

NOMES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Pickering
Mr. Brown	Mr. Plesse
Mr. Duff	Mr. Pilkington
Mr. George	Mr. H. Robinson
Mr. Harrison	Mr. R. T. Robinson
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. South
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Stubbs
Mr. Lefroy	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Mitchell	Mr. Thomson
Mr. Money	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Mullany	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Nairn	Mr. Hardwick

(Teller.)

Motion thus negatived; the Speaker's ruling not disagreed with.

Mr. Speaker: Notice of Motion No. 7.

Hon. P. Collier: But we have not yet disposed of No. 6, which we are still debating.

Mr. Speaker: There is nothing left of that motion to put to the House.

Hon. P. Collier: I take it that it cannot automatically drop out.

Mr. Speaker: I hope the leader of the Opposition will not adopt that attitude. Unless he desires to move a further amendment, it is finally disposed of. What is left of the motion now does not contain any sense and therefore it cannot be put.

House adjourned at 11.55 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 17th October, 1918.

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

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

MOTION—BUSINESS UNDERTAKINGS.

Hon. A. SANDERSON (Metropolitan-Suburban) [4.32]: I move—

That the Under Treasurer be requested to state the total capital expenditure from loan funds on each of the business undertakings put down in Return No. 3, page 496, of "Hansard."

It is not necessary to detain the House long over this matter, but I think hon. members are entitled to a brief explanation of what I propose. We have been told by the Treasurer, and we know it ourselves, that a certain amount of time and money is sometimes wasted by members in calling for returns. The return that I call for will probably involve some slight trouble, but I think it is most important that

we should have it in order that we can understand the position of affairs with regard to our finances. If hon. members will turn to the papers which have been placed on the Table of this House, and to page 3 of the details of the Estimates, they will see the State Trading Concerns. I am not going to refer, even if permitted, to the Treasurer's statement; we have already seen it. What I want to point out is that where we see the net estimated surplus of £54,000, which is the official return from State enterprises, and when we think of the large amount of public interest there is in this question of State trading concerns, the public, to say nothing of members, should be in a position to fairly understand the financial figures. With this table, which I am calling for, I maintain we can understand the position of these State trading concerns. I am going to take one illustration only, that of the State quarries. We see there the estimated receipts set down at £5,500 and the estimated expenditure at £5,516, a deficiency of £16. I want to know what is the capital involved in these trading concerns. The same may be said of the State sawmills, and others of these trading concerns. What is the amount of capital involved? We want to know this in order that we may ascertain what the profit is. We know from the statements which have been made by the Treasurer, and other members of the Government, what is involved in regard to the sinking fund and interest bill. We have no right to put down the credit balance we have here at £54,000. At any rate, we have not the right to lead the public to believe that we have made £54,000, unless we debit up the interest charges. That is my view of the question. I hope that hon. members will support me in this motion in order that we, and the public, may fully understand the position. At present it is impossible to understand it. In Return No. 13 we have railways, tramways, and water supplies. Personally I should like to see these included. I hope the Under Treasurer will give us the figures. Having fought for 25 years against these State enterprises I seem to find myself in a hopeless minority.

Hon. J. Ewing: I do not think you are.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: As a Liberal I like to move with the times. This return will help us very much in determining that point. If we are to go in for the State enterprises we must do so on a business footing. It is going to involve a considerable amount of labour to Ministers and members, because we have our responsibilities as well as Ministers. I am going to examine each of these State trading concerns from a purely business point of view, and obtain an independent report from an independent accountant on the position of affairs. I cannot do that without the figures called for in this return, showing what the capital involved is and what has been set aside or granted, as the case may be.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Or invested.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The term invested is the last word I would use in this connection.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Sunk.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Sunk is better. What we want to know is what money has been sunk in these enterprises. We also want a balance

sheet and a business report on the propositions, such as directors present to shareholders in any other business transaction. I sincerely ask members to vote for this, for the expenditure of time and cash cannot be very much.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: It should not be.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I want the most detailed accuracy, if we can only get it from these Treasury officials. We want to know how much money has been put in as capital. I hope the brevity of my remarks will not cause hon. members to think that this matter is of trivial importance; to me, it is one of great importance, and I trust the motion will be carried.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES (North) [4.37]: I have pleasure in seconding the motion. In the returns that are before us we have not the amount of the capital cost of these concerns and, I think in addition to that information, we should be supplied with profit and loss accounts and the balance sheets, exactly as would be the case in regard to business firms. Mr. Sanderson has clearly put it that it is impossible for members and the public to know how these concerns are going on. The figures show a profit of £54,000 here, but when the interest and sinking fund are debited up the loss will probably come out at a couple of hundred thousand pounds. The returns submitted are most misleading.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [4.38]: I have no objection to the motion, although I must say that I think the form of it is rather unusual. It would be quite proper and usual for the hon. member to move that a return be supplied showing the information that he desires. The form of the motion is not the form in which I, at all events, have seen motions submitted to the House. It says "That the Under Treasurer be requested to state." Is it customary in this House to request Government officials to do anything, no matter how highly placed they may be? In my opinion it is contrary to precedent. It is customary to move for a return in a case of this sort. If a return is moved for to cover any information that is desired I shall be pleased to support such a motion. The motion makes reference to page 496 of "Hansard." A good deal of the information, according to the motion, which the hon. member may desire is on another page of "Hansard," namely 499.

Hon. A. Sanderson: That is so. I accept that correction at once.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I doubt if the hon. member's motion expresses what he means, or, if carried, will give him what he desires. I think it would be better for the hon. member to re-frame his motion, simply moving for a return setting out what he wants. I do not altogether like the idea of the Chamber requesting the Under Treasurer to do anything. It would be more proper, and more in accordance with the usual procedure, for a return to be moved for. So far as the principle is concerned, namely that the fullest information should be given to hon. members, I am entirely in accord with Mr. Sanderson.

Hon. A. SANDERSON (Metropolitan-Suburban—in reply) [4.43]: With regard to the wording of the motion, if it offends the sus-

ceptibilities of the leader of the House, I would be glad to fall in with his suggestion.

The Colonial Secretary: It is not my susceptibility, but it is a question of procedure.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: If it were to be amended I should prefer myself that the officer supplying the information should be the Auditor General, because the Auditor General is an officer, not of the Government, but of Parliament. In regard to the question as to whether, if this motion is carried, it will give the information I desire, I shall be quite satisfied to think that it will. I readily admit the error in the reference to business undertakings instead of to Return No. 3. Return No. 3 is on page 496 of "Hansard." I regret the error, but it is really of no great consequence because the proper form will be in the motion which you, Sir, will submit to hon. members. I think it can safely be left at that. I should always wish on occasions of this kind to consult the leader of the House with regard to resolutions. You, Sir, see that matters are technically in order and not offensive. It is certainly the last desire that I have to make the position more difficult by hurting the susceptibilities of either the civil servants or the Minister, but on a future occasion I will consult the leader of the House with regard to the framing of any particular motion. I really do not see that there is anything to cavil at in a request to a civil servant, although I think it would be advisable as a member of Parliament for me to appeal to the Auditor General because of the confusion which exists in the minds of the public on the subject of our finances, and owing to the deliberate policy, not of the present Treasurer only, but that of other Treasurers as well, of embarking on a new system of finance so that we are unable to compare one with another. We have seen the wrangling which has been going on and therefore it is very important that we should be able to appeal to a specific officer to give us this specific return.

Question put and passed.

BILL—INTERPRETATION.

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—PRISONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [4.50] in moving the second reading said: As I explained yesterday in moving the second reading of the Bill to amend the Criminal Code, this amending Prisons Bill is to be considered in conjunction with that measure of which it is a necessary complement. Hon. members may remember that some 15 years ago a Royal Commission of which the late Dr. Jameson, at one time leader of this House, was Chairman, sat to inquire into the matter of prison reform. That Commission took a great deal of evidence and went to a lot of trouble, and submitted a report, which I, for one, have often felt was deserving of a great deal more consideration than it actually received. However, in this

State, at all events, I do not think that the reports of Royal Commissions have been particularly fruitful of good results.

Hon. J. Duffell: They represent a waste of money.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: So probably that Commission did not fare much worse than others which preceded and have succeeded it. The amendments made by this Bill and by the Criminal Code Amendment Bill present an important forward movement in the matter of dealing with criminals. I explained to hon. members yesterday the intentions regarding habitual criminals and preventive detention under the Code. The purpose of the Prisons Bill is to permit of the establishment of reformatory prisons, to provide for their conduct and to constitute a board to be called an indeterminate sentences board, and to prescribe the functions of that board. I explained yesterday that the Criminal Code Amendment Bill, if agreed to, will enable indeterminate sentences to be passed not only on habitual criminals as described by the Code, but also on other persons of whom a judge of the Supreme Court, having regard to their antecedents, character, age, mental condition and other circumstances, may hold that they are likely to benefit by this form of treatment. The first purpose of the present Bill is to permit of the establishment of the reformatory prison in which these indeterminate sentences are to be served. It is not intended by this means to increase the cost of prison administration. In fact, the whole project will entirely fail in its object if there is not a considerable economy achieved. At the outset a portion of Fremantle gaol will be set aside for this purpose to serve to a large extent as a sort of clearing station, a half-way house between the gaol itself and such other places as may be used for the purpose of reformatory prisons. We have both Rottneest and Coolgardie gaols available for use as reformatory prisons, and in future it is quite possible that at some time reformatory prison farms may be established. That, however, is not within the scope of the present intentions. The Act also empowers the Government to set apart institutions provided by such bodies as the Salvation Army for this purpose. At the present time the Government are in negotiation with the Salvation Army authorities with regard to a proposal which they have made to us for reformatory work in connection with inebriates. A very important feature of the Bill is the Indeterminate Sentences Board. This is to be a board of three persons appointed by the Governor to co-operate with the Comptroller General of Prisons in the administration of the Act. There can be little doubt that the success or otherwise of this proposed amendment in regard to the treatment of criminals will depend very largely on the wisdom and discrimination of the members of this board.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: Who will appoint the three persons?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The Governor-in-Council. Their powers in some respects are largely advisory, but they also have considerable actual powers as I will explain later on, and even so far as the advisory

powers are concerned, if the Bill is to be of any use it is obvious that any Government will require to have strong reasons for ignoring the advice of this board; consequently, it will be most important that the right people shall be elected, otherwise the position under the amending Bill will probably be worse than it is at the present time. Amongst its other duties the board will be required to visit reformatory prisons and will be expected to inquire into and report from time to time on the working of the Act, and will make such recommendations as it may think fit for the release on probation of prisoners in reformatory prisons. It will also have power to recommend the transfer of a prisoner from an ordinary prison, and regarding whom an indeterminate sentence has not been passed, to a reformatory prison, but it is provided that no person so transferred shall be detained in the reformatory prison for a longer period than is represented by the unexpired portion of his sentence at the time of such transfer. The intention is not to lengthen the period of his imprisonment, but on the contrary to shorten it if the grounds for so doing are deemed sufficient. The Bill does not take away the prerogative of mercy of the Crown, but it unquestionably sets up a method which is likely to be followed in the future as an alternative to the remission of portions of sentences by the Governor, acting on the advice of the Executive Council. The present practice is for the prisoner or his friends to make representations to the Attorney General, who consults the judge who tried the case, and the prison authorities, and who recommends Cabinet accordingly. This Bill does not take away that prerogative, but it sets out a method that is likely to be followed in almost all cases instead of the present method. Any person under sentence who would have good cause for seeking release, and who might be considered fit for liberation before the expiration of the sentence, would probably in the first instance be recommended by the board to be transferred from the gaol to the reformatory prison and from the reformatory prison he could be liberated, although not entirely, but as a test to show how he would conduct himself.

Hon. J. Duffell: Would he be allowed to leave the State?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: No, the terms and conditions of the release would be set out in each case.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Ticket of leave.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Conditional release.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The practice is in vogue in some of the other States. This conditional release is a very important feature of the proposed reform, but to take matters in their proper sequence, it may be well for me to refer first to the intentions towards the prisoners whilst in the reformatory prison. These intentions are that their surroundings shall be cheerful and healthy, and that they shall work. I venture to think that a fundamental error in prison treatment in the past has been that too many prisoners have been allowed to cultivate

habits of idleness whilst in gaol. Lack of sufficient work, or employment in useless work, are factors bound to operate against reform. I have very little doubt that one of the greatest faults in our prison system of the past is that there has been too much of that sort of thing.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: They have got into habits of luxury.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not think that prisoners are treated luxuriously; I hope they are not starved, but if the hon. member will look through the prisoners' menu he will hardly say that they are treated with luxury. I remember on one occasion shortly after I assumed office, receiving a request that at the Christmas meal prisoners might be allowed to have butter. This was agreed to, and I was told afterwards that they appreciated it very much, some of the long sentence men not having tasted butter for 15 years. That contradicts the suggestion that they are treated luxuriously in prison.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: We have read of eight men who have been there 30 times.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: One reason for that may be that when they get into gaol they drift into habits of idleness.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: No worry.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Whilst working, the prisoners will be credited with a prescribed portion of the proceeds from the sale of such things as they make, or a prescribed portion of the value of the work they do. Portions of this money may be applied to the maintenance of a prisoner's wife and family, now too often a charge on the State, and a proportion may be set apart to be handed to the prisoner on his release to form something with which he may make a new start in life. The board, and this is the chief executive power, with the concurrence of the Comptroller General, may temporarily release any prisoner as a test of reform, and in this respect it will be seen that the board goes beyond an advisory board, and has the power of action. This Bill is largely based on the Victorian Act, which has been in force since 1903 and which was amended in 1915. I should like to make a brief quotation from the report of 1916, showing how satisfactorily this provision regarding the release of prisoners on parole has worked.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Is it based on the American principle?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Not that I know of. There may be a great many systems in the different States of America, but I have not any record of them on this file. The report to which I have referred reads—

There is no more important provision in the amending Act than that which clothes the board with power to permit a person detained in a reformatory prison to leave such prison temporarily, in order to test the genuineness of his reform. It has been our complaint hitherto that we had no means of testing the value of good resolutions expressed, or of alleged reformation, except

by giving the prisoner his release on probation, when no conditions could be legally imposed other than the obligation to report once in three months to the police, and to abstain from crime and companionship with criminal associates. Now, a prisoner may be permitted by the board to leave a reformatory prison temporarily for such time and subject to such conditions as the board may determine, and he may during such leave, on an order in writing, signed by any two members of the board, be arrested without warrant, and returned to the prison.

We have copied the same provision into the new Bill. The report goes on to say—

Up till the 30th June last we had paroled under this provision 21 inmates of the Castlemaine reformatory, and six of the Pentridge reformatory, total 27, for periods varying from six weeks to three months. In one instance only was the trust betrayed, and that in the case of a Pentridge man, who decamped to another State, where he got into trouble, and who will be liable to arrest and return to the reformatory should he again enter this State. Of those paroled from Castlemaine, 12 were subsequently granted release on probation, and nine remain on parole on the 30th June. Of the six from Pentridge, one was given his release on probation, and five, including the one referred to above, were still on parole on that date.

Other figures published in the report indicate that good results have followed. The report specifically states—

There is reasonable hope that good results will follow upon their treatment under the indeterminate sentence system.

As I have said, if any prisoner misbehaves himself while on parole he may at once, by an order in writing, by two members of the board, be arrested without warrant and returned to the reformatory. He may be sent back to the ordinary prison on the recommendation of the board, through the Comptroller General approved by the Governor, if it is considered that he is not a suitable person for such treatment, and that he is better in the ordinary gaol. The whole matter, to my mind, depends on the judgment and wisdom of the board, and I am satisfied if we get a good board it will mean making an important advance in the matter of the treatment of criminals. The underlying idea is that prisoners, particularly those who have not become habitual criminals, whilst in prison shall be treated so that there is no temptation for them to become habitual criminals, that they shall be freed from the associations of the gaol. They must work and feel that they have an interest in their work, and as a matter of fact they must feel that the difference between being in prison and being out, is that they have to work just as hard in either case, but while out they get the whole of the proceeds of their labour and have their freedom as well. There are features of the Bill which, in Committee, members may desire to discuss. The Bill is couched in the simplest of language, so that I

do not think there will be any misunderstanding of any of its clauses. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom debate adjourned.

BILL—VERMIN.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 16th October.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [5.5]: The reason we have this Bill before us is owing to a general consensus of opinion during last session expressed by almost every member who spoke on the two measures which were before the House then, that a measure should be brought up to date and consolidated, and that other Acts dealing with the rabbit question should be repealed. The Government have been considerably assisted in this work by a select committee which was appointed by the Legislative Assembly, and I think from what I have seen of the measure that they have done a great deal which is in keeping with the general expressed wish and views of members when dealing with the measure in the House last session. There are probably not a great number of members in this Chamber who have been in the outlying districts and have had experience of the pest. It may be news to them to know that the rabbits from one side of the agricultural areas to the other seem to be coming in by thousands, and in any of those newly settled districts we can find indication of rabbits. There must be the destruction of rabbits from one end of the country to the other, and any measure which we can place on the statute-book that will be the means of making an organised attack on the rabbits will be for the benefit of the State. The select committee, in going into the evidence and inspecting the various areas, found that in many instances the settlers were most eager to attack the rabbits. But they were not always backed up by the department. Then again there would be many centres where the settlers were eager to attack the rabbits but failed to do so because it was hopeless for them to enter on any organised campaign against the rabbits because in many instances they were in close contact with farms that had been abandoned, and those abandoned farms had become breeding grounds for the surrounding country. Those settlers who were attacking the rabbits found that the department were doing nothing to attack rabbits on the abandoned farms. Further than that, there are a great many Government areas which have never been selected which are also breeding grounds for the rabbits. At present the main attack by poison carts is being eminently successful, and under the Bill we have before us it will be much better organised by handing the control of these matters to local bodies and district control. I am convinced that men will be elected from different centres who will be able to grapple with the question much better than having the disorganised system that has been in operation up to the present time. We have from time to time over a great many years had various systems suggested for the eradication of rabbits. We have all listened in this Cham-

ber to one or two orations on the various methods of destruction, but I do not wish to go into them now, except to refer to one which I have recently heard of. It was suggested to the Western Australian department about 10 or 12 years ago, and it is a matter that was discovered in South Africa, where the people have done their best to get a cheap form of meat for feeding kaffirs. It was decided to introduce the rabbit into South Africa, and although people for some years made earnest efforts to breed the rabbits there they found there was no success. People bred and let go thousands of rabbits, but it was found that they did not spread. It was discovered that there was a flesh-eating ant that destroyed the young rabbits. I do not know if there have been experiments in that direction in this country. I do not know whether those who have to deal with this matter in the departments have taken an interest in this question, but it seems to me that any data that can be acquired and any suggestions that can be put forward in that direction should be given a trial by the department. We know there are flesh-eating ants throughout our borders for frequently we find dead carcasses about the bush, with ants consuming them, and it may be that from inquiries of this sort I have referred to we may discover that in certain localities, even within our own State, where the rabbit has not been able to make so much progress as in other parts, that it is due to the fact that some ant of that nature is in existence. If the department could discover anything in that direction there will not be a great difficulty, I presume, in removing the queen ant from the nest to other centres, so as to attack this rabbit pest. Various other suggestions have been made, one by Sir Edward Wittenoom, who joined with others in favour of entering on a trade in rabbits. I am personally bound to oppose the trading in rabbits or rabbit skins, for the simple reason that as a land owner it seems unfair that one man should be taxed to raise a fund to eradicate the rabbits, while his neighbour may say, "I shall make a better living by increasing the rabbits." So that, on one side of the fence, whether a private fence or a public rabbit fence, we may find one man doing his best to eradicate the rabbits, and on the other side another man is doing his best to increase the rabbits. My view is that we must have the one line of attack—to eradicate the rabbit. I feel certain the rabbit will not bring in to this country the revenue which can be obtained from systematically working the land. I hope the Rabbit Department will persist in their attitude of turning down any suggestions to commercialise the rabbit. Many of our settlers who have rabbits on their holdings are beginning to feel inclined to take the line of least resistance, catching the rabbits and killing them for export. Unless we set our faces against that trade, it will creep in and enlarge, to the destruction of a very much better trade in agricultural products and mutton and wool. Just at present one does not hear from the settled areas so much about the rabbit. That is because during this season there has been an abundance of green feed and plenty of protection for the rabbit in the bush

areas. But as soon as the grass dries off, the rabbits will swarm down on some of the crops which are out in ear; and that is occurring even now. Inroads are already being made on magnificent crops. This shows that once we start out on rabbit destruction, it does not do to think that we have destroyed the rabbits and saved our crops, until we have actually garnered those crops. In a very few days a swarm of rabbits can work fearful devastation in a crop. It is regrettable that during the past few years the Rabbit Department have not had the necessary funds at their disposal. The select committee report that since 1912-13 the amounts made available for the destruction of rabbits have been on a decreasing scale, from £15,000 in 1912-13 to £9,000 in 1916-17. This latter amount is utterly inadequate. The proposals of this measure enabling various districts to form their own vermin boards with powers of taxation, will allow of the problem of rabbit destruction being grappled with more effectively. I sincerely hope the Government will not be niggardly in subsidising those bodies, for it is undoubtedly the Government land that is the seed bed to feed up with rabbits the areas which are already settled. Exactly the same position arises in connection with the rabbit pest as arose in connection with noxious weeds. When the Noxious Weeds Act was in operation, the officers of the Agricultural Department were frequently known to enter upon a property and order the whole of the noxious weed—stinkwort, for example—to be thoroughly eradicated; and if the owner failed to do it the department put on men of their own at the property owner's expense to perform the work. Then, after harassing the owner and compelling him to spend a good deal of money, the Government took no steps whatever to destroy the same weed upon Crown lands just on the other side of the fence; and the noxious weed on the Crown lands would seed up the private owner's land again the next year. I hope such a position will not arise in connection with the rabbit pest. Many of our settlers have been working hard to destroy the rabbits by laying poison, but through the laxity of the Agricultural Bank or the Industries Assistance Board, Government land and abandoned farms continue to be breeding grounds for the rabbits, with the result that the properties of the unfortunate settlers continue to be infested. In the closely settled districts the rabbit will not prove a source of great danger or loss. Where there are a number of settlers, they will be able to keep the rabbit down. I think that is the experience of the other Australian States.

Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister): But they constantly keep at the rabbits.

Hon. V. HANESLEY: Yes, in self defence. And their land is mostly cleared, and therefore does not afford the same amount of shelter to the rabbit. Moreover, there are usually children who keep dogs and get a fair amount of amusement out of rabbiting. Thus the rabbit, being constantly harassed, does not constitute so great a menace in the Eastern States. But it is where properties are in close contact with Crown lands or abandoned holdings which have been improved and have grown good herbage, that the rabbit is such a danger, in the latter case as an after effect of the pre-

vious cultivation of the abandoned land. I hope the Government will subsidise the vermin boards and thus assume a fair share of the State's responsibility in this matter. With regard to rating, a maximum has been imposed. The rate is very reasonable, half the amount which can be imposed by roads boards. The maximum of 1s. per hundred acres in respect of pastoral areas seems to me fair. It does not mean that the vermin boards will necessarily go to the extent of the maximum. That matter will depend entirely upon the voters. I am glad the maximum has not been fixed, as in the original measure, at the extravagant rate of 2s. per hundred acres. I sincerely trust that the inspectors to be employed by the Government will carry out their duties in a sympathetic rather than in an arbitrary manner. Extraordinary circumstances arise in many individual cases, and must be taken into account. We know of instances where even the Chief Inspector has harassed settlers, perhaps without realising that he was doing so. I firmly believe poisoning to be the chief means of destruction to which we should direct our attention. I am not at all sure that it is wise to go in for so much rabbit-proof fencing, though I know many people hold the opinion that the rabbit cannot be adequately dealt with in the absence of rabbit-proof fencing. But with the enormous cost of wire to-day, I think we can easily put too great a capitalisation and thereby ruin the holder of the land. It is easy to add to the cost of a property another 10s. of £1 or even 30s. per acre by the erection of rabbit-proof fences at the present high cost of wire. Therefore our main efforts must be directed to the matter of poisoning. When the Bill is in Committee, there are one or two clauses as to which I have not been able quite to satisfy myself, and to which I shall call attention. I give a general support to the measure, and sincerely hope that it will prove a means by which we can deal more reasonably with the subject of rabbit extermination. I have had several letters from settlers on whose properties the rabbit is in abundance, and they all appeal to me to ask members of this Chamber to push this Bill forward and get it on the statute-book so that the question may be dealt with. These settlers all feel that it is hopeless for one or two men to labour strenuously in this connection while there are no means of forcing their neighbours to assist in carrying on the work of destruction.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: (North) [5.29]: I support the second reading of this Bill. I realise that the measure is an attempt to deal with an exceedingly difficult problem. If the Bill becomes an Act, it will have very far reaching effects upon the agricultural and pastoral industries of this State. Three parties, it seems to me, will be affected by the measure. The first is the Crown, who can do as they like, spend money or not, just as they think fit: one Government may be disposed to provide money for rabbit destruction, and the other not. The second party is the individual landholder, who will be compelled to do as he is told. The third party is the Midland Railway Company. If the Midland Railway Company are to come under the provisions of

the Bill I think it will have a very serious effect upon the company, and may also have a serious effect upon the finances of the State, and upon the introduction of private capital into the State in the future. There are numerous clauses demanding careful scrutiny. Apparently the Bill has been compiled to meet agricultural development, while the pastoral development has been lost sight of altogether. Many of the clauses are drafted to deal with small holdings but, as I say, the pastoral industry, which I think will certainly become the principal primary industry in the State, has been lost sight of. Poisoning seems to be the main proposal. To my mind the poisoning of the rabbits is only a side line, for whilst we may poison some rabbits, we may poison also something much more valuable. This poisoning proposal is only tiddlywinking with the thing. Another point I desire to raise is as to the rights and privileges of existing boards to be considered under the Bill. For instance, the Gascoyne Vermin Board have expended £66,000 in the erection of a fence. That money was borrowed from the Government. Would that fence be considered a fence erected out of public money under Clause 3 of this Bill? The fence would certainly not be in accordance with the specification designed by the Public Works Department upon which fences are to be erected, and it may not be considered a fence at all under the Bill.

Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister): Is it badly erected?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: No, but the Bill provides that one must have two barbed wires in the fence. Modern pastoralists will not have a barbed wire on their holdings at all.

Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister): Under the second schedule a rabbit-proof fence has no barbed wire. There is the rabbit-proof fence, and the vermin fence.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I cannot see the necessity for any difference between the fences. From my standpoint a dog has to be treated on the same basis as a rabbit. The dog is the worse pest of the two, and as rabbits increase so will the dogs increase. One dog in one night will do almost as much damage amongst livestock as will a colony of rabbits in a year. That brings me to Clause 108, which provides a penalty of £20 on any person who offers a bonus as a reward for the destruction of rabbits. I should have thought that a man would be commended for destroying rabbits.

Hon. W. Kingmsmill: Apparently the destruction of rabbits is to be a State industry.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Clause 108 distinctly provides that penalty. I recall that a station in which I was interested was overrun with dogs. Three stations combined, and we eradicated the dogs under the bonus system. Yet if a man offers a bonus for the destruction of rabbits he is to be fined £20.

Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister): That is, if he does so without a license from the Minister.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Why should a man in the backblocks have to get a license from the Minister in the City before he destroys rabbits? On the three stations I have re-

ferred to we provided a practical man with wages and outfit, and gave him £6 per dog for every dog he killed. Yet it is proposed to prohibit a man from destroying rabbits. I am raising these points in order that the Minister may be somewhat more explicit in replying than he was when moving the second reading. Hitherto, when a Minister has moved the second reading of a Bill, he has gone thoroughly through the clauses and explained to the House the effect of those clauses, but when the present Honorary Minister moved the second reading he referred only to the number of poison carts the Government had and were going to get. It is in regard to the Bill that we require information.

Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister): I thought I had explained everything.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The Bill proposes to give equal powers to the Minister and to the boards. If a board does not act the Minister may act, and vice versa. They will have power to strike a rate and to enforce payment. But when it comes to the destruction of vermin it appears the owner must do the work on his own account, apart altogether from the rates he may have paid, and if he does not do it himself the Minister can do it and charge the owner with the cost plus interest, and enforce payment. Does that mean that the whole of the rates to be collected are to be frittered away in administration, and that when it comes to killing vermin the individual owner has to do the work himself, or have it done for him at his expense.

Hon. W. Kingmsmill: And if he offers a bonus he will be fined.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Another point: What is the intention of the Government as to the grouping of a number of holdings and surrounding it by a ring fence? The system of cutting up and fencing in 1,000 acres is suited to none but the best agricultural areas. We require a system of grouping. In the Eastern States it has been recognised that nothing can be done with the rabbits until they are got within four fences. Then those people within the fences are dealing with their own rabbits and not with outside colonies. This system of grouping large areas is a matter upon which I should like to hear from the Minister. Take the area between the two rabbit-proof fences, south of Mount Marshall. My figures, I may say, are only approximate. I understand that south of Mt. Marshall there are 11 million acres, of which three million have been alienated, while the remaining eight million acres constitute a breeding ground for pests. There we have two fences, with certain lines of railways passing through one or the other or both fences. If we were to follow those railways each with a single fence, which could be cheaply constructed, we would split up that huge area into areas of a reasonable size, which could be dealt with. I should like to know if the Government have any idea of conducting a campaign on such lines. This poison cart business is all moonshine, if we propose to deal with rabbits in a practical manner. Apart from the 11 million acres between the two fences, there are 14 million

acres within the agricultural belt this side of No. 2 fence. Of that area 11 million acres have been alienated, leaving three million acres in the hands of the Crown, to form a breeding ground for rabbits. All that area inside the fence will have to be cut up into sections so that the rabbits can be dealt with in the same way as I suggest they be dealt with between the two fences. We have in all about 25 million acres, generally referred to as the agricultural area, but which I term a mixed farming area. It is the mixed farming that we have to protect, not only against rabbits, but against dogs also, and seeing that the country is too light to withstand heavy stocking, the only way to protect it is to cut it up into reasonable areas and get the rabbits within four fences. The experience of the Eastern States teaches us that this can be done. Apart from the 25 million acres to which I have referred there are millions of acres of pastoral country further north, which may have to be dealt with somewhat similarly. Another point is that Clause 16 provides that no member of the board can remain in office for more than three years. It appears that there is no provision for re-election. Why should a man be compelled to go off the board at the end of three years? It is not clear as to whether the man is eligible for re-election or otherwise. Probably a man after three years' experience has just become a really efficient member of the board and should be kept on. Clause 35 provides that 14 days' notice of a meeting of the board is to be given. That is all right from the agricultural standpoint, but in the far north, where the distance is very great, and mails often do not go out to places for two or three months, what is the good of 14 days' notice in this connection?

Hon. V. Hamersley: They could have a fixed day once a month for a meeting.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Clause 59 deals with the recovery of rates levied "heretofore and hereafter." This is where I am somewhat concerned about the £66,000 expended by the Gascoyne Vermin Board. It will be remembered that the money was loaned to the Gascoyne Vermin Board by the Government to erect this fence. There was power to strike a rate but no power to collect the money. There was power to levy a rate of £1 a thousand acres when the Crown rental was only 10s. per acre, and the board which then existed enforced the £1 per thousand as far as they could. When they went to collect the money, however, they found they had no power to do so. A compromise was effected with the consent of both Houses of Parliament, and the then existing Minister, that the maximum rate that should be paid should be 10s. per thousand acres, and that the rate could be enforced and the arrears of rates spread over a number of years to enable the smaller men to pick up the arrears on a system of annual payments. This Bill proposes to deal with rates which have been levied heretofore and hereafter. I should like to be quite clear on the point so far as this £66,000 is concerned. Clause 73 deals with wire netting and other

approved appliances, but when we come to the fencing in of water, the Bill says that if the board or the Government can find wire netting the holder of the land must fence his property in, or the Government will do it for him. It is also stated that wire netting and other appliances must apply to the fencing in of water. Here we come to a difficulty so far as the pastoral areas are concerned. It is all right from an agricultural point of view, but not from a pastoral point of view. Running for miles through the country are the streams from the artesian bores. How are these to be fenced in without endangering the lives of stock? The thing is impossible from the pastoral point of view.

Hon. J. Nicholson: A horse may be brought to water, but he cannot be made to drink.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The Bill provides that the water must be fenced off, and if it is not done within seven days, when the holder may not get his notice for seven months, there is a penalty of £50. Then, perhaps the work will have been done by the Government and the £50 penalty before the notice has been received by the person for whom it is intended. There are other systems of watering stock in the north, apart altogether from the bores. But insofar as the bores are concerned the water sometimes runs for miles from the bores, and in some cases creates lakes where the country was dry before. The system on stations where wells are found is to have a pump, windmill, and a reservoir and troughs. When the reservoir is filled the windmill is automatically shut off, and immediately the troughs below are filled the reservoir is automatically shut off. In the case of sheep the whole of the drinking is done at night. If the water is fenced off and opened periodically in those parts of the country where rabbits abound it will probably be a race between the sheep and the rabbits as to who shall reach the water first.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Rabbits can do without water but sheep cannot.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Rabbits will do without it for a certain length of time.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: They do always.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Then where is the necessity for fencing in the water at all?

Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister): This only applies to proclaimed areas.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The Bill gives power to proclaim any area. We are not legislating for a day, but for a pest which will overrun this country unless it is properly handled.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Are you referring to the Government?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: To fence off the artesian bores and the big wells and water supplies in the far north is an impossible proposition.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: As it is with the rivers and lakes in the south.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The Bill provides that certain impossible things shall be done. Why fence off the dams and wells and reservoirs, and leave open the permanent pools and springs and rivers to which the rabbits have free access? If it is necessary to en-

force the clause in one direction it should be equally necessary to enforce it in other directions.

Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister): Not necessarily.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Sir Edward Wittenoom in the course of his remarks noted that the Commissioner of Railways was bound to fence, but I would point out that he is only bound to fence in his water.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: He is deemed to be an owner.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Rabbits can have free access to the railway. The Commissioner of Railways is only an owner so far as the fencing in of dams and wells is concerned, otherwise the rabbits have free access to the railway reserves. The Bill does not otherwise provide for fencing by the Railway Commissioner. What it should provide for is that the board could fence off the railway line on one side in order to split up these areas into sections. It may be necessary to have a measure brought in to enable that to be done. Mr. Kingsmill will remember that when he was Minister for Works and I was Minister for Railways, and Mr. John Davies was in charge of the Railways and Mr. C. Y. O'Connor in charge of the Public Works, a public works officer was in danger of his life if he went upon the railway property to do anything.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: And vice versa.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Whilst the Commissioner should not be compelled to put up fences along the railway line, the board should be empowered to fence along one side of them and the closer the fence is kept to the railway line, the easier will it be constructed and the more economically.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: I should like to make a personal explanation in regard to the point raised by the hon. member as to the liability of the Commissioner of Railways. I find that in Clause 81, paragraph 10, it is set out that the Commissioner of Railways shall for the purpose of this clause be deemed to be an owner of the land on which a Government railway is constructed or which is held or used in connection therewith. What I said yesterday was that the Commissioner of Railways would be responsible for keeping rabbits off that portion of the country which came under his domination, and I think that is so.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: That may be, but my definition of the clause is that the Commissioner is compelled to fence any water just as another person is.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: I agree that he should be.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: But he is not compelled to do any more.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: To keep the rabbits out.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: For the purpose of this section only, which is the water fencing section, the Commissioner of Railways is an owner, and not under any other section. On the question of the owner paying the rates, and also having to bear the cost of destroying the rabbits, and the possibility of the rate being spent in administration, I should like

to refer to Clause 83, Sub-clause 3, which reads as follow—

That the fence shall at all times be repaired, maintained and kept vermin proof or rabbit proof, as the case may be, by the occupier for the time being of the holding in which the fence is erected.

If the fence is to be maintained, repaired, and kept vermin proof by the occupier for the time being of the holding on which it is erected, what is to become of all the rates that are levied? Apart from the Gascoyne fence, there are in this State large areas of up to 40,000 acres, on which fences have been erected by private individuals. These are rabbit proof to-day and are serving a useful purpose but have not been built in accordance with this schedule. It would be an injustice to these people, who in the early stages put up these fences and endeavoured to deal with the rabbits if their rabbit proof fences are not to be treated as a rabbit proof fence under this Bill.

Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister): Provided that the inspector considers the fence rabbit proof and a sound fence.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: So much has been introduced into the Bill that one cannot expect even a legal man or a Minister to grasp the whole of the contents. It is only by dealing with it from different standpoints that one can arrive at a satisfactory conclusion. What I look for is a Bill that will serve all the purposes required of it. I am raising these points to assist the Minister in getting a Bill which will meet a very difficult problem. I do not know of any more important Bill than this. It deals not only with the protection of 25 millions of acres of mixed farming country, but with many million acres of pastoral country. We cannot give too much time and consideration to it. Sub-clause 6 of Clause 83 gives the Minister power to execute a mortgage on behalf of the owner. It may be all right in these cases, but once we give a Minister power to execute a mortgage on some other person's estate, I am not too sure as to where we will finish, after some of our experience. In my opinion, the clause is too drastic. Some pressure ought to be brought upon an owner of land to execute a mortgage in order to fence his holding, but to give a Minister power to come in and effect the mortgage himself is carrying the joke too far. Clause 87 provides a penalty of £100 without imprisonment for selling netting. If a man sells his netting and has nothing to realise on, what is the good of fining him £100? There is no alternative provided. If a man leaves a gate open by accident or by design, he too is liable to a penalty of £100 or six months imprisonment. I agree that if a man does such a thing deliberately, he should be severely punished, but if a man takes wire netting from the Government and sells it to someone else, what is the good of imposing a penalty on him, because we may rest assured that he will have nothing on which the Government will be able to realise. In that case the penalty to fine and not to imprison is not a fair thing. Clause 91, so far as I can understand it, compels an owner or occupier at his own cost and expense to destroy vermin not only

upon his own holding, but upon any roads bounding or intersecting that holding. That is not a fair thing. If a man destroys rabbits on his own holding it is as much as we can ask him to do. We are loading him up with quite enough without asking him to go out on the roads and destroy the rabbits there as well. With regard to Clause 99, a point I want cleared up is whether that applies to rabbit-proof fences to be erected, or fences already erected. I hope the Minister will go into that question and let us have some information about it when he replies. The first schedule provides for the repeal of Sections 3 and 4 of the Vermin Boards Act, 1915. That, too, is a matter which requires to be looked into, because the repeal of those sections may complicate matters. They are the sections which were passed to save the Gascoyne from disaster. There is one other point to which I wish to allude, and it is the wise provision with regard to voting. We have now returned to what I consider is the only safe foundation upon which any country, firm, or individual can prosper, and that is that those who pay the piper should have a hand in calling the tune. The wise provision to which I refer is that the more an individual pays the greater voting power he shall have.

Hon. V. Hamersley: It does not go far enough.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I hope this will not be the last time we shall see such a provision included in a Bill. I have gone out of my way perhaps to criticise the Bill and to raise points in order that we may clearly see any difficulties which may exist before the Bill becomes an Act. I look upon the Bill as a very important one, and I desire to give it my support.

Hon. H. STEWART (South-East) [6.5]: It is not my intention to speak at any length upon this Bill. When the measure was before the Chamber last session, I went into it and had some adverse criticism to offer, chiefly because, in my opinion, it would be unworkable and would not achieve the object the Government had in view. As a matter of fact I submitted a number of amendments, but I did not receive any support. After carefully perusing the Bill we have before us, I find that the amendments which I desired to see embodied in the previous measure will not be necessary in the present one, the difficulties which I then saw having been removed. I fully realise the difficulties, attention to which was drawn by Mr. Holmes, with regard to the pastoral industry. I want to stress the necessity for the measure being passed as early as possible, provided of course that no interests are penalised. It seems somewhat of a pity that when the select committee appointed by another place early in the year dealt with this question the matters to which Mr. Holmes alluded were not considered.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: The Bill must be passed this session, no matter how much time we devote to it.

Hon. H. STEWART: I agree that it must be passed as quickly as possible, because there is no denying the fact that the trouble is becoming acute. Much has been said with re-

gard to poison by the representatives of the agricultural districts. It is a necessary evil; there are no other means at hand at the present time by which we can deal with the pest effectively, but we hope that the necessity for using poison to the extent that has been indulged in will be obviated when conditions are again normal and when fencing material will be available at a reasonable rate. One thing that is exercising my mind is to know what is the actual position with regard to abandoned farms, those farms under the control of the Agricultural Bank and the Industries Assistance Board. I have carefully read through the definitions which have a bearing on these properties, and we have to take into consideration not only the definition of owner but also manager and occupier, because in the different clauses of the Bill difficulties occur, because the line of demarcation between these definitions is not well defined. Occupier, it is quite clear, includes manager, and under the definition of owner, as I read it, the Agricultural Bank, as the mortgagee, would be responsible for the obligations that fall upon other owners. I would like the Minister, in replying, to tell me definitely what is the position with regard to abandoned farms in the hands of the bank, whether, under the Agricultural Bank Act, and under the definition of owner the bank is responsible for keeping down the rabbits on those properties, whether the Government are only undertaking the work of destroying rabbits on Crown lands adjacent to occupied holdings and on abandoned farms, or whether they are only undertaking this work as an act of grace and that other Governments will not be bound. We might also be informed whether the Agricultural Bank, as owners, could be compelled to carry on the destruction of vermin just as a private owner. I would like to have these points definitely answered. With regard to Clause 43, the Governor may appoint a nominated board consisting of members some of whom may be members of a roads board, or men who are qualified to become members of the board by nomination. Having carefully considered this Bill in conjunction with the Roads Act, it seems to me that a man may be a member of a roads board and yet he may not possess the necessary qualification to enable him to become a member of the vermin board. If he is an occupier, I think he is entitled to be a member of the roads board, but being an occupier does not entitle him to become a member of the vermin board. I want to comment on Clause 73, which gives power to affix wire netting to a fence. The Minister or board may cause to be affixed and kept affixed to any fence, and so forth. I fully believe that the Minister or board can exercise drastic powers in that direction, and themselves carry out the work which can be carried out by owners or by a combination of owners. In this instance it is confined to the Minister and the board, and it causes a doubt to arise in my mind as to whether that is not too great a curtailment in connection with that clause. It does not make clear whether the Minister or the board are to erect those fences. The probability is that the work will be done departmentally or by a semi-government board, and then the work will be carried

out in an expensive manner, and the people will have to pay considerably more than they would be obliged to do if the work were carried out by contract. Taking the Bill as a whole, it is a measure which, although it will not meet with the complete approval of all the agriculturists, will go a long way towards improving the existing state of affairs, and it will certainly give the opportunity to the department to prove whether or not they are able to deal with this important question effectively. So far the excuse has been that there have not been any means at the disposal of the Government to enable the work of dealing with rabbits to be undertaken successfully. Proposals have been put forward by the Chief Inspector, who has not been able to carry them into effect because of the absence of legislative power. I was pleased to hear Mr. Hamersley refer to the experience in South Africa, where flesh-eating ants had proved the means for the destruction of rabbits.

Sitting suspended from 6.19 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. H. STEWART: Before tea I was referring to the South African flesh-eating ant which prevents the increase of rabbits in that country. I would like to offer a suggestion to the Minister. No harm would be done, and considerable benefit probably might ensue, by getting into touch with Professor Dakin, the scientific adviser in this State, to see whether that variety of ant, if not found in similar or suitable climates in this State, could not be introduced. It would not run any risk or have any detrimental effect in any way, and the Minister might recommend the introduction of that particular insect, if it is not already available in different parts of this State. It is a matter for investigation. In the first place the question must be submitted to a man who understands his business, for we must not introduce any insect or animal here until we are quite satisfied it will not have any deleterious effect. It will not be necessary to introduce this insect if we already have that variety here, but from information that comes through from South Africa, it is well worthy of investigation. I am pleased to notice a clause in the Bill that protects all animals in the State that are the natural enemies of vermin. Coming to Clause 109, I am pleased to see that the attitude of the department is against permitting the rabbit industry to grow up and become established. All commissions that have investigated this subject seem to arrive at one opinion, that it is unquestionably the safest policy to adopt, to prevent the establishment of the rabbit industry in a commercial sense—to utilise the carcases and the skins. The last point I wish to make is in connection with the schedule. The Honorary Minister in introducing the Bill told us he proposed to introduce certain amendments. Dealing with the Bill itself apart from the schedule, the Bill as introduced into the Lower House contained a schedule that provided that the mesh of the netting to be used should be $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches. I do not pose as an expert in the extermination of rabbits, but my province suffers from the pest and I have taken the opportunity of making inquiries from people who have had to do

with rabbits and there seems to be an unanimity of opinion that it is a vital matter that no gauge should be larger than $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches. It has been proved in the Eastern States that a mesh of $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches permits young rabbits to get through and grow and flourish. The $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch gauge mesh prevents young rabbits getting through, but if rabbits can get through that mesh they are so young and so insufficiently developed to live and flourish afterwards separated from the parent stock. So that I hope this House will adhere to the schedule as it is in the Bill now before the House and as amended in another place and see that a provision is inserted that $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch netting be used. In conclusion I think as far as agriculture is concerned this is a long wanted measure and as far as one can see it is a real good and solid attempt to meet the case in a fair and equitable manner. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading.

[The Deputy President took the Chair.]

Hon. H. MILLINGTON (North-East) [7.35]: I have not much to add to what has been said. There is one particular point I wish to stress, and that is the urgency of grappling with the problem. I am interested in the growing of wheat, and I have been feeding rabbits and they are looking well on it. This matter has been neglected in the past. There are a good many in the agricultural districts who are seriously considering whether it is worth while going on, and as a matter of fact I believe the rabbit pest has been responsible for a good many persons throwing up their holdings, or they anticipate doing so. This measure which should have been in operation some time aims at a recognised method of dealing with the problem. Those who are prepared to do their utmost to grapple with the pest are not assisted by their neighbours, and this Bill makes it obligatory for them to do so. Although the Bill does not provide this, it should also be obligatory on the part of the Government to come under the provisions of this measure, while it implies that as far as private land owners are concerned. I understand from the Honorary Minister the Government are going on with fencing water supplies and so forth, but there is nothing in the Bill to say that the Government are compelled to fence. Although I would not think of applying this Bill to virgin country, at the same time the Government are holders of abandoned farms and reserves. These holdings are intermixed with the holdings of private individuals, and in many instances the Government in the past has been the offender. One other difficulty is in regard to clearing the scrub which under ordinary circumstances would not be cleared because the land is useless. I find there is a difficulty in the Eastern States arising from this in connection with the wodge scrub. That is left, and it exists in good breeding ground. A great number of people, although they do their utmost with poison carts, find it impossible, because of the holdings alongside not being cleared, to keep the rabbits down. There is no provision in regard to this, but I do not know whether the board may not have some discretion in the matter. If not, whilst the

position is as it at present remains, that difficulty will always obtrude itself. Just one other point, and that is the question dealt with in Clause 109 as to the sale of rabbits. This is not as clear as it might be and I should like the assurance of the Government as far as the Eastern goldfields are concerned, that the people there will be permitted still to trade in rabbits as is done at present. This was mentioned when the Bill was before the House last session. I do not know if Clause 109 makes provision for this. I want the Minister to make it quite clear whether it will be permissible to trade in rabbits in the Eastern Goldfields districts. I understand the Government are anxious to get this Bill through. I heartily support it and I would not have spoken only for the urgency of the matters I have mentioned. I quite understand exception is taken to the Bill in places because it has to provide for the whole State, and we have to deal with conditions that are very diverse. I believe the Bill is framed, although it does not say so, to deal with the agricultural areas only. I understand the difficulty of those engaged in pastoral pursuits and they recognise the anomalies. The Bill has been drafted having in view the pest on the eastern belt. For that reason, leaving out the pastoral portion, it will be imperative that the Bill should be immediately dealt with. I hope the measure will be passed without undue delay because it is necessary to tackle the problem this summer. Although the rabbit question may be dealt with in the winter time and has been effectual where a determined effort has been made in winter, if we are really to do anything in the nature of extermination or keeping the rabbits within bounds, we must get to work in dead earnest this summer and with the shortest possible delay put the Bill into operation.

On motion by Hon. E. M. Clarke debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 7.44 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 17th 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."]

BILL—FORESTS.

Message.

Message from the Governor received and read, recommending appropriation in connection with the Bill.

QUESTION—ROYAL COMMISSION PERENJORI AND KULIN HOTEL LICENSES.

Hon. P. COLLIER (without notice) asked the Premier: Will the Government consider the advisability of appointing a solicitor to assist the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the Perenjori and Kulin hotel licenses? I do not wish to make any remarks, but in the past in connection with Royal Commissions, the Nevanas among others, it has been found necessary that someone should undertake the preparation of the evidence necessary to be called, it not being accepted as the function or duty of a judge of the Supreme Court to act as counsel in the case. Will the Government consider the advisability of rendering assistance of that nature to the judge in the present instance?

The PREMIER replied: A judge of the Supreme Court has been appointed as a Royal Commissioner to go into these matters. The Government were asked to appoint a Royal Commission, and it is for the Royal Commissioner to say whether he requires any assistance. If the case cannot be conducted without legal assistance, and if application for such assistance is made by the Royal Commissioner, the Government will be very pleased to consider the application. The Government have not yet had any suggestion to that effect from the Royal Commissioner.

Hon. P. Collier: Governments have given such assistance in the past without any suggestion.

QUESTION—ORDERS OF THE DAY, NOTIFICATION.

Mr. H. ROBINSON (without notice) asked the Premier: Will the Premier be good enough to make public through the columns of the morning newspapers the Orders of the Day with which the Government intend to proceed on each sitting day?

The PREMIER replied: The columns of the public Press are not the property of the Government. The Press can publish the Orders of the Day if they so desire. No doubt, if the hon. member approaches the Press on the subject, his wishes will be acceded to. I am not in a position to bring pressure to bear on the Press in this regard.

BILL—DISCHARGED SOLDIERS' SETTLEMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 8th October.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [4.41]: There is not one member of this House, I am sure, but is possessed with a desire to see this Bill passed through Parliament in a form which will render the utmost possible assistance to our returned soldiers, whom it is designed to help. But whatever views members may take of the merits of the Bill, it will be generally conceded that the appearance of the measure here is of a somewhat belated character, in view of the fact that we have now been four years at war and that for more than three