, and the years that follow, I fail to perceive how they can express an opinion on the merits of the survey vote, which is becoming such a large item in the expenditure of this department. Another branch of the service which has been subjected to much denunciation at the hands of certain persons is that known as the Lands Inspection Branch. I should like members to know what has been done in this connection. From the 1st March to the 12th November of this year we carried out 1,178 inspections of conditional purchase blocks on behalf of the land selection division, and 263 on behalf of the Agricultural Bank. This gives roughly an average of about 180 blocks per month which have been inspected by our staff.

MR. JACOBY: Conditional purchase blocks?

THE MINISTER: Grazing leases and conditional purchase blocks, inspected to see whether the provisions of the Act have been complied with. Needless to say that we were working at high pressure. Many people were calling out for the classification of the lands they had applied for, being anxious to know whether the classification was in their opinion reasonable and fair, so that they might select the lands. While they were worrying the department for that classification we were trying to work off these arrears, and could not devote the same attention to conditional purchase lands as we will devote to them at a later period, in the not distant future. We have 554 conditional purchase inspections in arrear, and 120 on behalf of the Agricultural Bank, giving a total of 664 inspections to be made. Members are aware that when speaking recently at Meckering I announced that no applications would be received during this month for grazing lands within the South-West Division, my

desire being to enable certain officers of the department to be brought from districts where they had completed their work to aid in districts where the work was congested, and to clear off the whole of the arrears by the end of the month. We may not clear them off by the end of the month; but we are making every possible effort to do so. Mr. May, the chief inspector of lands, was previously occupied in the Lands Office; he is now out inspecting conditional purchase lands. The two inspectors of the Agricultural Bank, who as I think I explained previously to the House used to be continually travelling, have had districts allocated to them; and as many other inspectors as we can spare are engaged in overtaking those arrears. Additional officers will, if necessary, be engaged; and when once the arrears are overtaken, the responsibility for keeping the work up to date will rest on the officers to whom it is intrusted. When I took office as Minister for Lands it was my desire to do as much business as possible, on business lines; and I would direct attention to the number of applications approved during each of the last six months, and the number approved during the corresponding six months of 1902. No doubt so much detail in figures is apt to be wearisome; but when I have finished the figures will be printed in *Hansard*, and members will have them for reference during this year. In 1902, for the month of May the applications approved totalled 234, and for May of this year they rose to 376; in June, 1902, the last month in the financial year, only 229 applications were approved, and in June of this year we approved of 1,265. It was in June last that the officers of this division were working late at night, and received payment for overtime. Members can appreciate the position in connection with those approvals; for had we not dealt with them in June we should have lost a quarter's rent. Members may say, "You would have lost a quarter's rent, but you would have got it at the other end of the term 20 years hence;" but the accumulated compound interest on that sum of money is no small consideration, and certainly far outweighs the cost incurred for overtime during that month, in putting through the approvals, bringing the work up to date, and giving

additional facilities to the public whose applications were being considered.

MR. BURGESS: The public did not get the land.

THE MINISTER: They had it locked up by virtue of their applications; and they were perfectly satisfied. In July of last year we approved of 427 applications, and in July of this year of 373—a decrease. In August of last year we approved of 476, and in August of this year of 432. In September of last year we approved of 393, and in September of this year of 1,232. In October, 1902, we approved of 391, and in October, 1903, of 566. The total for those six months of 1902 was 2,150 approvals, and for the corresponding period of this year 4,244; and I am sure members will agree that this is a very appreciable increase. While it may be wearisome to hear these figures recounted, there is no other way by which I can inform the House of the quantity of work which devolves on the Lands Department in dealing with the increased volume of business. As to the applications actually received at the head office from May till October, I shall not do more than read the number for each month—786, 882, 1,344, 1,172, 1,129, and 893, or a total of 6,146. No detailed record was kept for the corresponding months of the preceding year; so I am unable to give a comparative statement. Another division of the department which has been called on to perform much heavier work is the correspondence branch. During the first 10 months of 1902 the number of letters despatched was 21,870, and during the same period of this year the number was 31,592, or an increase of 9,722, showing a much greater volume of business. The letters, etc., posted and the telegrams sent for the first 10 months of 1903—exclusive of letters delivered by hand, say 10 to 20 a day—were, letters and telegrams 42,314, packets 7,111, or a total of 49,425. Thus we may say that for the 10 months the correspondence branch has despatched 53,925 communications of different kinds, including some 4,500 messages sent by hand. This increased volume of work serves to show that considerable interest in the settlement of this State is being taken abroad; and more particularly since we have been occasionally advertising in such papers as the *Australasian* and the *Bulletin*. These

advertisements have always been followed by an increased correspondence; and after the first appearance of the advertisement in the *Australasian*, by the mail which left Victoria only two days later we had 50 inquiries from persons desirous of selecting land in Western Australia. I mention this to show the distinct advantage gained by an occasional advertisement of that kind, as compared with a full-page advertisement in such old-world papers as the *British Australasian*.

MR. FICOTT: What was the cost of the advertisement in the *Australasian*?

THE MINISTER: Speaking from memory, I may say about £26 for one insertion.

MR. FICOTT: What did the *British Australasian* advertisement cost?

THE MINISTER: I cannot tell the hon. member off-hand; but if he desires the information I shall be pleased to get it for him. I had the advertisement reproduced in pamphlet form; and its cost, including the pamphlets, is certainly not £100. Members will recollect that last year a promise was made by the Colonial Treasurer, who was in charge of these Estimates, that some of the divisions of the Lands Office would be amalgamated. Those amalgamations have been effected; and although the Royal Commission recommend that we should revert to the old system, we are perfectly satisfied that a distinct advantage has been gained by amalgamating. On referring to the vote for contingencies, members will perceive that most of the works coming under that heading may be classed as pioneer works. The Department of Agriculture, which may be termed the guide, philosopher, and friend of the agriculturists of this State, has done great service, for much of which it merits considerable praise. Mr. Crawford is temporarily filling the position of acting Director of Agriculture; and I can but say that I believe his selection was the best we could have made from within the State civil service. As members know, we are inviting applications both here and abroad from persons capable of filling the position, and the various applicants will then be dealt with on their merits. There is an increased expenditure of £556 5s. in salaries; that is practically made up from the fact that in the past the manager of

the Agricultural Bank was Director of Agriculture, for which he only received £200. We have had to increase that item considerably, and there is an increase to Mr. Berthold, who is the wheat expert at Hamel. This officer was given the option of a position in South Africa at a salary of £450 per annum; with us he was drawing £150 a year. Ultimately it was determined, in preference to losing his services, to offer him £250 per annum, which was £200 per annum less than the proposal submitted to him by the Government of the Transvaal. The department were gratified to find that Mr. Berthold determined to throw in his lot with Western Australia, and remain here in the position which he previously occupied. There is one matter which has been engaging the attention of members, the markets, but it is *sub judice*, and I cannot make any announcement concerning it except that we are awaiting anxiously the judgment which his Honour Mr. Justice McMillan may reasonably be expected to deliver shortly. Members are aware of the fact that we are most anxious to get possession of the markets. It was my desire, if possible, to reduce the rentals to the various stall-holders, and I had hoped, where stall-holders sold nothing but Western Australian produce, to give them a considerable reduction in rent. I go on these lines: these markets were built with the public funds of Western Australia for the purpose of allowing the producers and the consumers in the city to come into closer touch with one another, and unless we have an opportunity of allowing the stall-holders to occupy these stalls at reasonable rates we cannot hope to achieve the end we have in view. The judgment when it is delivered may be against the Government; it may be we will have to give a seven-years lease. At the same time whatever the judgment is it is always open to appeal to the Full Court or subsequently to the High Court. The expenditure in connection with the refrigerating works has been increased by £332 10s. A new ice tank has been erected in connection with the works, and with slight additions the refrigerating chambers will be of greater benefit to the people using them, more particularly the small tradesmen dealing in perishables and people receiving perishables from

the country who do not get a market on the day they receive them. After the additions have been made, with the sales of ice and the additional freezing power we shall be able to not only pay the interest and sinking fund but if necessary show a profit; however, there is no particular desire in that direction. In connection with contingencies under the Agricultural Department the experimental plots and farms are provided with an increase of £2,500. As members know these farms were established by a vote from loan. It is intended now that the running and working expenses shall appear on the Estimates and be charged to revenue. We have 86 agricultural societies in the State at present, and the Director of Agriculture tells me that he considers these 86 agricultural and horticultural societies are distributing roughly about £3,250 per annum in prizes. Members will be interested to learn that Mr. Compiere, the entomologist of the Agricultural Department, returned from India to-day, and he reports that there are considerably over 100 species of the fruit fly prevalent in India at the present time, but that no harm comes from the fruit fly there because all are kept in check by their natural enemies. Strangely, although there are so many species of the fruit fly in India people do not look upon them as pests from the manner in which they are held in check. Mr. Compiere tells me that the West Australian fruit fly is not a native of India, but has been distinguished and determined by a South American professor, I forget his name for the moment, who has expressed the opinion that this fruit fly comes from the east coast of South America. Commenting on that fly and its ravages, Mr. Compiere states that in South America it is not a pest at all. If we have discovered the home of that particular fly and it is no pest there, the entomologist draws the inference that its natural enemies must be there also. I may say for the information of members that although Mr. Compiere has been on two trips for this department in connection with the fruit fly and other parasites, the cost to the department has been practically small in comparison to the work done and the countries he has travelled over. On his previous trip he went to the Eastern States, to China, America, and Europe,

and I believe made a very extensive examination along the coast of the Mediterranean; that trip cost £300. Since then Mr. Compere has made a trip through India, and as I said before returned to-day; the total cost of that trip being £80. We appointed, as members know, two experts, a bee expert and a poultry expert, and up to the present they have done much good work.

MR. JACOBY: Do you intend to go on with the inquiries about the fruit fly; do you still intend to try and obtain the parasite?

THE MINISTER: We by no means intend to relinquish the work. Members will recollect my having announced in the House that the Director of Agriculture at Washington was willing to aid in the expenditure necessary. I do not think we shall abate our efforts in the slightest; at the same time I believe the horticulturists in the Eastern States will interest themselves in the matter. The Eastern States in the past refused to bear their share with this Government as to the cost, but since then they are taking up the question and probably it will lead to some overtures being made. Bee and poultry experts have been appointed, and until members really go into the question of bees they do not know what a valuable adjunct to the ordinary farmer bees are. I may take the opportunity of saying that up to now, while the shows are on, a good deal of work has been done by the gentlemen holding these positions; and whilst we recognise the necessity of extending their operations, still I may clearly and distinctly state that a continuance in the positions they occupy has to be considered in conjunction with the value of the work they do. When the shows are over we shall be able to look into the question and see if we get the value of the money expended. I do not want members to run away with the idea that because these experts have been appointed to the positions that they are there for ever, whether they are doing good work or not. Mr. Despeissis is away at the present time making inquiries into viticulture. His recent handbook has been very favourably received and commented on by persons competent to express an opinion. I am not a horticulturist, and when these matters are placed before me by the

expert officers of the department, I can only go into them and deal with them as one's common sense leads one. In reference to the Agricultural Bank, I have a return which shows the number of applications received during February and October, 1903, and the amounts applied for each month. We received 44 applications in February and 66 in October; that shows an increase. The amount applied for in February was £5,000 and in October £11,500. I have also a statement showing the applications received for the year 1901-2. That shows there were 292 applications received for that year and the total amount applied for was £23,225. For this year, to show how the business of the bank has increased, we have had 537 applications totalling £87,425; so that members will see there was a big increase compared with the £23,225 for the year previous. From March 1st to October 30th we received 632 applications, which was another big increase for the seven months, more than twice the number applying during the whole of the year 1901-2. The total amount applied for in the seven months was £114,700. I do not know whether members are interested, but they ought to know the amount advanced during each month by this bank. In January there was £603; February, £760; March, £1,348; April, £2,296; May, £3,618; June, £3,799; July, £7,725; August, £5,689; September, £6,021; October, £6,347; or a total for the whole period of £38,383. The bank has made a profit of £616 16s. 10d. for the year ending on the 30th June last, which makes a total brought up to date of £990 10s. 3d. The total loans approved to date amount to £241,800, and cancellations to £14,000, leaving £227,212. There is one matter which is apparently of absorbing interest to members. I refer to the question of the rabbit-proof fence, and for members' information I have been working pretty constantly during the past six or eight weeks with a view of supplying members with as much information as possible. Starting with the railway and going north, the first 25 miles of fencing have been finished and paid for. From that point north for the next 125 miles a contract is in the hands of Mr. Dwyer at the present time. From that point farther north for a distance of

100 miles there is another contract in progress, also being carried out by Mr. Dwyer. Coming back to the railway and going south, the first 25 miles of fencing south of the railway have been finished. From that point there is a contract in progress of 145 miles, and this work is being carried out by Mr. Cocking, the total cost being £9,142 10s. Mr. Cocking has received on account of that contract £5,250 15s., whilst the balance in hand is £3,891 15s. This contract, I regret to say, is an unsatisfactory one. I have the reports dealing with it, and I do not know if it would be wise for me to worry members by reading the reports in detail now. I was thinking perhaps members would prefer, when we come to the Rabbit Department, to take the whole of these reports asked for, and they can be read at that particular time and dealt with. In connection with that contract the wire netting is supposed to be six inches underground, the trench properly made, and the earth returned and rammed. As a matter of fact it is reported that the wire netting is in places two inches underground, and the workmanship has been badly carried out. The fencing posts, for example, are wooden ones, and are 300 feet apart, whereas iron standards were to have been erected. Instead of these posts being put into the ground in accordance with the specifications, they have been cut off; and members can understand that when these standards are not put in at a proper distance, but are 300 feet apart, and they are wooden posts, the work cannot be satisfactory. I am speaking more particularly with regard to this contract. What I purpose doing is to take from the control of the Rabbit Department this work and place it under the Minister for Works, or to ask him to give me a thoroughly reliable engineer whom I can trust with this work, and on whose certificates I will pay; but unless the certificate is forthcoming—

MR. MORAN: You do not want an engineer for a rabbit fence.

THE MINISTER: That is just the point. Other people anticipated that in the past, but had we had an engineer with a reputation at stake and with continuity in the service, I venture to say the contract would not have been in the condition it is in to-day.

MR. PIGOTT: Why did you not appoint a man?

THE MINISTER: I want to say that the Lands Department is a pretty big one, and I think a certain amount of credit is due for my having reached the stage I have in time to save the country from having probably passed for payment a fence which is certainly not up to the specification by a very long way. I have done the best I could.

MR. JACOBY: What you want is an honest man; not an engineer.

THE MINISTER: An honest man is so like a dishonest one that I am afraid even the member for the Swan would have a difficulty in distinguishing him on some occasions.

MR. JACOBY: You have to look for him to find him out.

THE MINISTER: I am convinced that had we had one of our engineers with continuity of service, the blunders which have been made would not have happened. However, we cannot help that. I will not express an opinion on the other fencing contracts, because I have nothing to guide me in regard to them.

MR. PIGOTT: You do not know what they are like?

THE MINISTER: I mean I have no independent testimony bearing on the contracts other than the report of the Rabbit Department, which says they are reasonably satisfactory. I have given 25 miles south of the railway finished, 145 miles south of that in progress and unsatisfactory, 25 miles south of that finished and paid for by Walsh and Ginnetty, or rather the work was done; and the work 30 miles south to Starvation Boat Harbour has been done and paid for. That section of the fence has been causing some considerable annoyance, because of the difficulty of building a fence there that will stand the ocean and other natural disabilities and features of the country. I have just completed arrangements for the advance of wire netting to settlers in the locality of rabbit-infested districts, in order that they may get their boundaries fenced; and although for the moment I have not arrangements made, I hope that a little later on we shall be able to help those people with subdivision. Having some little knowledge of rabbits and their

habits in the Eastern States, I myself believe that the boundary fence will be of very small assistance. The fence may turn the rabbits back, but it remains to be seen whether under pressure they will not get over the fence.

MR. PIGOTT: The fence ought to be properly constructed.

THE MINISTER: One will find rabbits hanging by a claw in a tree at a height of seven or eight feet, where they have gone after leaves. If one puts a rabbit into a yard which is fenced with three-foot netting, I venture to say—and I am not speaking without experience—that such rabbit will, if you press him, go up the wire and over it; and this is recognised even by the department, because where there are trap yards they have a covering over the fence. A rabbit will readily go up wires. It remains to be seen whether under pressure they will not go up the wire on the boundary fence. I believe a fence has a tendency to turn the rabbits along it, but how far north they can go remains to be seen.

MR. MORAN: A good fence is an absolute bar. That is the experience in the Eastern States.

THE MINISTER: There is a good deal of controversy on that point, but I am stating what I know to be absolutely true.

MR. MORAN: You never heard a rabbit expert in the Eastern States say the rabbits came in over a fence.

THE MINISTER: I do not say they would do so. I said it remained to be seen what they would do under pressure, and I have told you what they will do in a yard. We have 160 miles of netting on hand, and I have completed arrangements to supply netting to persons who desire it to fence their holdings.

MR. JACOBY: You are referring to people west of the fence.

THE MINISTER: I am prepared to consider applications from persons west of the fence. I believe there are people holding good land, and if we can meet them reasonably, I see no reason why we should allow those properties to be sacrificed to the invading horde of rabbits.

MR. JACOBY: The rabbits are on this side of the fence, are they?

THE MINISTER: Yes. When we come to the reports I will give the information I possess. I believe the

rabbits are this side of the fence, not in one but in several places; and although the testimony is disputed in a measure, the fact remains, and I believe that if any member chooses to go, he will find in every instance the reports verified.

MR. JACOBY: Have you a party out now?

THE MINISTER: No; not at present, except that we have some rabbiters at work this side of the fence searching for and endeavouring to exterminate any of those rabbits which are on this side, and of course there are the boundary riders on the fence, but other than those we have no parties out at the present time. Turning to the Stock Department, members will see that the salaries total £3,012 10s. For this year the actual expenditure for salaries in the Stock Department only totalled £2,030, and that shows a saving of £982. Members will see the item "Chief Inspector, £550," and that item is right. There is an item "Acting Chief Inspector," and that will lapse. I do not know whether I may not go into these details a little later on, when I purpose asking the Committee to alter the item "Quarantine dépôt for tick cattle, Hine's Hill, £2,000."

MR. MORAN: The House asked you to alter that.

THE MINISTER: I am not aware it did.

MR. MORAN: Yes; the House disagreed with that recommendation.

THE MINISTER: The question of dipping was what members directed attention to. Those cattle might still have been dipped and sent there for a probationary period. I purpose to alter that item to "Quarantine dépôts, dips, and veterinary experiments, £2,000." I think that will probably meet our requirements, and then we can leave the vote as it stands. We have recently dipped 50 head of cattle for Copley, and 50 for Connor and Doherty. Those cattle were very carefully examined after the second dipping with the view of ascertaining whether there were any ticks alive upon them. Out of the 100 bullocks there were two which appeared to the Chief Inspector of Stock to have live ticks upon them, and those bullocks were immediately taken into the slaughter-yard, killed, and carefully examined.

MR. MORAN: Did not those ticks have a chance of getting on after the second dipping?

THE MINISTER: I do not think they had. Experience and the experiments made seem to point to the fact that ticks will not attach themselves to a bullock within a certain period from the time it has been through the dip.

MR. MORAN: Tick will do so the moment the cattle arrive.

THE MINISTER: I am speaking on the advice and opinions of those people engaged in the trade, and the expert opinion of the chief veterinary surgeon, Mr. Weir. There were only two out of the lot, which goes to show that the dipping has been in this instance very successful. These cattle are now doing a three-weeks additional probationary quarantine in order that any risk such as the member for West Perth contemplates may be removed.

MR. JACOBY: What was the result of the examination after they were slaughtered?

THE MINISTER: After slaughter, it was found there were no live ticks on either of them. That goes to show fairly clearly that although 100 bullocks, two lots of 50 each, have been dipped, the result of the experiment has been highly satisfactory to those persons who advocate dipping.

MR. BURGESS: Were live ticks on them before they were dipped?

THE MINISTER: No. Mr. Weir was not sure whether he would find live ticks on them, for he had his suspicions about those two, and they were all carefully inspected. He had those two slaughtered with the view of determining the doubt which had arisen in his mind, and he found there were no ticks on either of them. I think the House should be in possession of this information, and for that reason I give it. On the 10th of this month 48 bullocks were dipped, and on the 11th, 250. I think it would be worth while for members to go down and have a look at bullocks in their present condition, and they would see then what the result of the dipping has been.

MR. PIGOTT: What is your opinion as to the effect of the quarantine?

THE MINISTER: I would not care to express an opinion, because I have not

got the statistics in detail regarding these cattle; but I understand that so far there has been no mortality, and that the cattle have come through that very well. I think nothing conveys a better idea to any observer than to go and see for himself, and for that reason if any member or members are interested in the problem I will be only too glad to arrange with the Stock Department to have the investigations made when they may be present to judge for themselves upon the precautions taken and upon the conclusions eventually arrived at. I have spoken for a considerable length of time—it is just on the adjournment—and in doing so I have only been actuated by one desire, that being to give to members all the information possible, and so far as all the branches of my department are concerned I have nothing that I wish to keep from them. My only desire is to give all the information possible in order that it may render the criticism more easy, because the fact has been established that no person had the information in previous years, and no person knew exactly how to get information dealing with technical and professional points, surveys and drafting, and things of that kind; but I have had returns prepared and put before me once a week showing exactly what has been done, and I am convinced that the department is now going to work in a direction which must meet with the approval of all members. In asking members to take into consideration the Estimates of the Lands Department, and the divisions in them, I do so with a feeling that there is not an item in these Estimates which I believe cannot be fully substantiated to the satisfaction of any reasonable man.

[Sitting suspended for 10 minutes. General discussion ensued on the lands administration and estimates.]

MR. PIGOTT: The Minister's speech was most welcome; for it contained much information which might not otherwise have been available. The most striking item referred to was the rabbit invasion. If this assumed in Western Australia the form it took in other States, we had serious trouble to face. Without being pessimistic, one might say the trouble would be more serious than the Government anticipated. He (Mr. Pigott) blamed the Government for their

inaction. That they did not take sufficient precautions was proved by the Minister's statement, which was the greatest possible condemnation of departmental administration which anyone could devise. For years past money had been lavishly voted for the erection of rabbit-proof fences. Some unavoidable delays arose; but when the material came to hand, the Government should, without loss of time, have had an effective fence erected. Yet the Minister calmly stated that at least 145 miles of the fence was useless.

THE MINISTER: It was not passed or paid for; and it was answering the purpose for the time being, though not in accordance with the specification.

MR. PIGOTT: That had nought to do with the question. The paltry saving of the money not paid was a drop in the ocean compared with the damage done to the country. Every possible effort should have been made to have the fence properly erected, as the people were relying on the Government to protect them from this horrible scourge, and the Ministry had been given a free hand to incur whatever expense they thought fit in erecting the fence. The Minister was not prepared to give a definite answer as to whether any other portion of that fence was useless. Was the whole of the fence in a bad state?

THE MINISTER said he thought not. He had stated the true position, and that the rest of the fence was in accordance with the specifications.

MR. PIGOTT: Surely no member of the Committee would be satisfied with that reply.

THE MINISTER: So far as the secretary of the department knew, the answer was correct.

MR. PIGOTT: It was the duty of the Government to know.

THE MINISTER: Decidedly; and if he had thorough confidence in Inspector White he (the Minister) would be prepared to stand by the reports. Immediately he lost confidence in Mr. White, Mr. White was dispensed with.

MR. PIGOTT: The faulty work had continued for many months. The fence was commenced two years ago; and to-day the Minister could not say whether any portion of it had been properly erected.

THE MINISTER: Members could deal with each fencing contract as we came to it in the items.

MR. PIGOTT: And when all the fences were erected and the rabbits were all over the country, we should know that the fences were inefficient. The Minister spoke of the trouble arising through departmental work being in arrears. In this the Minister had one's full sympathy; but the only way to clear off the arrears was by employing sufficient men to do the work. If the Government had come to the House and said that 50 or 100 extra men had been put on to clear off arrears, the House would have been satisfied. The work had to be done, and therefore it should be carried out properly. Reference had been made to the dipping of cattle at Fremantle; but it would be advisable to bring that matter forward when the items were being considered. It was a fact the Government had not been as careful as they should in regard to the administration of the Rabbit Department.

MR. MORAN: It was to be regretted that the Minister had not been able to supply the file in which the rabbit question was dealt when he (Mr. Moran) was Minister for Lands, and he hoped the file would be placed in his hands when the consideration of the Rabbit Department came on.

THE MINISTER: One was at a loss to know what the hon. member wanted. Considerable trouble had been taken to get the files asked for by the member, and if informed what file the member wanted, he would send a special messenger for it.

MR. MORAN: The file which he wished to lay before the Committee was the one in which he, as Minister for Lands, traversed the question and went carefully into it and prepared a long recommendation for Cabinet setting forth what it was thought the immediate cost of undertaking the work would be, and recommending the taking then and there, if within a week of dissolution, the money out of revenue or loan or any moneys in hand to proceed with the rabbit fence before any other work was undertaken in Western Australia. The most culpable delay had taken place by the Government in dealing with the matter. The present Minister had nothing

to do with it; but we could not distinguish between the different units of the Ministry. He had to lay a charge against the Government that they had criminally neglected this great and vital question. Speaking generally, he wished to review the history of the past; and summed up as far as the various Governments were concerned, it was that the rabbit question was never seriously considered in the House under Sir John Forrest. That gentleman never had considered it, and the languor of the agricultural members backed him up, and they allowed the interests of their constituents to be brought to the position which we knew to-day. There was this to be said for the agricultural members: the danger then was only foreshadowed. It was thought, and it was hoped and believed by everybody in Western Australia, that rabbits could not possibly cross the great Australian desert. He confessed that he did not think they could, and no one else believed it.

MR. BURGESS: It was known in Sir John Forrest's time they were coming.

MR. MORAN: Later on, "a cloud no bigger than a man's hand" began to show itself on the horizon; it was a rabbit or two. No proof of the rabbits was found, and old West Australians, born and bred in the State, said that if rabbits were found, they were relics of some turned loose in the old days, and instead of coming from east to west had travelled away from west to east. The various Governments never looked on this as an approaching catastrophe in the proportion that it now assumed. Nobody in this Parliament, or in power at the time, seemed to recognise with what celerity a rabbit invasion could be brought about, and if they did, it was thought there was an impassable barrier in the Australian desert. Activity was brought into the matter early enough to have been effective when he (Mr. Moran) was Minister for Lands for a brief period in this State. He regretted always to have to refer to his occupancy of an office of that kind, because one should be judged by works and not what one stated; but after being out of the department for two years it was necessary to speak on this matter so that the people of the country could know who were their true friends. This matter was brought before him and he made a

leading question of it. He did not wish to be egotistical, but he must say that it was his solemn belief that a great injury and loss to the farming industry of Western Australia were caused when he relinquished the position of Minister for Lands; he firmly believed that, whatever other shortcomings he might have. No Cabinet which he belonged to would have been left long without having thrown under their noses the importance of this work. Had the elections resulted differently for the Throssell Government, the rabbit-proof fence would have been constructed from shore to shore in the shortest possible time on record; the work would have been done, and done well.

THE MINISTER: The hon. member should recollect his Premier's references to the recommendations.

MR. MORAN: One was not defending the then Premier, who was an agricultural member. He (Mr. Moran) recommended that money ought to be made available from loan or from reappropriation or revenue, and the work should be carried out before any other work in Western Australia, even before the Coolgardie Water Scheme; and he believed his minute would bear him out in this. The great work was the construction of a rabbit-proof fence of the latest approved fashion, not a little bit of a patch in the desert that rabbits could not find if they wanted to; not such a work as that undertaken by the Leake Government of 10 miles north and 10 miles south. He (Mr. Moran) calculated that the work to be efficiently made should start from the southern ocean and run to the Eastern Goldfields railway line and sufficient to the north of that for the time being to block all possible chance of the rabbits, and continued to the northern shore. Afterwards a fence could have been run across from the Ninety Mile Beach to shut in the whole of the Kimberleys, and around the South Australian border if need be. He strongly recommended as a second line of defence that a rabbit-proof fence should be constructed from Albany along the Great Southern railway line, because that fence could be watched every hour of the day. He also recommended that the country should be blocked off into sections similar to Queensland. A fence should be run from Booracoppin down to

meet the other fence north, also that a fence should be taken along the Midland railway line to Geraldton and on to the Cue goldfields to tap the eastern fence there; that would be another block. He recommended that the country should be blocked into divisions and rabbit boards appointed. That would be the first line of defence. No expense was too great, and he recommended, he thought, that the upkeep would be £7,000 a year. He thought it would not be unfair to put some small tax on the landholders of Western Australia, a stock tax per head or a land tax if necessary. He looked on this as a national work. What was the use of all the magnitude of figures which had been laid before the Committee to-day by the Minister, if the rabbits were to destroy settlement? Those who knew what the rabbits meant could tell the Committee. It meant ten times the expenditure in desultory work, fencing in this and that man's land. The bulk of the settlers taking up land to-day could not afford to fence with rabbit-proof fencing. He had outlined the recommendation which he had made, and he felt strongly on the question. The then Premier thought that we should mark time until after the elections, which were close at hand. He (Mr. Moran) would not mark time any more than he would mark time if he saw a burglar coming into his house. Nothing would have interfered, if he had been Premier of the State, with the starting of the work and committing the country to the expenditure of it. No rules or regulations could be laid down. The Government should move while they could, and not wait for formalities. Very little delay took place. Mr. Throssell went out of office and he (Mr. Moran) lost his seat, he regretted to say, but it was for nothing in connection with the administration of the Lands Department; he lost his seat through the old private trouble which had dogged him for years. The Leake Government came into office and had been there for three years, and on their shoulders rested nine-tenths of the blame in connection with the rabbit-proof fencing. If the Forrest Government were careless when danger was approaching in the distance, the Leake Government were careless and incompetent when danger was nigh. The Minister had taken credit for

discovering that the fence was badly built; but there was precious little benefit. No Government could have been more culpable than the Leake Government, which followed the Throssell Government. There was blame resting on the Throssell Administration; but with a new Premier and the elections approaching, the question of commencing so large a work this month or next month would not appear a pressing matter. The rabbit wave was now fast approaching, and the value of agricultural and especially pastoral land must depreciate in direct ratio to the spread of rabbits. No greater pest ever struck Australia or New Zealand than the rabbits; mitigated in some places by the export of dead rabbits or rabbit skins. The magnificent industry which once covered the land round Lake Wakatipu (New Zealand) had gone, and now a few men were making a scanty living by exporting rabbit skins. While pleased to hear the Minister's remarks about the administration of the Lands Department, and the numerous figures he quoted, yet these details did not convey much information to members. The Minister was not lacking in energy, but one could not assert the same of his experience, for he was a very modern convert to views he had recently expressed about the importance of agriculture in Western Australia. For a time he traversed parts of this State only to proclaim it useless as an agricultural country; still it was something now to find he had awakened from that sleep.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Could the hon. member quote extracts.

MR. MORAN: Every member present would know that what he was saying was the truth, without quoting extracts. Only a few months ago, the hon. member, now Minister for Lands, was loud in his advocacy for putting on a line of steamers to New Zealand, because he said the farmers in this country could not grow produce sufficient for the requirements of the population. The hon. gentleman, instead of being an ardent free-trader, had now become a rabid protectionist.

MR. JACOBY: It would be a good thing if he had.

MR. MORAN: The hon. gentleman now not only advocated the favouring of local producers, but he would go too far

in that direction and do a great injustice, for he proposed that the Government should grant free stalls in the Perth markets for the sale of local produce, but any produce imported from Hobart or other outside places, if sold in the Perth markets, must be sold at stalls that paid a rent.

MR. BURGESS : The hon. member would not give the local agriculturists any advantage.

MR. MORAN : If the member for York would consider, he would find that he (Mr. Moran) was the agriculturists' best friend; but he did object to a proposal that, in addition to the present protection through the customs, the importer of produce from outside should be farther handicapped against the local producer. That was going a step too far.

THE MINISTER : What were these markets erected for?

MR. MORAN : If it was intended to discriminate in this way, better say nothing about it. The Minister's proposal only showed how circumstances altered cases; and the circumstance of the hon. member being now Minister for Lands had changed his views considerably.

MR. JACOBY : And a good job too.

MR. MORAN : It was a good job. We now got energy directed to the settlement of lands, instead of that energy being exerted against the settlement of our lands. As to salaries in the Lands Department, there appeared to have been no method in the increases given. Length of service was certainly not considered.

THE MINISTER : Would the hon. member state definite instances?

MR. MORAN : These could be stated when dealing with items. As to ability, in determining the increases one failed to find on whose recommendation the Minister acted. In one instance, according to the papers of the department the Ministerial predilection was the only guide. The head of the department recommended a man who was doing good work for an increase, but the Minister refused that increase three times over, and no reason given except that the position was said to be worth so-and-so.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS : Who was this man?

MR. MORAN : When items were dealt with, these instances could be pointed to. As to the argument about scarcity of money for doing the necessary work of the department, he asked members to consider which would have been the more statesmanlike, to put additional money and additional energy into the erection of a rabbit-proof fence, or sink £40,000 in the secret purchase of land at Rocky Bay for works which were not yet even talked about; this expenditure being made without the sanction of Parliament, and against the advice of the Auditor General. The return received last year from the investment of that £40,000 appeared to be £400; a magnificent investment! We were told the remedy was to hand over the rabbit-proof fence to be managed by the Minister for Works, after the rabbits were in. No doubt if that Minister had had the matter in hand from the first, he might have made a success of the fence; but to say now that there was any remedy in employing a civil engineer to put up a rabbit-proof fence after the rabbits were in was like employing the Colonial Architect to erect a fowl-house. If the Minister for Works had taken in hand the erection of the rabbit-proof fence, he might have seen that good men were put on the job, and might have tried even the much-maligned day labour for erecting the fence properly, instead of the system of private contract once more "rooking" this country and destroying the fence. If this transfer to the Minister of Works would have the effect of taking this work from an incompetent to a competent department, he would approve of that. As the matter stood, he would now recommend the Government to turn attention to the second line of defence. [**MEMBER :** Where was that?] The railway system of the country was practically the second line of defence. He did previously recommend leaving the railway line at Kellerberrin and skirting across to include Greenhills and York. Of course it was not practicable to save every man whose land was threatened, nor was it practicable to save every electorate. Do the best that was possible in the circumstances. Queensland was traversed in all directions by rabbit-proof fences; and any man who said a rabbit-proof fence was no good was an

unreliable authority. A fence properly erected was effective when well watched. The man who talked about rabbits climbing wire fences was talking fiction, for no authentic instance had been found in Australia. There were plenty of instances of rabbits getting over with the aid of an inclined plane against a fence, or a flood, or even the aid of a man's hand. Constant patrolling was the only effective safeguard. Washaways under the fence could not be prevented, nor could one prevent *débris* from piling up against the fence; hence the necessity for continuous supervision. In the goldfields prospecting areas there should be gates in the fence, heavy penalties being provided for failure to close them. The fence should have been taken through nearly uninhabited country. Rabbits travelled in a widely-extended body; and the few which might have got through the fence could have been easily dealt with. Better erect the fence along the Great Southern line. Make a triangle, by going from Kellerberrin to Katanning. Fence the line from Perth, if desired, but certainly from York or Northam to Burracoppin, to meet the other fence. The bulk of the rabbits were south of the Eastern Goldfields railway. He had heard of none to the north.

THE MINISTER: Some had been found to the north.

MR. MORAN: To fence the line as suggested would prevent the bulk of the rabbits from reaching the north; and if any were to the north, fence the Midland railway and the Murchison line, and carry the fence across to join the main trans-continental fence.

MR. BURGESS: That would leave out nearly all the good country.

MR. MORAN: It did not follow that because some good country was left out, all land which could now be made safe should be abandoned. Keep the rabbits where they were. If the fence could safely be erected farther east than the railway line, erect it. Anyhow, if rabbits were coming to Western Australia, the most effective precaution was the Queensland system—to divide the State into areas under rabbit boards, as he (Mr. Moran) recommended long ago. He would now introduce a subject which would astonish the Committee. He, when Minister for Lands, recommended

the appointment of a rabbit expert to be placed, if necessary, at the head of a small department consisting of the expert at the head office and the necessary men to do the work. At that time there happened to be working for the *West Australian* newspaper Mr. Keeley, a journalist from Queensland, who made himself known to him (Mr. Moran) as an enthusiast in the prevention of rabbit incursions. Mr. Keeley wrote some able articles on the subject, some of which appeared in the *West Australian*. On his (Mr. Moran's) recommendation, Mr. Keeley applied for the position of secretary to the Rabbit Department about to be formed, and would have accepted a salary of £300 a year. Mr. Keeley's application referred to the Hon. William Allen, a well known member of the Queensland Upper House and president of the Pastoralists' Federal Council of Australia; Mr. John Cameron of Brisbane, of the United Pastoral Association of Queensland; Mr. Charles Lumley Hill, whom we all knew as a pastoral and rabbit expert, a member of the Queensland Parliament; Mr. W. W. Hood, of Rockhampton, president of the Central Rabbit Board; and Mr. J. G. A. Peddle, executive officer of the Central Queensland Pastoral Association, *Courier* Buildings, Brisbane. He (Mr. Moran) sent the following wire to each gentleman, asking for particulars:—

I am appointing officer to deal with rabbit question. A. E. Keeley, at one time an official of the Pastoral Association of Queensland, has applied for the position. He appears to have a good grip of the rabbit question. He has mentioned your name as a reference. You will oblige me greatly by wiring your opinion of him to fill the position. Reply paid, on service.

Mr. Peddle replied:—

Know Keeley well. Sure he will carry out what he undertakes. He must have good grip of the rabbit question from connection our association Brisbane, and has bush experience. I recommend him.

Mr. Hood replied:—

Re your wire about Keeley. He is a good officer; man well posted up in pastoral and rabbit-board matters.

Mr. Ransome, assistant secretary of the United Pastoralists' Association, replied:—

Mr. Keeley was assistant secretary of this association for over four years, during which

time he gave satisfaction. While engaged here the Rabbit Acts of this State were introduced and passed, and this association took an active part in getting them passed through Parliament; so Mr. Keeley had a good opportunity of getting an insight into the rabbit question as it affected this State, and should be able to give your department valuable assistance on this question.

Mr. Lumley Hill wired :—

Can confidently recommend Keeley for any position to deal with rabbit pest. Hon. William Allen, late chairman of the Pastoral Association, and still member of the Central Rabbit Board, testified most strongly and warmly as to his energy, zeal and ability both as bushman and intelligent active secretary.

Mr. John Cameron wired :—

Yours re Keeley. He was for some time an official of the Pastoralists' Association, during which time he gave satisfaction, and obtained a good insight into all pastoral matters, including the working of the Rabbit Acts, and the rabbit question generally.

The Hon. William Allen wired :—

Your telegram received to-day. Regarding Mr. Keeley, I saw your telegram yesterday to Mr. Hill, and his reply, and confirm the same. I have a high opinion of Mr. Keeley's ability, intelligence, probity, and steadiness; and he was accountant and assistant secretary to the Pastoralists Association while I was president, and got good knowledge of the working of the Rabbit Act, and has also station experience.

He (Mr. Moran) recommended Cabinet to appoint Mr. Keeley, and the Throssell Cabinet approved the appointment. A letter was sent to Mr. Keeley informing him that his qualifications were strongly testified to by the wires from gentlemen to whom Mr. Keeley had referred, and that the then Premier was entirely satisfied with the recommendations, and was like him (Mr. Moran) of opinion that Mr. Keeley was eminently suited for this position, the salary of which would be £300 per annum temporarily, but would doubtless be increased when Parliamentary sanction to the appointment was obtained. That was minuted on to Cabinet at the salary mentioned. Then came the break in the Administration. The next note he saw on the file was: "Please submit the expenditure for the approval of the Colonial Secretary." It was approved by Mr. Illingworth (then Colonial Secretary). The next thing that happened was that the gentleman now holding the position in the Rabbit Department was appointed. Although Mr. Keeley had been appointed by himself (Mr. Moran),

he failed to know why the Leake Government cancelled the appointment or what reasons were given for so doing. The gentleman who was subsequently appointed did not have a single recommendation; at any rate there was no recommendation on the file. He had the jacket dealing with the appointment, and it contained in the first place a clipping of an interview which appeared in the *West Australian* with this gentleman. Mr. Wilson had evidently arrived from somewhere. And then there was a telegram to Mr. Wilson asking him to accept the position, and that it would be necessary for him to be here on the 7th August. The reply was received from Brisbane accepting the appointment, and stating that he would be here by a certain day and would wire from South Australia. Mr. Wilson was appointed. This was one of the first administrative acts of the Leake Government. He wished the Committee to compare the two files, showing the action taken by the two Ministers, and it would be found that this was the beginning of the trouble in connection with the rabbit question. He exonerated the Colonial Treasurer of that time, because he found the Treasurer approved of the recommendation made. There was no link to connect Mr. Wilson with the appointment whatever. He (Mr. Moran) had shown how an officer, who had been appointed on the highest references in Australia, was dealt with; and why? Was it political patronage? Was it spite or spleen against a departing Minister? It was a disgraceful episode in the political history of Western Australia. In the face of that matter, he asked the Committee could one absolve or hold the Leake Government blameless in connection with the rabbit question? That was the initial step taken by them, that piece of political favouritism, or perhaps nepotism. What were we to expect, with the revelations coming right along the line down to the present time, and resulting to-day in the Minister for Lands taking the drastic action which he had taken of rising in his wrath and "sacking" every man far and wide, without discriminating who was right and who was wrong. Perhaps the Minister was doing a big injustice to the man who had borne the heat and burden of the day. He (Mr. Moran) did

not think half the truth was known in connection with this matter yet. The Minister for Lands had taken a drastic action. Like most young and enthusiastic men, he had done this. He (Mr. Moran) was young and enthusiastic too when in that position, he brought to bear about the same amount of energy into that department; but he had a little more knowledge than the present Minister had. And why should he not bring more knowledge to that department? He had eight years of Parliamentary experience, and the hon. member had one year. He (Mr. Moran) was an enthusiast on behalf of the settlement of the country, and had been so for 12 years. He took a comprehensive interest in everything affecting agriculturists in Western Australia. He had written of the possibilities of the State, 12 years ago, officially to the Press of Queensland, and he had inspected all the well-known portions of this country. He (Mr. Moran) was not a convert when he took the position. He certainly would not have been placed there if he had been a neophyte. He was not blaming the Minister for Lands in the slightest, but he was telling that gentleman and warning him that perhaps the comprehensive action he had taken in connection with this question might land him in difficulties, and in his enthusiasm to wipe out disgrace he might be doing wrong where he least expected it.

THE MINISTER: No; he did not think so.

MR. MORAN: It was to be hoped not. Some of the actions which the Minister had taken lately in this connection were wisely taken. The action of sending a party out with a couple of ferrets in their pockets to prevent the rabbit invasion was absurd. Ferrets were good enough for sporting, but to send ferrets out there was ridiculous. If men were to locate rabbit burrows with ferrets, probably they might succeed in scattering the rabbits without finding them. It reminded one of the story of the old woman trying to stop the ocean with a broom. We wanted fences, not ferrets. We wanted to assist those who would assist themselves, with wire-netting. We wanted money from any vote to deal with this question. We did not want a Collie-Narrogin railway line where nobody was living. We wanted the money which

that line would cost to assist the present settlers, and if the Government were worthy of their position to-day in Western Australia and those behind them representing the farming industry were worthy of their position, they would see that those already on the land were served first. We did not want a Narrogin railway line at the present time, which was a political matter to gratify supporters in the South. Ostensibly it was started at the present time, introduced by the Minister for Lands, to open up country. There was plenty of agricultural country opened up in Western Australia which would serve for the next ten years. Some people thought that the only wise act in politics to-day was to cram a great population into Western Australia. He (Mr. Moran) did not think that it was the first duty of a Government to do that; he did not think it was the first duty of a Government to cram a lot of people into Western Australia just to raise the value of Perth property. The first duty of the Government was to look after the men who were here. The Government were going to have plenty of trouble in connection with the settlers in Western Australia. In the first blush of enthusiasm people were rushing on to the land, but they were not supporting themselves yet. We did not want agricultural railways; we wanted a line of fencing first. If the Government wished to do more for the farmer, the small farmer particularly, then do for him what had been done for the miner—get him some machinery or subsidise threshing machines: an intelligent Government would look to that. A farmer's crop would be of value to him to-day if he could get it threshed. The policy of the Government was wrong at the present time in not grappling with the necessities of the case. The Government were acting like Nero—fiddling while Rome was burning. The Minister should not have come down and recounted what had been done in finding out a bad fence, but have told members what the Government intended to do to stop the rabbit invasion. Public works were well to-day, they were equally well next year; a year was nothing. A railway from Collie to Narrogin was well perhaps, but it would be well in a few years time when the wood was cut out on the goldfields.

Our rabbit-proof fence was well to-day if it was built, while it would be useless to-morrow. Some works could not wait; others could. The party keeping the Government in power to-day were being led to their own doom in face of the wave of depression coming over their industry. He (Mr. Moran) as an old goldfields member was apparently the only one as a Minister in the State who had grappled with the rabbit question and tried to galvanise it into life; now he as a Perth member was trying to galvanise the agricultural members into a sense of their duty. Measures and not men should be the order of the day in this State at the present time. Any good, ordinary, intelligent Cabinet to-day could administer Western Australia if it was kept in place by a proper party. He was pointing out that the occasional cheap sneers of members on the Government side were unworthy when those members gave as their only reason for keeping an undesirable Government in power, that they could not really see another. The present Government were the only Government to administer Western Australia! That was too cheap and too tawdry. The duty of this country was plain. There was a magnificent public works service, and if we wanted to get a public work such as a rabbit fence carried out, then the Public Works Department should carry it out; if not, then appoint a thoroughly competent man from the other side and let him deal with it; or appoint rabbit boards, cut the country up into districts, and put a light tax on the lands of the country so as to compensate the State. He would point out to the city members that the rabbit invasion was their loss just the same as it was the loss of the man who grew potatoes. The city members could not refuse to lend valuable assistance in a work of this kind. We were the common bearers of a common debt, and if the pastoral or the agricultural industry were destroyed, the burden would fall the heavier on the mining industry. Any State should have various industries, the success of one being the success of the others, and the burden falling lighter on the whole. It was his duty to say that the present Government were the old, unrelenting enemy of the farmer, although now supported in this

House by farming members. We had an Agricultural Bank Act, the pride of Western Australia, which the men now in office did their best to destroy in its infancy. We had a Repurchase of Estates Act, initiated by the party on this side of the House as part of the policy of the old Government, though laughed at at the time by the party now in power. We had a Land Act second to none in the world, every line of it belonging to this side of the House and none to the men now in power. Not one line had been altered in that Act by the gentlemen now in office. For years members on this side of the House, while supporting the old Government, would not take the risk of introducing pests into our fruit. Who did that? The gentlemen whom the farmers were now supporting. A greater pest was coming—the rabbits. Who caused that? The gentlemen now in office. Party or no party, and especially when we were told there must be only two parties in this State and when it was sought to squeeze Labour into a corner, these facts should be borne in mind. Every letter of the Land Act belonged to the old party, the actively progressive party in the past. Every subdivision for settlement of the land belonged to them also. Our advances to settlers, our Agricultural Bank—nothing received more strenuous opposition from the gentlemen now in power. While representing a goldfields constituency, he was an ardent supporter of every one of those measures, and he would not now be told, without giving back word for word, that there must be only two parties in Western Australia. If there were to be only two parties, for goodness sake let us have the old party that did so well for 10 years, and not the new party which had bungled so badly for three years. The present Minister for Lands was the latest recruit of that party, and one would have thought better of him if he had remained in his position as an independent member with the ideas he then entertained. Being now Minister for Lands, one hoped he would turn his marvellous energy and his strong personality to force on his colleagues the necessity for dealing comprehensively with the rabbit invasion; and that he would not be found advocating in this House a railway line that

was not wanted at the present time, to carry coal to the goldfields where it was not yet required. Now we were to have a section of that railway built, and it would not pay for axle-grease. He hoped this House would rise from its torpor at this end of the session, and not go to the country in disintegrated atoms. The country would know, as members in this House knew, that he was not one to allow anything in his career or ambition to stand in the way of union. He had endeavoured to induce the gentleman who sat in front of him, the member for Northam (Hon. G. Throssell), to assume his natural position as leader of this side of the House; but the hon. member would not do it. He had tendered his loyalty to another ex-Cabinet Minister to form a common platform, by which they could give and take alike in order to bind their scattered forces together. The present leader of the Opposition, it must be admitted, had not the ripe experience which was necessary to lead a great party in the battle that was coming. No member would be more willing than the hon. member, one felt sure, in bringing about the formation of a second great party with a platform on which the people could settle. As these Lands Estimates were going through, there would be opportunity for criticising them in detail. Increases of salary in the department gave evidence of spasmodic action. He was surprised to hear the Minister make no mention of the dreadful disorganisation in the Stock Department, in allowing a pest to get scattered abroad among pigs throughout the State. When the question of swine fever was brought before this House, he was laughed at; but the laugh was no longer heard, for the outbreak of swine fever was found to be a serious matter. The action of the Minister in getting rid of the head of the Stock Department was radically wrong, and it did not look well to this day. When we found out the truth about the way he got rid of the chief rabbit inspector, perhaps that would look just as bad. These radical changes by a man who was a newly made convert to the interests of agriculture in this State were very theatrical effects; but they brought an aftermath of trouble. There was great trouble in the Stock Department through penalising a man who was doing

his duty fearlessly and without respect of persons—that was why he went out; and the method of inquiry into that question was not calculated to bring credit on Western Australia. The Minister was no fit person to take over the inquiry and conduct it himself, for he had not the knowledge or experience necessary for the purpose, and he certainly could not be without bias. He was in an invidious position, for if he defended his officer, the public would say that of course the Minister took over the inquiry into his own department so as to shield his officer. Then the Minister swung to the other extreme, and to prove how fair he was he sacrificed his officer for a little applause. That inquiry should never have been taken over by the Minister. Fancy a man sitting on his own case, for that was practically an inquiry into his own department, and he presided over the inquiry! That inquiry would not have created so bad an impression in the public mind if it had been conducted independently by a magistrate, for certainly the Minister was not a fit person to undertake it. History pointed to very few cases of a William Pitt developing in a few months of parliamentary experience into a Cabinet Minister, for very few men were born Ministers. It seemed meet and proper that a man should serve a number of years before attaining the position of a Cabinet Minister, and certainly before taking on himself such extraordinary powers as the Minister for Lands had done. The dismissal of the Chief Inspector of Rabbits had not saved the fence from being badly built.

MR. BURGESS: He was not dismissed yet.

MR. MORAN: There might not have been sufficient dismissal or there might have been too much. All he blamed the Minister for was the rashness with which he precipitated action in these matters without due consideration, and he was certainly blamable for that. Members had seen how, a few days ago, the Minister tried to burk inquiry into the question of swine fever, and did it in absolute ignorance that there was raging in this country a virulent disease. He (Mr. Moran) was accused on that occasion of exaggerating the facts. Perhaps he did exaggerate them, but it was better to exaggerate and have an inquiry, than to

be too circumspect and let the disease go ahead. Would the Minister be surprised now if a letter were read from a gentleman who wrote it to a certain party in this State, who declined to accept the information or use it, weeks before he (Mr. Moran) spoke in this House of the disease amongst pigs? And the Stock Department knew nothing of it all the time—why? Because the Minister had got rid of that watchful officer who did such service in the past in connection with scab in sheep. Any member of the Opposition who was unfit to criticise the Government in these circumstances had no right to sit in Parliament. In saying what he had said about the Minister for Lands, he might explain that there was no man in this House for whom he had as great a personal regard as he had for that Minister, for they were old friends; but notwithstanding that, probably the Minister would get keener criticism from him than from any other member. No harm could result from the fullest criticism and exposure in connection with the Rabbit Department, concerning which many members who had not yet spoken were well informed. Having had a brief experience as Minister for Lands, he (Mr. Moran) did not join in the general condemnation of the department. He found it undermanned, and the officers hard-working and loyal. He hoped that the fire of criticism would burn out of the present Minister a little of the dross which entered into his composition when a free-trader and anti-agriculturist, and would teach him to pause before taking precipitate action—to look before he leaped. It should impress on him the urgent necessity, not for settling land or advertising the country far and wide, but for directing his whole energy to combating the rabbit invasion. Once that was dealt with, he could continue his propaganda work with a view to advertising Western Australia as a desirable home for all who wished to settle on the land.

MR. HASSELL: The last speaker said no agricultural member had ever taken an interest in rabbits. On the 17th July, 1893, he (Mr. Hassell) asked in the House whether the Government intended to take steps to prevent the incursion of rabbits; and the then Commissioner of Crown Lands (Mr. Marmion)

replied that the Government had been in communication with the Government of South Australia, who had replied that their Surveyor General did not think that any rabbits existed near their western border; that their Eucla stationmaster advised that travellers reported rabbits at Bight and telegraph line 50 miles farther west, but that the credibility of these reports was doubtful; that the Nullabor station manager and employees denied the existence of rabbits; and that the clerk of the Government bores, a three years' resident on the Nullabor Plains, had neither seen nor heard anything of rabbits. On the 3rd August, 1893, he (Mr. Hassell) moved the adjournment of the House to call attention to the reported approach of rabbits from South Australia towards the border at Eucla. Shortly before this he had received a letter from a trustworthy and reliable settler, Mr. F. W. Beere, to the effect that rabbits were at Eucla, followed by a telegram that Mr. Beere had received reliable information that rabbits were within 36 miles of the boundary. He (Mr. Hassell) then urged the Government to take some steps to protect the colony. The motion was supported by Mr. Canning; and in reply Sir John Forrest said he would have preferred more definite and reliable reports. Again, on the 7th August, 1894, he (Mr. Hassell) asked whether the Government had received any recent information as to rabbits at Eucla; and Mr. Marmion replied that on the 4th April the stationmaster at Eucla reported that he had been shown what was considered to be the dung of rabbits, found about seven miles from Eucla; and that on the 11th May this officer reported that he had natives hunting along the coast and within a 10-mile radius of the station, but could not find any traces of the deposits reported. Tramps, horsemen, and camel parties reported no traces of rabbits between Bight and Eucla. He (Mr. Hassell) got tired of continually drawing attention to what he knew to be a fact. The officials of the telegraph department at Eucla actually accused Mr. Beere of telling untruths with a view to getting a job to put up a fence. To give that job to Mr. Beere would have been a good job for the Government. The member for West Perth was mistaken in thinking that he was the only

member who had taken the trouble to bring the rabbit incursion under notice years ago. The steps taken by the Government to carry out the wishes of the House as to the rabbit-proof fence were very inefficient. Months ago a man who had been employed on the fence and probably dismissed told him (Mr. Hassell) that a lot of facts which people could hardly dream of would come out concerning the fence. On that statement little reliance could be placed; but evidently the man knew what he was talking of. The Government had practically taken no steps whatever to insure the erection of an efficient fence.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: If the almost startling utterances of the member for West Perth had emanated from any other member, one might have been induced to treat them seriously; but though the hon. member charged him with rashness, there was no rasher man in the Assembly than the member for West Perth. Mr. Wilson was appointed before he (the Minister) took office. The hon. member opened his speech by an attack on him (the Minister) for the non-production of certain files. The files would have been on the table had the hon. member rung up and asked for them. The member for Dundas (Mr. Thomas) wanted a file bearing on the retirement of Mr. Thomson, and he (the Minister) brought it to the House; the member for West Kimberley (Mr. Pigott) was supplied with every file he asked for; and as to the files asked for by the member for West Perth, he (the Minister) visited the department during the quarter-hour adjournment in order to get them. He had no wish to keep information from the Committee; and full information would be given before the debate was finished. As to the various subdepartments, he had not anticipated that members would expect fuller details than were given in his opening speech to-night. To devote an hour, as he had done, to elaborating his own estimates was most unusual. Take the charge of the hon. member (Mr. Moran) about the Stock Department, the charge of rashness and of burking inquiry. He (the Minister) was asked to hold an inquiry, and he held it. Was the hon. member annoyed because as a result of that exhaustive inquiry he (the Minister) was to-day in

possession of information concerning the internal working of that department which neither the hon. member nor any other member possessed? The member for the Swan (Mr. Jacoby) spoke recently of a Minister applying great principles. What Minister could apply great principles if he did not know the details? Knowledge of details was a condition precedent to reorganisation. The member for Plantagenet (Mr. Hassell) told us what he had heard as to the rabbit fence. Probably every member had heard something. He (the Minister) had heard something, and immediately arranged for an independent investigation, which lasted one month. He had before him the report of the inquiry; and when dealing with the Rabbit Department all the papers would be laid before the Committee, so that every member might express his own opinion on the action taken. He would not believe the statement that the advance of the rabbits spelt ruin either to the pastoralist or the selector in this State. Soon after entering the House he pointed out that if as was reported one or more rabbits had come through the fence, then with all due respect to Mr. White, whom he neither knew nor cared for, he (the Minister) was at a loss to understand how any man could confidently state in an annual report that in an area of 150 miles there was only one rabbit. It was like saying there was one needle in a haystack. How did he know there were not a dozen? There might have been a dozen colonies of rabbits for aught Mr. White knew. New South Wales had had a rabbit pest for many years; but the people there did not go into fits when they heard that rabbits were within 150 or 200 miles of an agricultural district. They waited the approach of the rabbits, and at the proper time appointed a rabbit board, which set to work to give the people the necessary facilities for rabbit destruction and fencing in the subdivision. There appeared no reason for the terrorising now being attempted. It was said that people were surrendering their country. Only yesterday Mr. W. E. Dempster, manager for Messrs. Dempster Bros., of Esperance, applied to him (the Minister) for wire netting; and to-day he was in a position to deal

with the application. Surely there was some degree of expedition about that. It remained then to fill out the necessary forms and comply with the regulations. He (the Minister) had a plan and a statement showing where the rabbits were supposed to be. Mr. Wilson, the secretary to the department, seemed to be sceptical as to the number of rabbits in this State. He (the Minister) knew the statement which he had was true, and was prepared to stake his existence on the truth as to what was embodied in the statement, and when read members would agree that he was justified in coming to the conclusions arrived at. There was another matter which was agitating members; the retirement of Inspector White. He had the file and would read it if necessary. He knew how it was that Mr. White did not appear on the Estimates. He had nothing to do with it himself, it was no work of his, and he sent for the manager of the Agricultural Bank to confer with him on the matter. It was Mr. White's intention to retire at the end of the year; that was assumed to be true. He (the Minister) did not prepare the draft Estimates, and Mr. White's name was left off because that officer intended to retire. Mr. White joined the department at £200 a year, which salary was afterwards increased to £350 a year, which was good pay for a man holding the position which Mr. White did. It was the same salary that inspectors of conditional purchases received, and those officers also provided their own kit. For some time past there had been rumours that Mr. White intended to resign, and some members of the House who were members of the advisory board would know that was correct. In the light of later evidence it appeared that Mr. White was only holding out these threats to have his salary or allowances increased. He (the Minister) heard nothing of this until Mr. White resigned and certain developments took place. For the rabbit-proof fence, for 250 miles north of the railway contracts were let and were being carried out, except the 25 miles which had been finished and paid for. Surveyor Canning was instructed by the department to go ahead and survey the line to the north. This officer was supplied with camels, and many were lost owing to the inhospitable nature of the country and the

poison which existed in the territory which had to be passed through. Surveyor Canning had an arduous task; he had to walk on one stage over 30 or 40 miles, and arriving there he found that his camel was dead. The next report we received was that Mr. Canning was walking 40 miles through the wilderness. It was only this afternoon that he (the Minister) had word that Surveyor Canning had arrived perfectly safe. He mentioned this to show members the nature of the country which had to be gone through from the 25 miles. Surveyor Canning was sent there to choose the line of fence to protect the pastoral country, to look out for timber suitable for fencing, and also for a water supply. While he (the Minister) happened to be at Northam on the 30th of the month he learnt that Inspector White was at Burracoppin with Inspector Geier, intending to go to a point 250 miles away and explore the country onwards. Inspector White was going to do with horses what Surveyor Canning had been paid to do with camels. He (the Minister) knew nothing about this, as these matters were done by divisional heads. Inspector White received a telegram from him to come to Perth; but before the inspector reached Perth he heard that he (the Minister) was in possession of certain information. Inspector White, thinking to forestall the Minister, tendered his resignation. If it was the wish of members he would read the file, so that members would know the history of the whole case; but we did not want to have to repeat the whole of this discussion when we arrived at a consideration of the Rabbit Department estimates. The first point of interest to members was the information which he (the Minister) had at his disposal, and which warranted his wiring to Inspector White asking that officer to return to Perth. Inspector White knew that he (the Minister) was in possession of certain information. There were two reports which he purposed reading for the information of members, and after reading the reports members would know that he (the Minister) was in possession of certain truths which evidently disconcerted Mr. White, who by his first minute written on June 29th, 1903, was most anxious to remain

in the department, and was quite surprised at not being left on the Estimates. Inspector White tendered his resignation on his arrival in Perth in these words:—

I beg to tender my resignation, and ask that it be promptly accepted. My reasons for resigning are—firstly, I consider I have been most unfairly and unjustly treated for the last three years in my travelling and subsistence expenses not being paid, and it will be necessary for me to take action to recover same.

The view of the department was that the increase of £150, making £350 a year, was given to cover the travelling expenses, being similar to the amount given to inspectors for conditional purchases. The next complaint was:—

I consider the methods being adopted by the department in dealing with the rabbit invasion are antiquated, unpractical, unworkable, and expensive, with very little prospect of beneficial results being obtained, and I decidedly decline to be a party to them any longer.

That was Mr. White's explanation, and it was headed "Burracoppin," and dated November, 3, 1903. This was handed, he believed, by Inspector White to the acting Director of Agriculture, Mr. Crawford, who wrote:—

On the 3rd inst. Mr. White handed me his resignation, and as I knew you wanted to see him I rang you up on the telephone and advised you that Mr. White was then in my office. According to your verbal instructions then given I asked Mr. White to make out a brief report as to the condition of the rabbits on the western side of the fence at the present time, and to meet you, in my company, the following morning at nine o'clock. Mr. White stated that he had already written out one report some time ago, and he refused to give any further information on the subject. This morning (the 5th) I saw Mr. White and he asked me what his position was as regards the department. I told him that so far as I knew he had severed his connection with the department by his refusal to carry out the instructions of the Minister. Mr. White then said that he wished to know clearly and definitely what his position was, as he wished to make public the bad condition the rabbit fence was in.

This man was receiving £350 a year as chief inspector to do nothing but ride up and down the fence—

I said to him that if the fence was in a bad condition surely he, as chief inspector, was responsible for it, but he immediately disclaimed any responsibility in the matter, saying that he had been compelled to take men as sub-inspectors who knew nothing whatever about the work, but who had been forced on him by political influence, citing as

a case in point the Premier's brother, and it was his intention, and also his duty, to let the public know the disgraceful state the fence was in. He intends having several public meetings, and explaining the position to the public generally. He is very anxious to know his exact position, and if his resignation is accepted, as he wants to feel himself free to take the steps indicated. He also intends instituting proceedings against the Government for the recovery of sustenance allowances. That letter he (the Minister) replied to as follows:—

By special messenger, instructions have been issued for the immediate dismissal of Chief Inspector White and other supervisors along the line of fence responsible for the shortcomings of the various contractors.

He (the Minister) had only his independent report before him, and the confirmation of the report was supplied by Inspector White himself. The independent report said:—

You will please note his refusal to supply me with a report as to his recent doings, and also his refusal to see me in company with the Director of Agriculture. I understand that all outdoor work has been under the supervision of Inspector White. After independent inquiries have been made, and I am possessed with the information that the fence is not up to specification and is altogether discreditable—

This reference was to Cocking's contract—

he is seized with a burning desire to have this fact made known, apparently regardless of the fact that he is one of those regarded by the department as being primarily responsible. A statement is made regarding the appointment of Mr. James. Please advise me (1) on whose recommendation Mr. James was appointed to the position in the Rabbit Department

That file he also wished to place before the Committee. The letter went on to say:—

(2) If he is in any way responsible for the condition of the fence to-day, please order his immediate dismissal. Inspector White from his communication of the 2nd inst. is apparently anxious to resign before his dismissal was effected, and submits two reasons for so doing—(a.) The first is of course untenable and absurd. (b.) The second he alone is entirely responsible for, inasmuch that the methods followed by either Inspector White or his staff have been regulated, so far as I know, by Inspector White himself.

No person he believed was ever interfered with.

MR. WALLACE: Were any inspectors on the fence now? Was the work proceeding?

THE MINISTER: Yes; the work was proceeding in the case of Dwyer's contract north, but in regard to the fence south Mr. Wilson had ordered certain alterations to be made. He (the Minister) could not see how alterations could be made to a fence where the wire netting was only two inches in the ground when it ought to be 6 inches, and where the iron standards were cut off. The Government did not intend to pay until the work was carried out as stipulated.

MR. PIGOTT: What was being done in the meantime?

THE MINISTER: In the meantime the fence was acting as an efficient barrier, but the rabbits could burrow underneath the two inches. The Government stipulated to pay a certain price for a certain fence, and should not pay unless the work was carried out as stipulated.

MR. ATKINS: Make the contractor do his work.

THE MINISTER: That was the stand which was being taken. Mr. Wilson said:—

In reply to the query in the Hon. the Minister's minute on the preceding page, as to upon whose recommendation Mr. Fred James was appointed to a position in the Rabbit Department, I beg to say that he was first casually mentioned to me by the late Minister, Mr. Sommers, as an applicant for a position. Later on Dr. Jameson (then Minister for Lands) instructed me to give him a place at the first opportunity. He was also recommended by Mr. Surveyor Canning under whom he had been working.—H. M. WILSON, Secretary Rabbit Department.

P.S.—I have written Mr. James informing him, as directed, that his services are dispensed with.—H.M.W.

The next paper on the file was an account headed "The Rabbit Invasion," which had appeared in the newspapers, therefore it was not necessary to read that. Then he (the Minister) had submitted the following questions to the Director of Agriculture for reply:—

Will you please have the following questions answered by Mr. Wilson:—1, When I recalled Inspector White to Perth, was he not under instructions to proceed north to report on timber, water, etc.? 2, On whose certificates have the progress payments been made on fence contracts?

The answer to the first one was "yes." That thoroughly confirmed what he had already stated, that Inspector White was going north to do that which he had no possibility of doing, and for which the

department had already provided a man with the necessary outfit.

MEMBER: Who ordered him to go?

THE MINISTER: Wilson ordered him. Would any hon. member, if he had the statements confirmed by Inspector White, have taken any other action than that which he (the Minister) took?

MR. ATKINS: It was well the Minister had the courage to do it.

THE MINISTER: It was the easiest thing to accuse a person in a responsible position of rashness, and of doing that which was unfair or unjust. He wanted Mr. Wilson to give him certain information concerning these contracts. The feeling of members appeared to be now that probably he might have sacked another man also. Mr. Wilson answered the second question, that the progress payments were made on the certificates of Inspector White, whenever possible.

MR. ATKINS: What relative positions did White and Wilson hold?

THE MINISTER: Mr. Wilson was engaged as secretary to the Rabbit Department, and Mr. White as chief inspector under him. Mr. Wilson had never, so far as he knew, been on a rabbit fence until on this occasion. As to looking into the work, he (the Minister) frankly confessed that he looked into as much as he honestly could. Mr. Wilson came from Queensland at the invitation of the late Minister (Mr. Sommers), and was supposed to have had large experience in rabbit country and in regard to rabbit fences, as stated by the acting Director of Agriculture.

MR. TAYLOR: Probably he got that from Mr. Wilson?

THE MINISTER: In all probability yes. The file showed the payments made on Cocking's contract. Sub-inspector James was under the control of Inspector White. When this information reached him (the Minister), he wrote the following minute, and the file was ready to be returned to the acting Director of Agriculture when he learned that the Lands estimates were likely to come on to-day in Parliament. The minute to the Director of Agriculture, dated 12th November, was as follows:—

I note on folio 5 a clear explanation of how Mr. Inspector White was left off the draft Estimates as compiled by the department. The late Director of Agriculture frequently

assured me of Mr. White's determination to sever his connection with the department at the end of the current year. I now interpret the resignation proposals as having been given as a means to induce the Government to increase the salary and allowances paid. Whilst at Northam I learned that Inspector White was at Burracoppin, about to proceed northward to inspect the country along north of a point 250 miles north of the railway line. Knowing that Surveyor Canning has been for some considerable time past engaged on this work, I failed to see the necessity of Inspector White and an assistant being despatched with horses to do that which Mr. Canning has found almost impossible with the aid of camels. Having meanwhile learned of the unsatisfactory condition of the fence, and the prevalence of rabbits to the westward of the fence, I wired from Northam requesting Inspector White to return to Perth. On his return, no doubt learning that I was possessed of this information, he tendered his resignation as per folio 9. I note your comments on folio 10, and would direct your attention to my reply on folio 11. It is very clear that had I not recalled Inspector White, the resignation dated 2nd November, and headed "Burracoppin," would never have been handed in. I also note minute by Secretary of Rabbit Department stating that in many cases, and whenever possible, progress payments were made on Inspector White's certificates, details of which are given on folio hereunder.

He (the Minister) wanted this to be clearly understood (in reference to salary and allowances paid), that White was retiring, and he made arrangements for Wilson not to sit in the office doing clerical work any longer, but to go into the field work. In reply to an interjection, he would suggest that one or two members of this House should go and inspect for themselves, and he would provide the equipment. There was nothing remarkable in that, because he contemplated going himself.

MR. PROCTOR: If the Minister had done that 12 months ago, it might have been of some use.

MR. MORAN: The Minister would not give us the inquiry we wanted, an inquiry into the Stock Department.

THE MINISTER: It was difficult to answer several propositions at the same time.

MR. ATKINS: Had the Minister that information any time before he sent that telegram to White?

THE MINISTER: What he did was to take Mr. Benzley's first report to the Premier and read it over with him, that being a month ago. The difficulty then

was that in the meantime White and Wilson had left Perth and gone by way of Burracoppin, knowing probably that he (the Minister) had obtained this information. He felt that the position was one of urgency, and he arranged for the same party to go back with despatches to Burracoppin. About a fortnight later he learnt incidentally of Mr. White being at Burracoppin. Mr. White's resignation evidently was not written until two days after Wilson got his (the Minister's) telegram.

MR. ATKINS: Therefore it was more than a fortnight after the Minister got the information.

THE MINISTER: On the 12th October he got the first information, and had then sent his special despatch after Wilson; which he would get about the 20th.

MR. MORAN: What led the Minister to send out this special expedition?

THE MINISTER: Could any member here say he did not hear something that gave rise to suspicion about that contract?

MR. TAYLOR: That was so.

MR. MORAN: Had the Minister any reports from Inspector White before this, complaining of any sub-inspectors?

THE MINISTER: There was one report bearing on that, and all these reports would be at the disposal of hon. members. The first intimation he had to verify his suspicions was embodied in a report which he would read.

At 6:30, the **CHAIRMAN** left the Chair.
At 7:30, Chair resumed.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (continuing): It was not satisfactory, after the heterogeneous mass of charges hurled against him and the Government by the member for West Perth, to find the hon. member was not now in his place. This seemed to indicate that some members were actuated rather by a desire to "get level" with the Government than to know the truth. Dealing with one or two of the minor details in the speech of the member for West Perth, we had first a criticism of Mr. Wilson, whom he (the Minister) had not the slightest intention of defending. Mr. Wilson must be dealt with entirely on his own merits and on the capacity he had displayed; for he (the Minister) held no brief for him.

Then the hon. member referred to a distinguished expert named Keeley, who it was said was now a pressman engaged on the *West Australian*. The hon. member, when Minister for Lands, wired to certain gentlemen in Queensland as to Mr. Keeley's qualifications; but the wording of the inquiry was not such as he (the Minister) would have sent had he been seeking information, though it was an excellent query for a man to send who was seeking a confirmation of his own opinion. The wire read :—

I am appointing officer to deal with rabbit question. A. E. Keeley, at one time an official of the Pastoral Association of Queensland, has applied for the position. He appears to have a good grip of the rabbit question. He has mentioned your name as a reference. You will oblige me greatly by wiring your opinion of him to fill the position. Reply paid, on service.

MR. MORAN : Did the Minister suggest that the recipients would not give honest opinions ?

THE MINISTER : No ; but if he (the Minister) were sending such a telegram, and wanted straight-out independent testimony, he would ask for information, and would not suggest the sort of reply he desired. A few members of the House knew Mr. Keeley ; and he would ask them, was Mr. Keeley the kind of man possessed of that whole-souled industry, determination, and force of character needed in the man who could grapple with such a problem as the rabbit invasion, and do so better than Mr. Wilson had done it ?

MR. PIOTT : Surely Mr. Keeley had some qualifications, seeing that he had for 12 months been employed in the Premier's Department.

MR. MORAN : Why did not the Minister question the authority of the Queensland experts ?

THE MINISTER had yet to be convinced that if he had a vacancy to-morrow Mr. Keeley was the man he would choose to put into it. And even if the hon. member (Mr. Moran) were now Minister for Lands, it was questionable whether he would not reconsider the opinion he had formed as to Mr. Keeley's qualifications for filling the vacancy. Doubtless all agreed as to the disaster which fell on the country when the hon. member went out of office, and that had he remained in office longer all the ills that flesh was

heir to in this country would have been quickly remedied. He (the Minister) had no desire to stand up at every show function to air his eloquence by discouraging on what he had done for the agriculturists, expanding his chest and telling the people of the country that he was their only friend. Some members never spoke in this House or at a show function without boasting of what they had done for the agricultural community. He preferred to leave the people interested to form their own opinion ; and if the opinion were unfavourable, that would not cause him much anxiety. He had been taken to task by the hon. member for referring in his first speech to-night to the question of the markets. Certain members were deeply interested in that question, and had, in the precincts of the House and in his office, urged him to give them information concerning the markets. That was only one of the numerous questions which he dealt with in his opening speech, because it was incumbent on him to give information to members who desired it. The hon. member (Mr. Moran) when speaking of the party which he (the Minister) equipped and sent out, made a childish and foolish reference to the party having been equipped with ferrets. The country through which the party travelled was similar to that around Kalgoolie, in which people went out almost daily with ferrets ; and when they came to a gilgai hole, a hollow log, or a burrow, it was a common practice to put in a ferret to drive out any rabbit which might be present. When he (the Minister) was out for that purpose about three months ago, he generally found 13 rabbits in one afternoon. The party which he equipped took with them a supply of traps and ferrets ; and were instructed that if they found a hollow log they were not to do as other officers had been doing all along—ride past it—but to put in a ferret to see whether the hole was occupied. Three years ago a hunt club was formed on the Eastern Goldfields, and the beagles would chase some sort of game for about a quarter of a mile, and then it disappeared. In the light of later events they appeared to have been chasing rabbits. The horsemen came to a gilgai hole, and that ended the chase. He had this in mind when he sent out that party

and instructed them to put a ferret into any such hole. If the ferret came out they would know there was no rabbit there. If the log or the burrow had more than one outlet, the openings were covered with nets, through which the ferret could pass though the rabbit could not. The party found several burrows from which the ferrets came out with their claws full of fur. Those burrows were dug out, and breeding nests discovered. The facts were embodied in the report he was about to read, written and handed to him on the 12th October, or 18 days prior to the date on which he wired to Inspector White to come to Perth :—

Acting on your instructions to inspect country west of rabbit-proof fence with a view to determining the presence of rabbits in that locality, I beg to report as follows :—Leaving Burracoppin, I paid slight attention only to the country west of fence for the first 30 miles. From this point onwards to the 92-mile, south of the railway my search has been reasonably complete, the distances west from fence varying from five to thirty miles, according to the inducements or likelihood which the country and its surroundings presented. At the 38-mile I found a burrow at a point about 80 chains west, also the usual scratchings, hillocks, etc., with droppings scattered about. The Government blackboy, "Monkey," informed me since of his having seen fresh droppings at a point not far distant from spot indicated above. At the 92-mile I was shown by Sub-Inspector Geier old droppings at a point between the fence and Emu Rock. I was also advised that traces would be found out on the lakes. These traces were easily discovered at points 15 miles south-west of 92-mile, continuing on in the same direction at the 16-mile and 24-mile. At the latter some of the droppings were fresh (not a month old). At a point one mile due west of the 24-mile above described, I found at another rock old droppings, and again south-west of 92-mile, at 25½-mile and 28-mile; and at 30-mile, I regret to say there exists abundant proof that in this locality at least three generations are established.

MR. PICOTT: How far west was the fence?

THE MINISTER: That was 92 miles south of the railway. The report went on :—

It is remarkable that, although this country is somewhat similar to the Hannan's Lake country, where innumerable warrens exist, very little burrowing has as yet been done. I only found two burrows, neither of which was more than a foot deep, and not more than three feet long. These were evidently breeding nests, and indicate that the number of rabbits has not so far reached large propor-

tions. The droppings show that rabbits have existed here for at least six months. On Saturday, 3rd October, I saw a full-grown rabbit, but had no opportunity to shoot it; and again on the following evening very late I saw another, and had a difficult shot but missed. Sub-inspector Geier happened to be camped at the 24-mile; this I observed by the smoke from his camp fire. I returned and requisitioned his assistance with the additional steel traps, poison, etc., in his possession. On the Monday Geier arrived, and two additional traps were set, but with no success. The droppings show clearly the existence of three generations, and in each case they were equally fresh. Sub-inspector Geier admitted this was the farthest point west where the existence of rabbits has been proven. He was greatly astonished at the immense quantity of droppings, and admitted that ten might be trapped in that locality.

MR. HASTIE: The fence was erected west of that.

THE MINISTER: The fence was erected west of that :—

As these rabbits had not burrowed, the ferrets were useless. I do not hesitate to estimate the number of rabbits in this locality at anything from 10 to 20. In fact this is manifest from the droppings. How many additional colonies of this description are established west of the fence it is difficult to estimate; nevertheless the truth is clearly shown that in this one instance a number of rabbits are established west of the barrier fence. The traps failed completely, and I question whether the rabbiters to the department will be successful with poison, more particularly with feed plentiful. In my opinion the present system is very poor indeed, seeing the large tract of country to hunt over. The rabbiters should be expert bushmen and travel in pairs, equipped with dogs and guns. The value of trapping is illustrated that in this instance, although six to eight traps were carefully set for three nights in succession, no captures were effected. That in reality was an indication of the success achieved by the rabbiters who had been out there the last time. The report went on :—

If the Agricultural Department, or the advisory board, desire indisputable proof, an inspection could be promptly made in, roughly, say seven days from Burracoppin and return. The spot is, I believe, about 80 miles east of Wagin, and is near the old Wagin-Coolgardie road, which may be a preferable route. If I may be permitted to direct attention to a few points in general, I would first suggest that the boundary riders should make regular trips north and south along the fence, keeping established a full line of communication, and be compelled to work in harmony, and assist in the conveyance of all mails, etc. This is not done at present, and may under other circumstances have caused me much trouble. Dis-

patch boxes should be fixed up at meeting places and weekly reports made. The Government camels should between times be used for the conveyance of stores, etc., for rabbiters and boundary riders. At present these men lose much time in conveying rations, etc. The boundary riders need not be men of exceptional ability; the rabbiters should be experienced men and reliable; they have no fixed camp, and, if good workers, deserve better pay than boundary riders.

The two rabbiters had been out there 21 days. One had spent five days in searching after rabbits and the other six or seven days; the rest of the time was devoted to riding up and down the line or going for rations. The report went on :—

A line of bush fires made by horsemen should be started this summer and carried from the southern coast as far north as practicable. This is a very important matter, and should be carried out systematically.

His idea was to start at a point west of the fence where rabbits existed and burn all the country towards them :—

I would recommend that more trappers be put on immediately, and that each party consist of two men, and that they be allotted not more than about 40 miles of country to work from north to south, and *vice versa*. After the middle of December it may not be possible to work some of this country, as it will be difficult and perhaps impossible to obtain water.

This report was signed "W. H. Benzley," and was handed to him (the Minister) probably on the day it was written. As a matter of fact, Mr. Benzley went out to oblige him (the Minister), and was under no obligation to the department. Mr. Benzley was of independent means. In making this report the question was pretty fully discussed. Mr. Benzley satisfied him (the Minister) as to the truth of the position. As a matter of fact, the Premier was most anxious that we should recall Inspector White to Burracoppin. He (the Minister) discussed that matter with Mr. Benzley and Mr. Wilson, and the secretary of the department came to Perth for the purpose of conferring on the position. He (the Minister) wrote a despatch and asked Mr. Benzley if he would take it. The request was formulated at the instigation of the Premier; and, as a result, Mr. Benzley went south with the despatch.

MR. MORAN: How did the Premier know about Benzley?

THE MINISTER: Because the report was read to the Premier. This was the report :—

Following on report received from special expedition sent to report on the country west of the rabbit-proof fence, I desire you to put on a sufficient number of boundary riders to traverse fence from coast to railway line, establishing through lines of communication. These boundary riders should have a camping place at each end of their beat in order that they may travel north one day, returning south the next. Letter boxes should be erected at various places along the fence, which the boundary riders should clear, and convey all mails and correspondence irrespective as to and on whose account they are being sent, from one end of the line to the other. I learn that rabbits are, at least in one place, travelling west of the fence. Please equip five (5) parties of two (2) men each, subject to two months' engagement, the parties to find both pack and riding horses, taking with them one (1) month's supplies, and each, if possible, to have one or more dogs as an experiment. Whatever number of rabbiters are appointed, please allocate to each man a certain mileage of fence running westward from same a distance of approximately 50 miles. I have this morning instructed Mr. Malcolm to engage six (6) men as rabbiters. These will proceed to Burracoppin at once, and there await your instructions. If additional men are required wire me at once, and they will be dispatched. If Inspector White is not otherwise engaged on pressing business, leave him at Burracoppin to carry out these instructions, and you, please, return to head office as early as possible. You will understand from this communication that I desire the country west of the rabbit-proof fence thoroughly hunted, and, if possible, cleared of all rabbits there existing before the water supplies are gone, and for this reason the wages offering are an increase on the ruling rates and subject to two (2) months' employment only.

That was sent down, and when White and Wilson received it they no doubt knew that he (the Minister) was in possession of certain information which enabled the instructions to be issued. On the 30th October, this minute was sent to the Director of Agriculture :—

I beg to confirm the verbal instruction issued to Mr. Malcolm this morning to engage three parties of two men each, on a two months' engagement, equipped with riding and pack horses, and also one month's supplies; salary, leader of the parties £5, and assistants £4 per week. Mr. Malcolm to issue the necessary ticket and freight orders for these men and their equipments to proceed to Burracoppin, and the men to await thereat for instructions from Mr. Wilson or Inspector White, as the case may be. Please consign by first train any dogs secured at police station and deemed to be suitable for

their requirements. Please advise by telephone if any going forward to-day.—J.M.H., Minister for Lands.

He wished to explain to members that in determining that we should try dogs it was purely an experiment. Those members who knew the habits of a rabbit knew that immediately they were disturbed, unlike the hare which ran a two or a three-mile course, the rabbit found the first piece of cover it came to in the shape of a hole or a hollow log and went into it for protection. He (the Minister) was under the impression, which was strengthened by people around Menzies and Leonora, that the rabbits did not burrow like they did at Kalgoorlie or Boulder, and the dogs were taken to run the rabbits to cover and then dig them out. He (the Minister) was anxious that the dogs should be tried. He did not know what the result of sending the dogs out had been, for no reports had been received advising him of the success which had attended the efforts. Following that was a communication from the Chief Clerk to the Chief Inspector of Rabbits, telling him what to do with the men who had gone forward. That was from Mr. Malcolm and was not of much consequence, simply dealing with details in reference to the parties. Then there was a communication from H. N. Wood at Burracoppin, one of the men sent by Mr. Malcolm; it was of no consequence. Mr. Malcolm then sent this communication :—

October 19th, 1903. Mr. Bert Woods, Rabbit Party, Burracoppin.—If Messrs. Wilson and White not yet arrived, Minister for Lands instructs you and Clark proceed south along fence to meet them, taking any mail for them with you. Wright and Lewis will remain at Burracoppin in case they are wanted. O'Callaghan and Hill are to go out north-west of Burracoppin, and return in three days to report and receive farther instructions.—NORMAN MALCOLM.

That was an instruction where the people were to go. Then there was a telegram as follows :—

Hon. Minister for Lands, York.—Rabbit party at Burracoppin informs them White and Wilson will be absent for a week, as party are wanted hundred miles south Burracoppin. Should they not proceed along fence to meet Wilson? You instructed them wait Burracoppin.

That telegram was bearing on the question, and an answer was sent. It was a

matter of detail. The next wire was from Benzley, as follows :—

Wilson and White going Starvation Bay. Instruct Malcolm to advise Devine to select dogs. Rabbiters refused same. I return tomorrow.

It was sent from Ravensthorpe. This minute was attached :—

Acting Director of Agriculture.—Please go out with P.C. and return file to me. Have you heard from Secretary Wilson or Inspector White?—J.M.H.

The next point of interest was a communication regarding the ferrets. The next report received was fairly distinct, and he would be able to point members to what he was referring as he read the report. So far as his (the Minister's) report went, he had only information of rabbits west of the fence at a point 27 miles north of the railway. This was a *précis* of what was reported at each place :—

27 miles north of railway, abundant indications of two generations. 35 miles south, three or four caught here; ample indications. 43 miles, indications rabbits reported by Inspector White. 76 miles, few indications reported by Dunn and Geier; rabbits supposed to have gone west. 92 miles, at 24 miles south-west of fence fresh droppings, two generations. 92 miles, at 30 miles south-west of fence saw two rabbits; droppings of three generations. Dunn and Geier have since captured two, and admit driving balance westward. Dunn's estimate 12, Geier's estimate 20. 92 miles, at 34 miles south-west of fence old droppings, which prove rabbits have gone westward many months ago. Dunn will corroborate. 129 miles, at 15 miles south-west of fence old droppings discovered by Dunn and reported to me. 180 miles, at 13 miles south-west of fence one captured by Dunn. Total estimate about 40.

That had an important bearing, because as far as he could see of the methods of the department he could conceive no method that would rid the country of what rabbits were there. Men went out to entrap rabbits and lay poison in country where feed was abundant; but the rabbits were not likely to take poison where feed was abundant, nor were they likely to be trapped. It appeared to be thought that because rabbits were not seen they had taken the poison and disappeared. If the men failed to find any traces of dead rabbits in a country where rabbits did not burrow, this fact led him to believe that because the rabbits had not died in the open they were more

likely to have travelled onward to another district two, four, six, or twelve miles away. Inspector White, whose knowledge of the matter he did not dispute, repudiated the use of dogs for this purpose. The next was Mr. Benzley's final report, written on his return after his connection with the department ceased. It was dated the 6th November, and said:—

In accordance with your instructions, I delivered despatches to Mr. Wilson on the 21st ultimo at his camp, seven miles from Ravensthorpe; since when my movements have been as already reported. The principal points coming under my observation were, first the marked hostility displayed by the officers of the department towards myself. The fence has been poorly constructed. The iron standards erected in lieu of posts have been cut off instead of being sunk into the ground. The wooden posts being about 300 feet apart, it is easily realised what effect these intervening standards have when not properly sunk. The fence has sagged in consequence. The top wire is very light in places, the gauge being altogether too light. The use of black wire under such circumstances I am at a loss to understand. The netting has not been let into the ground a sufficient depth—in places only two inches. In one instance I found a booby-hole under the netting and through to the other side. Traces of rabbits can be found in various places on the westward side of fence. I attach plan showing where they now exist. If I may be permitted to offer a few suggestions, I would recommend: 1. That the rabbiters start at a base line west of fence 100 miles, and work it at thoroughly towards same in an easterly direction. 2. That the work of fence construction and supervision be intrusted to reputable engineers. Mr. Wilson and Inspector White were apparently displeased at my mission. I assume that had the work been up to specifications, or the efforts of the department equal to their task, these officers would have challenged criticism or inspection. They, however, acted in the most hostile manner imaginable. In the light of later knowledge gained by my personal inspection, their attitude is easily understood. I would advise that no farther progress payments be made on the current contracts, pending careful inquiry. As previously explained, I cannot devote any more of my time for this business, as I have other matters requiring my attention. Your future difficulty will be to secure men for this work in whom implicit confidence can be placed.—I have (etc.).

W. H. BENZLEY.

These were sound propositions, as he believed when he first read them, and were worthy of adoption. On receipt of this information, he sent the expedition with despatches to Mr. Wilson and Mr. White at Ravensthorpe. Of course the

contents were handed to Mr. Wilson, and when he came back to Burracoppin he was going north, and the despatch was left open for him to see. Meanwhile he (the Minister) learned that Mr. White and Mr. Geier were about to go north with horses to do what Inspector Canning had found to be impracticable with camels. He (the Minister) recalled him to Perth. Mr. Benzley wired to him that he had important news, and he (the Minister) wired back that he was about to leave Perth for Northam and would see him there. They met at Northam, and Mr. Benzley then told him that Mr. White would be at Burracoppin on the next day on his way north, and he (the Minister) then wired him to return to Perth. Mr. White came to Perth as the result of that telegram, and no doubt Mr. White, knowing the nature of the report and thinking to get a shot in first, tendered his resignation. Under the circumstances he (the Minister) did not accept it, and in taking that course he thought he had no alternative, because in the case of any officer of the department who had treated him as Mr. White had done, only one course was open, and that was to terminate his engagement. So far as this report was concerned, whatever members of this House might think, he considered that he had adopted absolutely the best course in the circumstances. He was in a difficult position. He wanted a report of country 50 miles west of the fence. It was a dry, inhospitable country, with neither roads nor tracks; and whilst he might easily have picked a man off the street to make a report, and perhaps have to send a search party after him to find his bones, he realised that it was necessary to select a man in whom he could have confidence, one who had knowledge of the work and could be thoroughly relied on. It was for this reason he had selected a personal friend, with the result that he got him to report on the fence; and in view of the information disclosed in the report, he submitted to hon. members that he was justified in taking the course he had done. In this connection there were many points on which he might have elaborated, but hon. members were in possession of the truth, and he had been actuated by only one desire—to ascertain the truth and do what was right. He

had seen an indication of feeling to-night in regard to his dispensing with the services of Mr. White and Mr. James; he had also seen a feeling indicated in regard to what he had done in dispensing with Mr. Wilson; but he thought members would agree that he had taken a proper course in requesting the Minister for Works to place at his disposal one of his best engineers to report on this fence contract, and tell him whether the report by Mr. Benzley was correct, or whether the modified description given in Mr. Wilson's report was correct. He need not go into side issues such as that relating to the Collie-Narrogin railway project. Did any member of this House think that a Cabinet sitting to consider the expenditure of a large sum of money on this important work would contemplate submitting to Parliament a proposal to construct a railway for the purpose of building up a reputation for their Minister for Lands? He resented such an imputation, and he said without fear of contradiction that the present Government had no need to adopt such means to build up a reputation for the Minister for Lands.

MR. MORAN denied he had said that.

THE MINISTER: What else could be inferred from the hon. member's remarks? The hon. member had known what it was to have the hand of friendship extended to him when perhaps, if he had chosen to court popularity, he might have taken a different attitude. More than that, he had never been influenced by any other feeling towards the hon. member than a desire to see him get fair-play, which perhaps the hon. member did not always receive in those days. But as time rolled on and positions changed, one generally expected some recognition from one man towards another who had adopted such an attitude in times past. He (the Minister) had nothing farther to add. The inquiry into the Stock Department was not undertaken by him for the purpose of burking discussion. On the contrary, at the first opportunity the whole of the documents and the evidence signed by witnesses, who did not sign until they read the evidence and were satisfied with it, were placed on the table of the House, where the papers had been at the disposal of members for practically three

months past. He admitted he had been faced with difficulties, and regretted having had to bring in a man from outside the department, a personal friend on whom he could depend, for an independent report. But in taking that step he was actuated by a desire to do what was right in the interests of the country; and he left it to the Committee to say whether there had not been an absolute and complete answer to the charges and insinuations of the member for West Perth.

MR. ATKINS: Whatever the dilatoriness of past Governments in dealing with this matter, we had to thank the Minister for Lands for having, when he found something wrong, done what he thought best to rectify that wrong. There should be a thorough inquiry into the matter by a man whose character was above suspicion; and all the wrongdoers, whether contractors, inspectors, or the head men over the inspectors, should suffer. But before we talked of making people suffer, be sure that we had "the right sow by the ear."

MR. DIAMOND: The speech of the Minister made it clear that whatever the mistakes of the past, the Minister had quickly arrived at a solution of the difficulty, or had at least taken an independent view of the situation, and done what was the best in the circumstances to ascertain the truth and let the country know it. When rabbits first crossed the Darling from Victoria into South Australia, in some places they burrowed and in others they lived on the surface. Those which took possession of iguana holes were destroyed by these animals, which were therefore protected by the Government. He warned the Minister that the experience of South Australia, New South Wales, and Victoria had been that professional rabbiters conveyed the rabbits over fences and across rivers so as to make the work of destruction perpetual. One party of rabbiters on the Murray, paid at per scalp by the South Australian Government, had a large fire built round a pit; and after the scalps were tallied and credited to them by the inspector they used to throw the scalps apparently into the fire but really into the pit, to be taken out again and sold once more to the inspector on his next visit. The present position was most

serious; and the Minister, for his method of dealing with it, deserved the thanks of the House.

MR. MORAN: In respect to this matter a little life had been galvanised into the Committee. It was not to be supposed that anyone who spoke so vigorously as he had spoken this evening could altogether escape condemnation. He warned the Committee that if they accepted the Minister's statement as final, he (Mr. Moran) did not; and he hoped no member in the Chamber who pretended to be a man would condemn on the *ex parte* statement of the Minister any officer of the Lands Department who had been dismissed. The Minister had made an *ex parte* statement, and had read snatches from voluminous jackets; and he might be unwittingly biased in favour of his own action. It was evident from the veiled threats of the Minister that Mr. Wilson would be dealt with.

THE MINISTER: Not unless he was proved guilty.

MR. MORAN: Why, the Minister had adduced what was apparently sufficient proof to justify Mr. Wilson's dismissal. He (Mr. Moran) hoped this was only the commencement of the inquiry. These Lands estimates were not going through to-night. It was necessary to hear what Mr. White would say at the public meeting he was to address on Saturday night, and to resume this discussion next Tuesday in the light of that information. The Minister should not deny the Committee that privilege. It might be proved that Mr. White, long before this emissary of the Minister was sent out, condemned the fence; that Mr. White was never the inspector in charge but only an ordinary inspector; that Mr. White was indicted to shield someone else from blame; that the Minister ought to have known from a report by Mr. White that the work was not satisfactory; that Mr. White wrote to the Premier as well as to the Minister to the effect that a certain sub-inspector had passed work which he (Mr. White) had condemned; and that to this allegation Mr. White had received no satisfactory reply.

THE MINISTER: Such a communication had never been seen by him.

MR. MORAN: The Minister's statement was not sufficient.

THE MINISTER said he had already satisfied the Committee about Mr. White; nor did he think the Committee had two opinions on the subject. He (the Minister) courted the very fullest inquiry.

MR. MORAN: The Minister insisted on saddling himself with every attack made on the Government as a whole. When he (Mr. Moran) characterised the Collie railway as a wanton piece of political jobbery, the Minister took that to himself. None supposed that the Minister was responsible for that railway, which was perhaps decided on before he joined the Government; but he (Mr. Moran) did not believe members would allow any officer who asked for an inquiry to be denied that inquiry. We wanted full light thrown on this rabbit question. We knew that under the present Administration the first fencing post was put in and the first pound spent; and that the work had been muddled. For that the present Government were to blame; and surely the Committee would not allow the Government to cast the blame on a few officers if those officers were not given a fair hearing. As he (Mr. Moran) came back to the House from dinner he saw Mr. White for two minutes at the gate. He had never seen him previously save at 1 p.m. to-day, when he was formally introduced to him in this building, and no words passed. He had never known that Mr. White was connected with the Stock Department. The Minister introduced a queer idea when he said members seemed to think that because Mr. White was connected with the Stock Department he was to be singled out for vengeance.

THE MINISTER: The hon. member suggested as much in his speech. Only yesterday he (the Minister) wrote a minute asking whether it was true that Inspector White was still an officer of the Stock Department, and directing that if that were so arrangements should be made for his retirement. He had not known that Mr. White was an officer of the Stock Department.

MR. MORAN: Had anyone gathered from his speech that he suggested Mr. White had been harshly dealt with because he was at one time a member of the Stock Department?

THE MINISTER : The hon. member had referred to that matter.

MR. MORAN said he had never known Mr. White from the proverbial bar of soap, nor had he known that Mr. White was an officer of the Stock Department. The Minister should recollect that "conscience doth make cowards of us all." He (Mr. Moran) had not mentioned Mr. White as an officer of the Stock Department. The Minister misunderstood, for he (Mr. Moran) was dealing generally with the Stock Department and stated that the steps which had been taken in connection with that department were similar to the wrong which was being done now.

THE MINISTER : An analogy was drawn between the Stock Department and the matter under debate.

MR. MORAN : It was simply an analogy. Mr. White and Mr. Wilson—and bear in mind he had never had a word to say against Mr. Wilson—both might be able to justify themselves. It was not right that the reputation of a man should be taken away by a peremptory dismissal by the Minister without any inquiry. The House had been asking for regulations in connection with the civil service and classification, and members would not stand calmly by and see every privilege of a civil servant taken from him on the *ipse dixit* of a Minister. He (Mr. Moran) would not. It was to be regretted the Minister should have referred to the fact of their friendship and have stated that in times of trouble the compliment might have been returned. He (Mr. Moran) was under no obligation to the Minister except that of friendship for one whom he liked and respected, but that was not near enough to prevent an attack being made on a department of which the Minister was nominally the head. He (Mr. Moran) was under no obligation to the Minister. There was no need to talk of gratitude. The Minister was one of the favoured children of the Forrest Government, but Sir John Forrest's back was hardly turned when the Minister rose and attacked the Forrest Government and their administration for 10 years, on purpose to get into Parliament. If he (Mr. Moran) and the Minister were on different sides of the House it was not he (Mr. Moran) who had changed. The Minister was in a camp which

he did not belong to previously, while he (Mr. Moran) was still in the camp that had ruled the country for 10 years and ruled it well. A matter of this kind was so important that somebody must take it up and go into the question fearlessly. He had not imputed any motive to the Minister, who had placed himself in a most invidious position over the Stock Department, no matter what the finding might be. On the one hand the Minister was defending himself practically, therefore would find for his own department. People would say the Minister had a bias towards his own department, and in order to get rid of that suspicion a violent bias must be taken the other way. How much better it would have been to have left the inquiry into the Stock Department where it was placed, in the hands of the magistrate, Mr. Roe? But the inquiry was dragged away from Mr. Roe and placed in the hands of the Minister. What important announcement had there been made to-night about the inquiry? The Minister told the Committee that he was asked to do this; therefore he stood to a large degree liberated from blame. But who asked the Minister? There could only be one person in this State who could ask the Minister, his chief, the Premier, who was counsel for one of the firms in dispute. The Minister was asked by the Premier to take over the inquiry while the Premier and his firm were counsel for one of the parties to the dispute. The Minister acceded to the request. The blame, if there was blame, was on the Premier, which showed how important was the discussion on this point. He (Mr. Moran) knew the member for Boulder very well, and knew he would go into the matter unbiased as far as he could; but one had to look at the fact that the inquiry was asked for and granted before an independent magistrate. The Premier was placed in this invidious position, that one of the parties to the dispute was his valued client. The inquiry was removed from the magistrate and placed in the hands of the Minister for Lands, who was junior to the Premier. Was it wise or fair to the Minister for Lands? The inquiry ought to have been made as impartial as possible. These Estimates should not be closed to-night; we should have more light and more inquiry into the question of the rabbit

fence, so that no injustice should be done to a civil servant who for years past had been working in the desert without a spell, Mr. White. It was no easy matter to live in what the Minister described as a desert where only experienced bushmen could travel. Mr. White had informed him (Mr. Moran) that so far from the Minister's statement being correct that he (Mr. White) was informed when he came back to Burracoppin to go north, nearly a month before in Perth Mr. White received instructions from Mr. Crawford to go north, and resented it, and tried all he could to get out of it. Did the Minister know that? The Minister did not. Mr. White wanted an inquiry to prove by documentary evidence that what he said was correct. On his arrival at Burracoppin Mr. White wired to the Minister, and that wire could be produced. In the light of all this, were we to believe the Minister? The enthusiasm of the Minister was characteristic in everything which he had taken up. The Minister could not be blamed for want of enthusiasm in his work or for want of industry; very few could compare with him in these. The Minister was a young man, and as a member of Parliament he had hardly cut his wisdom teeth, and as a Minister his judgment was hardly ripe enough to guide the House in a matter of this kind. He (Mr. Moran) did not regret the steps that had been taken in connection with this question. There were other members of the House with a greater knowledge of the details of the rabbit question than he (Mr. Moran) had. He had spoken generally on the administration, and he wished to apologise to the member for Plantagenet, who had taken a great deal of interest in this question in days gone by, for not having mentioned the name of that member: it was because he had forgotten for the time being. He had known that member more as an advocate of the Esperance railway for a number of years and a friend of the goldfields than as an agricultural member. The Minister had accused him (Mr. Moran) of endeavouring to advertise himself. There might be some truth in that, but such a statement came badly from the Minister. For two years matters in connection with the rabbit question had lain dormant; he had never

sought to drag it up when it ought to have been brought forward. The Minister had gone out of his way to throw doubt as to Mr. Keeley's abilities. Mr. Keeley was a gentleman of experience and honour and dignity, who was known far and wide in Australia, who had been connected with the rabbit business in Queensland, and it was impudence on the part of the Minister to cast a doubt on this gentleman's experience. The Minister might have attacked him (Mr. Moran) and left Mr. Keeley alone. As the Minister accused him of advertising himself, well it had not cost him £750 for a photo. and a pamphlet. He could get it cheaper than that, and he would not get the State to pay for it. Nor had he gone the length of having a thousand copies of what was called an eloquent speech attacking Mr. Nanson in this Chamber. He hoped the little interchanges of love and friendship between himself and the member for Boulder would only serve to cement the friendship which had stood the test so long. By the time the Minister was a few years older and the House had had a little more of his distinguished presence and the country of his distinguished services, past differences might be forgotten and the good friendship continue, while the Minister luxuriated in the sunshine of office and he (Mr. Moran) remained in the cold shade of Opposition.

MR. WALLACE thanked the Minister for the full explanation he had given of the working of the Lands Department, though it was to be regretted the attendance of agricultural members in the Chamber during the delivery of that statement was not such as one could expect, for only six agricultural members were present. The Minister was entitled to credit for the improvements he had effected in the working of his department and in bringing up arrears. In regard to the inspection of conditional purchases, he (Mr. Wallace) had occasion to visit the department in reference to one case, and was told that the only inspector available for the work was then away in another part of the country, and the person interested in the land would have to wait until the inspector returned, although the matter was somewhat urgent. He was glad that greater provision was now made for the inspection of conditional

purchases. The changes and improvements effected by the present Minister showed that the department must have been in a lamentable state of confusion when the Minister took office, for hundreds of selections were awaiting inspection, and the number had been accumulating for years. This state of things did not reflect creditably on the previous administrators of the department; but while recognising the present Minister's great energy, it was possible to be too energetic in trying to do too many things in a short time, and if the present Minister had done some of the things with more caution there would have been less criticism on his actions than we had heard to-day. Referring to the mode of dealing with a piece of land when more than one person applied for it, the system was for a board to inquire as to the several applicants and decide which was the most fitted to have the land. Members of such a board would be open to the suspicion of prejudice or bias, and he did not think the determination should be left to a board. Some system of balloting would be more satisfactory to applicants, and would cause less dissatisfaction in regard to the actions of a board. Referring to the disposal of an estate near York and the mode of dealing with an allotment where there appeared to be collusion, he suggested that instead of putting up the particular section to auction some other system should be devised, because the test should not be the strength of a man's position financially. In other States a system other than that adopted in this State was said to work satisfactorily. Officers of the Horticultural and Viticultural Departments, instead of travelling about the world to discover a natural enemy to the fruit fly, might be better employed in looking after the vineyards and orchards within the State. There had been great alarm about the codlin moth, but he was not aware that it was really doing much damage in this State. Objection had been heard against the employment of a poultry expert in connection with the Agricultural Department for improving the breed of poultry in this State, though he did not think the objection was reasonable; and the energetic action taken by Mr. Sommers, the late Minister, would produce good results

in this direction. The experiment in importing stud cattle to improve the breed of stock under Government supervision might be extended usefully by assisting farmers to stock their land, say to the extent of a few head of suitable stock or some sheep. In view of the present good season, this seemed to be a suitable opportunity for extending operations in this direction, and he hoped the Minister would consider the suggestion, as it would tend to increase the quality of stock for butter, for beef, and for mutton, and would make it less necessary to import stock from other States when the ordinary supply from Kimberley fell off during part of the year. The report of the Government refrigerating works indicated a coming expansion in the frozen meat trade, now that steamers were being fitted with refrigerators. Frozen meat, because of its cheapness, would always be in demand; and the Government should pay some attention to the meat on its introduction to the State, and more particularly to the freezing chambers. There was sometimes uncertainty as to the condition of frozen meat from without the Commonwealth, when put into freezing rooms. He had noticed that some of it, if not diseased, was in poor condition. Now that stock in Australia and elsewhere was more or less diseased, a close inspection of this meat was necessary. Much of the local fresh meat sold was two days old; it was put in the refrigerators on Saturday, and sold to the public on Monday as fresh meat, though some of it was unfit for consumption. The manager of the refrigerating works had told a select committee that better supervision of meat in refrigerators was needed. In his speeches to-night the Minister made no reference to swine fever. He (Mr. Wallace) had asked the Minister to have some inspection made of the pork in refrigerating rooms, and had been informed later that an inspection had been made, and only one carcass found to be diseased.

THE MINISTER: And that was only a suspicious case.

MR. WALLACE: Still, there was a chance of meat unfit for consumption coming out of the refrigerators, no matter in what condition it went in. Apparently the Health Department had always been too apathetic to do anything in the

interests of the community; and unless the department were stirred up, he feared a continuance of the old lackadaisical mode of inspection, which afforded no protection to the public. Would the Minister for Lands note, on behalf of the Colonial Secretary, that closer supervision over refrigerating rooms was necessary? He (Mr. Wallace) did not mind being called a faddist or an alarmist in health matters, if he could assist the public. His own inspection of piggeries and the reports of official inspectors proved the correctness of the statements of the member for West Perth as to swine fever. Mr. Leslie, whose piggery he (Mr. Wallace) had visited, told him that the late Chief Inspector of Stock had made two inspections of the pigs, and that between the first and the second a doctor, accompanied by the late chief inspector, visited the place because the late chief inspector had bought a boar there and taken it to his farm at Beverley, and Mr. Leslie believed this had induced the Stock Department to proclaim the disease swine fever. He (Mr. Wallace) did not wish to make unfair accusations, but to assist the Minister in arriving at a conclusion, and to convince him that he had erred in administering some of the sub-departments under his control. The fact that the disease was new in the State was probably the only excuse for the responsible officials not discovering it sooner.

THE MINISTER: Some of the outside veterinary surgeons still maintained that it was not swine fever.

MR. MORAN: No matter what it was it killed pigs, and ought to have been checked.

MR. WALLACE: Probably the disease prevailed because sanitary regulations were not enforced in piggeries. Some of these places were cleanly and up-to-date; but the smell of others was perceptible half a-mile off, and the pigs in them could not be healthy. Fortunately, badly kept piggeries were few. If the Health Department had not enough inspectors, let others be appointed, or transfer the work to another department. The rabbit question had been so threshed out that he (Mr. Wallace), not being an expert, would only say that he did not accuse the Minister for Lands of reading statements which he knew to be unfair, but he accused the Minister of indiscretion.

To-night the Minister read many documents to the House. He (Mr. Wallace) met Mr. White for the first time in leaving this Chamber for dinner to-night, and candidly told Mr. White that if the information which the Minister had collected from departmental files was correct, things looked black against Mr. White; and Mr. White then stated that he had made the presence of rabbits at Burracoppin known to the Minister by means of telegraph or telephone.

THE MINISTER: Such a communication had never reached him. At Northam, immediately on receiving the information that Mr. White was going north from Burracoppin, he telegraphed to Mr. White at Burracoppin to come back.

MR. MORAN: Did not this show that the Minister did not know everything, and that inquiry was necessary?

THE MINISTER: This point had no bearing on the question.

MR. WALLACE admitted that the Minister's speech had certainly changed his opinion of Mr. White; but he (Mr. Wallace) still wished Mr. White, whose reputation was at stake, to be given an opportunity at a public meeting or in the Press to put his side of the case before the public.

THE MINISTER: Mr. White in his letter admitted that the fence was bad, and that he was responsible. Read his resignation.

MR. WALLACE: Had not reports as to the condition of the fence been made prior to the Minister's discoveries? As Mr. White was responsible to his superior (Mr. Wilson), was the Minister right in throwing the whole blame on Mr. White?

THE MINISTER: That had not been done.

MR. WALLACE: Perhaps unwittingly the Minister strongly emphasised some points in the documents he read to-night, so that members were led to believe that the Minister was backed up by information other than that in the documents.

THE MINISTER: Surely the statement was clear.

MR. WALLACE wished to remain neutral until all the officers in question had an opportunity of placing their cases before Parliament, at a public meeting or in the Press.

THE MINISTER said he had asked Mr. White to place his case before him, and Mr. White had refused.

MR. WALLACE: Mr. White had had no opportunity of placing his case before the House; Parliament had not inquired into the accusations made, and the Minister would admit the unfairness of asking the House to come to a decision on an *ex parte* statement. No matter what the feeling of members was towards the Government, if we wished to be honest and fair we could not blame the Government for the position of to-day, for the Government had entered into certain contracts, and had employed men to supervise the carrying out of the work. There were clear specifications, and the Government placed trust in the supervisors. Therefore it was hardly fair to blame the Government because their officers, in whom they placed trust, neglected to do their duty. For years the member for West Perth had supported a party which had an opportunity of keeping back the rabbit invasion, but that party took no action. On one occasion when the matter was mentioned in the House Sir John Forrest accused the members who spoke about it of being alarmists. To-day the man who was looked on as an alarmist was of great value to any country, because if an alarm was raised there was an opportunity of arming ourselves against any invasion, no matter what it might be. If the question had been raised years ago in the way in which it had been brought forward to-day, we would have had a fence erected, and the rabbits would have been on the other side of that fence. He did not know what means the Government proposed to take to assist the settlers on the western side of the fence, but he hoped it was intended to supply those settlers with wire netting and assist them financially to enclose their holdings.

THE MINISTER: Already he had announced that the Government had 160 miles of wire fencing for that purpose.

MR. WALLACE: But the conditions under which the Government were advancing the netting were not as favourable as could be obtained outside.

THE MINISTER: That was not correct.

MR. WALLACE: A person who ought to know had informed him (Mr. Wallace) that such was the case, and this settler had wired to the Eastern States for quotations, having been advised that he could get wire netting at a less price and

under better conditions than those offered by the Government.

THE MINISTER: That was incorrect, unless there had been a fluctuation in the price since the netting was landed.

MR. WALLACE: The Government should consider those settlers on the western side of the fence and assist them as speedily as possible. Did the Minister announce the conditions under which the netting was being supplied to settlers?

THE MINISTER: There were regulations.

MR. WALLACE: The Minister could have indicated briefly the conditions under which the wire netting was to be advanced. The settlers on the eastern side of the fence should be considered as well as those on the western side. There were many holdings on the western side which the rabbits had not reached yet, and the settlers there should be given an opportunity of enclosing their holdings, not little patches, so as to prevent the invasion of the rabbits. If members looked up the report of the Department of Agriculture they would find a lot of information as to the progress the rabbits had made in this State. He wished to deal with the stock question, as he had always interested himself in stock matters, although he was looked upon with a certain amount of suspicion by members who pretended to know everything. In the early period of his residence in this State there was a serious disease amongst the herds from the north of Geraldton to the south of the State. The ravages caused ruin to some pastoralists. He referred to scab in sheep. The late Chief Inspector of Stock who was in charge of the Stock Department at the time struggled hard to get rid of the disease. In one case the inspector took action under powers vested in him and issued orders that stock were to be treated in a certain way, and in one instance his orders were cancelled by the head of the Government. He referred to a case in the south-west of the State where tick or lice were discovered in sheep, and an order was made that the sheep should be dipped. The owner of the sheep was away in Melbourne at the time, and his manager communicated with him. The owner then wired to Sir John Forrest condemning the action which the Chief Inspector had taken, and went so far as

to say that if the order was enforced in regard to dipping all his sheep, then every kangaroo in the south-west should be dipped also. The Stock Department had for years been labouring under serious difficulties.

MR. BURGESS: It was a perfect farce, the way in which the Stock Department was being carried out to this day.

MR. WALLACE: It was in the best interests of the sheep farmers that the tick or lice in sheep should be got rid of. Wool clipped from these sheep was sent abroad, and might convey the tick or lice to clean sheep. Tick or lice were discovered in sheep at York. The present Minister for Lands had taken a stand similar to that taken by a Minister in the previous period. The present Minister had laid a large pile of papers on the table in response to a motion by him, which papers he (Mr. Wallace) perused in part. Certain regulations were made under the Stock Diseases Act prohibiting the removal of stock from the quarantine ground at Owen's Anchorage, the removal being for slaughter only and at the place specified in the permit. To show how the system worked, he visited the quarantine ground some years ago and saw cattle there that were too poor to eat, and they were not permitted to be removed except for slaughter. The decision of the present Minister to hold an inquiry himself into charges which had been made by a firm of stock importers against the department was a mistaken course for the Minister to take. The practice of the department had been to give a permit for the removal of certain stock to a certain place for slaughter, and instructions to that effect would be sent by telegraph to the department's officer, who would then await the arrival of the stock. The department wished to take action against a certain firm for having violated the regulations, but some difficulty ensued as to the tribunal which should inquire. After some delay Mr. Commissioner Roe consented to conduct the inquiry. When the inquiry had gone a certain length, an officer of the Stock Department, acting under instructions from the present Minister for Lands, went to Mr. Commissioner Roe's office and took possession of the papers, though it did not appear whether this was done with the sanction of Mr. Roe. There had been some ob-

jection as to counsel being employed on either side in the case, and eventually counsel were not allowed in the inquiry conducted by Mr. Commissioner Roe. As to the propriety of the Minister for Lands sitting as chairman to conduct an inquiry into his own department, members had only to compare this with the recent libel case of *Spear v. Parker*, to realise what an outcry there would have been in the country if Mr. Justice Parker, the accused party in that case, had claimed to preside over the inquiry in his capacity as a Judge.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: What interest could it be him (the Minister) whatever the result of the inquiry might be?

MR. WALLACE: Each side reviewed the evidence given by the other side, and it was to be noticed that the firm which had made charges against the department, in reviewing the evidence passed certain reflections on the Chief Inspector of Stock in regard to his experience during 31 years in office, and criticised the manner in which witnesses gave their evidence, insinuating that these witnesses for the department had been previously "squared," and imputing all sorts of dishonesty to the witnesses, except only as to one witness. That witness was Mr. Stevens, who had had a long practical experience in East Kimberley in stock, and the firm in reviewing his evidence ridiculed it, and pointed out that his knowledge of tick and of stock matters generally had been gained by the fact that he had slept in a stockyard one night. This kind of comment showed an amount of venom on the part of those who conducted that side of the case, and it must be said also there was a great deal of venom on the other side. In carrying out the inquiry, it was made evident that the Stock Department had kept closely to the powers vested in it in regard to stock diseases. Even though counsel were not allowed on either side in this inquiry, yet the counsel who was advising the side against the Government was a member of the firm in which the Attorney General was senior partner. It appeared that the Minister for Lands, in conducting this inquiry, acted on the advice of the Attorney General, who was senior partner in the firm that was fighting the Government in this inquiry.

The case hinged on the production of a permit to truck the cattle, which were trucked to Coolgardie, whereas the Stock Department alleged that they should have been trucked to Kalgoorlie. The permit was not forthcoming. Mr. Nathan, the officer of the department at Coolgardie, had some years ago visited the stock yards at Fremantle with a select committee to inquire as to cattle tick; and when there, one of the partners of the firm in question made light of Mr. Nathan's knowledge of the subject; but at the inquiry before the Minister the same firm made use of Mr. Nathan, who came to Perth to give evidence in favour of the firm and against his own department.

MR. PIGOTT: Was the evidence false?

MR. WALLACE: Probably; because Mr. Nathan was the officer who usually received these permits, and none but this permit was missing; and the Railway Department subsequently refused to hand him permits without getting receipts. At the inquiry Mr. Nathan was treated by the Stock Department as a hostile witness. In the absence of the permit the Minister had to rely on conflicting oral and other evidence, but discovered on the butt of the permit book the word "Coolgardie," written in pencil, in a line with "Kalgoorlie," which was admittedly in the writing not of the chief officer but of Mr. Stevens; but neither officer could remember whether the actual permit was for Coolgardie. The present acting chief inspector said he might have altered it but believed he had filled in "Kalgoorlie," as he did on the butt. Some time previously Mr. Nathan, in replying through the Minister to a question in the House, stated by telegram that it was not the custom to depasture cattle on the gold-fields; yet at the inquiry he admitted that this had been a common practice for years. He (the Minister) summed up against the Stock Department. That was the only saving feature in the action he took. He must have known by the records that the then Chief Inspector, Mr. Craig, had served for 30 years in that capacity, and had, when he was freed from Ministerial interference, rendered valuable service by exterminating scab in sheep, though prior to his being given a free hand he had been accused of collusion with some persons who wanted employment. This

service proved that Mr. Craig knew how to cope with stock diseases. In the South-West Division the same officer was ordered by Sir John Forrest to rescind an order issued; and as a result the whole of the flocks in the South-West, and probably some in the East, had to be dipped. As to the inquiry, the consignee should have been proceeded against for breach of regulations, and not the person who in good faith received the cattle at the other end. Mr. D'Arcy Uhr was only the receiver, and the consigning firm were liable. The trouble first arose through trucking the cattle contrary to the regulations, at a place other than that mentioned in the permit; and if the Government had allowed the Stock Department to proceed as it desired, the firm instead of Mr. D'Arcy Uhr would have been prosecuted. Even if the evidence showed that the department had been lax, yet had the chairman been any other than the Minister he would not have taken the drastic step of dismissing the chief officer of that department. Some bungle did occur, and if we visited the sins of the responsible officer on the Minister he would have a heavy burden to carry, and the tone of the remarks of the Minister to-night indicated that he should not be blamed for the maladministration of his supervisors. Referring to the late Chief Inspector of Stock, there was nothing in the evidence to justify the dismissal of Mr. Craig. Mr. Paterson, the Director of Agriculture, who knew Mr. Craig from boyhood, in his report referred to Mr. Craig's retirement in these words:—

An important change has been effected in the stock branch of the department by the retirement of the Chief Inspector of Stock (Mr. J. Morton Craig) on his pension. Mr. Craig has been a valued officer of the stock branch for thirty-one years, and it is mainly through his energy and unwavering enforcement of the State's enactments that scab was eradicated from our flocks. It was a gigantic undertaking considering the enormous area of the country and its wooded condition, while Mr. Craig also experienced considerable opposition from the settlers. His valuable advice in stock matters will be greatly missed, as Mr. Craig had such a general and extensive knowledge of the country.

Mr. Paterson was better qualified to judge than the Minister for Lands or the Premier as to the qualifications of Mr. Craig, who had given 31 years to this

department, and during that time had a most difficult task to perform, coming in contact with cattle raisers and sheep raisers and the stock owners generally. Mr. Craig held a most unpleasant position, and had not received the support of Ministers. If the Minister for Lands intended to adopt the same autocratic attitude in regard to the other sub-departments under him that he had done to the Stock Department the confusion in the Lands Department, which the Minister led one to believe was to be found when he took office, would still be there when he left it. It was to be regretted the Government had supported the decision of the Minister as to the retirement of Mr. Craig, seeing that officer had a good record. Even those whom Mr. Craig came in conflict with in the administration of his department had expressed sympathy with that officer, and were not in agreement with the decision of the Minister. When the Estimates were under consideration he (Mr. Wallace) intended to express his opinion on the officer now holding the position of Chief Inspector of Stock, for that officer was largely responsible for the trouble which had brought about the dismissal of Mr. Craig. There had been too much suppression policy in the past, and he regretted the Minister was not in a position to give information to-night about the disease in swine. The Minister passed the matter over, which was to be regretted, but before the debate concluded perhaps the Minister would give the Committee some information. As far as the land policy of the State was concerned, credit must be given to the Minister for the energy which he had displayed and his desire to become acquainted with the conditions under which people had to settle in the country. As the Minister grew older in office he might see the folly of rushing hastily into matters of dispute. One hoped some consideration would be given to Mr. Craig in addition to his pension.

MR. THOMAS: There would be opportunities of discussing the various items in the Lands estimates when dealt with; therefore he intended to devote most of his remarks to-night to the question of the rabbit invasion. Not only in the past had administration been faulty and negligent in regard to this matter, but

the present Government had been as lax as any in regard to the rabbit invasion. Just at the start of responsible government the member for Plantagenet, whose district extended to Eucla, brought the matter prominently before the House and kept pegging away at it, and after some years of hard work that member succeeded in getting the attention of the Government drawn slightly to the question. At that time the Minister for Lands, he thought it was Mr. Richardson, begged and prayed of Sir John Forrest to give him money to cope with the rabbits while there was time. Sir John Forrest consented to spend £2,000 or £3,000 in the purchase of cats and to send them out into the bush; at any rate, two or three ship-loads of cats were sent to Esperance and landed there, and sent out into the country. On coming into the House three years ago, the first speech which he (Mr. Thomas) made was in reference to the urgent necessity for the Government doing something to stop the rabbit invasion while there was time. He then asked that the Government should cable to any part of the world to get rabbit netting, at any price, so as to put up a fence while there was time. He asked on behalf of the squatters and the settlers and those developing the pastoral interests of the country that they should be protected by a subsidiary line of fencing. He wished to have a line of fence in addition to the one which the Government intended to erect, starting from Starvation Harbour. A deliberate promise was given by Mr. Leake that a subsidiary fence should be erected for the protection of those settlers to the east of the Government fence, but nothing was done in the matter, and this had been going on year after year. He had stated that reports were given that the rabbits were advancing, but that it would be necessary for reports to be received that the rabbits were at Narrogin and Bunbury before the rabbit fence was erected. As far as the eastern settlers were concerned, the Minister for Lands stated that he did not think it would mean the abandonment of the land there, and that he did not know of anyone who had abandoned any holding, or that people were going to fence.

THE MINISTER: Only one case had been brought under his notice, that of

Dempster Brothers, who had asked for netting.

MR. THOMAS: Within the last two or three weeks he had a long interview with Mr. Hewison, who had travelled through the country for many years past, and the report which that gentleman gave him was most alarming. He (Mr. Thomas) did not want to be termed an alarmist, and probably he would be doing injury to some of the settlers and the squatters of his district when giving the facts of the case, but he could not help it, because he believed some of the settlers in his district were responsible, in a certain way, for the state of affairs in regard to the rabbit-proof fence. These settlers desired to realise a good price for their holdings and they were afraid to own that rabbits were approaching, therefore on many occasions the settlers sent reports that the rumours that the rabbits existed in large numbers were incorrect. To-day these settlers were fully alive to the seriousness of the position, and Mr. Hewison told him that there was no hope, but that the settlers around Balladonia and that district would have to give the country best and go somewhere else to get a livelihood.

THE MINISTER: They had not applied for netting.

MR. THOMAS: Settlers had applied for netting. He thought applications and inquiries would be found from Pontaine Bros., Graham, Brooks, Crossing and Anderson, and their predecessors in that station.

THE MINISTER: Not in his time.

MR. THOMAS: In Dr. Jameson's time, but no fencing was available at that time to enable these persons to fence their properties. It appeared the position was that for 200 miles outside of Eucla the country had been eaten as bare as the floor of this House, not a blade of grass left. Had the statements which the member for Plantagenet repeatedly made been acted on, had the report made by Mr. Mason been acted on, had the requests made by Mr. Richardson (then Commissioner for Crown Lands) been acted on, had the requests of Mr. Conolly (then representative of Dundas) been acted on, had his own strong representations been carried out and those of a late Minister for Lands (Mr. Moran) been carried out, we should not now

have this trouble staring us in the face, and settlers who were being ruined or were losing the value of their property would not have to suffer as they were suffering now. Mr. Hewison told him that land he had travelled over some little time ago was then in a splendid state and he was able to feed the cattle he was droving; but that three weeks afterwards, in again passing over what had been splendid country, he found it eaten bare. At the present rate of progress the rabbits were making, they would be at the fence inside two and a half years, and then there would be nothing that could be done to save the rest of the State from invasion. He had been laughed at enough when he tried to rouse this House three years ago; but he had been in contact lately with scores of people who had seen the rabbits, and this House would find that the statements he had been making were not alarmist statements. When he said a short time ago that a portion of the country now being bored for water in connection with the Transcontinental Railway project was worth protecting, the Premier laughed at him; but now the rabbits had cleared that country bare. He hoped that the steps which were being taken would stop their coming past the present fence, because it was too late to do anything towards stopping them from coming east of the fence. If the Minister did not fence now, he would have to go to a bigger expense and have to open a proper stock route to the goldfields; he would have to fence big areas as feeding grounds on the way. The rabbits were passing these stations, and it would be then no good to put up a fence to save a station here or there, for what would be the good if the whole country between a man's station and his market was made as bare as this floor? There would be no feeding ground then for droving the stock to market. The Minister had referred to stations in that district. One station was owned by the Grahams, who were born in the district and had done their best to open it up; and during Mr. Hewison's last trip he bought every animal on the station, when the Grahams quitted it. There would be many more quitting their stations before a few months were over. He would now refer to the case of Inspector White, who had

been dealt with unjustly, and would refer to reports that Mr. White had been giving to the department during years past in reference to the rabbit invasion. Mr. White was a constituent of his, and came to him in Coolgardie on October 30th last and placed his case before him. The file of papers on the table revealed that when he (Mr. Thomas) was strongly advocating a subsidiary fence, Mr. White was against him on that subject and was advising the department not to put up a subsidiary fence to protect Esperance, but to erect a fence farther west. This circumstance showed that in now bringing Mr. White's case before the House he was not prejudiced in Mr. White's favour. On March 12th Mr. White first came through from the south coast to Burracoppin, that being his first tour of inspection, and he reported to the secretary of the Rabbit Department that the coastal contract No. 1 was satisfactory, that No. 2 was satisfactory, that No. 3 contract (145 miles) was satisfactory to the extent of 42 miles then erected. On March 27th, other sub-inspectors then being on the job, Mr. White again went to the line of the fence to put Sub-inspector James on the route, and showed him the line he would have to carefully superintend and inspect, and there left him. Mr. White then returned and went north to put Warnecke on to Dwyer's section of the fence. Then Mr. White tried to go 250 miles north with horses, but had to turn back because there was no feed and no water. This he reported to the department. When the Minister was speaking, he led members to believe that it was Mr. White's fault, that it was his proposal to go ahead north with horses over country which Surveyor Canning had failed to do with camels. [THE MINISTER: No.] Mr. White reported to the department that he had to turn back with horses because there was no feed and no water. The next inspection started on April 18th, and was reported as soon as Mr. White could get to a place to write it, and it was reported to the department on April 27th. At that time Mr. White stated that the fence which had been inspected by Sub-inspectors James and Warnecke was very unsatisfactory, and that he was writing to the former (James) and had interviewed the latter, and said

the rain had washed away some of the fencing, that the trench was only three inches deep in places, that the straining posts were cut under size, and that he wrote to Sub-inspector James very strongly, telling him he could not put up with the work of inspection which was going on in that contract. This was on April 27th. On April 30th he wrote to Cocking, contractor, saying he had instructed the sub-inspectors that everything was to be carried out to the letter, and that he must be personally assured that everything was properly done before he would pass any more progress payments. In his letter to Cocking he said that 15 miles of the fence would have to be gone over again. That was his second tour. He started next from Burracoppin on April 18th, travelling about 30 miles a day on the average, and he next went to Starvation Boat Harbour and was delayed a week cancelling a contract and reletting it. As to Mr. White's attention to duty, he (Mr. Thomas) had this assurance not only from Mr. White, but from other people in his district whom White had offended in regard to this fencing business, that during the whole time he had spent with the department he travelled night and day all over the country, and very rarely did he take a Sunday off, but that on this occasion he went home on Sunday and Monday. Next he went to Burracoppin, and started north 150 miles to report on the country in that direction. These were the dates of only a few of the more important letters, and showed the gist of the letters Mr. White wrote. Mr. White came to Perth in June, handed in his report, and found for the first time that no provision was made on the annual Estimates for his salary for the next year. On the 29th June he wrote to the department asking for the grounds of his dismissal; and he (Mr. Thomas) was informed that no reply had ever been received.

THE MINISTER: Read the file.

MR. THOMAS: Directly. On the 26th June Mr. White wrote a report to the secretary of the Rabbit Department, giving the result of the trip north. The next inspection Mr. White made of the fence was in August. After returning from the trip north and writing his

report in Perth on 26th June, Mr. White went to Esperance to get his plant together, and from Esperance to Starvation Boat Harbour. All would recognise that after going from Perth to Coolgardie, thence in five or seven days to Esperance, and thence to Starvation Boat Harbour, he must have been very quick to get to the fence in August. From the 92-Mile, at Emu Rock, south of Burracoppin, he wrote to Sub-Inspector James on 15th August, stating that he found the standards bad; that instead of the holes being dumped down with a bar, the standards had been driven in on the slant a few inches, and then bent so as to appear in an upright position above the ground; that the flood gates were unsatisfactory; that in many instances the netting was not down four inches; and that he estimated that over 30 per cent. of the standards were unsatisfactory. On the 20th August he wrote to Cocking from the 79-Mile Rocks in regard to contract No. 3, and gave Cocking notice that under Clause 8 of the agreement he (Mr. White) would annul the contract, and referred to letters repeatedly written to Mr. James insisting on better work. On the 26th August Mr. White wrote to the secretary of the department, telling him again that Cocking's contract was most unsatisfactory; that a fine had been inflicted on Cocking; that he (Mr. White) had spoken of the standards, and had threatened to annul Cocking's contract. This letter it was certain the Minister had never seen.

THE MINISTER: Quite right.

MR. THOMAS: The letter stated also that the wire netting sent to him, and supposed to have been inspected by the celebrated Mr. Carruthers, our consulting engineer in London, and by Mr. Wilson when it landed at Fremantle, was not up to the standard, and that it was from an inch to an inch and a half too narrow. Mr. White stated in his letter, and this was evidently the crux of the whole case:—

In view of these above discrepancies, I am reluctantly compelled to suggest that Sub-inspector James be transferred to some other work than that of inspection, as he has evidently not displayed that firmness in seeing the work carried out in accordance with the specifications that he should have done. Before, however, taking this step, I should

much prefer if you could personally inspect the work and decide for yourself.

That was the action of an honourable man. From the 27th March till the 26th August Mr. White had been repeatedly warning Mr. James that his work was entirely unsatisfactory, and not only had he written to Mr. James to that effect, but he had threatened the contractor, and sent full information on every point to the secretary of the department. As to Mr. White's resignation, he was justified in resigning; in fact, after Mr. White had placed his case before him (Mr. Thomas), on the 30th October, he had almost advised Mr. White to take that action, because he could see that Mr. White had no chance, while in the department, of getting justice. On the 29th June Mr. White wrote to the Director of Agriculture:—

Re my dismissal. I have been too busy, since my arrival in Perth, in preparation of my report on the northern trip and progress payments in connection with the department, to go fully into the matter, neither were my copies of letters sent, or replies received thereto, available until now, as I had to send for them. I have already expressed my surprise, both to you and to the secretary, at the verbal intimations I received that my services would be dispensed with in this summary manner; but as I have this intimation, and knowing that the Estimates are under consideration, I now take this opportunity of placing my position before you. I understand, both from you and the secretary, that the grounds for dismissal are that I resigned, or intended doing so at once. I fail to see that any such interpretation can be placed on any letter of mine addressed to the department. On the contrary, in my application for an increase, based on a conversation held with the secretary on the 17th April last, no reference was made to resigning; and in the course of conversation I distinctly told the secretary I had no intention of resigning immediately. If you go farther back to my letter of the 12th April—the only one in which I made any reference to resigning—I distinctly stated I did not intend resigning. I was not and am not prepared, by resigning or dismissal, to waive my claim to any leave of absence or retiring allowance I am entitled to (and the fairness of which has been assented to by the late Minister, Dr. Jameson) by retiring before my 12 months' engagement expires. My locomotion and subsistence allowances to which I am entitled under the scale of allowances to public servants travelling on duty have also accumulated, and accounts of these will be submitted on receipt of my books from Esperance.

I respectfully submit that the following is my position, and trust that you will take a fair and impartial view of the matter. I was

employed in the first instance at a salary of £200 per annum, residing at my home at Esperance as headquarters, and finding my own plant. Secondly, I was transferred to Norseman as my headquarters, with an increase of salary amounting in all to £350 per annum, and was also required to find my own plant and horses. Since then I have been constantly travelling all over the State, which has necessitated my using three times the quantity of horseflesh in the shape of horses and mules, and I was verbally promised by the late Minister, Mr. Sommers, an additional allowance for fodder for horses and mules. This not having been made, and the Civil Service Commission having been created, and being informed that I should be required in evidence, and being told that any increase decided on by them would be retrospective and would date as from 30th of June last, I was quite content to abide by their decision; but, to my surprise, some days after being informed I should require to give evidence, I saw their report appearing in the daily newspapers to the effect that my position was to remain as before at a salary of £350. It was not until after this intimation (the only intimation I have had other than verbal that my position was to be abolished) that I made an application for additional allowance, and was disallowed by the Minister, as per letter from secretary dated May 7, 1903. A day or two after this, I was again notified that the Civil Service Commission required my evidence, and proceeded to Perth and laid my case before them, and if in their report they decided I was entitled to an additional allowance I think I should have been notified of it. I have given my whole undivided attention to my duties in this and the Stock Department since my appointment, working alternately seven mules and five horses, often travelling from 4 a.m. to 9 p.m., unaccompanied, over long, dry stretches of desert country, and sometimes with only an allowance of three quarts of water a day for my own use and two gallons each for horses and mules, and then had to snatch an hour or two's sleep so as not to let the horses or mules stray, as in the event of such happening it probably meant perishing with thirst. Knowing the opposition there was in certain quarters to the recommendation of the Royal Commission to inquire into the rabbit question, viz., to create a new department, I declined to accept the position, which meant sacrificing my interests at Esperance and removing my family to Perth, which you will admit as things are would have been very short-sighted policy, and would have placed me even in a worse position than I stand in to-day.

He was apparently offered the billet of head of the department.

THE MINISTER: Was that the hon. member's statement?

MR. THOMAS: That was inferred by him from the letter, which was an official document. He (Mr. Thomas)

would make the assertion that this officer was offered the position. The letter went on:

I have never at any time neglected my work and never left for to-morrow what could be done to-day, and have never suggested or recommended any matter to the department which I did not think was to its best interests. In fact I have made many enemies of old friends, and am myself a sufferer by not recommending the enclosure of portion of the Esperance district within the barrier fence, and that this fence is not completed to-day to a greater distance is due entirely to my recommendation not being promptly carried out, as my letters will show. I claim to have been doing two men's work for the last 12 or 18 months, and I have asked that a thorough inspection might be made of the work carried out both in fencing and in water conservation, and in the latter I claim that no work has been carried out of a similar nature in any of the Government departments at so low a cost. I also claim to have, through delaying of tenders for a fortnight, saved the department over £1,600 in one contract alone, of which the late Minister, Dr. Jameson, was fully aware, and probably the Premier will remember. If the dismissal is to take place, I should be notified of it, in writing, and I ask that the grounds for such should be stated, so that I may be in a position to take such action as I may think fit under the circumstances, and not find myself stranded at Kimberley Ranges or some other outlandish place at a minute's notice. As it is, it will take me three months to collect or dispose of my plant, which is scattered from Mount Magnet to Eucla. I cannot help thinking there is no inducement for anyone to enter the Government service and endeavour to do their duty.

To this letter, written on the 29th June, he received no reply. During the time Mr. White was on this job he had to travel on an average about 30 miles a day, all over the country practically. He had to find his own plant. On an average he worked at least two mules and two horses, and on some occasions he had as many as 15 horses, seven mules, and two camels. He had to keep and pay a black boy, and the cost could, one supposed, be put at 15s. or £1 a week. Out of that £150 Mr. White had to pay for all the fodder and keep these horses, camels, and mules going, and if he went away he had, unless able to send these horses back to his paddock in Esperance, to pay someone else for the hire of a paddock. Should not the promise made be carried out? That promise was given verbally, and there was every reason to believe Mr. Charles Sommers was not going back upon the promise. That man had

travelled and stayed at hotels. If travelling in the back country, his breakfast, luncheon, and dinner would cost 3s., and his bed 3s., and then he had to buy tucker for his nigger. If he travelled by steamer, the steamer fare was paid, if by coach the coach fare, and if by rail his ticket was given him; but if he travelled on the railway he had to pay for his meals. If summoned to Perth—and he had been summoned to Perth lots of times to look into the question of new specifications for contracts—he had to stay at a hotel, and the department had not paid his expenses. He (Mr. Thomas) did not believe the Minister knew these facts, otherwise the hon. gentleman would not have dared to put up with such a scandalous state of affairs as had existed for the last two years in connection with Inspector White, who did his utmost all the time he was with the Government. Out of a salary of £350 there was not much left when he had to incur such heavy expenditure. It was scandalous, and the Minister did not know the full facts of the case. The file proceeded. The secretary of the Rabbit Department (Mr. Wilson) wrote to the Director of Agriculture as follows :—

I have read Mr. Inspector White's letter hereunder. It is evident the writer was smarting under a feeling of disappointment—

Probably the reference was to the chief position in the department. The letter proceeded :—

and imagined wrong on hearing of the proposal to make no provision for his services on the draft Estimates for the ensuing year; and he has been led in consequence to take a somewhat extreme view of the matter throughout. I cannot help agreeing with you that Mr. Inspector White has himself been largely responsible for any such action as it was proposed to take in the direction of retiring him, though no suggestion has ever fallen from me that it was Mr. White's wish to resign immediately. His various expressions to me, both verbally and in writing, to the effect that he was "pretty nearly full up of" the work.

If the statements made were correct, no wonder the officer was full up of the work. He worked 20 hours out of the 24, and could only snatch a few hours' sleep each day. The letter continued—

and his hints at resigning were followed up by his writing, on 12th April, "I have fully made up my mind to resign," unless he were granted farther concessions by the Government.

One would think so. The letter proceeded :—

I therefore got him to formulate this, resulting in his claim for forage allowance, which claim was refused.

This was a report by a man who had the comfortable job of sitting in an office :—

Mr. White has persistently intimated to me that his private affairs were in much need of his whole time and attention; and that in any case his intention was to remain in the service only until such time as he had accumulated a certain amount of funds which he needed for private enterprises, and which, I understood him to say, would take him to about the end of the present calendar year, or till the fencing contracts then in progress were completed.

One would like to know whether Mr. Wilson was in the habit of placing private conversations upon a public file, and whether he knew the meaning of the word loyalty to those who had acted honestly and justly towards him while in the department. He would like to ask Mr. Wilson a few questions through the Minister, and when he had done so the Minister would agree with him. The letter proceeded :—

I do not think it has ever been denied that Mr. Inspector White is a most zealous officer, who has not spared himself in the interests of the department. At the same time I can scarcely indorse his implied suggestion that all the burden, as well as all the credit for the success of the department, lies with him alone; or that in carrying out his share of the work he has been able to accomplish a great amount more than any other good man in his position might have done. Whether he is being adequately compensated I am hardly in a position to say—

Who would be in a better position to say than the head of the department ?

not understanding very clearly what allowances have been due to him all along. I may say in conclusion, that I am glad to learn it is now proposed to continue Mr. White's services. Otherwise, with the gradual expansion of the work, it would shortly become necessary to appoint another good man, we having no officer in the department at present capable of taking up such duties as will be required of an inspector in Mr. White's position for some time yet.

Mr. White's letter, together with Mr. Wilson's minute, was sent on for the information of the Minister for Lands. The previous minute was dated April 16th. This minute reached Mr. Crawford on 27th October, which was in keeping with the red-tapeism so apparent in the State in times gone past. It got

into the department on the 16th July and reached Mr. Crawford on the 27th October, three and a half months afterwards. Mr. Crawford said :—

This file came to hand unexpectedly to-day while looking for some others. It has a strong bearing on Mr. White's claim now before you for travelling allowances. On page 2 he admits that he made a claim for travelling allowances, but that it was refused and that he was then content to await the recommendation of the Royal Commission. The Commission does not seem to have recommended that he should have allowances. According to the foregoing Mr. White's claim for £400 allowances has no grounds for existing.

The minute took three and a-half months to reach Mr. Crawford, who wrote this minute for the Minister's inspection, but the Minister did not see it till 10 days afterwards, and he signed it on 6th November. On the 2nd November Mr. White wrote the letter which the Minister had read to the Committee, stating that he was most unjustly and unfairly treated with regard to allowances, and that he could not submit any longer to the way in which the business was carried on by some of the inspectors to whom he had to submit, and that he wanted to be relieved of his position. The Minister said to-day and insinuated that Inspector White only resigned because he had heard a hint that the Minister for Lands when he was at Northam found out certain things, and that because Inspector White was afraid to face the matter he had sent in his resignation.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: With due respect to the hon. member, he (the Minister) said that if Inspector White took that course, it followed on the reading of despatches which had been sent by him (the Minister) to Ravens-thorpe.

MR. THOMAS: The Minister considered that because of something he had learned at Northam, Inspector White had forestalled him and sent in his resignation. He (Mr. Thomas), because Mr. White was one of his constituents, was able to entirely refute that statement. On 30th October Mr. White met him at Coolgardie and went through the matter with him and introduced him to Mr. Hewison, whom he (Mr. Thomas) had mentioned earlier. Inspector White showed his letter books, and convinced

him (Mr. Thomas) that the inspector was being unjustly treated, and he almost went so far as to tell the inspector to wire his resignation to Perth.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Why did the hon. member not tell the inspector to see his Minister?

MR. THOMAS: That matter would be dealt with afterwards. Mr. White stated that he would go to Burracoppin, but knew the department was going to send him up north, and that no provision was made for his salary on the Estimates. He said that he was going to be dismissed, and did not intend to have his dismissal when out in the bush but wanted his dismissal amidst civilisation where he could collect his kit. Mr. White also told him (Mr. Thomas) that unless he could get justice meted out to him about his travelling allowances that he would hand in his resignation to the department and see that justice was done. That was sufficient explanation.

THE MINISTER: It was a fair inference to draw that when the inspector refused to see the Minister there was something he was afraid of.

MR. THOMAS: After Mr. White's resignation went in there was a letter from Mr. Crawford to the Minister for Lands. It was dated 5th November, and the letter had a very distinct bearing on the Minister's action. The letter was handed in on the 3rd inst. and was as follows :—

On the 3rd inst. Mr. White handed me his resignation, and as I knew you wanted to see him I rang you up on the telephone and advised you that Mr. White was then in my office. According to your verbal instructions then given I asked Mr. White to make out a brief report as to the condition of the rabbits on the western side of the fence at the present time, and to meet you, in my company, the following morning at nine o'clock. Mr. White stated that he had already written out one report some time ago, and he refused to give any further information on the subject.

He would deal with the question as to the western side of the fence when he had finished with the file. The letter went on to deal with the matter, but the Minister had read it and it would appear in *Hansard*. Then on the 6th the Minister wrote :—

By special messenger instructions have been issued for the immediate dismissal of Chief Inspector White and other supervisors

along the line of fence responsible for the shortcomings of the various contractors.

THE MINISTER: That was based on his own letter.

MR. THOMAS: On his own report.

THE MINISTER: In which he said the fence was in a bad condition.

MR. THOMAS: Certainly. That was on the file which he wished to have on the table; the Minister had promised to lay the files on the table.

THE MINISTER: It was not to be expected that he would search all the records of the office for himself.

MR. THOMAS: The letter went on to say:—

You will please note his refusal to supply me with a report as to his recent doings and also his refusal to see me in company with the Director of Agriculture. I understand that all outdoor work has been under the supervision of Inspector White. After independent inquiries have been made, I am possessed with the information that the fence is not up to specification and is altogether discreditable.

The Minister had stated that after an independent inquiry had been made he was "possessed with the information that the fence is not up to specification." Why did not the Minister read the inspector's report wherein he stated time after time that the fence was not up to specification?

THE MINISTER: That was easily explained.

MR. THOMAS: The letter went on to say:—

He is seized with a burning desire to have this fact made known, apparently regardless of the fact that he is one of those regarded by the department as being primarily responsible. A statement is made regarding the appointment of Mr. James. Please advise me—1, On whose recommendation Mr. James was appointed to the position in the Rabbit Department. 2, If he is in any way responsible for the condition of the fence to-day, please order his immediate dismissal. Inspector White from his communication of the 2nd inst. is apparently anxious to resign before his dismissal was effected, and submits two reasons for so doing.

That was about his travelling expenses.

THE MINISTER: Why not read the first reason?

MR. THOMAS: It would be read. In reference to the travelling expenses he stated:—

I consider I have been most unfairly and unjustly treated for the last three years in my travelling and subsistence expenses not being

paid, and it will be necessary for me to take action to recover same.

The Minister in reply to that stated:—

The first is of course untenable and absurd.

THE MINISTER: That was shown in another file in the department which the hon. member could also have on the table

MR. THOMAS: The Minister went on to say:—

The second he alone is entirely responsible for, inasmuch that the methods followed by either Inspector White or his staff have been regulated, so far as I know, by Inspector White himself.

The file then went on to show that Mr. Wilson wrote to the Acting Director of Agriculture:—

In reply to the query in the hon. the Minister's minute on the preceding page, as to upon whose recommendation Mr. Fred. James was appointed to a position in the Rabbit Department, I beg to say that he was first casually mentioned to me by the late Minister, Mr. Sommers, as an applicant for a position. Later on Dr. Jameson (then Minister for Lands) instructed me to give him a place at the first opportunity. He was also recommended by Mr. Surveyer Canning, under whom he had been working.

Then there was a letter by Dr. Jameson directing that he was to be put on. Then appeared an initialled note informing Mr. James that his services were dispensed with as directed. Then came a cutting from an article in the Press which it was not necessary to read. Then the Minister sent the following to the Director of Agriculture:—

Will you please have the following questions answered by Mr. Wilson:—1, When I recalled Inspector White to Perth was he not under instructions to proceed north to report on timber, water, etc.? 2, On whose certificates have the progress payments been made on fence contracts?

The Acting Director of Agriculture sent the following reply:—

Replying to above: 1, Yes. 2, In most cases and whenever possible on Inspector White's certificate: though there were occasions when, owing to Inspector White not being available, the certificate of the sub-inspector in charge had to be taken to enable the contractor to carry on. This occurred twice, I believe, in Cocking's contract.

The next paper gave the dates of the payments to Cocking.

THE MINISTER: The certificates.

MR. THOMAS: Yes. The payment in 1903 on the authority of Inspector

White and the March payment also on the authority of Inspector White. He would like members to cast their memory back for a moment to the time when in giving a history of the case he showed where Mr. White had been. On March 12 he had passed 42 miles of Cocking's contract as being eminently satisfactory. The April payment was passed on his authority because he went down in April and May, as had been shown by the letters read to the Committee. He insisted on 15 miles of the fencing being done before he would pass it, and then he gave Mr. James a nasty knock over the knuckles and said if there was any more of that sort of trouble he would write to the department and report the whole thing. Between the 18th April and May Mr. White saw Mr. James and insisted that the bad fence was to be put in order; then there was a letter from Mr. James saying that the fence had been put in order. In May Mr. White inspected the fence and found it in order, and passed amounts for £652 and £891 in April and May as being correct. And while he was complaining so frequently from June till October, every one of those progress-payment slips was signed by Mr. James.

THE MINISTER said he had read Mr. White's own file.

MR. THOMAS : The last item on this file was a long minute by the Minister, addressed to the Acting Director of Agriculture :—

I note on folio 5 a clear explanation of how Mr. Inspector White was left off the draft Estimates as compiled by the department. The late Director of Agriculture frequently assured me of Mr. White's determination to sever his connection with the department at the end of the current year.

THE MINISTER: Members should clearly understand that he (the Minister) was not responsible for leaving Mr. White out of the draft-Estimates.

MR. THOMAS said he admitted that; but it had nothing to do with the question. The minute continued :—

I now interpret his resignation proposals as having been given as a means to induce the Government to increase the salary and allowances paid. Whilst at Northam I learned that Inspector White was at Burracoppin, about to proceed northwards to inspect the country lying north of a point 250 miles north of the railway line. Knowing that Surveyor Canning has been for some considerable time past

engaged on this work, I failed to see the necessity of Inspector White and an assistant being despatched with horses to do that which Mr. Canning has found almost impossible with the aid of camels.

That was perfectly sound; and Mr. White's report to the department showed the utter futility of trying without camels to go through that country, and that he had for three days been delayed in his inspection by having to go to Coolgardie to purchase a camel. The minute continued :—

Having meanwhile learned of the unsatisfactory condition of the fence and the prevalence of rabbits to the westward of the fence, I wired from Northam requesting Inspector White to return to Perth. On his return, no doubt learning that I was possessed of this information, he tendered his resignation as per folio 9.

THE MINISTER: That was the only possible inference, and a fair inference.

MR. THOMAS said he had understood the Minister to state, when he (Mr. Thomas) said it was a fair inference, that it was not a fair inference. This was the inference which the Minister drew from the circumstance, and which he noted in the minute :—

I note your comments on folio 10, and would direct your attention to my reply on folio 11. It is very clear that had I not recalled Inspector White, the resignation dated November 2 and headed Burracoppin would never have been handed in.

Talk about inferences! Here were definite statements by the Minister, on his own file :—

I also note minute by secretary of Rabbit Department, stating that in many cases and wherever possible progress payments were made on Inspector White's certificates, details of which are given on folio hereunder.

As to the Burracoppin business, a wire was sent on the 12th October by the Minister for Lands to Mr. White at Burracoppin: "Please wire me on your arrival at Burracoppin for instructions." Mr. White got there and wired. He left Coolgardie on the afternoon of Friday, the 30th, and arrived at Burracoppin on the 31st, and at 10-30 o'clock in the evening received a wire :—

Await instructions before proceeding north. Acknowledge wire, also advise the secretary.

Mr. White wired to the Minister on the 2nd :—

Message received. Posted extract *Kalgoorlie Miner* last night. Suggest sending fodder, as some of the dogs forwarded starving.

That showed that Mr. White did communicate when at Burracoppin, and the Minister must regard the evidence as satisfactory.

THE MINISTER: Yes; and that had been explained in his speech to-night.

MR. THOMAS: The Minister rightly inferred that Mr. White resigned because of something he had learned after the Minister reached Northam; and the Minister was right in making that inference and minuting it; but he (Mr. Thomas) repeated that Inspector White saw him on the 30th October and then stated his intention of resigning, and this was before the Minister got to Northam; therefore the Minister might conclude that this incident had nothing to do with the handing in of Mr. White's resignation.

THE MINISTER: That he would admit willingly enough; and after investigation he would probably have taken a different view but for that letter of Inspector White, who if he had not written it would have been retained like Mr. Wilson. As the hon. member acknowledged, he (the Minister) had no alternative on receiving Mr. White's letter.

MR. THOMAS: With regard to rabbits west of the fence, the Minister took a firm action when he, regardless of expense, sent out a trustworthy man to see whether rabbits were there. But Inspector White had cause for annoyance over the matter; for months previously he had recommended the appointment of two men at £3 10s. a week each to destroy rabbits west of the fence. In August, 1902, he reported that these rabbits existed; and ever since until he left the service he had continued to send such reports. He (Mr. Thomas) was not now attacking the Minister, but the Minister's predecessor and the Government. Most of these events occurred prior to the Minister's taking office. Mr. White's recommendation was not acted on, but two men were subsequently sent out, drawing apparently £13 or £14 a week between them, this presumably including all travelling expenses. White naturally felt annoyed at his recommendations being ignored; and then, when the present Minister asked White for a farther report of how the rabbits west of the fence were getting on, White replied in effect, "No; I have

given you my full reports time after time; you have disregarded them; I will not give you any more information; I have resigned and finished with the whole thing." He (Mr. Thomas), being hot - tempered, would probably have gone even farther. He would have occasion later to refer to this matter. In conclusion, he wished to deal with these progress payments. The explanation he had just given, comparing the dates of Mr. White's own letters, was amply sufficient to clear Mr. White for the whole of the contracts. Mr. White had to travel enormous distances, and it was an impossibility for him to stand alongside the construction of the fence every minute, so he had to depend on someone. He did not want to sign progress payments, as he told Mr. Wilson both verbally and by letters. Mr. Wilson here in Perth filled up some of the progress payment slips for various contracts, and insisted on Inspector White signing the progress payments. He (Mr. Thomas) believed Inspector White did inspect the greater part of the work, but he could not do that when travelling, therefore the secretary should have taken, as he did in the rest of the instances, the report of the sub-inspector that things were all right. Inspector White told Secretary Wilson that he did not want to sign these progress payments for any work that he had not thoroughly inspected and been in close touch with, but Secretary Wilson insisted that every progress payment slip that went in when Inspector White was available should be signed by Inspector White, and some of these were filled up by Secretary Wilson himself. He (Mr. Thomas) had looked at the press copies of letters. It was impossible for Inspector White to personally supervise every single inch of the fence, and for that reason sub-inspectors were appointed. Sub-inspector James was one of them, and that sub-inspector was at the root of the whole trouble. Another was Warnecke, who was dismissed for passing bad work in Dwyer's contract, and the man who got him dismissed was Inspector White. Inspector White reported against Warnecke, and Warnecke's dismissal took place.

THE MINISTER: No letter was seen by him.

MR. THOMAS: One could infer that from the remarks the Minister had made. He believed in the honesty of the Minister in this connection, and said the hon. gentleman had been grossly deceived by somebody, and had made a scapegoat of the wrong man.

THE MINISTER: No.

MR. THOMAS said he was convinced of the honesty of the hon. gentleman, but through the Minister's acting with youthful impetuosity the wrong man had been made to suffer. Inspector White was not the man who went wrong in this matter, but Sub-inspector James, who went very badly astray. Inspector White was on Sub-inspector James's track every day. He reported to the department, wrote to James himself, and also wrote to the contractor that he would have nothing more to do with him, that he insisted on everything being carried out to the letter, or he would demand the man's dismissal, which he did in the letter of the 26th August. So far as one could gather inspections were carried out by sub-inspectors, and Inspector White considered that signing his name to these progress payments was only a *pro forma* matter. Inspector White was, however, foolish in that connection, and should have refused to do it. When the Secretary demanded that Inspector White should sign the slips, Inspector White should have told the chief to go somewhere, and should have gone straight to his Minister and said he would not submit to it. Had that been done, the Minister would probably have met Inspector White, and there would have been no trouble and no occasion for any minutes on the file for the dismissal of one of the best public servants we had had in Western Australia.

THE MINISTER: Did one understand the hon. member to say the secretary of the department demanded that Mr. White should sign certificates for work he had not inspected?

MR. THOMAS: Yes. He was not in possession of the files, but having looked through all the letter-books he asserted that one of the two men was a liar, either Inspector White or Secretary Wilson, and he knew the Minister was going to find out during the next two or three days who was the liar. He (Mr. Thomas) had had an opportunity of going through

copies of everything Inspector White sent to the department, and letters which he had received in connection with correspondence with Warnecke, James, Cocking, Dwyer, and others. He (Mr. Thomas) considered that Inspector White was being unjustly treated, and he knew full well the Minister would inquire into the facts. The conduct of the Minister would be in keeping with plenty of other things the Ministry had been doing during the last three years, acting impetuously but also acting honestly. No one could doubt that, but if they made these mistakes they had to take the blame for them.

THE TREASURER: Of course Ministers were willing to take the blame.

MR. THOMAS: Charges had been made against the department where wrong had been done, and the Government had to take the blame. Members of the Opposition were in the House to fight political battles, and they could not allow everything to be smoothed over. They had to see that wrongs were righted, otherwise there was no need to have an Opposition. Many complaints had been made against the Government and many explanations had been offered. The Premier said at Bunbury that there were to be only two parties in the House. If the Premier in the past was a firm believer in non-party government, now that he was in power he did not agree with the principle, but said that with the people who had put him in power and kept his administration going for three years, the Labour bench, he had finished, and that at the next election he would have no rail-sitters. He (Mr. Thomas) was not a supporter of the James Government, nor a supporter of the Labour party. This matter was simply in keeping with the rest, and he simply referred to it because the Government claimed that they could commit no mistakes and do nothing wrong in administering the affairs of the State. The Opposition believed it, provided the Government told us honestly what was done. The Government should not suffer for any wrong honestly committed and honestly admitted. He apologised for going into this matter at length, but it was in order to justify a much maligned member of the public and to try and see justice done that person. Now the case was brought forward, the Minister

would, he understood, see that justice was done.

On motion by Mr. JACOBY, progress reported and leave given to sit again.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 11:37 o'clock, until the next Tuesday.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 17th November, 1903.

	PAGE
Railway Bridge, William Street, Information ...	2107
Bills: Audit, the procedure on amendments ...	2107
Companies Duty Act Continuance, third reading ...	2107
Municipal Institutions Act Amendment, second reading, in Committee, reported ...	2107
Redistribution of Seats, in Committee resumed, progress ...	2117
Election of Senators, second reading ...	2123
Supreme Court Act Amendment, second reading, in Committee, reported ...	2123

THE PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4:30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the COLONIAL SECRETARY: New Parliament House, plans of buildings now being proceeded with. Alterations in Railway Classification and Rate Book. Additions to gaol regulations. Coolgardie municipality, by-laws.

Ordered, to lie on the table.

RAILWAY BRIDGE, WILLIAM STREET.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY, in farther reference to a question asked on the 13th October by Hon. G. Randell, presented the following additional information from the Railway Department: "The accommodation which has been provided, it is considered, will meet the case; and there will be no cause of complaint. It is out of the question to erect a bridge for foot passengers."

AUDIT BILL.

ASSEMBLY'S MESSAGE, PROCEDURE.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY brought up the report of the Standing Orders Committee on Message No. 16 from the Legislative Assembly.

Report adopted, and a message accordingly returned to the Assembly.

COMPANIES DUTY ACT CONTINUANCE BILL.

Read a third time, and *passed*.

MUNICIPAL INSTITUTIONS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

HON. J. A. THOMSON (Central), in moving the second reading, said: This is a Bill of a semi-private character, the second reading of which the Colonial Secretary has allowed a private member to move, and I, as an old city councillor, have been asked to take the measure in hand. The Bill is very short, and from my experience of municipal work I think it is a necessary measure. I was one of the councillors who moved that the city council should purchase a quarrying plant, the reason being that it was considered necessary for the city council to have a quarrying plant of their own in consequence of the extraordinarily high price the council were being charged for road metal and also the scarcity of metal at that high price. Very often, when metal was required for an urgent work, it was quite impossible to obtain it from private sources. Therefore it was considered necessary in the interests of the city of Perth to have a quarry and plant established. That was in 1897. It has been found that the Municipalities Act, although giving permission to a council or a municipality to borrow money for the purpose of acquiring plant, does not give power to use the plant for their own requirements. Singularly enough the Act does not give power to the city council to employ men to work the plant or in any way to carry on the works. The council have power to purchase and erect works, and this short Bill is introduced for the purpose of giving power to the city council to enable them to work the quarry in the interests of the ratepayers at large.