

high purposes and ideals in connection with education are to be commended. I only wish the State were in the position that it was able to support him in carrying out his projects.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: He needs to learn the meaning of economy.

Mr. ANGELO: I only hope when the present bad times are passed that the Minister for Education is still with us, holding his high and noble position, and that he will then be able to carry out his ideals.

Hon. T. Walker: You are breaking his heart by speeches of this kind.

Mr. ANGELO: I hope I shall break his heart to the extent that he will agree to this reduction which we are so anxious to make. When the time does come that the State is in a position to enable that Minister to carry out his high ideals, I hope he will still be in his present position.

Hon. T. Walker: Do you want to immortalise the Ministry? There is no education in that.

Mr. ANGELO: At all events I hope that when good times come again the State will be able to assist him in carrying out what he so much desires.

Mr. Holman: What do you think of the Training College?

[The Chairman resumed the Chair.]

Mr. ANGELO: I would be sorry in any way to touch the Training College. It is very necessary to keep our teachers up to that high standard which this State would always like to see its teachers holding. When we come to the Items, I hope that some hon. members will fully explain the benefits of the Training College, and I hope to spare the pruning knife as much as possible in that direction.

Mr. MALEY: Would I be in order, Mr. Chairman, in moving for a reduction in the Education vote at this stage?

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member would not be in order.

Mr. MALEY: It has been the general practice on the introduction of a departmental vote to permit a member to move for the reduction of that vote.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is not in order.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Progress reported.

BILL—CURATOR OF INTESTATE ESTATES.

Returned from the Legislative Council, with an amendment.

House adjourned 6-32 a.m. (Wednesday).

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 13th March, 1918.

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

BILL—HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Assembly.

BILL—VERMIN BOARDS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 5th March.

Hon. H. STEWART (South-East) [4.37]: In offering a few remarks on this Bill, I wish to compliment the Honorary Minister upon having brought forward this very necessary legislation, and not only for that reason, but for having on the whole placed it before the House in a clear and concise manner, so that it can be readily comprehended by those who have not had the necessary time to study it for themselves. It is the view particularly of the agriculturists of this country, and others who are affected by the rabbit pest, that these amendments have been badly needed for a considerable period of years. As has been pointed out by officers of the department, previous Ministers have taken no action whatever. We now trust that the recommendations of the permanent officer of the Rabbit Department will be put into effect, so that the Government will have no excuse for not seeing that the pest is coped with in the best possible manner, with the limited means at their disposal, as for example the scarcity of netting and poison brought about by the war conditions. I would also like to draw the attention of the Honorary Minister to Section 5 of the old Act, in which it is stated to be optional for the Government to give power to the roads boards of the State to expend money on their behalf, and to point out to the Honorary Minister that there is a way in which, instead of building up a larger Government department than already exists, greater efficiency in administration might be obtained by handing over to the roads board a considerable portion of the work which the Rabbit Department, under adverse and limited conditions, have been obliged to do. If the provision contained in Section 5 is reasonably availed of some more systematic and efficient administration will be obtained than if an endeavour is made to do the whole of the work by the department. I would next like to draw the attention of the Honorary Minister to Clause 13 of the 1909 Act with regard to the voting strength. The voting strength as laid down there sets up an anomalous position. One can very easily find the case of a person who holds, say, 5,000 acres of freehold land only being entitled to one vote, and yet he has a great deal more at stake than, for example, the holder of a little

over 10,000 acres of leasehold, who would be entitled to two votes. Other hon. members have pointed out several discrepancies with regard to the voting power in connection with the rates to be levied by the road boards. What I have already mentioned might well be taken into consideration in conjunction with what the Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom and the Hon. Mr. Miles have said. We have also to see, in connection with this Act, that the man who can least afford to pay should not be unduly penalised. In this connection I would refer to Section 40, Subsection 3 of the Act. There is a provision there with regard to the recovery of debts due in connection with fencing and so forth, as follows:—

If default is made in respect to any annual sum so payable by way of interest as aforesaid, such annual sum, together with one-tenth more by way of penalty shall be recoverable, and payment thereof may be enforced by the board in the same manner in which rates under this Act may be recovered and payment thereof enforced by a board.

When we consider the many people who are coping with the rabbits in these distressing circumstances, we must realise that if the Bill provided for an amendment of that sub-clause so that it would read that this one-tenth additional penalty should be optional, and at the discretion of the board or the Minister, so as to come into line with the roads board rates, no harm would be done, and that this would be a help to those who at the present time will find it a difficult matter to finance the situation. I would like to see that clause read so that the word "shall" would be altered to "may"—that is to say, "the annual sum, together with one-tenth more by way of penalty, may be recovered." It would be giving latitude similar to that which is already given with respect to road boards rates. I am simply asking for this to be put on a par with the road board rates. When we turn to the 1915 amending Act we see that the tendency is for the Act to be administered with consideration for those who are already suffering from the ravages of the pest. On page 2 of this Act, in the last portion of Section 2, Subsection 2, the following occurs:—

Provided that no proceedings shall be taken for the recovery of rates heretofore struck if, and so long as, the amount thereof is paid by equal annual instalments extending over ten years from the commencement of this Act; the first of such instalments to be payable at the expiration of one month from the commencement of the Act, and every subsequent instalment to become payable at the expiration of each succeeding period of twelve calendar months.

In that Subsection it is shown that the tendency is to give reasonable latitude, and not to impose the additional hardship of a fine because these annual payments are not made promptly. In regard to the second portion of Part V. of the Act which relates to the destruction of vermin, I wish to ask the Minister if the Agricul-

tural Bank is an owner of the forfeited farms and is liable to be called upon in the same way as any owner, to fulfil obligations under the Act. Reading through the measure I consider the bank is the owner of the forfeited properties. Further than this we have to consider that in this Bill there are two definitions, also in the Act, for holders, namely, "owner" and "manager." Clause 46b of the Bill reads in this way—

Part V. of the Rabbit Act, 1902, is incorporated with this Act, and all the powers thereby conferred on the Minister charged with the administration of that Act may, within any district—

and so forth. We find therefore owing to this clause, that two pages out of 13 of the Rabbit Act, 1902, and four pages out of seven of the Bill to amend the Rabbit Act, are incorporated in the Vermin Act. Later on I shall come to what appears to be an anomaly, but at present I wish to draw attention to the fact that in the Rabbit Act and the Bill amending it under the interpretation section there is a definition of "occupier" and "owner" and under the Vermin Act, 1902, there also is a definition of "owner" and "manager." When we come to read the amendments of the Bill amending the Vermin Act we see that "occupier" and "owner" by virtue of this incorporation, comes into the reading of the Vermin Act, and it seems to me, seeing that so much of the Rabbit Bill comes into the Vermin Bill, the same definition should cover owner, occupier, and manager in both Acts and the amending Bills. If owner and manager suffice for the Rabbit Act, then owner and manager should suffice for the Vermin Act and vice versa. I wish to direct the Minister's attention to that point. There is another point I think should be clearly looked at and it is that under the Vermin Act, an owner of land, although he may hold 1,000 acres, yet if only 100 acres are cleared the administration will have to be sympathetic. He is responsible for clearing the rabbits off the whole of his land no matter to what extent it is unimproved, yet surrounding him or partially enclosing him there may be Government land, more or less improved, and it seems that where the Government land is adjacent to the land largely unimproved, and certainly in the cases of partially improved farms in the hands of the Agricultural Bank, these should come under the Act and the Vermin Act should apply. Were it not for the financial position of the State unquestionably the Government should have been called upon to deal with the rabbits on Crown lands at least within No. 2 fence or to hold them in check. The Government have been in that position year after year. They have had the fence and the rabbits have encroached. They could have dealt with the pest but the rabbits have achieved a victory. The Minister or the heads of public departments have not adequately dealt with them. If the Minister says the departments are not to blame he cannot say they have held the rabbits in check. Successive Governments have failed to cope with the rabbits up to the present time. As a matter of simple equity, if the circumstances of the State had not been what they are, there is no question but the settlers in the agricultural areas would have been fully

justified in using all the pressure they could bring to bear to get the Government to shoulder the burden. Section 43 of the Act says—

A board may cause to be served upon the owner of any holding situated wholly or partly within the district a notice in writing and requiring such owner to forthwith take effective measures for the destruction of vermin on such holding.

I agree with the reduction of the notice to the absolute minimum. I have already referred to the complication of varying definitions of "owner," "manager," and "occupier" in the Vermin Act, the Rabbit Act and amending Bills, and I wish now to direct attention to Section 66 in conjunction with Section 43. Section 42 and 43 state that a period of seven days will be given after the service of the notice, then if the "owner" fails to take effective measures for the destruction of vermin authority is given to the board's representative to take steps for the destruction of vermin on the holding. Then Section 66 reads—

No person shall be deemed a trespasser or be liable for any damage occasioned by him by reason of the execution of any of the powers vested in him under or in pursuance of the provisions of this Act unless such damage is occasioned otherwise than in the reasonable exercise of such powers.

It goes on to say—

Provided that before any poison is laid upon any holding by any such person he shall give to the owner of such holding seven days' notice in writing stating when and where such poison is to be laid.

I wish to direct the attention of the Minister to this, but no doubt he is already fully cognisant of it. Section 43 provides for seven days' notice as against 30 and the second section says—

Any person so authorised may enter and remain upon the holding, with or without assistants, and may take any such measures, and do any such things during such period as may in his opinion be necessary—

I am pointing out that Section 43 limits the notice to seven days and then it authorises a person with or without assistance to enter on and take such action as is considered necessary. Then by Section 66 he has to give another notice in writing before he may lay the poison and he has to give notice as to when and where it is to be laid. It seems possible that portion of Section 66 has been overlooked. It virtually extends the time limit from seven days sought in the Bill to at least 14 days before the board's representative can begin poisoning. I think the position would be met if Section 43 was amended so that if an owner did not take steps within seven days of the original notice a person could forthwith enter on and lay the poison. The second period of seven days' notice might be removed. I certainly support the second reading of the Bill.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [5.56]: The Hon. Mr. Baxter will reply to the second reading debate, but I wish to point out that when the Bill was under discussion an undertaking was given that neither the Vermin Bill nor the Rabbit Bill should be proceeded with in Committee until the select committee of the Legislative Assem-

bly had furnished their report. At that time it was thought that the report would be available before now. I have made inquiries and I find that the report will not be available until the end of next week. The consequence is that if we do not go on with the consideration of these two Bills, as far as I can see there will be no business to justify me in summoning members for next week. On the other hand to adopt that course would mean that these two Bills, as well as the Estimates and the whole of the financial proposals of the Government, would come before the House in the following week, which would mean a considerable congestion of business. It might make it difficult for another place to deal with these two Bills. I have conferred with the chairman of the committee of another place and I find that the select committee are not taking into consideration the Bills at all, but as to the methods to be adopted by the Government for the extermination of the rabbits. There will be no advantage for this Chamber to await the report of the select committee in that case. I hold myself entirely bound by the statement I made to the House unless members waive the consideration of the Bills in Committee for the purpose of disposing of them now.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM (North) [5.0]: It seems almost superfluous to deal with a matter of this description when a select committee are making inquiries as to the best means of dealing with the subject. If the select committee's investigation is worth anything, it should result in eliciting all the information bearing on the subject. I know that many witnesses have already been examined and I have been amongst the number, and unless the report of the committee is not going to be of value, we should get something from it to guide us. Of course if the consideration of the Bill is a matter of urgency we should go on with it and allow the amendments, if any, to be introduced in the other Chamber.

Hon. J. EWING (South-West) [5.3]: Speaking in connection with the rabbit-proof fence, I would draw attention to a statement made by an hon. member that the fence had not been properly patrolled, and also that the traps had been taken from the outside and placed on the inside of the fence. I am at a loss to understand why that should have been done. Considerable expenditure has been incurred in connection with the construction of the fences, and it is difficult to know why the result has not been more satisfactory. I have not had much experience in connection with this matter, but it has been said by many people that there has been maladministration, that, in fact, there has been too much centralisation. I trust that the Minister when he is replying will deal with that aspect of the question. I have also been told that some of the settlers living outside the fence have seen the rabbits actually climbing over the fence. I know that may be considered a remarkable statement, but I am acquainted with the settlers who happen to have made it, and I think we can place some credence upon it. If that should be the case, why was something not put on the top of the fence to prevent the rabbits from getting over? It has also been

said that the fence after having been washed down by floods has remained on the ground for a week or more at a time. We know what a terrible menace the rabbits are, and I should like to have some information as to whether it is a fact that repairs have not always been effected with the quickest possible despatch. I do not blame the Government, and I do not know whether the Chief Inspector, who has charge of the department, knows his business, but considering the immense amount of money which is spent annually in the maintenance of the fence, I think that the charge that it is not properly patrolled should be sheeted home to somebody. The Minister himself has said that the officials are not in any way responsible because everything that could be done had been done. If, however, that should not be the case, those responsible should be properly dealt with. The Minister has not been long enough in charge of the department to give us his real opinion, but he should certainly see that the fence receives every care and attention, otherwise the expenditure which has been incurred on it will be rendered useless. It is the desire of everyone to assist the Government to the fullest possible extent in their efforts to overcome the dreadful plague of rabbits, but at the same time members are entitled to know whether sufficient consideration has been given to the question and whether in connection with the administration of the fence, efficiency has been the order of the day, and also whether the money voted has been expended in the right direction.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister—East—in reply) [5.8]: I can assure the hon. member who has just sat down that from the departmental standpoint everything that it has been possible to do in connection with the fence has been done.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: Except to give the inspector the money that he requires.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): Certainly, but the fence in spite of that has received every attention.

Hon. J. Ewing: Are you satisfied yourself?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): I am, and from my own experience which has been gained by travelling along the fence for hundreds of miles I am convinced that the supervision has been everything that could be desired. I am not going to say that the fence has not been down; it has been down for some days at a time after a flood, but it is manifestly impossible to have available a staff which could rush along in the course of a day or so and repair any damage that might have been done by fire or storm. All repairs have been hurried on. With regard to the removal of the traps from the East to the West side of the fence, there has been a reason for doing that. On the east side the rabbits were so thick that the number trapped did not effectually reduce the pest, while on the west side every one caught is of importance.

Hon. V. Hamersley: Why not have the traps on both sides?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): Time and time again it has been known that persons have taken the rabbits out of the traps on the East side of the fence and thrown them over on to the West side.

Hon. V. Hamersley: Why not prosecute them?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): How is it possible to catch people who do this kind of thing? A boundary rider may be many miles away at the time and he could be seen approaching from a considerable distance too. Therefore, the only sensible thing to do was to remove the traps from the East side to the West side. Mr. Ewing made a statement that rabbits had been seen climbing the fence. I have seen rabbits climbing trees which have been at an angle, but they only did that after eating the bark away. If anyone saw a rabbit climbing a netting fence, it would be worth while catching that rabbit for show purposes. It would be a curiosity indeed. I am afraid that those people who told Mr. Ewing that they saw the rabbits climbing the netting fence do not know the difference between a rabbit and a cat. I know quite well that a rabbit could not climb a netting fence. Hon. members may have seen rabbits running along the fence, but they never jump high enough to get anywhere near the top so as to be able to get over. Invariably a rabbit which has been cut off from its harbourage will not run more than 100 yards along the fence and after going that distance it is often possible to pick it up. If the rabbit was a fence climber it would very quickly get over the fence. Several hon. members, namely Sir Edward Wittenoom, Mr. Kingsmill, Mr. Clarke, and Mr. Hickey have stressed the point that the Government must take action in the direction of exterminating rabbits from unoccupied Crown lands and abandoned farms. So far as abandoned farms are concerned, action will be taken and we are already working in that direction with a number of poison carts, and we are out also to destroy the warrens. Let us compare those statements with that of Mr. Greig, who has been farming in South Australia and was practically eaten out of his property by rabbits. That gentleman did not suggest that the Government should clear the rabbits from unoccupied Crown lands; he said that the Government could not do it. South Australia never attempted that and neither was it attempted in Victoria, though in that State there is very little Crown land. It would be attempting an absolute impossibility if we were to make an effort to clear our tremendous areas of Crown lands of rabbits. As a matter of fact, Crown lands are not the main difficulty. The difficulty is the improved lands. The rabbits will increase and multiply on improved properties to a much greater extent than they do on an unimproved property. A further remark was made by Sir Edward Wittenoom that when the Government demanded the destruction of rabbits, they must

send an inspector to instruct. That has always been done hitherto, but the time is coming when a whole army of inspectors would be needed in order that the practice might be continued. The department is quite prepared to afford every facility to the people concerned, so that they may understand how to carry out the destruction themselves. The main difficulty is the mixing of the poison. Instruction can be given to any settler how to mix the poison. I know some of them have made a mess of it in the past, through not understanding the quantities, and disastrous results have followed. The question has been asked whether Clause 4 is intended to cancel the Gascoyne and other vermin boards mentioned in the schedule. But that clause simply alters the date of election from the third Thursday in March to the second Wednesday in April, so as to bring the election of the vermin boards into line with the roads board elections. Another hon. member said that he did not understand Clause 9. Clause 9 represents an additional amendment of Section 39 of the principal Act. Where a vermin fence has been erected and has been made use of by an adjoining settler, only for the purpose of a stock fence, then the 5 per cent. charge would apply to the value of the fence only as a stock fence. If, on the other hand, the settler has made use of the fence as a vermin fence, the 5 per cent. will be charged on the value of the fence as a vermin fence. Several references have been made to the tax which may be levied up to 2s. per 100 acres. But the Bill does not provide that the full amount of 2s. must be levied. It is left optional with the vermin boards to levy anything up to that amount. Provision must be made to let the boards levy up to a reasonable amount, since otherwise they will not be able to do the work that lies in front of them. One board may only need to tax to the extent of 6d., another perhaps to the extent of 1s., and in none but extreme cases will boards require a levy of 1s. 6d. or 2s. To restrict the amount would be to impose a hardship on boards endeavouring to clean the holdings in their districts.

Hon. J. A. Greig: What is the levy under Clause 47 to be used for? Will the boards collect it and have the spending of it?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): The boards would make use of the rate.

Hon. J. A. Greig: The Government would not claim any portion of it?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): No. It is a vermin board matter entirely. Clause 4 of the Bill refers to the system of rating; and if that system does not meet with the approval of hon. members, it is for the House to say whether they will amend it or not. Mr. Holmes referred to the members of the Gascoyne vermin board being elected by the residents of the town of Carnarvon. But the ratepayers in the Gascoyne district have the opportunity of taking part in the election, and if they fail to record their votes in favour of a person residing outside the town, and on that account more suitable to them, the blame is on their own shoulders. Certainly they

cannot blame the people of Carnarvon for returning a man whom those people desire to see on the vermin board.

Hon. V. Hamersley: Some of those men are 150 and 200 miles out from Carnarvon.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): I take it the provision was inserted to give them the opportunity of recording their votes if they wish to do so. Clause 20, according to Mr. Holmes, is far too strong. It simply refers to proof of the ownership of land. The boards must have that provision, because proof of ownership of land is always a most difficult matter. Mr. Kingsmill inquired as to the interpretation of the term "vermin." In the view of the Government vermin includes wild dogs, rabbits, and any other bird or animal which the Governor-in-Council may declare to be vermin. Mr. Kingsmill went on to say that sparrows and crows and cats should also be classed as vermin. I quite agree with him as regards crows and sparrows, but not as regard cats, which I know destroy rabbits. One evening, at a place in the country, I saw a cat bring into the house no less than six full-grown rabbits; and it is safe to say that she had eaten a couple of rabbits before bringing these six in.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: That would be a very exceptional cat.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): No. I know of hundreds of similar cases. The cat is one of the enemies of the rabbit. I assure the hon. gentleman that we have not lost sight of the sparrow difficulty. We are facing that trouble at the present time. Unfortunately, the sparrows are farther west than most people imagine. They have, in fact, reached Mundrabulla Homestead, between Eucla and Eyre Sandpatch.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: In that case you will never dislodge them.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): I have made preparations to dislodge them there, but I admit it will be a difficult matter. At the same time, the sparrow is not altogether new to Western Australia. Some years ago we had sparrows in Perth, and the last of that lot was shot near the Supreme Court buildings.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: I do not think we ever had sparrows in Perth.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): I can assure the hon. gentleman it is so. They were got rid of, but not without some trouble. Though I am not too optimistic about getting rid of them this time, the Government are making every effort.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: How long is it since you have been making efforts?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): It is only a fortnight since I received the report that the sparrows have reached Mundrabulla Homestead, and I issued immediate orders for their destruction by shooting and by poisoned wheat. I have had reports from time to time about their progress along the Transcontinental Railway. When I was in the East I got in touch with Captain White, and found that sparrows had not travelled westward beyond Tarcoola on the railway.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: It is nearly six months since I reported the sparrows on the coast.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): Mr. Kingsmill has asked that every effort should be made to protect smaller animals and bird life. I entirely agree with him, and that is one of the reasons why I object to the use of liquid poison for the destruction of rabbits, though there is no question that liquid poison is one of the most destructive agents which can be used against the rabbit pest. Poisoned bait, however, is not so dangerous, because seed-eating birds are not insectivorous, and, on the other hand, insectivorous birds are not seed eating.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: That is not quite correct. It all depends on the season of the year. At one season a bird will be insectivorous and at another seed eating.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): Undoubtedly our proper course will be to poison the rabbits by laying baits, but, in my opinion, we should keep clear of liquid poison. Some hon. members have stated that it will be impossible to poison rabbits all the year round. This is not so. By varying the class of poison used, poisoning can be carried on all the year round, though I do not assert that it will yield the same results at all seasons. On the contrary, I know that is not so. But even if one has only poor results for part of the year, still one is keeping the pest down. An illustration of that is to be found in the Lake Grace district, where the settlers have kept the rabbits down by constant poisoning and as a consequence have, in fact, got the rabbits well under. I hope the Lake Grace settlers will persevere, and continue to keep the rabbits under. Those settlers have had very good results from their crops, thanks to their energy in coping with the rabbit pest. With regard to trading in rabbits, the Government intend, when the Bill is in Committee, to move the deletion of the clause which prevents the sale of rabbit skins. If any trade arises in rabbit skins, let it be carried on. That is the position the House has affirmed previously. At the present juncture the market value of rabbit skins is only 11d. per dozen, which would hardly pay for the wire needed to dry the skins. Mr. Hickey from his standpoint sounded a warning note, saying that he hoped that if the Government received the powers asked for under this Bill, they would use every effort to give the settlers a fair deal. It is assuredly not the intention of the Government to harass the settlers. What we desire is to get the settlers first to recognise the rabbit difficulty and, after that, to co-operate with the Government in eradicating the pest. We have no intention whatever of inflicting any hardship, but, at the same time, we must see that the work of rabbit destruction proceeds. We do not intend to allow things to go on as in the past, when one settler might be doing a great deal, while five or six in his immediate neighbourhood were not moving a hand. That state of affairs must be ended. Every person will have to do his best to clear his own property. Mr. Hickey also suggested the importation of wire netting. I doubt if

wire netting is obtainable, even at a most exorbitant price. The Agricultural Royal Commission also spoke about wire netting. It is impossible to obtain wire netting at the present time. A limited quantity was recently purchased by the Government at a cost of £70 per mile, for the purpose of fencing in water supplies. It is feasible to pay such a price for the purpose of fencing in water, but to buy wire netting at £70 per mile in order to fence off properties would be utterly ridiculous. No farm in Western Australia could carry such a burden. Again, Mr. Hickey suggested the establishment of the wire netting industry. How are we to establish the wire netting industry here when we cannot procure the necessary wire? If we could obtain the wire, there would be no difficulty about making the wire netting. Machinery for that purpose could be erected, and the manufacture of the netting could proceed. Certainly the cost would be somewhat higher than that of the imported wire netting in normal times; but, still, the cost would not be out of reach. When, however, it is impossible to purchase the wire itself, we have no chance whatever of manufacturing the netting.

Hon. J. Duffell: It is not impossible to draw wire.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): Mr. Hickey favours the commercialising of the rabbit as an industry. Not in any State where the rabbit has been commercialised have any good results accrued as regards the eradication of the pest. All commercialising has tended in the one direction of increasing the pest; and we do not want to do that here. We want to eradicate the rabbit. If we want to commercialise any industry, let it be the sheep industry, and not the rabbit industry. Let hon. members heed the position of New South Wales at the present time. New South Wales commercialised the rabbit as an industry, with the result that that State has a wide tract of country right alongside the railways which will take years to clear of rabbits, so as to permit of its carrying stock. In fact, the owners of the adjacent land have notified the Government, "You can either take the embargo off rabbit poisoning in this area, and allow us to go on poisoning, or else you can take over our lands." I think we would find the same position created here if we commercialised the rabbit. Mr. Hamersley expressed the opinion that it would be advisable to combine the Vermin Bill and the Rabbit Bill in one measure. The Crown Law Department advise that the two measures had better be kept separate. They consider it would be unwise to incorporate the two enactments in one Act.

Hon. J. Duffell: The advice of the Crown Law Department is not worth much after yesterday's advice.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL. STATE OF
BUSINESS.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [5.31]: I move—

“That the House at its rising adjourn until Wednesday next.”

I am hopeful that there will be business coming forward by then. However, I will arrange through the Clerk to intimate to hon. members who may be in the country whether or not that will be so.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 5.32 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 13th March, 1918.

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

[For “Questions on Notice” and “Paper Presented” see “Votes and Proceedings.”]

SELECT COMMITTEE, SPECIAL LEASE (GYPSUM) BILL.

Report Presented.

Mr. Piesse brought up the report of the select committee appointed to inquire into the Special Lease (Gypsum) Bill.

Report received and read, and, together with minutes of the evidence, ordered to be printed.

BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

BILL—HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Council and, on motion by the Attorney General, read a first time.

PAPERS — STATE STEAMSHIP “WESTERN AUSTRALIA.”

On motion by Mr. SMITH (North Perth) ordered: That all papers and accounts in connection with the Admiralty Arbitration case re the s.s. “Western Australia” be placed on the Table of the House.

MOTION—REPATRIATION, RIVERTON ESTATE.

To adopt Report of Select Committee.

Mr. PIESSE (Toodyay) [4.49]: I move—

“That in the opinion of this House, the recommendations contained in the report of the select committee appointed to inquire into the offer made by the owners of the Riverton estate to give an area of 68 acres in the estate for the purpose of repatriation, should be given effect to.”

I do not think it necessary to add any remarks to those already embodied in the report of the select committee.

Mr. HARRISON (Avon) [4.50]: I trust there will be an expression by the House that this project is not a part of the Government's repatriation scheme. If this motion was to go forth proclaiming the Riverton estate as suitable for the growing of vegetables by returned soldiers, without any adverse expression of opinion, even by a minority, it might lead to a false impression. The various reports we have had, including the report of the select committee, are to my mind not sufficient to show that Riverton is a good proposition for those returned soldiers. They are to have a loan of £500 each to assist them to make good on that property. There will be open competition with labour of all classes, including Asiatics, with the object of producing vegetables and fruit, or whatever the place may grow; there will be open competition with men established on choice spots for this particular class of work. We have been told that the soil is deficient in plant food. If that is so, the plant food necessary to the growing of these vegetables will have to be put into the land before it can be taken off in the shape of garden products. It strikes me those men are up against a tough proposition. I do not want to see a repetition of the experiences gained on wodge lands. Having regard to the conditions under which these men will enter upon this estate, although near Perth, I am not convinced that they are on a good proposition financially, or in respect of the purpose for which they have taken up the land.

Mr. Munsie: Do you know the purpose for which they have taken it up?

Mr. HARRISON: From the evidence on the file, they are going in for poultry, vegetables, and so forth. Those men are no longer physically fit to be in the trenches, yet they have to go into open competition with men situated on better soil under better conditions.

Mr. O'Loghlen: Competition will be found in every avocation.

Mr. HARRISON: I admit it. The worst feature is, not so much the growing of vegetables, as our present method of marketing. We have the middle man, who takes from the producer the greater part of his earnings, and unless those returned soldiers are placed under absolutely tip-top conditions, I do not think they are going to make good. Until we have open markets where the producer can sell direct to the consumer a man growing vegetables is not in a good position. I know of no one in Western Australia who