would become so disheartened that they would simply clear out of the country.

Mr. Smith: How many people have applied for land in the Bridgetown district during the past six months?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): The necessity for the Bridgetown land office is proved by the fact that the Labour Government, who were out to economise in this respect, did not close that office.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: These offices transact a great deal of work, and if we are to prepare for the future they should remain active. We cannot conduct business under any scheme of centralisation. These districts cover a great area, and the duty of the district should be to see where all the land is and have it surveyed and prepared for settlement. Under centralisation this work cannot be done.

Vote put and passed.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11.13 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 7th March, 1918.

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

HARVEY IRRIGATION SCHEME, TO INQUIRE BY ROYAL COMMISSION.

Personal Explanation.

Hon. A. SANDERSON (Metropolitan-Suburban): My name appears on the Notice Paper as one of the suggested Commissioners for this proposed Harvey Royal Commission. I thanked the hon. member for having suggested my name at the time, or if I did not I will do so now; but I positively refused to go on the Commission, because I was quite satisfied that my opinion on the Harvey would be of very little value either to myself or to anyone else, and would carry very little weight. Having given the matter full consideration, I beg to request that my name should be removed from the list.

The PRESIDENT: Perhaps the hon. member will have it removed when we come to the Order of the Day.

BILL—CURATOR OF INTESTATE ESTATES.

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the previous day. Hon. W. Kingsmill in the Chair; the Colonial Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 47—Amendment of Section 242j:

The CHAIRMAN: To this clause an amendment has been moved by Mr. Duffell to add at the end of the clause the following:—

(iii) By the deletion of the proviso in Subsection (1), and by inserting at the end the following new sections, to stand as 242jj and 242jjj:—242jj. (1) In the case of females the Commissioner shall, before taking any action under Section 242j, submit to an advisory committee, constituted as hereinafter mentioned, the evidence on which he proposes to take such action, and the said committee shall decide on the action, if any, to be taken by him. (2) The advisory committee shall be appointed by the Governor, and shall consist of four members. The Commissioner shall be chairman of the committee, but shall not be entitled to vote on any matter submitted to the committee. The remaining three shall consist of two females (one of whom shall be a duly qualified medical practitioner) and one male. The committee shall meet from time to time, when summoned by the Commissioner, and may make rules and regulations for the proper conduct of its business. All proceedings of the advisory committee shall be held in camera. 242jjj. It shall be lawful for a court established under the State Children Act, 1907, at any time either before or after committal of any child to order an examination to be made of such child by a duly qualified medical practitioner, either male or female, if there is reason to suspect that such child is suffering from venereal disease. In the event of the medical practitioner reporting that any child is so suffering, the court shall forthwith notify the Commissioner in writing, who may thereupon deal with such child as provided in subsections two to eight, inclusive, of Section 242j.

The question before the Committee is that the words proposed to be added be so added.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move an amendment on the amendment, as follows:—

That after "action" in line 5 of 242jj (1) the words "but without revealing the name of the person against whom such action is contemplated" be inserted.

I entirely approve of the suggestions of the select committee, and I may say that the members of that committee have assured me that they are quite in accord with my amendment. The only possible objection that could be raised against the proposal of the select committee to establish this advisory committee is that it might lead to more people than necessary being made acquainted with the name of the person against whom action is contemplated. There is no reason whatever why the

name should be given to the advisory committee.

Amendment on the amendment put and passed.

Hon. J. E. DODD: The Colonial Secretary, referring to some remarks of mine last night, said it was an insult to the Commissioner of Public Health that I should suggest that he might act upon an anonymous letter. I take strong exception to that statement. I have been carefully looking up in "Hansard" this morning some of the speeches made during the debate on the Bill of 1915. Almost the whole of the contentious matter ranged about the proviso which it is proposed shall be deleted. Dr. Saw in his second reading speech asked—

> Do they propose to have a lion's mouth through the wall of the office of the Commissioner of Public Health to lodge secret denunciations?

Mr. Baxter, Mr. Holmes, and, I think, yourself, Sir, took up almost precisely the same stand. Then again, in Committee, Dr. Saw said—

> My object is to protect a person informed against from any wrongful or malicious information.

And the only time the leader of the House spoke was when he said that he also wished to protect people from this abuse. Dr. Saw said also that the object of his amendment was that the Commissioner should have before him a statement on oath before taking any action; otherwise the clause would give rise to opportunities for blackmail and also that abomination, the anonymous informer. If it is an insult to the Commissioner to now suggest that he might act on an anonymous letter, it was an insult then, and practically all hon. members are to be accused, because they carried the amendment for the signed statement. I strongly object to the Colonial Secretary endeavouring to smother criticism by using the Commissioner as a foil and saying "If you criticise the Bill you will be insulting the Commissioner." I have been associated with the Commissioner for four or five years, and I strongly endorsed the recommendation for his appointment to the position. There is no officer of the civil service to whom I would more willingly give power than to Dr. Atkinson. To assert that it is an insult to the doctor to say that he might be tempted to act upon an anonymous letter, is to overlook what is going on about us. There are many instances in Government departments of the power of anonymity being used. We read in reports of law cases very often that the police have acted upon anonymous information. If one department do it, there is nothing to prevent another department from doing it. This power, if given, is likely to be used. We have to bear in mind that as time goes on the power will gradually devolve upon officials surrounding the Public Health Commissioner. I know it is stated in the evidence given before the select committee that only the Commissioner, his secretary, and his typist know anything about these notifications. That may be all right for the present, but as time goes on the power is likely to devolve upon other persons. I do not seek to take anything out of the Bill. I know the horrible effects of venereal disease. But to open up a channel through which any malicious-minded individual might send to the Commissioner anonymous letters or anonymous information is going altogether too far. Such a channel would certainly be availed of sooner or later. If my memory serves me rightly, some time after the existing Act came into operation a certain individual, not of very good character, who was suffering from venereal disease, was sent to Kalgoorlie and Boulder for the purpose of trapping chemists. That is what was done under the particular amendment now before us. I know it is sometimes hard to prevent the law being broken with impunity unless informers are used; but in my opinion it was taking a good deal of power to send a man suffering from venereal disease, and a man of very bad reputation indeed, in order to trap respectable chemists. Further than that, these proceedings are in camera. When questions were asked in another place on the case to which I have referred, the fact that the proceedings were in camera was used in order to avoid giving full replies to the questions asked. That is what has been done under the Act as it stands, and if we remove every safeguard there is no telling what may occur in future. The Commissioner of Public Health may not always be Dr. Atkinson. Some medical men whom we have had in our State service were not so tactful and not so courteous as Dr. Atkinson; and we do not know whom we might have in future. I am afraid it is now too late, but I was going to suggest that a far better way of getting over the difficulty and of meeting the trouble which the Public Health Commissioner has pointed out in regard to obtaining signed statements from individuals, would be to amend the Act somewhat on these lines: retain the signed statement as now required, and provide that whenever the Commissioner has received oral information from an infected person—I do not mean oral information from anybody—that the person has contracted the disease from some other person; after which the clause might proceed as it is, but with a proviso added that if it is proved that the person complaining was not infected by the person complained of, then the latter should have the same right to the name and address of the person complaining as there is now in connection with a written statement. Once the power of malicious infection becomes known, it will be used. As regards experts, some hon. members have told us that we should always follow the expert's advice. I can only say that the experts who have been engaged in this country have cost Western Australia many hundreds of thousands of pounds through the wrong advice they have given, and that we are continually following on the track of the experts and trying to undo the effects of the wrong advice they have given us. One of the members of the present Government recently went to the Brunswick farm, and there tore up an orchard planted on the advice of an expert at a cost of £4,000 or £5,000. Dozens and dozens of similar instances could be quoted. I do not think we should be guided by experts entirely; I think we should all consult our own

common sense. As regards the amendment it may be all right so far as females are concerned, although to my mind it represents an absolute farce. I think girls would be quite willing to trust the Commissioner, and would be more willing to face the Commissioner than to face the proposed committee. However, the amendment makes no provision for the youth or the man. The youth or the man is still to be subject to any whisper which may reach the Commissioner. I hope that the amendment will be struck out, and that, if possible, something will be done in the direction I have recommended.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I understand it is the select committees amendment we are now discussing. I wish to protest against that amendment. To put it in the mildest way, it seems to me questionable whether the proposed amendment is a wise one to place on the Statute-book. Even assuming that it is wise, however, the financial and the Federal aspects of the matter are quite sufficient to condemn the amendment. We cannot carry out this provision with £4,000. If members will turn to page 43 of the evidence given before the select committee, they will see that a witness stated—

> I am satisfied from my experience that the disease is rampant and is spreading.

The witness was then asked—

> Do you think it has been the result of these young girls associating with returned soldiers?

The answer was—

> Yes; there is no doubt about it.

Then you, Mr. Chairman, asked the witness the following question:—

> Does it not seem to you that there must be a lack of sanitary provision in relation to the Defence forces to allow such men to be at large?

The witness replied—

> I should say there was a screw loose somewhere.

Bearing that evidence in mind, and bearing in mind the letter of our Medical Department stating that they had power to go into military camps and the letter of the Defence Department denying that the State officials had that power, I think it very questionable whether this amendment is sound. But, even assuming that it is sound, yet the financial and Federal aspects of the question make it impossible for us to carry out such a provision.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: In reply to Mr. Dodd's remarks, I desire to point out that, although he quoted Dr. Saw as an expert, he still protested that absolutely no notice ought to be taken of the advice of experts.

Hon. J. E. DODD: I was quoting Dr. Saw, not as an expert, but as a member of Parliament.

Amendment put and passed; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 48—Insertion of new section; provision for examination and treatment of prisoners, and persons in industrial schools:

Hon. J. DUFFELL: The select committee recommend that this clause should be struck out and a new clause 242 (k) as printed on the Notice Paper be inserted in lieu.

Clause put and negatived.

Clause 49—Amendment of Section 242 (m):

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: In the parent Act it is provided that the publication of proceedings under all circumstances are forbidden in the Press. The Commissioner has evidently come to the conclusion that there may be cases in which public interest will be served by the publication or some reference to the proceedings in the Press. One of the statements made frequently when the Bill was before the select committee was that the public knew so little regarding the provisions of the Act, and I am afraid the public are ignorant in regard to some of the offences that the Bill provides for. Therefore, in the Bill there is permission to publish the proceedings by the written permission of the Commissioner. I suggest to the Colonial Secretary that an amendment be made providing that permission be given by the court and not by the Commissioner. I am in sympathy with the intention of the clause and every member of the Committee must agree that it is desirable to publish any portions of the evidence which it is considered in the public interests should be published. The bench are in a better position than the Commissioner to know what portions of the proceedings should be published. The bench have heard all the evidence, while the Commissioner is not present in court. A case may be heard at Kalgoorlie, Albany, or Geraldton, or some long distance from Perth. In any case, the Commissioner before giving permission would ask the bench whether it is advisable that permission should be given to publish the evidence. In the case of papers published in Perth, it is easy to communicate with the Commissioner by telephone, but in the case of papers published long distances from Perth, the Commissioner would have to be written to and considerable time wasted and public interest in the proceedings would be lost. Mr. Dodd drew attention to a case in which a number of chemists were prosecuted at Kalgoorlie for an infringement of the Act for treating men suffering from disease, when they were not properly qualified to treat them. The newspapers were not permitted to mention the fact that this prosecution was even instituted, and no mention of the court proceedings was made. It would have had a salutary effect if, at any rate, the names of the offenders were published and the punishments stated. I move an amendment—

> "That the words 'written permission of the Commissioner' in lines 6 and 7 be struck out, and 'permission of the court before which any such proceedings are taken' be inserted in lieu."

I would like to see the report submitted to the bench. Permission might have to be given before the case was heard because the bench might say, "If you show me the report I may give consent if in the interests of the public it should be published." In that case, therefore, it would be better to leave out the word "written."

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The hon. member is quite right in his interpretation of the object of the amendment, to give publicity where it is thought that publicity might act as a prevention of an offence. It is thought that in many cases publication would be desirable, but I doubt if the amendment proposed would improve the position. Proceedings under the Act are held in camera. If the amendment is carried, the report would have to be taken in the ordinary way and then submitted to the bench for approval. If the bench refused permission the notes would still be in existence, and there might be a difficulty in preventing their objectionable circulation. When the proceedings are held in camera there is no one to take a report of the proceedings. That is the only objection, otherwise I cannot see much objection to the amendment, but I oppose any proposal which will interfere with the principle that all these proceedings should be held in camera.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: If the words "written permission of the Commissioner" are retained, it will be necessary for the newspapers to get a report of the proceedings from the Commissioner. The words "supplied to the Press by the Commissioner" might overcome that difficulty. I think it would be better if permission came from the bench and in support of what I said I would remind the Colonial Secretary of the remarks by Mr. Dodd. In the cases Mr. Dodd referred to, a man was sent from Perth suffering from this disease for the purpose of trapping chemists at Kalgoorlie. It was said that he travelled in a sleeping compartment on the train. In any case he had to travel by train and it is likely he would use the towels, and run the risk of spreading the infection to travellers. If the report were supplied by the bench probably that fact would be made public. Whether the Commissioner should be censured or not, at least the public should know the particulars so as to express approval or otherwise. It would be better if the report were given by the bench which would be cognizant of what had taken place. As it is, the Commissioner has a tremendous amount of power in his hands and the bench would be impartial and faithfully represent what is in the interests of the public. I would suggest that the amendment that I proposed should be made.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The further argument used by Mr. Kirwan suggests to my mind additional objections to the course he proposes. It sems to me, from his reference to such a case as occurred in Kalgoorlie, that the question of whether or not this matter should be published would be decided largely by local feeling and local prejudices instead of as a matter of public policy. I can assure the hon. member that the patient who went to Kalgoorlie not only went there to trap chemists, and did trap nearly all of them, but that he was in a condition in which he could not possibly be infectious to anyone, even if he had not been travelling, as was the case, with an inspector. It is not unusual for people who are in an infectious condition to travel in a train, without any supervision. The hon. member suggests that, because of the feeling in Kalgoorlie at the time, the bench would have had the matter made public if they had had power to do so.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: I made no such suggestion.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The hon. member used this case to illustrate how wise it would be that the local bench which heard these cases should have power to say whether they should be published or not. It is a strong reason why this publication should not be made. There was great local feeling over the matter. The Act provides that it is not an offence for a chemist to treat any persons, or supply them with medicines, unless they are suffering from venereal diseases. Before a person can be convicted of having broken the law, it is necessary to get a sufferer from the disease, as well as one who is prepared to play the part of informer. The individual in question was able to play both parts. In view of the fact that the proceedings are in camera, and that the publication of these things should be made as a matter of public policy, quite removed from any local feeling which may exist, I think it would be far better to leave the clause as it stands.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: I think, for the credit of the benches of this State, we ought to regard them as removed from any local feeling. The resident magistrate who heard this particular case is a gentleman who I am quite sure is superior to local feeling, and is held in the highest regard. We must assume that the benches of the State are entirely free from local feeling of any kind. The statement which the Colonial Secretary has freely emphasised, that the proceedings are in camera, is a strong argument why the bench should have the right to require that certain matter, which it may be considered in the public interests should be published, is published. If it be a matter of something which is derogatory to the reputation of the Commissioner, surely the Commissioner would never dream of allowing it to be published. What better persons are there to give a fair representation of the facts of a case than those who try the case? The Commissioner is, after all, a party to the proceedings. He could do a great wrong to a private individual, though I do not say he would, and the bench may consider it essential in the public interests that the matter should be published for the information of all concerned. If I can get any support I intend to divide the Committee upon this particular clause. I claim that the persons who have heard the case are the proper persons to say what portion of the proceedings should be made public.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member will need to withdraw his amendment with a view to moving a further amendment.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: I would like to withdraw my first amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: I move an amendment—

"That the word 'Commissioner' in the fifth line be struck out and the words 'The court before which such proceedings are taken' inserted in lieu."

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

Ayes	.. ..	6
Noes	.. ..	10
Majority against	..	4

AYES.

Hon. H. Carson	Hon. C. McKenzie
Hon. J. E. Dodd	Hon. A. Sanderson
Hon. J. A. Greig	(*Teller.*)
Hon. J. W. Kirwan	

NOES.

Hon. J. F. Allen	Hon. R. J. Lynn
Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. H. P. Colebatch	Hon. C. Sommers
Hon. J. Ewing	Hon. J. Duffell
Hon. V. Hamersley	(*Teller.*)
Hon. J. J. Holmes	

Amendment thus negatived; the clause put and passed.

Clauses 50, 51, 52—agreed to.

The CHAIRMAN: I would point out to the leader of the House that it is advisable where part of the clause is italicised, that the whole of the clause should be italicised. It is almost impossible for the Committee to consider part of a clause without referring to the portion in italics, and if members refer to the portion in italics they will be out of order. It will be necessary for the leader of the House to inform his colleauges in another place that all the words contained in italicised clauses will have to be moved as new clauses.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I quite agree.

Clause 53—Amendment of Section 259:

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Is it proposed to reprint the whole of this Health Bill once these amendments are gone through and the Bill is passed?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The last clause of the Bill makes provision for this.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 54, 55—agreed to.

Clause 56—Amendment of Section 254:

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I would like to draw the attention of the Committee to the report of the Commissioner of Public Health, page 14, and to ask the Minister if he is going to take any steps to deal with the matter. The report says, under the heading "School Medical Inspection"—

> During the year under review the medical inspection of school children was almost a dead letter.

I wish to point out that, on the showing of the Colonial Secretary's medical officer, it has been a dead letter. What steps is the Colonial Secretary going to take to see that notice is taken of our legislative enactments?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I regret that the medical inspection of school children should at that time have become a dead letter. Doctors were appointed for the purpose, but for financial reasons and the scarcity of these gentlemen the work was abandoned. Since the report from which the hon. member read was issued, the work has been resumed.

Hon. A. Sanderson: I was quoting from the latest report I could get.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: There is a medical officer engaged on that work at the present time. Medical officers in the different districts are expected to assist, and do assist, but in the present conditions throughout the country districts, it would be quite impracticable to ask a medical officer to make regular inspections of schools, which we would under other circumstances expect them to do. There are many places which have maintained doctors, but which are now without them, and it is inevitable that most things have had to be left undone. It is as much as medical men can do now to barely attend to people who are actually sick. The work is being done as well as it can be done in the present extreme circumstances. In inspections which have been made of large schools lately, from 12 to 32 per cent. of the scholars have been found to be infected with vermin, and such infection is almost entirely confined to girls, because of their long hair. We might really double those figures if we want to get at an accurate percentage, and that would mean that from one-fifth to upwards of one-half of the girls in the large schools have been found to be infected with vermin. In view of that, it is necessary in the interests of the children themselves, and still more in the interests of the clean children, that some power of the nature proposed in the Bill should be given.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I think the Committee will admit that we have had some valuable information from the Minister. I have been sent here to watch the interests of the people I represent, and it is important that matters of this description should receive attention. I think it would be advisable to give power to a school teacher, in addition to a medical man, to report cases of unclean or verminous children. The information which the Minister has given us is disquieting, but of course it goes back to the old question of the financial condition of the country. However, I think that a teacher should be able to report matters of this description, and therefore I move an amendment—

"That in line 3 after 'medical officer' the words 'or teacher' be added."

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I appreciate the motive of the hon. member, but I hardly think it would be wise to accept his amendment. There are two powers, the one of suggestion and persuasion, and the other of compulsion. The clause proposes to give a medical officer power of compulsion, and parents can be prosecuted. A school teacher has the power of suggestion and persuasion, and we do not seek anything more so far as the teacher is concerned. It would be a doubtful policy to say, on the statement of a teacher, that a parent should be liable to prosecution. A teacher can report, and they do report, verminous cases. They report them also to

the parents, and urge them to keep their children clean.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I will withdraw the amendment, but I think we should have devoted more time, more care, and more criticism to these different clauses. We then would have had a more satisfactory Bill.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 57—agreed to.

Clause 58—Amendment of Section 300:

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: I would like the Colonial Secretary to give some information to the Committee regarding this clause. The parent Act requires that no proof shall be required of the particular or general appointment of any public health official or any officer of a local authority. The Bill goes further, and it provides that there need not be any proof of the qualification of any officer of a local authority. I would like to know the reason for the amendment, and also whether under any other Act it is not necessary to give proof of qualifications. When a doctor is in court the mere fact that he is a legally qualified practitioner is sufficient, but here it is proposed that the qualification of the official who is taking proceedings shall not be considered.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Cases have arisen in which defending solicitors have tried to draw this red herring across the trail, and have insisted upon officers proving their qualifications. The idea is that the appointment of the officer to the position he holds is a sufficient qualification.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: There is a difference between proving qualifications and asking what qualifications are. Would this prevent a doctor being asked what his qualifications were? I should imagine it would.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: No; it would not require him to prove his qualifications.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 59, 60—agreed to.

New clause:

Hon. J. DUFFELL: At an earlier stage Clause 48 was deleted with a view of inserting a new clause to be known as 242kk. Hon. members will see that it deals with the definition of industrial schools. The second portion of the proposed new clause will take the place of that which appeared in the Bill dealing with the detention of prisoners. If hon. members will turn to page 25 of the evidence, they will find there that Mr. Campbell, the Deputy Comptroller of Prisons, was asked some questions with regard to prisoners suffering from venereal disease. He stated that last year there were 620 male prisoners, and of that number 18 were suffering from venereal disease and ten of them were discharged cured. In the female section there were 254 prisoners, 14 of whom had venereal disease, and two were discharged cured. The difference in the number of the female and male prisoners was borne out in the evidence by the fact that in most instances male prisoners were long-sentence prisoners, which afforded ample opportunities for the medical officer to successfully deal with the disease; but in the case of the female prisoners they were chiefly of short sentence, and therefore there was not sufficient time in which to positively cure them. From the evidence adduced by this witness and by Sub-Inspector O'Halloran, the select committee came to the conclusion that the proposed amendment in Clause 48, dealing with the detention of prisoners, was not acceptable. We held that when a prisoner has served his time he has expiated his crime, and that in the interests of common humanity he should not be further detained. In these circumstances the proposed new clause was evolved. I think it fully meets the case. It will do away with the question of detaining prisoners after the expiry of their sentences.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I intend to accept this proposed new clause. I think it removes every objection raised against the suggested amendment. It also gives the department an opportunity of keping in touch with the sufferers, and therefore it removes the chief difficulties which we have been labouring under in the past. At the same time, I do not admit that the original proposal put up by the department was not a good one. Similar provision occurs in the Victorian, Tasmanian, and Queensland Acts, while the New South Wales Act makes provision that all long sentence prisoners shall be detained until cured. In New South Wales a select committee has recently recommended that the provision be amended to provide that all prisoners shall be detained until cured. Some of the witnesses before the select committee, representing the views of those who entirely object to the detention of prisoners, apparently took the view that it was the proper course for the military authorities to detain returned soldiers until they were perfectly cured. It is somewhat inconsistent to say that the returned soldier, who certainly has more excuse for his condition than have other sufferers, should be detained until cured, and yet to say it must not be suggested that a prisoner also shall be detained in hospital until he is cured. The proposal of the select committee will meet the case in a general way. I accept it largely in deference to the wishes of the select committee, because I am satisfied that they have done splendid work which will be of service in this State and will also be availed of in the other States in their health legislation. The reason for putting up the original proposition was very clearly shown in the statement of Mr. Duffell, when he referred to the number of prisoners discharged while still suffering from venereal disease. It was put forward as a humane proposition; because prisoners when they leave gaol usually have no money, and it was thought that it would be an act of kindness to place them in an hospital until cured. I readily accept the proposal of the select committee. I move—

"That the following be added as a new clause:—242kk. (1.) In the construction and application of this section, the following definitions shall apply:—'Industrial school' means an institution approved and certified by the Governor for the purposes of 'The State Children Act, 1907,' for the detention, maintenance, and training of children found guilty of an offence punishable by imprison-

ment or of children transferred from another institution under that Act, and includes a reformatory. 'Prisoner' shall include any person in gaol or subject to detention in an industrial school, whether male or female. It shall be the duty of every medical officer attached to any gaol or industrial school to examine any prisoner (except a prisoner under remand) who he may suspect of suffering from venereal disease, and if, as a result of such examination, the medical officer is of opinion that the prisoner is so suffering, he shall forthwith notify the Commissioner in writing, giving the name of the prisoner and particulars of his diagnosis. It shall be the further duty of such medical officer to re-examine every such prisoner at least fourteen days before he is due to be discharged, and if he is then found to be suffering from venereal disease, such medical officer shall, at least seven days before the date of his discharge, notify the Commissioner of the fact, giving his name and prospective address (if any), and the due date of his discharge. The Commissioner may thereupon give notice to such prisoner that he shall, within three days, report himself to the Commissioner and place himself under such treatment as the Commissioner may direct, and he may be proceeded against and dealt with, as provided in subsections two to eight, inclusive, of Section 242j. For the due carrying out of the provisions of this section alone, the Commissioner may appoint any medical officer as his deputy.''

New clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT.

Assembly's Message.

Message having been received from the Assembly giving reasons for disagreeing to the amendment made by the Council, the Message was now considered.

In Committee.

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

The CHAIRMAN: The amendment made by the Council to which the Assembly has disagreed, is as follows:—

New clause.—Add the following, to stand as No. 6:—Disorderly behaviour at meeting. (See Com., No. 17 of 1911, Section 182e.) 6. A section is inserted in the principal Act, as follows:—188b. (1.) Any person who, at any public meeting to which this section applies, acts in a disorderly manner for the purpose of preventing the transaction of the business for which the meeting is held shall be guilty of an offence against this Act. Penalty—Five pounds or one month's imprisonment. (2.) This section applies to any lawful public political meeting held in relation to any election of members of Parliament between the date of the issue of the writ for the election and the date of the return of the writ.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move—

''That the amendment be not insisted on.''

The amendment was inserted at the suggestion of Mr. Lynn, and I still think it was a good amendment. The effect of it was to embody in our Electoral Act the provision which obtains in the Commonwealth Act in regard to public meetings. However, I understand that from all sides in another place but little respect was shown for the Commonwealth statute. I have consulted with Mr. Lynn and he has agreed that the matter is not worth pressing.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I am surprised that another place has not agreed to the amendment. It is a very reasonable provision to have in the Bill. The reasons given by the Assembly for disagreeing with the amendment appear to me almost childish. To allow this to go is to invite interruption at every public political meeting.

The Colonial Secretary: There is provision in the Police Act.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: It frequently happens that there are no police on the spot. The chairman of a public political meeting has no means of combating concerted action on the part of two or three obstructionists. It is a grave abuse if the arguments of all parties are not placed fully and freely before the public. The provision should appear in the Electoral Act. If I receive any support, I will press this question to a division, with a view to asking members of another place to reconsider the matter.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: Perhaps the Colonial Secretary will quote to the Committee the sections of the Police Act dealing with this matter. I think the inclusion of the provision in the Electoral Act would have a steadying effect in certain portions of the metropolitan area. The mere mention, by the chairman of a public meeting, that the Electoral Act contains such a provision would, in an emergency, have a steadying effect. I know certain members of another place consider the amendment ridiculous, but I am not sure from what districts those hon. mebers come.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I would remind Mr. Hamersley that the absence of the police from a public meeting does not put the Police Act out of operation, and that it would be just as easy to carry out the provisions of the Police Act in the absence of police as to carry out this suggested provision of the Electoral Act in the absence of police. In either case it would be a matter of having sufficient evidence. Still, I am of opinion that this is a better provision than that contained in the Police Act, and I am rather surprised that the amendment should have been treated with such scant courtesy in another place. The fact of its being included in Commonwealth legislation would, I thought, have ensured it respectful consideration from at all events certain hon. members elsewhere. However, I do not know that there is any particular hurry over this Bill. There is no reason why hon. members should not be per-

fectly satisfied on the point. I therefore move—

That progress be reported.

Motion put and passed.

The President resumed the Chair.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 6.6 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 7th March, 1918.

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

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

SELECT COMMITTEE, RABBIT PEST.

Extension of Time.

Mr. SMITH (North Perth) [4.35]: I move—

"That the time for bringing up the report of the select committee be extended for one week."

We have examined a great many witnesses and have sat on not less than one dozen occasions. Some of the members of the select committee now desire to visit certain portions of the wheat belt and find out for themselves what sort of work the rabbit carts are doing.

Question put and passed.

BILL—FRIENDLY SOCIETIES ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Legislative Council and read a first time.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1917-18.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the previous day; Mr. Stubbs in the Chair.

Agricultural Department (Hon. H. B. Lefroy, Minister).

Vote—Agriculture generally, £49,786:

The Chairman: Before commencing the debate on the Vote "Agriculture generally, £49,876," I think it highly desirable to decide whether members are to be allowed to speak more than once on the general discussion. The question turns upon the interpretation of paragraph (b) of Standing Order 386b, namely—

A general discussion on the administration of the one department held on the first vote of that department.

My interpretation is that it applies only to a department which includes two or more votes, such as the Premier's Department which includes votes for the Premier's Office, the London Agency, and Government Motor Cars. I hold that it does not apply to a department which has one single vote, such as "Agriculture generally, £49,786." It is quite true that the words of paragraph (b) will bear another interpretation, namely that a single vote is the first vote. But we have a guide to the right interpretation in the report of the Standing Orders Committee upon recommending Standing Order 386a to the House. The third paragraph of this report reads as follows:—

> Your committee are further of opinion that it would be unwise for the House to restrict the rights of individual members when speaking to the vote or item immediately under discussion. To do so would be an interference with the important principle of full consideration of the Estimates in Committee. When, however, an extension of the limits of discussion is allowed to individual members that extension may fairly be made subject to restriction. The two cases in which such extension has been allowed, by the authority of custom, and with the approval of the House, are—(1) a general discussion on the whole of the Estimates, when the first vote is before the Committee; and (2) a general discussion on the whole of a department when the first vote of that department is before the Committee.

These words leave no doubt in my mind as to my interpretation being correct. I rule, therefore, that paragraph (b) of Standing Order 386a does not apply to the discussion on the question now before the Committee, namely that the Vote "Agriculture generally, £49,786" stand as printed, and that members are not restricted in their right to speak more than once to the question. I have no desire, or intention, whatever to flout the will of the Committee because I would be wrong if I attempted to do so, but before we proceed with the discussion I want hon. members to decide this question. At the beginning of the discussion on "Lands and Agriculture," seeing that the vote is divided into two parts, the first "Lands and Surveys" and the second "Agriculture generally," the Honorary Minister (Hon. F. E. S. Willmott) said, in the course of his opening remarks, he would only deal with the Lands and Surveys Estimates. Therefore I thought I would confine the general discussion to that vote, "Lands and Surveys," and I gave hon. members distinctly to understand that when the department of Agriculture was being discussed they would then have the right to freely discuss it on the first item after the Minister had made his opening remarks. It is for hon. members to decide whether I am wright or wrong in this connection; I think the matter might be cleared up before the discussion starts on the vote "Agriculture generally."

Dissent from the Chairman's Ruling.

Hon. T. Walker: It is a somewhat extraordinary procedure to suddenly ask the House