

tribute to the construction of a dividing fence between their respective lands, as provided in section 9 of "The Fencing Act, 1881," which fence shall be rabbit-proof, according to schedule of rabbit-proof fence attached herewith.

Page 2, paragraph 14: Read and agreed to.

Mr. Buchanan moved that the following be inserted after paragraph 14:—

With regard to the second question, it is with much regret that the Committee find themselves compelled to reply emphatically in the negative, and to indorse in the strongest manner that portion of the report presented to the House by the Committee of 1884, and quoted below, which deals with this portion of the question:—

The Committee, however, is strongly of opinion that the most frequent cause of failure to destroy rabbits, and consequent public dissatisfaction, is the evident unfitness of many of the officers for the important and responsible duties imposed upon them. The various witnesses examined were naturally reluctant to name individual cases, but the Committee is none the less satisfied that many appointments have been made of men whose previous history furnished nothing but a record of failure in other walks of life, and incapacity and unfitness for any responsibility such as is contemplated by this Act. To carry out its provisions with vigour, it is necessary that the Inspectors should be allowed to exercise large powers; and when it is remembered that, under present arrangements, these same officers are intrusted with the working of the Sheep Act, it will be at once recognized that they have duties to perform involving great responsibility, and requiring the use of much tact and judgment.

The Committee think these considerations cannot fail to give weight to the remarks above made relating to the appointment of officers, and to impress the Government with the duty which rests upon them of at once dispensing with the services of men unqualified for such an important duty.

The Committee feel bound to point out to the House that few or no steps have been taken by the Government to remedy the state of affairs indicated by the above quotation.

Individual settlers and groups of settlers have proved again and again that rabbit suppression is perfectly practicable in every class of country by methods which are now well known to every settler, and at moderate cost.

The Legislature has clothed the Government with ample power to compel the neglectful settler to do his duty to himself and others. The House, therefore, has the right to ask why this is not being done.

The earnest recommendation of the Committee is, that every Inspector in charge of a district should have ample power given him by circular to suspend or summarily dismiss, for neglect of duty, any rabbit agent under his supervision; and that the services of such Inspector should be dispensed with upon failure to deal effectively with the rabbits in his district within a reasonable time.

The Committee altogether deny that a speedy suppression of the rabbit pest involves any harsh treatment or arbitrary display of authority; but, on the contrary, they maintain that a firm, impartial, and judicious administration of the Act is all that is necessary to produce the most satisfactory results.—Carried.

Paragraph 15 amended: Mr. Buchanan moved, 'To omit in lines 32, 33, 34, and 35, from "arrangements" to "same time" inclusive.—Carried. Also in line 37, after the word "them," to insert "and they would strongly recommend every inducement being offered for their permanent occupation."—Carried. Also in lines 39 and 40 to omit the words "feline," "raptorial."—Carried. Also in line 41, after "Committee," to omit "recommend," and insert "strongly urge."—Carried. Also in line 42, after "stoats," insert "and."—Agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Robinson moved, That "polecats" be added after "weasels" in line 42.—Negatived.

Mr. Buchanan moved, After "weasels," to omit the remainder of the paragraph, and insert "and also for the breeding of a large number of ferrets locally by contract."—Carried.

Paragraph 15, as amended, was carried.

Page 2, paragraph 16, read and agreed to.

Page 2, paragraph 17, line 58: Mr. J. McKenzie moved, To strike out all the words after "Government" to end of paragraph, and to insert "to assist the pastoral tenants of the Crown by bearing a portion of the cost of the destruction of the pest during the last two or three years of the lease."

Paragraph 17 carried.

Page 2, paragraph 18: Mr. Buchanan moved, To omit, in line 64, "mere palliatives."—Carried. And after "not" to insert "radical."—Carried. Also in line 66 to omit "and the cessation of the present large expenditure in connection with it."—Carried.

Paragraph 18, as amended, carried.

Then the Committee adjourned.

FRIDAY, 16TH JULY, 1886.

The Joint Rabbit Nuisance Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10.30 a.m.

*Present:* Legislative Council—Hon. Mr. G. R. Johnson (Chairman), Hon. Mr. Holmes, Hon. Mr. Menzies, Hon. Mr. Peter, Hon. Mr. Walker, Hon. Mr. Williamson. House of Representatives—Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Cowan, Mr. Lance, Mr. J. McKenzie, Mr. McMillan, Captain Russell.

The amended draft report was considered.

#### DRAFT REPORT.—RABBIT NUISANCE.

THE Joint Committee appointed to inquire into the best means of dealing with the rabbit pest has the honour to report as follows:—

It has examined eighteen witnesses "possessed of much practical experience," and also obtained information from more than sixty persons resident in various parts of the colony, as well as from such of the County Councils as were able and willing to reply to the questions submitted to them regarding the rabbit nuisance and the working of "The Rabbit Nuisance Act, 1882."