

years? It is an impossibility. I regret that the Premier has not included a provision in the Bill to deal with those areas which were taken up by individuals, areas in excess of what they actually required. There are many people in this State who took up considerably more land than they intended to utilise and a clause might have been included in the Bill to give those people an opportunity to put that land under cultivation, in default of which it should be taken from them, payment being made at the same rate at which they secured it from the Crown and no more. If that were done, we could go with some confidence to the soldiers and say, "We are handing over to you this land which is close to a railway and on which there is a great possibility of your succeeding in making a livelihood." But it is a mistake to resume land where only a small portion has been improved, where buildings have been erected on one part of it only, and on which interest at the rate of $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. would have to be paid and then expect soldiers to make a living on it. We are aware that many complaints have been made by settlers who have taken up land which has been repurchased by the State, and it is necessary to relieve that difficulty. A period of 10 years has been added to the time for payments and that will assist to a large extent, but with interest and sinking fund added, the cost of the land has been increased 100 per cent. What I mean to say is that those people who have taken up land from the Government will have to pay 100 per cent. more than it cost the Government.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): That is bound to be.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: How then can we ask soldiers under a Bill of this description to take up areas on repurchased estates and pay interest on the capital which has been invested and expect them to immediately make the land productive? Except in very few settlements, and then on very small holdings, can any improvements be carried out. The Yandanooka estate cost £1 per acre or £140,000.

The Colonial Treasurer: It cost £62,000. The other portion of it is leasehold.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Many of the other estates which we repurchased cost £3 and £4 per acre. Narra Tarra cost over £2 an acre.

The Colonial Treasurer: Yandanooka cost £1 an acre all round.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Premier told us the other day that it was intended to reduce the price of land at the Yandanooka estate so as to enable soldiers to settle on it. The interest in that case is 4 per cent., but under the Bill soldiers will have to pay $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

The Colonial Treasurer: Why?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Because under the Local Inscribed Stock Act the interest is $6\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

The Colonial Treasurer: They can easily arrange for the purchase of 4 per cent. bonds.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I notice that in Queensland they have provided that in connection with all lands purchased for soldiers the debentures shall only carry 4 per cent. interest. The Bill before us provides that

the prescribed rate shall be that provided for under the Inscribed Stock Act, and then it says also that it shall be increased by 1 per cent. above that. There is no need to say any more except to again express regret that the Premier has not made it compulsory to acquire land from persons who hold it without any intention of improving it and paying for it what the holders originally gave to the Government.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex) [10.29]: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion put and negatived.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

House adjourned at 10.30 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 22nd October, 1918.

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

[For "Papers presented" see "Minutes of Proceedings."]

BILL—FRUIT CASES.

Introduced by Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister) and read a first time.

NOTICE OF MOTION—HONORARY MINISTER, HON. C. F. BAXTER, WANT OF CONFIDENCE.

Hon. H. CARSON (Central) [4.32]: Is the motion of which notice has been given by Hon. A. Sanderson, "That the Honorary Minister (Hon. C. F. Baxter) does not possess the confidence of the members of this House," in order?

The PRESIDENT [4.33]: In reply to the hon. member I would inform him that it is not part of the business of the Legislative Council to express confidence or want of confidence in any member. As there is only one Honorary Minister, and his conduct is impugned, the motion becomes a personal attack and is improper. A substantive motion may be framed on some matter of public business, on which the judgment of the House can be taken. I disallow the motion in its present form.

Hon. A. SANDERSON (Metropolitan-Suburban) [4.35]: This places me in a difficult position.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member can only move that my ruling be disagreed with.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: May I speak to that?

The PRESIDENT: If the hon. member is going to move that my ruling be disagreed with he can speak to such a motion.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Would you permit me, Sir, to make a personal explanation of a brief nature?

The PRESIDENT: I will hear the hon. member if he has a personal explanation to make.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The personal explanation is this: In the first place I should like to assure you, Sir, and through you the Honorary Minister, or any other member of the Council, that so far as a personal attack is concerned on that hon. gentleman, that is my last wish. I have no desire whatever to make any personal attack. I do not think I have been guilty in the past of doing so.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member cannot discuss that now; there is no motion before the House.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: With regard to the specific motion which you say, Sir, I may move, namely that your ruling be disagreed with, it is a very difficult—

The PRESIDENT: No debate on that can be allowed at present. It must be moved and seconded and then debated on. Your motion can be taken to-morrow, at the next sitting of the House. It is no good entering on the subject now.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: No, Sir. Would it be permissible for me to deal with this question in another form?

The PRESIDENT: Yes, but as I said—

Hon. A. SANDERSON: If I submit it to you.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member can deal with it as a matter of public business, and it can be restated and brought on at a future occasion.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Thank you, Sir.

BILL—INTERPRETATION.

Read a third time and *passed*.

BILL—CRIMINAL CODE ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 17th October.

Hon. J. DUFFELL (Metropolitan-Suburban) [4.40]: I support the second reading of the Bill. I realise the difficulty one has in dealing with this matter, considering that we have two other Bills closely allied with it, one to deal with the State Children Act and the other with the Prisons Act. We find in looking through the Bill generally that it proposes to increase the punishment for certain crimes. As was stated in this House a few days ago, under the Prisons Act Amendment Bill it is proposed to form a board of control which is to be furnished with very great powers. These powers go so far as to permit such a board to release prisoners on good behaviour, or prisoners who manifestly desired to show some form of good behaviour during the period in which they were serving their sentence. Having these things in mind, one

realises the difficulty in grasping what can be in the mind of the Attorney General in introducing an amendment to the Code and increasing the punishment, say, in the direction of offences towards girls and children. This is a Bill which will be dealt with very largely in Committee. The clauses will be gone through to a fuller extent than can be done on the second reading debate. It cannot be doubted but that the time has arrived when it is necessary to amend the Code as it stands at present. It is pointed out in Clause 3 that cases are brought up in the local courts in which persons acting on the advice of their counsel, have decided to have their cases dealt with summarily, ostensibly because they realise that they will get off much lighter than if they went before a judge and jury. It has been found, as a result of experience in the working of the Act, that many accused persons who are being dealt with summarily have received the maximum penalty that the court has been allowed to impose upon them. After the judgment has been given it has been found that a certain person is an old offender with a long list of previous convictions, in many cases for a similar offence for which they have been just tried, and that, therefore, the period of six months is a totally inadequate punishment for the crime which has been committed. In the circumstances it will be realised that an amendment in the form of Clause 3, Subclause 3, is very necessary. A magistrate, or justices, adjudicating in a police court, can then remand a case for sentence to a higher court. This has been a long felt want, and I feel it will have full consideration at the hands of the House in Committee. It may be remembered that when the leader of the House was explaining this clause I asked if there would be an opportunity for the accused to plead when he came before a higher court, and the leader of the House stated that the remand must be as set forth in the Bill, and that it would be generally understood that it did not give the accused person an opportunity to plead before a higher tribunal. With regard to Clause 4, one will necessarily hesitate before granting the power sought in it, the power to arrest without warrant. We know in the past it has been proved that arrests have been made of persons who have subsequently been proved to be innocent. At the same time we realise that we are living in abnormal times and circumstances arise, unfortunately only too frequently, which necessitate the authorities having this power to arrest without a warrant. Under the circumstances I shall support the clause. One of the most contentious clauses in the Bill is Clause 5. The more one thinks of it, the more one realises the necessity for abolishing all sentiment and speaking exactly what one feels. The clause deals with cases of assault and attempts to have carnal knowledge with children. After all said and done, girls under the age of 13 years are only children, and we have had painful instances of late where it has been found necessary to mete out increased punishment to offenders. It is not long since in Western Australia, where a man,

after assaulting a girl choked her. Any person who is so depraved as to commit a deed of that kind on children is not fit to be at large. Once such a person is tainted with the disease—for I can call it nothing else but a disease—it seems to me there is very little hope for him. The Victorian Code, I find, provides more drastic punishment than we propose to inflict here. Section 42 of the Victorian Act provides that the guilty person shall suffer the death penalty. I have no hesitation in saying that I support the extreme penalty for such an offence. Men—they are not men, they are fiends—who commit or attempt to commit this kind of offence are not fit to live, and to deal with them in a lenient manner will in my opinion have the effect of making the crime more prevalent.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Would you move to operate on them?

Hon. J. DUFFELL: I will deal with that when we reach the Committee stage. We cannot lose sight of one thing and it is that for 2,000 years we have been preaching Christianity. Although it is pointed out in some quarters that more leniency should be shown in dealing with criminals than has been done in the past, to me it seems futile to do such a thing, especially in times like these when we have seen so little permanent good resulting from the preaching of Christianity. Yet there are people who come forward and advocate that a more lenient view should be taken of serious offences such as these. If we are to stamp out this disease, we should do so as they do in Victoria, by making it a felony and providing the death sentence as the punishment. Clause 10 introduces another subject which is highly debatable. I can only term this clause as a hybrid one, inasmuch as it proposes to make it illegal for any person being the keeper of a brothel to suffer any girl under the age of 21 years to be therein. This is a clause which is very difficult to understand, inasmuch as we are faced with the fact that at the present time we are told on the best of authority that offences on girls are being committed to an alarming extent in our public gardens, parks, and elsewhere. This was brought before the House last session when we were considering the Venereal Diseases Bill. The brothel is not a place within the meaning of the Act where anyone can go, but if this clause is passed, it seems to me that any girl over the age of 21 years will not be committing an offence by resorting in such a house. I cannot see that we can place any other construction on the clause. It is quite true that we have at the present time Acts upon our statute-book which are not put into operation. It has been stated for various reasons that it is well to keep them there, that they are useful in their way. If this clause is to be passed, it simply means that women over 21 years of age will not be committing any offence by remaining in brothels. Unless I am given more information of a convincing nature than I possess at the present time, I shall be inclined to vote against the clause. Clause 32 relates to the age at which boys shall not frequent these places. The age is increased by the clause from 16 to 18. We

are living in a community where these places are not supposed to exist and it is somewhat conflicting that a clause of this nature should be submitted to us for our approval. It seems to me that if we agree to the clause, we undoubtedly shall be sanctioning, to a great extent, the existence of these places. Another clause to which I desire to refer is that amending Section 678 of the Code, and which provides that the Comptroller General shall take the place of the sheriff at executions. Why this change? Perhaps the leader of the House in his reply will tell us. It seems to me that the proper person to hand over a body should be the sheriff and not the Comptroller General of Prisons. The Comptroller General is not so closely associated with prison work as is the sheriff and I think the proposed change requires to be explained. Generally speaking I support the second reading, and I trust when the Bill is in Committee the amendment I have mentioned and which exists in the Victorian Code will be inserted in our Code. I know of no crime of a more dastardly character, which brings shame, ruin, and sometimes death on innocent children than this. These crimes are getting too frequent. I was speaking to a medical man a few days ago, and I was surprised at the information which he revealed to me on that occasion. He said that it was a supposition amongst men affected with venereal disease that to have sexual intercourse with a maiden or a child was a sure and speedy cure. If that is so can any member do anything which will oppose my idea of meting out punishment to offenders? When in Committee I hope that section of the Victorian Code will be inserted in our Bill. It will be one of the greatest deterrents against offences of this kind. Nothing short of that will have the desired effect. It is all very fine to talk about putting men into reformatories, segregating them for a period and then letting them at large. That will not have the slightest effect. I have seen acts of leniency and mercy meted out to prisoners misconstrued. There was the case which occurred a short time ago at Midland Junction. The man was let loose and was given over to the care of the Salvation Army. He went to Victoria, and there we know he met his Waterloo. Leniency with men of this type is altogether out of place. It is not effective. I support the second reading.

Hon. J. E. DODD (South) [5.3]: I think the Government are to be commended in introducing the two Bills, the Criminal Code and the Prisons Bill. There certainly are many provisions that will be beneficial, but I think there are others which are somewhat objectionable. Possibly the Colonial Secretary will see his way clear to accept some amendments, or at least to alter the Bill in some of its details. I agree with the indeterminate system of sentences. I think it is a really good idea, and one that is likely to be productive of a great amount of good. But I am not so sure of the benefit arising from the increase in the number of years for some of the offences described in the Bill. I am not sure it is going to do any good, and although I agree with Mr. Duffell as to the enormity

of offences on children, I am inclined to think there is some other means that may be adopted in punishing the individual without inflicting severe sentences. The only object in punishment, I take it, is first to act as a deterrent and to bring about a reform. Although I am not going to advocate now the method of a surgical operation for this offence, I honestly think at the same time it would be far better had the Government sought for more information on this method of treatment. It is no earthly use to put men in gaol for 14 or 15 years except that it keeps them away from the public; it locks them up. If you hang a man that is the worst possible thing to do; if you keep him in gaol that is the next worst thing. We can say what we like about these offences; they are largely the result of heredity, and we can try and get around them in any way we think fit, but sexual offences are largely brought about by heredity. Many of the public, and it is quite correct, think that our morals are according to our upbringing. I have often been reminded in regard to this by the remark which is attributed to John Wesley. On seeing a drunken man being taken away to prison he said, "But for the grace of God there goes John Wesley," and no doubt we are as moral as we are, not by any virtue of our own, but because we have had good bringing up or better parental control than other individuals have had. Therefore I look at punishment for these offences from that standpoint. We should see if there is not some other means by which we can accomplish reform—if it were possible by the surgical operation method to make a good citizen of an offender instead of locking him up for life, or by that other barbarous method of treatment, flogging. I am sorry the Attorney General has not pursued inquiries in this direction, so that we might test the efficacy of it or its desirability. I do not pretend that I have read much about it, so that I can give a proper vote. I would have liked to have had more information. There are one or two points I can hardly understand in the Bill. In Clause 7 it states, "any person who has or attempts to have unlawful carnal knowledge of a girl under the age of 16 years is guilty of a crime, and it is a defence to a charge of either of the offences defined to prove that the accused person believed on reasonable grounds that the girl was above the age of 16. In Clause 8 it says that any person who unlawfully and indecently deals with a girl or woman who is under the age of 16 years is guilty of a crime, but in this case if the accused person proves that the act was committed with the consent of the woman or girl that she was over the age of 13 years, and that he believed at the time on reasonable grounds that her age was greater than stated, he shall be in the same position as if her age had been as he so believed it to be. I want to find out why the difference is made in the two clauses. One in regard to 16 years and the other 13 years. Perhaps the Colonial Secretary will be able to state why. Again I see no provision in the Bill for a boy under the age of 16 years, who may possibly have unlawful carnal knowledge

of a girl under 16. Surely if it is either a boy or a girl under 16 years one is equally as bad as the other. Yet a boy under the age of 16 years may be sentenced to hard labour for five years with a whipping for having unlawful carnal knowledge of a girl who is perhaps older than himself. There is necessity for protecting boys as well as girls. Members will agree with me that a girl of 16 years of age is more of a woman than a boy of 13 is a man. And we should try and look around us and endeavour to protect the young men as well as the young girls. I would increase the age of those who are convicted of indecently dealing with a girl under the age of 16 years to 16 years in that case, the same as I would in Clause 7. I will explain what I mean. If the offender can prove that he thought the girl was over the age of 13 years he may get out of any punishment. I hope the Colonial Secretary will be able to explain this. Then again, in Clause 7, Subclause 3, it states "a prosecution under this section for the offence of having unlawful carnal knowledge must be begun within six months and for offences of attempting to have unlawful carnal knowledge within three months after the offence has been committed. I would like to know why that increase. It is a long time, and surely three months is quite sufficient to allow any charge for prosecution to be laid against an offender. Then I am not altogether clear about Clause 8, as to what is meant by "dealing with" a girl or woman. It states in Subclause 5 that the term "dealing with" includes doing any act which if done without consent would constitute an assault as hereinafter defined. But I am at a loss to know where it is defined. It may be in the original Act. Here again, may I ask how much better it would be if the leader of the House could see his way clear when introducing Bills to give us the clause in its entirety as it appears in the original Act when that clause is to be amended. We appreciate the innovation which has been made in giving us particulars, but if we could have the whole clause that is to be amended given it would save research and be much better in dealing with the matter. Again, in Clause 28 regarding proposed new Section 662, it states that the court may direct an extension of the term imposed on an offender and that he be detained during the Governor's pleasure in a reformatory prison. That does not appear fair to me. If he has served a term of imprisonment he may still be detained in a reformatory prison. The next subclause certainly deals with a different offender, or different cases, but there it states that at the expiration of the imprisonment then imposed on him a prisoner may be detained during the Governor's pleasure in a reformatory prison, and the court may do this having regard to the antecedents of the prisoner. That is a mighty big power to place in the hands of the court.

Hon. J. Duffell: Greater powers will be placed in the hands of the board of control, if the board is appointed.

Hon. J. E. DODD: These are points which the leader of the House might clear up. As regards the board of control, I am not altogether sure that it is a wise policy to appoint

such a board. If the appointment is to be made, the Government, I understand, agree that at least one woman should be placed upon that board of control. I think it pretty hard that men should have the sole right of making the laws, and also the sole right of administering the laws. Certainly the presence of a woman on the board would represent a great improvement. In my opinion men over the age of 25 convicted of these offences should be given different treatment from those under that age, or at all events, those under the age of 21. Most of us are, I think, seized with the fact that there is a sad lack of parental control in regard to a large number of our girls; and I certainly am disposed to think that we should study the interests of the men as well as the interests of the girls. I am glad the Bill has been introduced, and I think it will effect improvements. Possibly, if the leader of the House sees his way clear to alter the measure in certain respects, it will represent a still greater advance. All we can possibly do to prevent offences upon little children we ought to do, and I have no sympathy whatever with those who are inclined to be lenient in this respect. My argument is that we can effect reform in even a better way, because it is the temptation to which frequently men are subjected, and their inability to resist that temptation, the fact of hereditary influences acting upon them, that causes sexual offences. I cannot conceive of any normal man committing some of the offences of which we read in the Press. Only the other day the newspapers published the report of a trial of a poor fellow sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment and a flogging because the judge had no power to impose any other sentence. At the same time, the judge said that he would refer the offender to medical treatment. There is no shadow of doubt that that man was absolutely irresponsible, and yet the judge had to inflict a sentence of 14 years' imprisonment and a flogging. I have pleasure in supporting the second reading.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM (North) [5.20]: We must all admit that this is an extremely important Bill and one deserving our most careful consideration. I have listened with considerable interest to the speeches of those hon. members who have preceded me, and with many of the remarks made by both I agree. The measure possesses many good features and will represent an improvement in several directions, but I am in accord with Mr. Dodd when he said that some of the penalties proposed are very severe and if carried out would be very damaging indeed. Coming now to the clauses; as regards Clause 5, I agree entirely with what has fallen from Mr. Duffell. I do not think that under circumstances of that nature punishment can be too severe, and therefore no sympathy need be expressed for those who bring themselves within the purview of that clause. But Clause 7 I regard from a different point of view. Mr. Dodd has almost anticipated the remarks I have to offer on that provision. It seems to me very drastic indeed that we should turn young people into criminals for exercising those instincts which nature has

implanted in them. I regard this clause as something like the marriage law—it is a regulation of sexual intercourse. After all, though the marriage law is claimed as a divine law, whether it be that or not we must all have noticed that it is practically a regulation of sexual intercourse. I take it, this clause to a large extent represents the same thing. Sexual intercourse improperly indulged in is usually termed the social evil, and is generally referred to as the social evil. I believe it is generally classed with the vices of smoking, drinking and gambling; but I hardly think it should be classed with those three, for this reason, that the latter three are acquired evils, evils which people have contracted in the course of their lives; but what is known as the social evil is constitutional, is implanted in us by the Creator, or nature, and was intended for the procreation of the race. Were the instinct dead, we should be doing away with some of the functions for which we were created. Therefore, so far as we possibly can we must regulate it. But it seems to me a very drastic remedy to convert into a criminal a young man who perhaps is full of life and vigour, and who, through his environment, happens to have had sexual intercourse with some girl under the age of 16. For that, it is proposed to make him a criminal for the rest of his life. It seems to me a very difficult position to maintain. Whilst I agree that every effort should be made to prevent such offences, I consider that in many cases it would be almost impossible to prevent them. Their commission has never yet been prevented since the world began. There is the fact that our methods of living throw the sexes together in the most indiscriminate manner. One has only to look at large factories, or at large gatherings of people, to observe the sexes thrown together without any restraint; and however wrong it may be, and however objectionable, and however much our social laws may be against it, sexual irregularity will take place occasionally. Therefore methods can only be adopted to restrict the evil as much as possible. I quite agree that nothing is too bad for those men who deliberately set to work to bring about the ruin of a young woman. Mr. Dodd put the matter very clearly. There are cases in which young men of 22 or 23 find themselves involved in this position owing to their environment. It is very hard indeed that such young men should be turned into criminals for the remainder of their lives. If that is to be the case, then only one of two courses is open to us: either everybody must be inoculated so as to do away with the desire for sexual intercourse until after marriage, or there must be a similar complete separation of the sexes as exists in some Eastern countries. The clause cannot possibly be administered without making criminals of quite a lot of our young men. Next, I come to Clause 13, which refers to bookmaking. Of bookmakers my view is that they are unnecessary. Many of them are quite a good class of men, but they are not necessary. I am in favour of a certain amount of gambling, or speculation, speaking generally, in the form of the total-

isator and in that of sweeps. Especially do I see no objection to sweeps, in which the poorest may invest five shillings with the possibility of getting back £5,000; and all men, and especially Australians, like a little sport. I am quite prepared to permit the spirit of speculation to be indulged to the extent I have indicated. Clause 14 proposes to deal with suicides. I have placed a note against it, "Why interfere with them?" That about sums up my view of the subject. If people, having got into trouble, wish to put themselves out of the way, I do not see why we should be at great pains to prevent them from doing so. Clause 15 deals with assaults, and makes reference to Section 321 of the Criminal Code. I am one of those who believe in severe punishment for assaults on the person, and I entirely agree with the remarks of the leader of the House in this connection. That a man should hammer another half to death and then escape with a fine of £5 or £10 is utterly wrong. In this country we all boast of our political liberty; and I consider that we ought to be able to boast of our physical liberty as well. A man ought to be able to walk in the street without fear of assault so long as he does not interfere with others. But there are a class of men who because of their physical strength will say, "I'll give so-and-so a jolly good hiding, and pay five pounds for it." That should not be permitted, and therefore, in Committee, I shall move an amendment providing that a man guilty of violent and unprovoked assault shall be liable, not merely to a fine, but to a fine with or without whipping. If one man chooses to exercise violence on another, let the offender feel violence in his own person. It is well known that nothing but whipping stopped the great epidemic of garrotting in England a few decades ago. In referring to Clause 7 I omitted to mention my entire agreement with the remarks of Mr. Dodd relative to young men under 23 years of age. With these remarks, and subject to further attention to the Bill in Committee. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading.

On motion by Hon. J. Nicholson debate adjourned.

BILL—VERMIN.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 17th October.

Hon. E. M. CLARKE (South-West) [5.29]: Having glanced through this Bill, I am satisfied that it represents a vast improvement on the measure which was before this House last session. That Bill, to my mind, was altogether too drastic; and I voted against it. In order to keep up with the times, and take things from first sight, I made it my business to travel along the loop line from Dowerin to Merredin, as far as Kununoppin. I went to see for myself what the rabbits were doing, and to form some opinion as to the best method of dealing with the pest. I went over a strip of country 20 miles long by three or four wide. At sundown one could not travel a quarter of a mile without seeing rabbits. At certain places they were very

numerous. They were there by thousands. There is no doubt the two State fences have delayed the rabbits for a considerable time, but the place I am speaking of is some distance to the eastward of the second fence, and therefore I take it that the rabbits are nearly all over the area between the two fences. Late in the evening we could see them running in all directions. Under the Bill it appears the Government are going to take a certain amount of responsibility. That is only right. When one goes out among those settlers one realises that they are up against a big problem, not only to save their crops, but to get a bare living. The settlers are in a bad way on account of their crops having suffered last year, and from what I saw, this year some of the fields have not been allowed to get up into ear, while other have been cut down by the rabbits as though a mower had passed over them. The pest has neatly taken the whole thing off in a face, and from what I could see it is a very serious trouble indeed. The settlers are up against a big proposition. I anticipate that we are not going to find a ready market for our wheat in the coming season, and therefore I repeat what I have said on previous occasions, namely, that the settlers must have stock in addition to wheat. Before I went up there I was doubtful whether stock would do well in that district. However, all the stock I saw there were sleek, and in good condition. Unfortunately they are but few, but what are there are really quite good. In certain places where the rabbits were at their worst we saw the tracks of poison carts. We discovered a few dead rabbits, and by the activities of the blow-flies I could see that there were other dead rabbits in a number of the holes. In the very worst places the dead rabbits were very few indeed as compared with those we saw running away. As a matter of fact, in many instances the poison was lying unconsumed. There were a few dead rabbits, but not nearly as many as one might have expected. In regard to this poisoning, my idea is that it is a capital thing in the summer time, but is not of much account in winter, when feed is plentiful. It is when there is no green feed, and the rabbits are kept away from water, that poisoning should be resorted to. It would then be far more effective than at the present season of the year. Here is another aspect of the poisoning: One member of our party jumped out of the motor to the ground, and instantly there was a blaze. On investigation we found that it was due to the phosphorus lying about. It is true that the country in the vicinity was so cleanly divested of anything in the nature of grass that the fire would not have gone any distance; but suppose it had happened in a wheat field! The fire was started merely by a member of our party jumping out of the motor. We did not go out there on a hunting expedition, but, as showing what can be done with the gun, I may say that, travelling at a good speed, we shot some 200 rabbits in a very short space of time. It will thus be seen that they were pretty numerous. And, strange to say, there were at least four small ones to every full-sized rabbit in the grounds that we saw. Almost

another fence we found a great number of carcases and skins of rabbits.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): Was that on the No. 2 fence?

Hon. E. M. CLARKE: No. I am talking of the fences around the holdings. We had left the State fence 15 or 20 miles behind us. Along that fence there were scores of skeletons and skins. What the settlers meant by "on the fence" was along either side of the fence. On the one side of that fence was a man pretty well off, although I must say he did not make his money at wheat growing. His crop was badly eaten down. On the opposite side of the fence was a man not too well off. I was told that it took him all his time to keep the rabbits off his crop. One of the owners there had set three traps along the fence and in one of these traps I counted 20 rabbits. In all three there was about one-third of a sackful of rabbits. They were taken home and given to the pigs. They could not go five yards without coming across the remains of rabbits said to have been killed by hawks and eaten by crows; so apparently the rabbits have a good few enemies. From what we hear of the experience in the Eastern States, I have always held that the way to deal with the rabbits is to commercialise them. If we are to commercialise them, let it be done in the winter months, when there is any quantity of feed, and let the poisoning go on in the summer months, when the feed is scarce. We have the experience of the Eastern States to guide us. They have here spent millions in erecting rabbit-proof fences. We here have spent a large sum. I will not say that it has been of no use whatever, because I am convinced that the rabbit-proof fences did contain the rabbits for some time, possibly for years. The fact remains that the rabbits are now swarming in between the two fences and are getting closer and closer to the settled districts. I am pleased to see that there is in the Bill a clause dealing with the question of trapping, and it is provided that a man trapping rabbits shall have a license. With that I quite agree. But there is this to be considered: a man cannot go out there and catch rabbits and send them in to market, even at this time of the year, for, in view of the lack of travelling facilities, the distance is too great; while in the warm weather it will be necessary that the trapper should have some contrivance for chilling the rabbits, if he is to send them to market in good condition. As I have said, the rabbits are on both sides of the fences. In my opinion the Government will have to go to the relief of those settlers and supply them with the means of getting some stock. That to a great extent will help the settlers over their difficulties. A good deal might be done by fencing, but of course this is impossible in view of the present cost of wire. I think we shall have to do other things. My idea is to commercialise the rabbits. I was very much struck with the quality of the land up there and its suitability for wheat-growing. Under proper climatic conditions that is going to be the wheat-growing portion of Western Australia. But the point I make is that, under existing conditions and in view of what we can

see ahead, I have not very much hope of the settlers getting very rich on wheat growing alone. They must have some stock. I am satisfied that stock will do well up there. I asked some of the settlers whether they had much trouble from the native dogs. They said they thought they could deal with that pest. Several told me of instances of the dogs getting through the fences and causing damage among the sheep, but I do not think the dogs will occasion the settlers very much trouble. I have pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill, because I am sure that those pioneers out there merit the fullest attention and consideration the Government can give them.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL (Metropolitan) [5.44]: I, too, have pleasure in supporting the Bill, although I think it sets out to achieve an object absolutely unattainable. It sets out to reconcile the irreconcilable; it sets out to bring under one statute the whole State, the conditions in various parts of which are so entirely different that it is impossible to bring them under one statute. I think the Government would be wise to limit the area of the operations of the Bill. The Bill is very good and given some few amendments, would be a perfectly workable one in an area which might relatively be described as south of the Murchison River and west of a line from Southern Cross to the south coast. For the rest of the State outside that area, I do not think the Bill is applicable or workable. It would be well if the Government would put such a provision into the Bill. From what I have seen of the agricultural areas and the pastoral areas of the State—for during the last two or three years my work has enabled me to see a great deal of it—I feel certain that these two areas of the State cannot be brought under the one class of legislation. It is a peculiar thing, and gives rise in my mind to a great deal of thought, that the position as regards rabbits in this and in the Eastern States is very dissimilar. In the Eastern States the rabbits did less harm to the small holder and a great deal of harm to the pastoralists, the holders of large areas who, with the money at their command and with that supplied by the Government, could not efficiently cope with this pest. Here we see the reverse. I think hon. members who have had experience of the Eastern States and of this State—and there are such in this House, notably, Mr. Greig—will bear me out when I say that if rabbits had existed in the pastoral areas of this State under the conditions that they existed in the pastoral areas of the Eastern States for many years, there would not be a sheep on the pastoral holdings in Western Australia to-day. It is a thing we can congratulate ourselves upon, that the rabbits have not increased on the pastoral holdings in this State to the extent that they did in the case of Eastern Australia. A little while ago I had an opportunity of seeing a wide stretch of country, of about 250 miles by 100 miles, of pastoral holdings, and it was a pleasure to me to observe the fauna on that stretch of country, amongst which, unfortunately, is included the rabbit. Never-

theless, I found very few cases of rabbits having done any harm. Certainly, we would be better off without them, but they are there. If they have decreased the stock-carrying capacity of that particular area of country, they have done so to a very small extent indeed, and they have been there, I suppose, for the last 14 or 15 years. I venture to say that if the rabbits had existed in that class of country for the same time in South Australia, or in the west of New South Wales, that even the trees would have been ringbarked. With regard to the agricultural areas, I have travelled over them a great deal also; and while I have seen rabbits, I suppose not in the same number per acre as perhaps Mr. Clarke has seen them, I have not seen them anywhere in the same numbers that they exist in the Eastern States. It is unfortunately true that it is the small holder, the agricultural man, who is principally troubled with them, and it is to the agriculturalist, I think, that this Bill should undoubtedly be made to apply. It is possible for him, the small holder, if he has not more than a few thousand acres, to carry out the provisions relating to the fencing off of water, but it would be impossible and impracticable for the pastoralist in the northern and far eastern portion of the State to attempt to do so. The Government are ill-advised in endeavouring to apply the same sets of conditions to totally dissimilar stretches of country. There are one or two little defects in the Bill which are more defects in draftsman-ship. In these Bills, as a rule, which deal with noxious weeds, game, or fisheries, it is usual to include the birds, beasts, and fishes, to which it is intended that the legislation shall apply, in a schedule at the end of the Bill. They thus strike the eye of the observer more clearly, and the schedule thus provided is added to by proclamation of the Governor-in-Council. In this Bill we do not find that this practice has been followed. I think it would be desirable if the Government—

Hon. J. Nicholson: It is only in the interpretation that we find the definition of vermin.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: It is only in the interpretation that we find the definition of vermin. Vermin means rabbits, foxes, dingoes, and wild dogs, dogs run wild or at large, and any other animals, and, for the purposes of Part 7, birds which the Governor may declare to be vermin for the purposes of the Act. I think, when we are framing an Act, we should undoubtedly take the opportunity of expressing in the schedule of the Bill the opinion of this House with regard to what should be vermin and what should not be vermin. There are several important omissions from this schedule, as it should be, that should be repaired before the Bill passes through Committee. I see no mention whatever of the birds to which I have called attention, I suppose, some six times in the House without apparently interesting the Government in them: I refer to sparrows. Sparrows are a very serious pest now in the Eastern States, and the Government appear to be looking upon the approach of these birds with the utmost equanimity.

Hon. H. Carson: Prospectors are out after them.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: Yes, so they say. It is a funny thing that everyone but Government prospectors are finding these birds. I have recently spoken to a man who came from a district in which sparrows are reported. He saw them in plenty, but he did not hear of an offer of any bonus for killing them. I suppose a bonus has been offered, but if so, it must have been offered very confidentially.

Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister): No.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: Possibly it has appeared in the "Government Gazette," which is not widely read in the districts concerned on account of its not being illustrated. So far, I am bound to say that the efforts which the Government have made, and which were detailed in the answers to the question which I put, appear to be very half-hearted efforts indeed. I suppose they think that this is not a pest which is likely to be a nuisance in Western Australia. Whether the wheat grower, or the orchardist, or the town dweller, the sparrow is about as undesirable a neighbour as he can possibly get. I hope the Government will put a little more vim into their efforts to meet these birds, and stop them before it is impossible to do so. One good shower of rain in the country that they are now in means that they are in Western Australia for good, and we shall never get rid of them. We should, therefore, take time by the forelock. In one instance the Bill specifies foxes as vermin. Of course, foxes are not here at present in sufficient numbers to allow us to recognise their existence, but if the Government are going to legislate in advance—and it is quite right that they should do so—I say they should undoubtedly include starlings amongst the birds. The society of which I have the honour to be the president has always taken the greatest trouble and care to avoid introducing anything which may possibly turn itself into a pest. This is very hard indeed. It is necessary to be extra cautious, because a bird or beast, or even a fish, which in one country, its country of origin perhaps, is harmless and even beneficial, when it is introduced to a new country, changes its habits to such an extent that it may become an everlasting pest. That is the case with rabbits. In the Old Country, where rabbits are kept under control by the population, where it is even necessary to make game laws for their preservation, rabbits have not had a chance, nor do I think they ever would have, of increasing to the same extent as is the case with them in Australia. It is a peculiar thing that whenever a beast from the northern hemisphere is brought to this island continent of ours, it appears to gain in fecundity, in size, and in every way. For instance, hares that have been brought from England to South Australia and Victoria have increased to such an extent as to become a serious pest. Here they would become just the same. This is principally due to the fact that they have very

many more young at birth in Australia than they do in the Old Country. Instances are not lacking in other ways. Until nature herself restores the balance—that will be done, and I believe is being done in the case of rabbits—we have to take means in the first place to keep these animals out, and secondly to control them if we bring them in. For the purposes of this Bill and this debate, the only vermin which we appear to deal with is the rabbit. As Mr. Clarke has said, the settlers have assured him—I think they are quite right—that they can easily enough deal with the dingoes and other pests. Because they are not absolutely in their paddocks they are disposed to neglect consideration of them. While this Bill and this debate deal practically only with rabbits, so, apparently, from the speech of the Honorary Minister, there is only one method of doing so, and that is by means of poison. I know it is of no use endeavouring to evoke a scientific interest or a sense of humanity in the Government or the Honorary Minister, because they are disposed, I imagine, to neglect the scientific interest, and they have no feelings of humanity towards rabbits, in which they are quite right; but unfortunately they do not seem to be able to display much humanity towards other animals and birds, which will be involved with the rabbits in a common fate. The indiscriminate poisoning of rabbits, and with them of all the other small fauna of the State is I venture to say, a crime against nature. Crimes against nature never go unpunished.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: What is the experience in the other States?

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: For one thing the experience of the Eastern States is the blow-fly, which is largely due to the practice of poisoning carried out against rabbits. We do not know what experience Western Australia may have. If one commits a crime against nature by destroying the balance of nature, be sure that nature will take her revenge. We do not know in what form it will come. If we destroy rabbits by poison, and with them all those insectivorous birds, which at present keep our orchards and wheat fields free from the insect pests, we shall possibly exchange a lesser evil for a greater one. This is a matter which must be well considered before we adopt such a wholesale method of destruction as the laying of poison involves.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: What is the alternative?

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: I will deal with that in a few moments. There are, I think, alternatives. There are other means of eradicating this pest. I think that nature herself is taking one means. In the history of mankind or, to go further back, the history of nature, I think that it has always come about that any species of animals, or any species of birds or fish, always has a rise and a decline. It invariably follows, too, that where a new animal or bird is introduced to a new country, at first, if the conditions are suitable, it will increase beyond all measure. This has been so with the rabbit pest. When introduced to Australia they found a land particularly adapted for their support.

and afterwards they increased enormously. I would like hon. members to study this question and give the House the benefit of their experience. I believe that the rabbit to-day in Western Australia has not got the same racial vitality as had the rabbit 30 years ago when with all the freshness and vigour of a new arrival in the country, which was absolutely suited to them, they spread over the face of that country like a devouring fire, and as that vitality has disappeared, we will find that nature will restore the balance which for the time being has been lost. This is going to be one of the greatest factors in dealing with the rabbit question. The second is a method which cannot for the time being be put to its fullest possible use, and that is, dealing with the rabbits in group areas by means of wire netting. Of course I know I will be met at once with the rejoinder that netting is not obtainable, but probably within the next year or two it will be obtainable, and then we will be able to deal with this question much more satisfactorily. Mr. Hamersley has spoken of the possibility of a certain meat-eating ant from South Africa for the purpose of destroying young rabbits. Since then I have consulted a gentleman with whom I am in frequent touch, a man who is one of the best entomologists in the State, and who has had some experience of this very ant in South Africa, and has seen what the insect is capable of doing, and he informs me that there is not the slightest doubt that this meat-eating ant will destroy rabbits, but that there is also not the slightest doubt it will destroy anything else that it will come across and that it will very likely destroy lambs as well as rabbits.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: And chickens.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: Yes. This ant has such a destructive influence that I am not very anxious to engage in its acclimatisation. Therefore I am afraid we will have to count the meat-eating ant out. Some 30 years ago the Government of New South Wales who were then spending millions in subsidising the pastoralists of that State in destroying rabbits, thought it well to divert some thousands of pounds into channels for conducting inquiries which were then being made by Pasteur as the main spring, through their representative in Australia, a gentleman called Dr. Danysz. This gentleman came to Australia and remained in New South Wales for a number of years. Dr. Danysz, acting under the direction of Pasteur, was endeavouring to find the bacillus of some disease which would be specific to the rabbit. He was quite right in thinking that such a disease was discoverable. I do not doubt that a disease will be found, but at the present time all the scientific thought of the world is unfortunately turned into other channels, but I think that within a few years we shall be able to say that a disease has been discovered which is specific to rabbits. By that I mean that whilst the disease will destroy and spread amongst rab-

bits it will not harm anything else. Dr. Danyasz had an island placed at his disposal by the Government of New South Wales and on that island he carried out his experiments. Unfortunately he found that every disease with which he experimented was communicable by the rabbit to some other animal, though perhaps in a lesser degree, but to such an extent as to put it out of court. I am firmly of the opinion that when we get scientific thought turned to the solution of some of these problems a disease will be found. I do not wish, by holding out hope for the future, to minimise the difficulties of the present. I realise that the rabbits, in the agricultural areas to a greater extent than in the pastoral areas, are a great menace, and if we have to adopt poison to deal with that menace, I must reluctantly agree. I venture to say, however, that we are running great risks. Apart from the sentimental risk, we are incurring a risk in adopting wholesale poisoning as the only way of dealing with this question. Just a word or two about commercialising the rabbit. Let me say at once that after reading a good deal that has been said on the question, I venture to express the opinion that those people who say that by commercialising the rabbit we are spreading him, depend a great deal more on assertion than on logic for proof of what they say. It is the custom in rabbit departments, and amongst a lot of people it is a fetish, that if we put the rabbit to the use that nature intended we are committing almost a crime. I think this country would be well advised, even though we are endowed by nature with a lavish food supply, not to neglect this bounteous food supply which nature has furnished. I am of the belief that in certain areas and at certain seasons the rabbits, when it is impossible to poison them, should undoubtedly be secured for subsequent sale. I may be met with the rejoinder that persons can get a license for the destruction and the sale of rabbits, but at the same time the Honorary Minister, who on this point, I understand, expresses the voice of the department, holds that it would be foolish to grant these licenses. Therefore the benefit which is contained in the granting of licenses is more apparent than real. I think I may claim to have seen the results of the experiments carried on during a great number of years. I had at one time in the course of a more or less chequered career the opportunity of coming into close contact with the rabbits by making a living out of them by way of trapping them for their scalps during a period of 12 or 18 months; and in that time I carefully observed what I may call the natural history of the rabbit. Perhaps, therefore, I may be allowed to make these remarks because of the experience I have had in the Eastern States. I have endeavoured when I have travelled in this State, to apply that experience to the circumstances which I find are not altogether similar here. To sum up, I do not believe for a moment that the rabbit is going to

nearly as serious a pest in Western Australia as it has been in the Eastern States—God forbid that it should become so. But at the same time, as I have already said, in holding out hope for the future I do not want to minimise the serious condition of the present. We must take these steps, but we take them with the experience of 30 or 40 years of Eastern Australia to help us. And I firmly believe that we will yet be able to eradicate the pest. I have every hope for the future, and I recommend the Government to limit the area of the operations of the Bill. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading.

Sitting suspended from 6.10 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. J. MILLS (Central) [7.30]: This Bill has been so thoroughly discussed by members that there is very little for me to deal with. My remarks will be confined almost entirely to Clause 81. This provides that the Governor may declare by proclamation that certain areas are vermin-infested and all owners within that area are required to fence water supplies. Sub-clause 9 defines what water supply is, and for the purposes of the clause it is any well, dam, or reservoir. In my opinion this clause is aimed at those settlers on the Eastern wheat belt who at this time form a sort of barrier against the rabbits and on these it is acting rather unfairly. Had this invasion taken place, say, from Cape Leeuwin, there would have been no appearance of this clause in the Bill because there are large areas of water in that district which it would be impossible to fence. I am not a rabbit expert, but since the appearance of rabbits in the district which I represent, some nine years ago, I have had opportunities of watching the peculiarities and movements of the rabbits and I hold that water is not a necessity for the life of the rabbit. They can do with it or without; preferably with it, such as marsupials can. If we prevent the free access of stock to a water hole we must provide the alternative. It will require a windmill and tank, a ball tap and troughs which cost between £70 and £80. Few of the settlers would have one dam, and many might have six or seven dams on their holdings. It is a serious matter if these men should have to fence their water supplies because they would have to provide the alternative. I do not think there is any necessity for this extra cost, nor is there any advantage to be gained from it. It is clear this is aimed at the men I have referred to because it mentions "dam or reservoir," leaving out "springs, soaks, or pools." If water attracted rabbits it would be a very good thing because the settler could leave the water holes open and then fence them off and the rabbits would then all die. In the country which I represent there are unlimited water holes and I have not seen rabbits around them to excess. They are first class judges of grass. When the Bill reaches the Committee stage I intend to move for the deletion of this clause.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON (Metropolitan) [7.35]: It was not my intention to have ad-

dressed the House in regard to this Bill, because I recognise that a measure of this nature was in very good hands when being dealt with by men of the wide experience of the members who have spoken, but I became interested, however, in view of various criticisms which were made on different clauses by members who have spoken, and because of that I took the opportunity, probably more from a critical standpoint, of perusing the Bill more closely than otherwise I should have done, and in the course of that perusal I have seen in the Bill many places where amendments might, with benefit, be made, and I therefore, in addressing the House, wish it to be understood that I seek to address the House from the critical standpoint. It must be a very gratifying thing for the Minister in charge to have heard such a consensus of approval on the part of members. The Bill has been received by unanimous consent as a wise measure, and no doubt it is because we are concerned with a very serious menace. Whatever can be done to overcome that menace must certainly be welcome. Whether the various means devised in the Bill are the right means may be open to question, particularly in regard to poisoning, the method that has been questioned by various members who have spoken. But quite apart from that, if the Bill attains some good purpose in raising an interest some means may be devised that will enable the Government to cope with this serious trouble. Dealing, however, with certain of the clauses in the Bill, I would refer first to the definition of "holding" in Clause 3. It occurs to me in order to make the position clear there should be added after the words "or other lease," which is rather a wide term, the words "granting or including the right to the surface of the land." For example, supposing the right is given to a man to remove stone or other substance from the land, he has no right to the surface. He has only the right to carry out that particular thing that is granted in his lease. In regard to the definition of "occupier" it will be observed that "manager" is included in that definition. I venture to say that a manager should not be included because in the Bill, particularly in Part VI., there are various obligations which are imposed and various rights that might be exercised by an occupier which I do not think should be in the hands of a manager. I intend later on to make further reference to the position of occupier and owner. In dealing also with this particular matter of holdings, to which I may refer again for a moment, some members alluded to the position of a company here which has experienced very many hardships, the Midland Railway Company, and I think with those members who have spoken in regard to that company that consideration ought to be extended and amendments introduced into the Bill to enable protection or exemption being granted to them. They should be placed in the position that Government lands are, and not have imposed on them greater obligations than the Government would require to bear. I notice in Clause 15 that provision is made for the appointment of the first members of the board by the Governor, and it is provided

there that where the members of a board are so appointed they shall go out of office on the second Wednesday in April following their appointment. If reference is made to Clause 43 it will be noted that the Governor may also appoint nominees from various roads boards and in the case of nominees appointed from various roads boards it is provided that they shall remain in office for three years from the date of appointment. It is therefore not intended that members appointed from roads boards should go out of office on the second Wednesday of April following their appointment, and some saving provision should be inserted in Subclause 2 of Clause 13. I am making these comments now with a view of explaining certain amendments which it is my intention to submit when the Bill is in Committee and this may give members an opportunity of considering the clauses. Another important clause in connection with the appointment of members is that contained in Clause 25. It is provided there that where no members or an insufficient number have been elected to a board, the Governor may at any time he thinks fit appoint a sufficient number of members to the board in the place of those who ought to be elected. In Clause 16 the method of election is provided for, and in Subclause 4 of (Clause 16) it states that the members to go out of office shall be the members who have been longest in office. Assuming an instance of this sort: that one board did not elect the full number of members required, the Governor under Clause 25 would be entitled to appoint members to the board and the question would then arise, as the clause now stands, when should those members who are appointed by the Governor go out of office? Those members appointed under Clause 25 have not been elected by the voters, and it is, therefore, unknown what votes they would have received if they had gone through the ordinary process of election. Therefore, it is impossible to determine their rotation—that is to say, whether the member who has been appointed by the Governor under Clause 25 shall or shall not go out of office before the member who has been actually elected. I suggest there should be added to the clause that the Governor should fix the date of retirement of such members as have not been elected, and therefore have not received votes. Part VI. of the measure, dealing with fencing, is the most important part of it. That seems to be divided into practically three sub parts. The first of them consists of Clauses 71 to 75, dealing with the powers of the Minister or of the board to erect fences, etc. In Clause 71, Subclause 2, paragraph (b), a very sweeping power is given to the Minister or the board, and the officers, servants, and agents of the Minister and the board, to do various things—to enter upon lands and to cut timber thereon. Those members who are interested in country lands will, no doubt, view this extraordinary power with a good deal of suspicion, because it has often happened that inspectors carry out their powers in a high handed way, whereas, it is true, others act in a more moderate manner. I suggest that a proviso should be inserted limiting this right to cut timber so

that it will not extend to certain trees used for ornament or shade, or even fruit trees. The power should be specified so that the rights to that class of timber would be perfectly safeguarded and that the power would be restricted to ordinary indigenous timber. Clause 74 makes provision that if any Government fences, or any fences erected by or under the control of the board, are, with the consent of the Minister or the board, as the case may be, made use of by the owner of a holding in fencing his holding, such owner shall become liable to pay to the Minister or the board, as the case may be, an annual sum equal to interest at a prescribed rate. There is no provision that it shall be unlawful for any person to use the fence of the Government or of a board, and I have no doubt the Minister in charge of the Bill will agree to the insertion of some clause providing that it shall be, in the first instance, unlawful to use any fence of the Government or of a board without the consent in writing of the Minister or the board, as the case may be. In point of fact, to read the clause literally, if a man were to use a fence of the Government or a board without the consent of the Government or the board, the question arises whether he would be liable to a penalty. But if a clause be inserted as I suggest, it would get over the difficulty. I think, indeed, that the words, "with the consent of the Minister or the board, as the case may be" might be safely omitted, provided the other clause is inserted. In Subclause 3 of Clause 74 there should be a transposition of some words, but that matter can easily be adjusted in Committee. Likewise, amendment is needed to Subclause 4 of Clause 74, which provides—

For the purposes of this section an owner shall be deemed to so make use of a fence as aforesaid if he receives the benefit thereof, or of any part thereof, as a protection to his holding or any part thereof against vermin.

A man might possibly use the fence for other purposes than protection against vermin. He may erect an ordinary open wire fence. Therefore, provision should be made to allow the measure to cover such a case as that. In regard to the annual sum which it is provided shall be paid to the Minister or board erecting the fence, or providing the means for erecting, I notice there is no statement as to the date from which that annual sum, in the shape of interest, shall be computed. However, that also is a matter which can easily be rectified in Committee. Clauses 71 to 75 deal entirely with matters between the Minister and the board, and the owner, as distinct from the occupier. In Clause 76, however, there commences the introduction of the name of the occupier; and in that clause and subsequent clauses he is brought in as being a party who has a certain interest almost equal to that of the owner of the land. As I pointed out earlier, an occupier may be a manager under the definition. As the manager is only representing the interests of the owner, I venture to say the occupier should not be allowed to have an equal voice practically, as is provided here, with the owner.

Whatever arrangements are made should be arrangements as between the owner, and the Minister or board; and provision should be made that, in the event of the owner's failure to carry out his obligations under the measure, it should then be optional for the occupier, or a right of the occupier, to carry out those necessary obligations in order to achieve the purposes of the measure. The subsequent provision in Subclause 7 of Clause 81 could then apply. It reads—

As between the owner and occupier the following covenants shall (subject to any agreement to the contrary) be implied in any existing or future lease or agreement to let the land, that is to say.—(a) The owner shall indemnify the occupier against the capital cost of the fencing. (b) The occupier shall, during his occupancy, pay the owner interest on such cost at the prescribed rate per annum, and such interest shall be recoverable by action or by distress as arrears of rent are recoverable. (c) The occupier shall, during his occupancy, repair the fencing and keep the same in thorough repair.

The object is a wise one, because, where an owner of land has leased his property at the present time, provision has naturally not been made to meet the case of such obligations as are imposed by this Bill, and it is fair and proper that some such implied conditions should be introduced. When the Bill is in Committee it may be necessary even to extend those implied conditions. Reverting for a moment to Clause 76, Subclause 3 states that the amount payable by way of contribution shall be a charge upon the land in respect of which such contribution is payable. Now Clause 98 provides—

Subject and without prejudice to the foregoing provisions of this Act in any case where—(a) money payable under this Act is expressed to be a charge upon land; and (b) notice of such charge is registered in the prescribed manner in the Office of Titles or Registry of Deeds, or in the Department of Lands, or of Mines, as the case may be, any person thereafter becoming the owner of such land shall be taken to have notice of such charge, and shall be liable to pay the sum so charged or so much thereof as may, for the time being, be unpaid.

That is to say that, subject and without prejudice to the provisions of the measure, when notice is given in the Titles Office, or other Government office, any person coming subsequently would have notice of the charge. But as the Bill now reads, I submit, this subclause practically creates a charge from the very moment that the cost is incurred by the Minister or by the board. There should be added to Subclause 3 words to this effect, "Subject to the provisions of Section 98." My contention is that those words at the beginning of Clause 98 make the preceding provisions subject to the various succeeding clauses. However, that is also a matter which can easily be rectified in Committee. Clause 78, I notice, is a new provision for the reference of all disputes to arbitration; and this clause, it would appear, was intended to take the place of

Clause 86, which makes some wider provisions in the same respect. I do not know whether the Honorary Minister has considered that clause or not. It looks as though Clauses 78 and 86 conflict. In Clause 79, which provides for the erection of ring fences, there is nothing to show that any one or other of those owners who might bear the burden of the cost of erecting the ring fence, would be entitled to a charge on the properties of the other parties.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: Does not the following clause provide for that?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I think not. Unless it is prescribed in the regulations that there shall be such provision in the agreement they could not very well make such provision. However, that difficulty can be overcome in Committee. Very drastic power is provided in Clause 83, namely, the power to the Minister or the board to execute a mortgage over the property of an owner. I question whether that power should be given in its present form. That clause is worthy of serious consideration on the part of those affected. Clause 104 seems to create rather a serious responsibility on an employer who is the owner of cattle. It is there provided that any person who is the employer of a person who drives cattle on Crown land adjacent to a rabbit-proof fence shall be liable to a penalty of £1 for every head of cattle so driven. This is throwing the responsibility on to the owners of cattle, who may be unable themselves to safeguard their position; because it is well known that when cattle are handed over to stock-drivers they have the complete charge, unaccompanied as a rule by the employer. And if through some ill-will or carelessness on the part of the stock-driver he infringes this clause, the owner will be left with the responsibility of £1 per head of the cattle, which might be a very serious item in the case of a large herd of cattle. I commend that clause also to the consideration of hon. members. I have dealt with some of the provisions that occur to me as being worthy of consideration, and when in Committee I will take an opportunity of moving certain amendments in the direction I have indicated. Otherwise I may say that I could not do other than give my full support to the Bill.

Hon. J. A. GREIG (South-East) [8.6]: I rise to support the second reading. It is a very much better Bill than the one we had previously. Speaking on the earlier measure I remarked that in my opinion the two Bills, namely the Vermin Bill and the Rabbit Bill, should be consolidated into one measure. I think this Bill is somewhat more lengthy than is required, that it could be condensed. At the same time, I have gone through it and I think it is a fair Bill. There is no doubt that when it comes into working, we shall find its weak points. Past experience has taught me that Vermin Bills always raise a certain amount of controversy. I can see things in the Bill now which will probably give rise to litigation. For instance, there is the question of cattle being driven on Crown lands adjoining a rabbit-proof fence. The difficulty may arise through the absence of any defini-

tion of what is meant by "adjoining a fence." For instance, we have Crown lands 100 miles back from the fences, yet running right up to those fences. Would not a man driving a mob of cattle on Crown land 100 miles from the fence be infringing this provision? If it is said that this is an extreme view, I retort by asking where are we to draw the line? Shall it be one mile or half a mile or six inches?

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: Where it is likely to do damage to the fence.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: That would be a sensible view. The difficulty in framing a Bill is to so frame it that it will not provide points for lawyers to quibble over.

Hon. J. Nicholson: My contention is that the penalty should be, not on the owner, but on the man who drives the cattle.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: I think the only way would be to punish the offender if he does damage to the fence. There could be no harm done to the fence by the mere driving of cattle near it. If the clause stipulated a width of one chain from the fence, we should have something definite. I regret that the Minister, while introducing the Bill, has also given notice of so many amendments to it. Seeing the time it has been in hand the Bill should have been perfected by the draftsman. Mr. Kingsmill referred to the racial vitality of rabbits in Western Australia. Personally, I am at a loss to understand why rabbits have not increased much more rapidly in Western Australia. My experience was gained 25 years ago in the Eastern States, and I am quite certain that the rabbits in similar country there increased very much faster and were a much greater menace than they are in Western Australia. I do not know whether it is on account of the lack of this racial vitality, as Mr. Kingsmill has termed it, or whether it is that there is something in the bush and scrub of the country which restrains them. I was told some time ago at Wyalcatchem that as soon as the grass dried in that district and the rabbits began to eat the bush and scrub, they suffered from compaction occasioned by acid in the bark of the scrub, and that this caused them to die out. I think there is something in that theory. I recently travelled considerably in the Great Southern district, and did not see a rabbit. I came across small traces on the ground, and I know that there are a few in the locality. I am told that they have been there for years. Why they have not increased faster, I do not understand. I agree with Mr. Kingsmill that the Bill should provide for other pests, particularly parrots, sparrows, and starlings. I presume that under the Bill it will be compulsory for every district in Western Australia to form a Vermin Board. There are some districts in the South-West which have very little vermin, apart from birds. Others again will have dingoes and birds. It seems to me that it would be only a fair thing to ask those districts fortunate enough to be free of rabbits to hand over to the Government the surplus revenue which they will collect under the Bill, to assist in fighting the rabbits. Undoubtedly the men in the eastern districts

faced with the influx of rabbits, are sustaining the greatest amount of injury, and it would be only fair to ask others more fortunately situated to contribute to the cost of combating the rabbits in those eastern districts. There are in the Bill some clauses which I think it will be wise to amend. There are also the amendments which the Honorary Minister is to move. On the whole I think the Bill can be taken as a fair one, and when it shall have been dealt with in Committee it should be quite a good measure.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister—East—in reply) [8.14]: I have to thank hon. members for the friendly and helpful criticism they have given to the measure. Some of the suggestions preferred are very sound and will be acted on when the Bill is in Committee. Mr. Clarke told us how, desiring to get first-hand knowledge, he had paid a visit to a part of the State where rabbits are very bad indeed. He referred to the fact that some of the fields had been destroyed by the rabbits. Hon. members should know that Mr. Crawford, the chief inspector of rabbits, has just completed a trip of inspection through some of the most densely infested districts, and his report shows clearly that wherever an attempt has been made to deal with the pest the crops have not suffered to any extent at all. Where no attempts have been made to poison or take other measures to eradicate the pest, the crops have suffered accordingly. The hon. member also stated that fires had been started by means of phosphorus. I have no doubt that what he said was quite correct, and that probably we shall have trouble in that direction. The fault, however, lies with the bad mixing. If there is faulty mixing of the phosphorus with the bait, trouble is bound to follow. Phosphorus, when struck by any hard instrument, will immediately burst into flame. If the farmers are not going to take the trouble to find out the best way of mixing the phosphorus with the bait, as is shown by the pamphlet issued by the department, they are courting disaster. With regard to the presence of rabbits between the fences, I know they are very bad in some places. Mr. Clarke, and one or two other members, have stated that they do not think poisoning is effective in winter time. Wherever poisoning is carried out properly there have been very fair results. I do not say that the results have been as good as during the summer months. One cannot anticipate results in winter time, when there is green feed about, such as one can anticipate in the summer time. Nevertheless, useful work has been done; but if settlers are going to neglect poisoning in the winter time the rabbits will increase rapidly.

Hon. J. Nicholson: What about the blow-fly?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): No doubt Mr. Kingsmill was quite correct in his statement in that regard. We have the blow-fly with us now, in a bad form. We cannot, however, say that the blow-fly has increased in the South-Western districts through the presence of dead rabbits, because there has been no poisoning done in that particular part of the State.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: I meant in Victoria and New South Wales.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): The blow-fly is bad at present, and I know that the rabbits' carcases will increase that particular pest. The question is which is worse. If the rabbits are allowed to go on there will be no sheep for the blow-fly to affect. Mr. Kingsmill stated he had drawn attention several times to the coming invasion of sparrows. That is so. He has been untiring in his efforts to keep this trouble before the Government. His efforts are appreciated by the Government and the department, and have been very helpful to us. We have not been neglectful in this matter, and have done our best to stop the invasion. The moment that we learned that an invasion of sparrows was threatened I made inquiries in the Eastern States. Captain White, the South Australian officer in charge of the department, informed me that we need not trouble about the sparrows, and that they had only got as far as Tarcoola. Coming along the Great Western railway, I learned that they were inside our borders, and that they had travelled along the coast and not along the railway. The Government then agreed to grant a bonus of 2s. 6d. a head for sparrows. Apparently there were only to be found at Eucla at that time. We appointed a man at Eucla to attend to this matter, but notwithstanding that this bonus was granted at the commencement of the year, we have not had a single claim for a bonus.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: There are no idle men at Eucla.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): I understood from Mr. Doran that he could not get any man there. Finally we put a man on at a daily wage to go out into some of the undeveloped parts of the district, where I understand the sparrows are, and to do his best to clear out the few that are there. It will be seen that we have not been in any way lax in our efforts to stop the invasion of sparrows. There are other methods besides poisoning of getting rid of rabbits. We were doing something in the way of fumigation at one time, until we ran out of the necessary materials. Owing to this fact, the fumigator business had to be laid on one side. I quite agree that in poisoning rabbits we are going to destroy a great deal of bird life, but I see no way out of the difficulty, and the department has not yet solved the problem. There is a protective measure to a certain extent in using a poison cart that will cover the poison. This does protect the bird life to a certain extent, but does not protect all kinds of birds. If this practice is followed out the loss of bird life will not be so great as would otherwise be the case. I know that Mr. Kingsmill has had long years of experience of rabbits, and knows as well as any member of the House their habits and customs, and the trouble that they cause. I do not, however, agree with him when he says that rabbits have not the same vitality in this State as they have in the Eastern States. I think the contrary is the case. Rabbits have won through what is almost a desert, and only those possessing strong vitality and recuper-

ative powers could have got through. I am of opinion that the reason why we do not get the increase of rabbits here, such as is the case in the Eastern States, is because there is a very short breeding season in Western Australia. Unless we have summer rains there is a very small percentage of rabbits which will breed during that period.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: They breed in the dry season and not in the wet season. They cannot breed in the wet season.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): They breed in the spring time.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: They breed during every month in the year.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): If one travels through Western Australia during the summer months, say from January onwards, unless there are rains, one will see very little breeding amongst the rabbits, and will see very few young rabbits.

Hon. J. Mills: I have seen young rabbits all the year round.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): There are very few young rabbits in our wheat belt, for instance. We are fortunate also in having a number of natural enemies to the rabbits. The iguana is very useful in keeping the rabbits down.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: They have their natural enemies in the Eastern States.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): Not so plentifully as we have them here. Then we have the poison bush, which is also a deterrent. This poisons thousands of rabbits. Mr. Mills stressed the point with regard to the fencing in of water supplies. I do hope that in Committee the measure will be passed as it stands in this respect. It is one of the main portions of the Bill. If we leave the water supplies open we shall assist in the spread of the rabbit. I admit that rabbits will live without water if they are inured to doing so. If the rabbits are accustomed to getting water in the summer time, and it is then taken away from them, they will die in thousands. Rabbits can thrive without water if the supply diminishes gradually. Mr. Mills also said that he had not seen rabbits visiting dams for water. I would point out that the rabbits will very seldom go to water during the daytime, but will do so readily at night.

Hon. J. Mills: I have slept beside them scores of times.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): Rabbits will drink all right at night time. I want to refer to Clause 154. Both Mr. Nicholson and Mr. Greig referred to that; they said it was too drastic. The department has had a lot of trouble in connection with cattle travelling along the reserve beside the fence. The point was stressed by, I think, Sir Edward Wittenoom, that it would inflict hardship upon the owners of cattle if they could not travel their beasts along the fence. I would ask how owners of cattle, who are not adjacent to the fence, travel their beasts. No doubt it is a convenience for those people to use the fence. If they are going to be allowed to travel the fence what has happened will happen again. There will

be cases of the cattle rushing into the fence and dragging it down, and all the money which has been spent on the fence will be wasted, because once the fence is broken down the rabbits will get through. With regard to Mr. Nicholson's contention with reference to employers, I would remind him that the definition of employer is, any person who drives or is an employer of any person who drives. We must have a clause of that description. It is hard enough to get a conviction already, because of the loophole that exists. The Government want this power, or they will have difficulty in keeping the fence in order.

Hon. J. Nicholson: The master may be liable for the wrong of his servant.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): That is so. In a lot of cases there would be little chance of getting a conviction unless the employer was liable.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: You could get a conviction but not a penalty.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): Mr. Greig regrets that I should see fit, as a representative of the Government in this matter, to put so many amendments on the Notice Paper seeing that the Bill has been before Parliament for a considerable period, and that the draftsman should have remedied this. This Bill came to us from the Legislative Assembly. The only way of putting amendments in it is by the means which has been adopted. Since the Bill was passed by the Legislative Assembly it has been found that many amendments were needed, and some of those were even suggested by hon. members in this Chamber. Several members have referred to the matter of trapping, and considered that it would be helpful to allow rabbit trapping to take place. This has not prevented altogether. One would gather from what has been said that the Government will not allow trapping in any part of the State. That is not correct. There is no restriction on trapping on the eastern goldfields, or in fact anywhere eastward of No. 1 barrier fence. On this side of the fence land owners, that is farmers, can get a license to trap and send rabbits to market. The restriction is on the professional trapper. It has been proved in the Eastern States that where the professional trapper is at work the rabbits are only increasing. As soon as a particular area is played out for the trapper he moves on to some other place, with the result that the former locality is soon as badly infested with rabbits as ever. It is also known to the expert that a large percentage of rabbits trapped are buck rabbits, and that the fact of reducing the number of bucks renders the does more prolific. (Clause 109 reads—

Any person who, in any part of the State situated westward of the Government fence from Starvation Boat Harbour to the 90-Mile Beach, without the license in writing of the Minister sells, or offers to sell, or exposes for sale, any dead rabbit shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding £50.

Further than that a select committee was appointed by the Legislative Assembly on

the 13th February, 1918, to inquire into the method adopted by the department for combating the rabbit with a view of recommending more effective methods of dealing with this national menace. That committee reported as follows:—

The weight of evidence and the experience of other States is against the professional trapper, and we do not recommend that he be encouraged, but this remark is not intended to apply to the Goldfields or outside the No. 1 fence, where we can see no objection to professional trapping.

I have also a copy of the report of the select committee appointed by the Queensland Legislative Council on the 21st November, 1916, to consider the Rabbit Act Amendment Bill in that State, and that committee reported as follows:—

The committee has devoted attention chiefly to the question of the issuing of permits for trafficking in the carcasses of rabbits, and whether the general trafficking in skins and carcasses of rabbits would result in the diminution or an increase of their number. The whole of the evidence shows that the custom of trapping tends to the spread of rabbits instead of confining them to a limited area, where they could more easily be exterminated by the free use of poison. The evidence is unfavourable to the general traffic in carcasses of rabbits, and the committee suggest that it might be allowed only in the vicinity of established freezing works until it is ascertained that the experiment is a success.

There we have the findings of two select committees. Reference has been made to Clause 3 and to the fact that Crown lands have not been included. The idea of some hon. members is that the Government should be included in the definition of "owner." It would not be reasonable to expect that because we cannot expect the Crown to proceed against the Crown. I would like to draw attention to paragraph (d) of Clause 9, which reads—

And generally in such manner as the Minister may from time to time direct for defraying or contributing towards the cost of any measures taken on Crown lands, public reserves, vacant areas adjacent to private holdings, and generally on all lands whether held privately or otherwise, for the prevention of the incursion or migration or for the destruction of vermin in any part of the State.

This gives the Government power to expend money on the eradication of rabbits, and provision has been made on the Estimates for £14,000 to be used for this purpose, and this, in conjunction with land holders dealing with the pest on their properties, will keep rabbits in check until wire-netting fences are erected. Hon. members desired information with regard to the South African flesh-eating ant. Mr. Kingsmill gave as complete an answer to that as can be given. This matter was investigated by the

death of the rabbits there is attributed to tick as well as ants, and the introduction of such a remedy in this State would probably be worse than the disease. The question has been asked, "Does the Gascoyne fence come under the operations of this measure." The reply is that the Act of 1915 is being repealed as to Sections 3 and 4; the remaining portion of that Act will continue in operation. This remaining portion provides for the validation of rates, and of the establishment of certain boards, and also provides that certain proceedings for the recovery of rates theretofore struck shall not be taken, so long as the amount thereof is paid by equal annual instalments extending over ten years from the commencement of that Act. That arrangement remains in operation. With this exception, the Gascoyne vermin district will be on exactly the same footing as any other vermin district under the new Act. A question was asked as to whether the whole of the rates levied by vermin boards are to cover administration charges only. The reply is that Section 70 provides how funds received by a board may be applied, viz.:—For administration expenses; for certain work on fences; for interest on, and repayment of loans; and for defraying the cost of the destruction of vermin within the district. Generally speaking the arrangement contemplated is that the responsibility for the eradication of rabbits shall rest on landholders, and that the boards shall see that the land holders do the work required in this respect. The Act further gives the board power to spend moneys in certain directions as stated. It has been said that Sub-clause 6 of Clause 83, is too drastic. Further consideration has been given to this with the result that a proposed amendment is on the Notice Paper. It is proposed in the second paragraph after the word "mortgage" to omit all the words to the end of the paragraph and to insert, "the Minister or the board with the approval of the Minister may enter a caveat in the prescribed form against the land of the owner and such caveat shall have the same effect as if the mortgage had been executed by the owner." It is proposed to move this amendment because it is considered that the Act as it stands is altogether too drastic. It is proposed to make an addition to Clause 87 in the direction of adding after "for the provision of the fines," the words "or imprisonment for not exceeding six months." With regard to Clause 99 it is proposed to add a Subclause reading, "and it shall not be essential that the fence shall in all respects comply with the descriptions contained in the second schedule." It was thought by hon. members that Part 1 was not explanatory enough. The addition of these words will make it clear in that respect.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: What about confining the matters to the southern portion of the State as suggested by Mr. Kingsmill?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minis-

to make any statement in that respect. Such a proposal may have its advantages as well as its drawbacks.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—PRISONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Order of the Day read, for resumption of debate, from the 17th October, on motion for second reading.

On motion by Hon. W. Kingsmill, debate further adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.40 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 22nd October, 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."]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. HARDWICK, leave of absence for two weeks granted to the member for Kimberley (Mr. Durack) on the ground of urgent private business.

MOTION—STANDING ORDER 386a, TO AMEND.

The PREMIER (Hon. H. B. Lefroy—Moore) [4.42]: I move—

That Standing Order 386a be amended by striking out in paragraph (b), line 2, the word "one" and substituting in lieu "a Minister's."

The Committee of this House appointed in March last to go into the question of the interpretation of this Standing Order have submitted a report in which they recommend this amendment. Some difficulty has arisen as to the interpretation of this Standing Order when the House has been in Committee of Supply. The Standing Order at present reads—

386a. Notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 372, no member (except the Minister, who shall have the right of reply) shall speak more than once during—(a) A general discussion on the whole of the Estimates held on the first vote. (b) A general discussion on the administration of one department held on the first vote of that department. In both cases the reply

of the Minister shall close the debate. In all other cases the rules of debate in Committee of the whole shall be maintained.

The amendment really proposes to substitute "a Minister's department" for the words now appearing in paragraph (b), "one department." I do not think the House will object to agree to the amendment.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. T. Robinson—Canning) [4.44]: May I add a word of explanation before the motion goes to the vote. The words "one department" in paragraph (b) were held, during the discussion of last year's Estimates, to mean a Government department; and some Ministers control seven or eight Government departments. The further result was that it was held that "one department" might mean seven or eight discussions in connection with one Minister's work. The object of the amendment is to limit the discussion to a Minister's department, instead of extending it to the various divisions comprised in a Minister's department.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Take the Minister for Lands and Agriculture; there are two Ministers.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: There is only one Minister for Lands and Agriculture, and that is the Premier.

Mr. Pilkington: Take the Colonial Secretary and Minister for Education.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The Colonial Secretary's office and the Education Department are treated quite separately, as two departments, in the Estimates.

Mr. Pilkington: And there are two separate discussions.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes. Let hon. members look at a non-controversial department; say, the Colonial Treasurer's department. On turning to page 63 of the Estimates they will find that the Colonial Treasurer controls ten of what might be called Government departments, but what constitute really, in these Estimates, one department. That is to say, the department of the Colonial Treasurer comprises those ten divisions. In the way the Standing Order reads, a general discussion may take place on each of those departments, and so the discussion on the Estimates would be interminable. The object of the amendment is to confine discussion to a Minister's department. It is not intended to burke discussion at all, for hon. members will be able to run their eyes down a department and see what items they are interested in, with a view to discussing those particular items on the first vote. In respect of the illustration given by the member for Perth, hon. members will see that in the Colonial Secretary's Department there are 11 subdivisions, each of which might be called a department. Under the amendment they will be treated as one, as the Colonial Secretary's Department.

Hon. P. Collier: Why should they? They have often been treated separately before.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: We have not had ten different discussions on one department.

Hon. P. Collier: Yes, very often.