

SECOND READING.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. G. Randell): I move that this Bill be read a second time. Hon. members will quite understand that it is necessary that provision should be made for carrying on the public services of the colony, as it is proposed, perhaps this evening, to prorogue, and Parliament will not meet again until probably the 7th August. This Bill has met with the approval of hon. gentlemen in another place, and hon. members here will see that as very little business, or no business, is ready at the present moment, and that as the very important question of the referendum being taken has to be settled, the popular vote having to be taken on the 31st July, it is undesirable for many reasons to sit during the time that intervenes between now and July 31. I think it will meet the wishes of hon. members of this House that we should not sit about the ordinary time, which is generally about the latter end of this month or early in July. If Parliament were to sit at that time, I am afraid a considerable delay would take place, because business is not ready for the ordinary session, and the financial year is not yet ended. I think it has been found on previous occasions that to meet early in June is inconvenient. That has been my feeling. If we meet in August we may despatch our business much quicker than we should do now, and with much more satisfaction to ourselves and less loss of time. I hope hon. members will be in favour of passing this Bill into law, so that we may carry on the public service of the colony. Hon. members will understand that the Government cannot legally expend moneys after the 30th June, unless with the sanction of Parliament. I do not think I need say any more on the question. The Bill will commend itself to hon. members, and I think they will fall in with my view that about the 7th of August is a good time for the Parliament to meet for its general session.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE, ETC.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

Read a third time, and *passed*.

CONSTITUTION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES, TO AMEND ERROR.

Received from the Legislative Assembly, and read a first time.

THE PRESIDENT, at ten minutes past 5 o'clock, left the Chair for 20 minutes; and, on resuming,

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY moved that the second reading of the Constitution Act Amendment Bill be made an order of the day for Tuesday next.

Question put and passed.

ADJOURNMENT.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY moved that the House do now adjourn. He explained that this meant until 4.30 on the next Tuesday. If he should require the services of hon. members, he would advise each member individually.

The House adjourned at 5.32 o'clock until the next Tuesday.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 14th June, 1900.

Question: East Mount Magnet Goldfield, to Reward Discoverers—Constitution Act, 1899, Amendment Bill (to correct an error), all stages—Privilege (Robson Charges), Committee's Report, Motion and Amendment; Points of Order—Prorogation, Proclamation; Close of Session.

THE SPEAKER took the Chair at 4.30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

QUESTION—EAST MOUNT MAGNET GOLDFIELD, TO REWARD DISCOVERERS.

MR. HUBBLE, for Mr. Rason, asked the Minister of Mines: 1, Whether he had received any application for a reward for the discovery of the East Mt. Magnet Goldfield: 2, Whether it was the intention of the Government to grant any such reward.

THE MINISTER OF MINES replied :—1, Several applications for a reward have been received from persons claiming to have been the first discoverers of gold at East Mt. Magnet; 2, These applications are under consideration, but it has not been decided by the Government that any reward should be granted.

CONSTITUTION ACT, 1899, AMENDMENT BILL.

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES, TO CORRECT ERROR.

SECOND READING.

On motion by the PREMIER, without debate,

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE.

Clauses and schedule—agreed to.

Preamble:

THE PREMIER moved, in effect, that the following be substituted for the words before the enactment:

Whereas by inadvertence the amendments consequent upon the alteration of the boundaries of the South-West Mining Electoral District were omitted to be made in the second schedule to the Constitution Acts Amendment Act, 1899, while passing through Parliament, and it is expedient to correct such error:

Also that the word "therefore" be inserted before "enacted," in line 1 of the enactment.

Amendments put and passed, and the preamble as amended agreed to.

Title:

THE PREMIER moved that the word "amend," in the full title, be struck out, and "correct an error in" be inserted in lieu.

Put and passed, and the title as amended agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments, and the report adopted.

THIRD READING.

Bill read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

Majority of members present at each stage.

PRIVILEGE (ROBSON CHARGES) COMMITTEE'S REPORT, MOTION AND AMENDMENT.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

MR. LEAKE (Albany): Before this matter is considered by the House, I desire to make a personal explanation. I

have been accused by hon. members of having remarked that I indorse all that Mr. Robson said, both with regard to the Government and to private members.

MR. HIGHAM: You said you would repeat the statements.

MR. LEAKE: I am not making an attack on anybody.

MR. HIGHAM: But that is what you said.

MR. LEAKE: I have been accused of that, and I say I have no recollection of having made that statement, and I had no intention to make such a statement. Indeed, had I done so, I would have apologised without reserve to any individual member of the House for having made the assertion. But I do not wish to be misunderstood, and I say now what I have said, or what I intended to say, throughout these proceedings, that is that I would stand by Mr. Robson so far as the attacks on the Government as a political body are concerned. Beyond that I do not go. I, in common with many hon. members, deprecate attacks upon individuals. It has further been stated that I was instrumental in inducing Mr. Robson to withdraw his charges against the Government, because pressure was brought to bear upon me. That also I deny.

MR. MORAN: Who said that? It was never said in the House.

MR. LEAKE: I do not say it was said in the House.

MR. HUBBLE: It was said by one of your own side, I expect.

THE SPEAKER: Order!

MR. LEAKE: It is not good taste, I think, to interrupt a member who is making a personal explanation. I say the charges were not withdrawn against the Government; and in support of that statement I have a letter from Mr. Robson, which is addressed to the leader of the Opposition, and reads as follows:

It has come to my ears that my action last night in the Assembly is regarded practically as a withdrawal of my charges against the Government. Let me at once say that I have not withdrawn any charges which reflect upon the governing body, but only those which reflect upon the House itself and individual members. In effect I say that I ought not to have made the reference to members being without visible means of support, and that they were helped by a financier; but I was justified in saying that the Government was politically rotten and corrupt, and that statement I have

not withdrawn, and its accuracy remains undetermined.

I again say I have not intentionally said anything with a desire to reflect on the personal honour of any member, and if any hon. member thinks I have done so, and he likes to call on me either here or elsewhere, I will amply apologise.

DEBATE ON THE REPORT.

MR. MORAN (East Coolgardie): I now move, in accordance with notice:

(a.) That this House is of opinion that the explanation made by the hon. member for Geraldton, that his charges should not be taken in their literal sense, is not sufficiently satisfactory. (b.) That this House is of opinion that, should he make an unqualified withdrawal of his charges, no further action on its part is necessary. (c.) That, failing this withdrawal, this House is of opinion that the hon. member for Geraldton should be censured by Mr. Speaker.

Before we proceed to the motion, we may as well find out exactly where we are. Does this motion, of which I gave notice last night, precede a general discussion on the report of the Select Committee?

THE SPEAKER: Certainly.

MR. MORAN: Then the motion and the report are coincident?

THE SPEAKER: Yes; the discussion may take place on both. It is not desirable to have a discussion on each separate matter, the report and the motion.

MR. MORAN: The motion of which I gave notice, and which appears on the Notice Paper, is redundant in the altered circumstances, and I know it will be altered and amended in such a way as to meet the present position of affairs.

POINT OF ORDER.

MR. LEAKE: I rise to a point of order. I understand the hon. member is speaking to the motion of which he has given notice.

THE SPEAKER: Yes.

MR. LEAKE: I would ask you, sir, whether the motion or any portion of it is in order; and I submit that if it is not in order it cannot even be amended, but must be rejected altogether. I submit that the motion deals with a person, or affects to deal with a person, who is no longer a member of this House, and who is not within our jurisdiction.

SEVERAL MEMBERS: Oh!

MR. LEAKE: I have risen to a point of order.

MR. HIGHAM: A point of disorder.

THE SPEAKER: I am of opinion the motion is in order. It is not for me to say a motion is not in order because it is not correct. Certainly it would have been absolutely correct in its form, if the member for Geraldton had not sent in his resignation last night; but still I cannot withdraw the motion from the House, because, as I say, it is not out of order. If a motion is placed before the House, whether correct or not in its statement, it is for the House to deal with the motion, and not for me to rule it out of order.

MR. GREGORY: Is there a member for Geraldton at present?

THE SPEAKER: No; there is not. I may as well say now that I was incorrect in my reply to the member for North Murchison (Mr. Moorhead) last night. The hon. member asked me whether the seat for Geraldton was vacant, and I said it was not; but on looking at the Constitution Act, I see that as soon as a member sends in his resignation in writing to the Speaker, the seat absolutely thereupon becomes vacant.

DEBATE RESUMED.

MR. MORAN: Let us "return to our muttons," now that we have cleared the way. The personal explanation of the late leader of the Opposition (Mr. Leake) is *apropos* to the present occasion, and I listened to it with some pleasure. Next to not having made an imputation against a man's honour or character, comes an honourable apology for having made any such imputation; because that is the only honourable thing left to a man who has impugned the character of another, unless the person who makes the accusation wishes to prove the truth of his statements. The member for Albany (Mr. Leake) did undoubtedly use the words which have been imputed to him, and he did so in the hearing of everyone in the House. He said he repeated what the member for Geraldton (Mr. Robson) had said; but I learn with pleasure that the words were used probably in the heat of the moment, and without due consideration as to what the meaning might be. I welcome the withdrawal and apology of the late member for Geraldton

but I must also say that the letter which has just been read, and which is sent by a private gentleman to a member of the House, is not *apropos* to the present occasion at all. We heard Mr. Robson last night deliver what was, to my mind, a full and unreserved apology, bearing with it, I think, a certain amount of justification for a proposal that that gentleman should be forgiven and his transgressions in the past be forgotten. I regret we have not yet heard the last of Mr. Robson; and the leader of the Opposition, with his coadjutor the other leader, would have been well advised if they had not read the letter here; because after the *amende honourable* made by Mr. Robson, it is rather late in the day to sling down the gauntlet on the floor of the House, and ask us to leave a shadow of the imputation of corruption against a man who, after all, is a private member of the House—I mean the Premier, the head of Government. I fail to see, and always have failed to see, and cannot be led to see how any man can be honourable as a private member, if he be dishonourable and corrupt as a public administrator; and we having welcomed the explanation given, I say the member for Albany would have been well advised not to have dragged out any further communication from Mr. Robson on the floor of the House. We have heard Mr. Robson on several occasions in different moods, in varying phases, the last of these moods yesterday being the most satisfactory. That phase is one which should have preceded all the others, and which he, as an honourable man, should have assumed when he found he could not prove the charges he had laid against others. Let me premise what I am about to say by stating I decline to allow this Parliament to break up, no matter how long a time it may last, before this imputation is removed from the Government. I decline, as a private member, to allow the Government I follow to be in any way besmirched, and I would consider the inquiry had been fruitless and useless and that the House had not done its duty—not only on the Government side but members of the Opposition—if a shadow of imputation were allowed to rest on the Government because of the charges which have been made by Mr.

Robson, and which have been withdrawn. I may be taking a wrong view, but that is the view I intend to take, and which I hope every member will take, on the question. We have arrived at this stage: we have Mr. Robson's apology, which is a full and ample one.

MR. GREGORY: As against hon. members.

MR. MORAN: I think that is unworthy of the Opposition. I had hoped to find the House not divided into parties on the question, and that neither the leader of the Opposition nor his very able whip would continue to gain a party advantage from this very unpleasant business. It is perhaps presumption on my part to dictate to the leader of the Opposition, but the line of conduct he has taken on the question has, in my mind, not been consonant with the high and honourable action which a man leading a great party should take. The hon. member may not have been actuated by any unfair motives, but let it be understood that he is considered to be seeking to gain a small party advantage, and his position becomes the subject of misrepresentation. Does the leader of the Opposition or does he not seek to allow a cloud or an imputation of corruption to rest against the Government as a body? If the leader of the Opposition still thinks the Government of the country are rotten and corrupt, he has his proper, correct, statesmanlike, and constitutional remedy. He ought not to allow an imputation of the kind to remain because of the charges of a private member—a gentleman who is no longer a member of this House—but he ought to bring a direct motion on the floor of the House, now or any time he likes.

MR. GREGORY: This session?

MR. MORAN: Yes; we will welcome the fight.

MR. LEAKE: That is because you know you would win.

MR. MORAN: We know that justice will prevail, and that is why we know we will win.

MR. LEAKE: We will appeal to the public, and not to Parliament.

MR. MORAN: I know the leader of the Opposition would never descend to impute dishonourable personal motives to members of the Administration, and I

want him to understand if other people raise the cry of "rotten and corrupt," and he believes it, he ought to table a motion of want of confidence and give his reasons for that motion. Let him then speak as long as he likes, and on every document and paper he can get, and if the House approve the motion there is only one remedy: the House would turn out such a Government, and we on the Government side would help to do it. That is the position which should be taken up by the Opposition leaders. They should bring a direct charge by direct motion, and allow the House to decide; and if the House be wrong we are close enough to a general election to allow the public to reverse the verdict. I regret that this last parting "bomb" of Mr. Robson should have been thrown on the floor of the House, though I should rather call it a "squib" which may lead to an animated discussion; but I for one will never rest while there is an imputation that the Government I support is rotten and corrupt. Let us come to the question at issue, namely, Mr. Robson's honourable withdrawal. Let us, if we can, forget the letter of Mr. Robson, which he writes as a private member, because he is at liberty as such to do as he likes, and cannot "foul the nest," because he no longer belongs to it. As a private citizen, what is Mr. Robson's position? Mr. Robson has retired, and it is now, in my opinion, no longer a matter for this House to deal with him, because he will be dealt with by those who sent him here, namely, his own constituents.

MR. HIGHAM: If he dares.

MR. MORAN: A man will dare anything. I have no doubt whatever that the first thing Mr. Robson will do at Geraldton will be to address the electors, either as having abandoned his political career altogether, or as seeking their suffrages for a seat here. Out of evil comes good; and no doubt much has been made of the question in the country, and much also has been made of it by some of the leading newspapers of the colony. It is far better that we have had the inquiry, because an imputation left unexamined becomes a charge in time. If the Government had not investigated this matter, I am perfectly certain, as I said before, it would have been a distinct gain to the Opposition, who

would have been able to go to a general election with these charges unexamined. I do not impute for a moment that any member of the Opposition would use those charges in that way; and let us assume they would not, for I know the rank and file of the Opposition have behaved like honourable men in this case. They have behaved like men as well as members of Parliament, and as they would have behaved were they not members of Parliament or members of a party, and just as they would in the case of an imputation against a member of a club to which they might belong. They gave the fullest opportunity to the accused to acquit his character, and to the accuser to prove his charges; and as an integral body the Opposition would not have used the cry at the general election. But the Opposition, no more than the Government or any other body, can control public opinion. The Opposition could not, even if they sought to do so, remove from the minds of the electors this stigma against the Government; namely, that these charges have been made, and that they have been accentuated in the public Press on the goldfields to an alarming extent, that they have been accepted as proven, and that a taunt has been hurled at the Government of the colony that they were afraid to examine the charges. The Opposition must have scored immensely in the election campaign, even in spite of their own efforts to the contrary.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Even worse things have been said in that Press.

MR. MORAN: Yes; I maintain that worse things have been said in that Press. But here is a member of this Chamber who sat with us, ate and drank with us, moved about with us socially, who saw and heard us both in our public positions and in our private and unguarded moments, as in a club; and he says the body to which he belongs is rotten and corrupt, and the Government at the head of that body is rotten and corrupt; and he brings several distinct charges. What was the imputation conveyed to the public mind? That this man had discovered something which had made him violate the canons of ordinary gentlemanly behaviour, which had made him violate the rules of hospitality when, on proceeding to the Darling Ranges with the Premier as the Premier's private guest

and after enjoying the good things which the Premier supplied, in the freer moments which followed upon a good dinner and its concomitants, the hon. member elicited from the Premier information, which he afterwards used to support his charges. Nothing could have induced a man who was, at one time at least, an honourable member of this House, to so far transgress all the canons of propriety as to do that, unless he had found some gross charges which compelled him to break through all the trammels of society in order that they might be exposed. That was the popular view of the position; for it was indeed a strange thing to find an Englishman, as Mr. Robson is, acting in such a manner. The word "Englishman" means a great deal, as far as personal honour is concerned. I am not an Englishman; but I know if there be one nation in the world that has an idea of personal honour, of the duties and obligations of host and guest, the laws of hospitality, or, as we may call it, "clubness," I am free to say it is the English nation. It is an honourable nation. The English may not have the high ideals held by some other races; I do not say whether they have or not; but of personal honour and the laws governing the intercourse between man and man, no man in the world has a higher idea than an Englishman; and Mr. Robson is an Englishman.

MR. GEORGE: There are Englishmen and Englishmen.

MR. MORAN: I wish to cast no imputations, excepting this, that it must have been imagined Mr. Robson knew something very grave and gross, or he would not have transgressed all the canons of propriety as he did on that occasion. Could we in this House have remained under those imputations, and not examined them? I say this House could have done so. Great men have outlived more serious charges. But in this case, knowing the exaggerated state of party feeling in the colony at the present time, and that a large party, backed up by a powerful Press, were seeking for every peg on which they could hang charges against the Government, it would have been suicidal for this House, it would have been unfair and unjust for anyone to have asked the Forrest Government not to inquire into

these charges. They were inquired into by a select committee of this House, and that committee finds the charges are unproven in every particular. Mr. Robson has failed to prove his charges. Now let me do justice to this man who is no longer a member of the Assembly; for in the mind of every man to-day, sympathy with that hon. member should be uppermost. It is uppermost in my mind. I sympathise with the man who has been compelled to resign his seat in this House at the outset of what appeared to be a promising public career. Well, the charges are unproven. I say he made a generous apology last night: I choose to read it as a full apology. It has been said Mr. Robson introduced one or two qualifications; but I wish to be generous, and to interpret his apology in the fullest sense. Therefore, I regret that the letter written by him as a private man was thrown upon the floor of this House to-night. He said, "I make a full and unreserved apology."

MR. GREGORY: To members of the House.

MR. MORAN: The leader of the whip is always most anxious to put his little squib into the Government, if he can.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Not "the leader of the whip."

MR. MORAN: The man who wields the whip over the unwilling flanks of some members of the Opposition. They do not come at his call as willingly as they might: he has not yet "tooled" his team properly. The leader of the whip is most anxious to leave this imputation resting upon the Government. But, as the late member for Geraldton made a public apology, let us accept it.

MR. GREGORY: Nothing of the sort. What I said is correct. I have the words here.

MR. MORAN: The Opposition whip is marvellously clever. In his opinion, the Commissioner of Crown Lands is not a member of this House, the Premier is no longer a member of this House, nor is the Commissioner of Railways a member. I say they are members of this House, and the late hon. member (Mr. Robson), in apologising to all members of this House, must needs have included the members of the Ministry. [MR. ILLINGWORTH: Hear, hear.] The leader of the Opposition says "Hear, hear," as I expected he would. Ministers are mem-

bers of this House; and their personal honour last night was absolutely vindicated by Mr. Robson. There is no question of that. [MR. ILLINGWORTH: Hear, hear.] I say, let us accept the apology in the spirit in which it was made. I for one should have liked to see his apology accepted, I should have liked to see this matter glozed over this afternoon in a friendly spirit because I well know, and the country now knows, that these charges were unfounded. The member for Albany (Mr. Leake) has said that, in his opinion, the charges were unfounded. Bear in mind I do not wish to talk about political matters. We are dealing with a subject high above politics—let us discuss one thing at a time—the personal honour of this House has been vindicated by the very man who brought the charges.

MR. GREGORY: You are talking generally.

MR. MORAN: What remained for us to do was to have accepted that resignation with a certain amount of regret. This House did not seek to expel the late hon. member from the Chamber. The motion I tabled last night, and which I feel sure would have been carried, was as mild as could have been put. The motion affirmed that the Select Committee's report was adopted, that the charges constituted a breach of privilege, and that the hon. member should be called upon for an apology. That was all. Did he still persist in not apologising, then no hon. member would for one moment have refused to agree that the Speaker should censure the hon. member in his place in the House. After that, why persecute him? Why follow the man up? We are dealing with our personal honour. The man is gone from amongst us, and it is not for us to follow him into the obscurity of private life. Let him remain there until, in the eyes of his constituents, he has been purified. If they send him back to this House again, that is their affair; and as far as the electorate of Geraldton is concerned, it may if it likes be once more represented by the hon. member. Whether the hon. member, should he come here again, will find it so easy to commingle as he did in the past with several members of this (Government) side of the House, I leave to his own good taste to imagine. Did I dare to dictate to the electors of Geraldton or

to Mr. Robson, I would suggest that they should allow a little time to elapse, so as to heal the wound. Better allow Mr. Robson to stand down until the general election. But it is not for me to dictate to the electors of Geraldton. If it were I should consider it my duty to do so on the public platform, and to the people themselves in Geraldton. It is for them to say what fate Mr. Robson deserves; it is for them to say whether he has made a fatal mistake, and one that will preclude him from coming back again; or it is for them to take a more lenient view, and to say he has been guilty of a gross indiscretion, an indiscretion which they may choose to consider as being due to his zeal to purify what he thought a corrupt House, concerning which he now finds he has been misinformed. Let us bear in mind Mr. Robson may have been led astray by others; that he may have been told things which he took to be truths, and which he afterwards found his informants did not substantiate. That hypothesis always remains. But I did not intend to waste so much of the time of the House as I have wasted, seeing that my motion will be superseded by the amendment; and I should not have spoken at such length but for the letter sent in by Mr. Robson, which led me rather off the track; and I do hope this view of the question will not be pushed this evening. I hope the leader of the Opposition will take the high and honourable position that he should take, and will admit that the charges have absolutely fallen to the ground, with regard both to the Government and to private members of the House. And the papers are still here. Next session the leader of the Opposition can table a motion in this House to the effect that the Government of the colony are politically rotten and corrupt, that they are not managing the affairs of this country in its best interests and that therefore they are no longer fit to hold the reins of power; and I am perfectly certain the country will give the hon. member a fair hearing, even if this House do not. I hope this evening will see the conclusion of this painful episode, and that it will be allowed to sink into the oblivion from which Mr. Robson and every member of this House must now be sorry it ever emerged.

MR. MONGER (York): I second this motion. It is only a few weeks since the doors of this House were rushed by the people of Perth, both ladies and gentlemen, in order to hear these nasty, dirty charges which the late member for Geraldton said he was going to level against the Government and certain members of this Chamber. As far as I am personally concerned, I shall refer only to the attack he has been cruel enough to make on myself. Though I may have made mistakes, though I may have had occasion to ask for concessions from my creditors, the one desire I have in view is to meet those creditors in the future as man to man, and if ever my position does permit of it, to pay them what I owe them.

SEVERAL MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

MR. GEORGE: You will do it, too.

MR. MONGER: That has not been the position, as I have on several occasions attempted to point out, taken by the member for Geraldton.

MR. HUBBLE: The late member.

MR. MONGER: The late hon. member for Geraldton. Remember I am not taking advantage of my position as a member of this House, and as one who can speak of any other person in his absence. Remember I have endeavoured, at every possible opportunity since my name has been brought forward by Mr. Robson, to give him a chance to accept or refute whatever I might say in this House. What I am about to say I shall say with regret; but I wish it to go to the people of this colony, to the people throughout Australia to whom my name and other names have been published, and to the people of Geraldton in particular, where this man lives and has dared to make his nasty insinuations against a man like myself. I believe other members attacked will reply for themselves. It is only a few years ago that Mr. Robson was associated with a concern called "Ritchie, Robson, & Co." That concern burst up, with the result that it met its creditors, owing to the painful pleadings of Mr. Robson. Mr. Robson appealed in a most piteous style to his creditors, and said, "Gentlemen, the assets of this institution are worth ten bob in the pound. I will pay you that." I believe he did. This man dares to throw mud against men on this side of

the House who are desirous of meeting every obligation they were ever associated with, whether from a personal standpoint or from being publicly associated with others--men on this side who have met with disaster. I am one of those, and he dares to throw this odium on me. I ask whether, in his affluent days, he has for one moment ever attempted to say to his creditors: "Gentlemen, the one aim of my life shall be to repay you every penny that firm I was associated with owed you?"

MR. ILLINGWORTH: He has paid some of them twenty shillings in the pound.

MR. MONGER: That I emphatically deny, with all due respect to the hon. member. He may have paid some of them; creditors to whom he owed perhaps twenty-five shillings. My greatest desire was to have been able to tell the late member for Geraldton the position that he occupied, and whilst I do not want to stir up any more dirty mud than is necessary on an occasion like this, it is perhaps needful for one to cast his recollections back to, comparatively speaking, ancient history. The late hon. member for Geraldton had in the course of his remarks to refer to dead men, dead men respected by every honest West Australian, dead men whose boots the like of that thing was unworthy to unlace; and what I am most particularly desirous of doing at the present moment is to let the people of Geraldton know that Mr. Robson threw the whole of the onus and the whole of the odium of his bankruptcy proceedings on to his absconding partner. Whilst admitting that perhaps at the time Mr. Robson had fair and reasonable grounds for doing so, what I want the people of Geraldton to know is, that Mr. Ritchie, his then late lamented partner, returned to this colony some three or four years afterwards in supposed affluent circumstances. And what happened? Mr. Robson in no way attempted to call Mr. Ritchie up to the mark. I will allow the late departed member for Geraldton, if ever he is again a member of this House, to explain his reasons for not attempting to make an exhibition of Mr. Ritchie. There is a skeleton in the cupboard of those two men. Mr. Robson dares not to approach Mr. Ritchie. I will allow Mr. Robson, from his place on

the hustings at Geraldton, to dare to refute the idea that I fling into his own pocket. He can keep it there. It has gone out to the whole of the people of Western Australia, and to the whole of the people of Australasia, because we know how the Press of this colony is regulated; it has, I say, gone out to the whole of the people of Western Australia that there are certain men sitting on this side of the House who are to all intents and purposes without visible means of support. I would like to put it to the man who dared in the first instance to bring these imputations against men on this side, whether, if he, with all his honest purposes at heart, had paid those he was indebted to, he would have ever occupied a position in this House. I would like to ask him—and I am sorry he is not in his place to-night—whether, if he were in affluent circumstances to-morrow, he would meet the obligations of that firm with which he was associated. I do not want to make this an occasion for any personal appeal. I think I am sufficiently known to the people of Western Australia for them to be aware that, should my position and my circumstances warrant it, those to whom I have been indebted and to whom I am to-day indebted will receive everything to which they are entitled. That has never been the attempt, it has never been the maxim, adopted by the late member for Geraldton. I have only a few more points to make, but I must naturally refer to a leading article that appeared in one of our morning papers. The words to which I am particularly taking exception are these:

Individual members are not in Parliament to represent themselves, to justify their private conduct, nor are they there to deal with the private conduct of others.

Those few words struck me as not being the language that would emanate from the worthy editor of the *Morning Herald*. I say we are here to justify our personal honour, we are here to defend our personal conduct; and when a newspaper with the reputation of the *Morning Herald* advises the people of Western Australia that their personal honour or personal conduct is a mere secondary consideration, I think there must have been something relaxing.

MR. GEORGE: He was out to a picnic last night.

MR. MONGER: It is all very well for the people of Western Australia to know that Mr. Robson made certain charges, which in a quiet and calmer moment he has practically withdrawn; it is all very well to let this go out to the people of Western Australia as a sort of a charge made by this man—I would describe him as something else if he were in the House, this late hon. member—it is all very well for him to have his say and then to adopt the policy suggested by this newspaper: "Oh, accept everything and allow no personal explanations whatever." As far as I am personally concerned, it was my desire that Mr. Robson should be in his place in the House to hear what I had to say. Then I might have described him in far stronger language, or attempted far stronger language, than what I have resorted to this evening. I second the motion of the hon. member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran), and in doing so have but one regret, that the late member for Geraldton thought fit to resign before he could hear what members on this side of the House had to express as to their personal feelings towards him. He has gone; may he die. If he comes back to this House, there is only one position he will occupy. The men who have been kind to him, men who have in the past recognised him, will no longer have anything to do with him.

MR. HUBBLE (Gascoyne): I, like the hon. member who has just sat down, am one of those accused of having no possible or visible means of support, according to the member for Geraldton. I do not think the member for Geraldton would have said what he did, had he known what he was talking about at the time. This imputation has been telegraphed to all parts of the colony, also no doubt to all the other colonies, and moreover by this time it is in England; and I feel justified in protecting my honour and the credit which I have held in this colony in the last 15 years. Doubtless Mr. Robson as a young politician tried to make his case very great, coming forward as he did for Geraldton, with a swollen head which we all believe he had at the time, then going before his constituents and repeating the assertions made, and then, when travelling around the country with the hon. the Commissioner of Crown Lands and a few others, saying he had these

little things in his pigeon-holes. During the course of my life I have always tried to keep peace, instead of throwing mud, but to-night I am going to throw a brick, if I am permitted to do so.

MR. DOHERTY: Do not throw on this side.

MR. JAMES: Will it hit too hard?

MR. HUBBLE: The *Morning Herald* in this morning's issue, as the member for York has stated, said private grievances should not be brought into the House; but I would like to explain to the House that I wished to have certain letters published in the morning papers of Perth. I took those letters to the papers, and they declined to publish them. With your permission, therefore, I shall have very much pleasure in reading those letters which I wished published. This is a letter I wrote in reply to the report that appeared in Saturday morning's issue of both papers:

I have read in this morning's issue my name in Mr. Robson's list of the members without "visible means of support." Although it may be true that I no longer enjoy the affluent circumstances which surrounded me some little while ago, I think I may fairly claim that my present position is in no small measure due to the backwardness of my so-called friends, in repaying the advances always to be had from my foolish generosity. The enclosed correspondence discloses a fair example of how a man like myself may become temporarily embarrassed, and be held up to public ridicule in the selfish interest of party warfare. As Mr. Leake is Mr. Robson's legal adviser and political mentor—

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Is the hon. member in order in referring to any hon. member?

MR. LEAKE: Let him go on.

MR. HUBBLE (reading on):

perhaps Mr. Robson can now explain if I am still to be classed among his brigade of political sinners without "visible means of support," while holding the promissory note for £500 of the ex-leader of the Opposition.

This is the correspondence I wanted to publish, from my solicitors, Messrs. Stone and Burt:

Enclosed herewith we forward you copy of a letter received by us from Mr. Leake. We shall be glad to know if you still require us to issue a writ.

That letter was dated 7th April, this year, and the member for Albany wrote on the same day to Messrs. Stone and Burt:

In reply to your letter of yesterday's date asking for payment of what is due to Mr. Hubble, I can only say that I do not dispute

the liability, but unfortunately am unable to pay. The debt is secured.—

MR. LEAKE: It says the debt is secured.

MR. HUBBLE: The letter proceeds:

and should Mr. Hubble be desirous of realising upon the property, I shall be ready to do what I can to facilitate a sale. I may add that I extremely regret my inability to send a cheque, for Mr. Hubble has shown great forbearance in this matter.

MR. LEAKE: May I say a word in explanation? because I want to put the member for the Gascoyne right on one point. I merely wish to say that I have never borrowed a single penny from Mr. Hubble in my life. The incident to which he refers was more in the nature of a guarantee than anything else, and, as he says, the debt was secured.

MR. HUBBLE: That is what Mr. Leake says.

THE SPEAKER: I think the member for the Gascoyne ought to confine himself to Mr. Robson's charges, and not refer to other hon. members in the way he is doing.

MR. LEAKE: I have no objection at all to this correspondence being read.

MR. HALL (Perth): My name has been dragged into this unfortunate episode, which I am sure every member regrets, though I feel confident no one regrets it more than Mr. Robson himself. I occupy rather a peculiar position in this matter, because Mr. Robson has apologised to me very fully; and my only regret is that he has not seen his way to apologise quite as fully to other members of the House whom he so unwarrantably attacked. I feel sure Mr. Robson is convinced he has been extremely foolish, to put it mildly, in mentioning the name of any member of the House; and I can only say I was particularly surprised when I learned from the newspapers that Mr. Robson had thought fit to mention me as having "no visible means of support." But I can afford to look lightly upon such an utterance with the contempt it deserved.

MR. GREGORY: You have accepted Mr. Robson's apology.

MR. HALL: I have accepted the apology, and, therefore, I will not say what I would have said under other circumstances. But I want to tell hon. members what occurred subsequently between myself and Mr. Robson. On the afternoon of the morning that Mr.

Robson apologised to me before the Select Committee, I met him in the street. I may say that I do not think I had spoken six words to Mr. Robson previously since he entered this House. I met him in the street, and calling me over, he desired to know whether he might speak to me. He then told me he had apologised to me in the committee, and would offer any reparation in his power—that he would apologise in the House and write me a letter which I could publish. He stated he had no reason for making such a charge against me, and blamed the chairman of the committee for, as he termed it, “putting him in a hole.” I then told Mr. Robson—and I wish to emphasise my opinion now—what I thought of his conduct, and said, “I am prepared, before you write any letter, to prove to you not only that I possess a good business, but that I also possess at least ten thousand pounds’ worth of property over and above mortgage.” If I can get no means of support from that amount of property, then I ought to be kicked; but I, as I think everyone knows, have very visible means of support. I have a good business which brings me in, I dare say, quite as much as Mr. Robson’s business brings him in, and I have an agency for one gentleman which alone would be almost enough to keep one individual going.

MR. WOOD: Do you want a partner?

MR. HALL: I only wish, in making this explanation, to state that if any member of the House desires to inspect my books—(General laughter).

MR. GEORGE: Your bank book?

MR. HALL: I am only saying that I can prove what I stated to Mr. Robson. I know I am in a place where men can say anything, but I can prove my statements to anyone who desires to have them verified. As I said, I am in the peculiar position of having accepted an apology from Mr. Robson, and I think he ought to apologise to other members of the House as well as to myself.

MR. GEORGE (Murray): In dealing with this motion, I think I shall be expressing, or at least I hope I shall, the feelings of the bulk of the members of this House when I say there is nothing in the history of Parliament or in the history of responsible government in this colony which hon. members have regret-

ted so much as the matter which has caused the discussion this evening. I feel myself, in reference to the apology which was tendered last evening by Mr. Robson, that had I been in his shoes I would have waited for this evening, and have given those gentlemen who have been pilloried throughout the whole of Western Australia an opportunity of defending themselves face to face with myself. I regret that Mr. Robson did not take that course; and whether the course he took was at his own initiation or whether it was on the advice of those who have been assisting him in this matter, I do not know; but I do know that it is idle of Mr. Robson, as it is idle of any member of this House, to try to pare away the sharpness of the insults and the charges made in the speeches he delivered at Geraldton and other places, and afterwards affirmed from his seat in the House. I state that as my opinion, and 99 out of every 100 people in the colony would read Mr. Robson’s speech to mean that he thoroughly believed those charges, and had evidence to prove them; and that as a public man he stood forward to give out to the world, or to the world of Western Australia at any rate, what the Parliament of this colony was. During the last few weeks I have thought it necessary to refer to some portion of the Press of this colony, which I, at any rate, consider to be an undesirable Press, without any knowledge of personal honour. One of the newspapers to which I referred has been sent to me during the last few days, and I think this newspaper, which I considered low, has struck the key-note of the matter. The extract I will quote is as follows:

There may be something yet to add to Mr. Robson’s political reputation; but his exposure of confidences gained while the guest of the Premier irrevocably fixes his social standing. Such a revelation is quite unpardonable, and Mr. Robson is likely to be made to feel it. No possible public benefit excuses such a breach of social decency, for surely we are not to do evil that good may come. Life would become quite intolerable if men acted on the Robsonian example. Politics have very slight attraction now for men of sensitive honour: repetition of the Robson tactics would make men shun public life as a plague.

That is the dictum of a newspaper which, so far as I know up to the present, has not been conspicuous for the high line it has taken in dealing with men who are

engaged in politics; and if a newspaper of this character can print words like that which are so correct, so manly, and so honourable, what would newspapers of a different type say? Mr. Robson made an apology last evening, which he qualified by saying "for the time being." What on earth does a man mean when he apologises to another? He means that he recognises he has done an injustice or irreparable wrong to some other man; and when he apologises, does he want such a reservation in his mind as "for the time being"? If he does wrong he wants no loopholes for escape. I do not know myself what is the view that will be taken by some members on the Opposition side of the House, but I should be very sorry indeed if they did not take the view in connection with this matter, that an apology should be given without reservation. If a man calls another a liar, surely he has a right to stand up as a man to the man he has insulted. If a man does a wrong to another in business or injures his credit, he has to stand up in the Supreme Court if it comes to a question of slander; and if a man has injured another, as Mr. Robson has by branding members of this House, surely there should be no reservation in the reparation he offers. I would also point out a matter hon. members have to consider, and I regret there has been an incident somewhat similar this evening in regard to another hon. member. What on earth does it matter to me, the financial standing of any member of the House? A man does not come here as the representative of dollars, but is chosen by the people of his constituency; and as such, what does it matter to me whether he has paid his debts either of honour or of trade? I may know, in fact we all know, that men at times are unable to pay their debts, but they are none the less honourable men for that. There are men in the Assembly and out of it, who at times are not able to pay their debts right up to the tick, but they never lose their credit on that account. Does anyone feel, so far as the member for Albany is concerned—except perhaps the hon. member who is smarting under trouble—that he will not pay his debts when he has the chance? Is it any disgrace to be poor? Is it any disgrace to me that I have been poor enough to

know what it is to want a dinner? If my hands are clean and my heart sound, am I not an honest man? For an hon. member on either side of the House to brand a man because of his poverty is disgraceful, and is lowering the traditions of the House, to which I, at any rate, feel it an honour to belong.

MR. LOCKE (Sussex): I am in a rather humiliating position, in having to apologise for not being better off. I have been charged by that individual—I will not say honourable member, because I do not think he was—by that individual who sat over there, Robson, with coming into this House without any visible means of support. I do not know, to begin with, that it has anything to do with him whether I have any visible means of support or not. I do not know that it has anything to do with any member of this House so long as I behave myself as a gentleman, which Mr. Robson has not done, and so long as I pay my way and carry on. It is beyond the privileges of this House to be dragged up in the way I have been. I treated Mr. Robson, when I met him, as a gentleman, but I am very sorry I did so, and I apologise to hon. members on both sides of the House for having done so. I made a mistake, for I can assure hon. members that Mr. Robson is anything but a gentleman. I do not suppose that we shall see him again, but if we do hon. members will not forget the kind of man he is, and will know how to treat him. I do not mind so much what he said of me financially, because I think that is outside the business of this House: it has nothing to do with him, or anybody else, except my constituents. I may say that I was born in my constituency, and have lived there ever since; my constituents know me better than Mr. Robson does, and as long as they think that I am the best man to represent them, I think it is more than the privileges of this House allow to be insulted by the man who sat over there—I cannot call him a woman: it would be a disgrace to the other sex. I would like to say that the inference that the public drew from the speech in Geraldton cut me deeper than anything Mr. Robson might have said before the Select Committee, or anywhere else. At Geraldton six months ago Mr. Robson said he had been offered a bribe in connection with the sluicing

and Dredging Bill, which was brought before Parliament. Mr. Robson could not say that without inferring that I offered the bribe to him, because I introduced that Bill. That statement was sent all over the world, at all events it was sent all over my district, and I know it was sent all over Australia.

MR. DOHERTY: Your district is all the world to you.

MR. LOCKE: It was sent all over Australia that Mr. Robson was offered a bribe in connection with the Sluicing and Dredging Bill; but Mr. Robson had not the honour to say that the bribe was not offered by a member of Parliament. He had not the honour to say that until he was forced to do so before the committee, and when he knew he had to say it, and would have had to prove it. He then said that the bribe was not offered to him by a member of Parliament. I go one further, and say I do not believe a bribe was offered to him at all. I believe the statement to be an absolute fabrication, and an untruth. I wanted Mr. Robson in his place to-day to tell him so. I feel very sore on this point, because friends of mine with whom I have been acquainted all my life have looked at me in a cold way, because they think I am mixed up with something which is not very clean. All Mr. Robson can say derogatory of me is worth very little. If Mr. Robson is the best man his constituents can send to Parliament, all the worse for them. I hope they will not send him back again, but if they do we shall know how to treat him. That is all I wish to say about that portion of the subject. As to my visible means of support, I need not elaborate on the number of stock I have, or the number of acres I have. I am pretty well known throughout my district. I have a few racehorses, and keep them going, and I may say that ever since I was thirteen years old I have kept myself and paid my expenses. I think that I am not only independent of the man who spoke, but of all the hon. members who supported him. I think it was a mean, cowardly, unmanly action on his part to make such a statement; it was uncalled for, and he deserves the disgrace that has been brought upon him. The only thing I am sorry for is that you, sir, accepted his resignation, because I think he ought

to have been expelled from this House. I do not think Mr. Robson ought to have been allowed to hand in his resignation. He sneaked back to Geraldton in a crawling way. I do not suppose he has many constituents; he may have one or two supporters there, if not I am sorry for him; but I think the action of this man in the House will be a lasting disgrace to the Parliament of this colony. I do not know that I have anything more to say. I am thoroughly independent of Mr. Robson, and if I had had my own choice I should have taken the law into my own hands. I spoke to members about it, and they advised me not to do so. I leave Parliament to deal with him, and I think he is entitled to all he will get.

AMENDMENT.

MR. HIGHAM (Fremantle): While I do not believe in the motion which the hon. member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) has brought forward, I preferred to let those members affected by the action of the late member for Geraldton have their say before I moved an amendment. Those hon. members have had their say, and possibly in this amendment we shall have some views expressed on the other side. I desire to move that all the words after "House" in the first line of the motion be struck out, and the following words substituted:

[This House] adopts the report of the Select Committee appointed to inquire into certain charges made by the late member for Geraldton (Mr. Robson), and is of opinion that the conduct of Mr. Robson in making statements at a public meeting at Geraldton, imputing dishonourable motives to members of the Government and to other members of this House whilst in the discharge of their public duties, which statements he has failed to substantiate in the evidence given before the Select Committee, renders him guilty of a grave breach of the privileges of this House; but this House having regard to the subsequent withdrawal by Mr. Robson of all reflections made by him upon hon. members, and to his unreserved apology to the House last evening, is of opinion that inasmuch as he has resigned his seat in this House, no further action be taken.

I think that amendment will meet with the approval of the House. The whole subject is a very painful one, not only to myself, but to every member on both sides of the House. I am willing to give credit to members on this and on the

other side of the House for the same motives that I claim for myself. I claim that I came to the House not for any personal gain, but to conserve the interests of the particular constituency I represent, and the colony as a whole, and, if you like to take it from a broader point of view, to conserve federal interests. That is my aim, and I am willing to believe those feelings actuate members on both sides of the House. I have seen no reason to believe otherwise. I do not believe either for personal motives or from a party point of view that this House is dishonest and corrupt. I have seen no reason to believe that, and I am not prepared to believe it. I believe we are all trying to do our best for the colony of our birth or adoption. My only regret is that the late member for Geraldton did not see fit to stop in this House and see the matter brought to a conclusion. I think the committee who have investigated the charges are to be congratulated for the impartial and careful way they have carried out their duties. I believe conclusively that the late member for Geraldton has been most unguarded in the charges he made in his *post-prandial* speech, and through egotism or some other weakness was too cowardly to withdraw. Mr. Robson repeated the charges subsequently to a meeting of his electors, and again when accompanying the leader of the Opposition to the Murchison. I think it is a matter for regret that Mr. Robson should have proved so cowardly as not to have sat in the House until the matter was gone through, and have heard the explanations of the members he has maligned. Although Mr. Robson only named four members of the House, I consider the statements made reflected not only on members on this side of the House, but on all members of the House. If the Government are dishonest and corrupt, the whole House are dishonest and corrupt also. If according to Mr. Robson's view this dishonesty and corruption has existed so long, the other side must have been dishonest and corrupt to have allowed it to continue so long. I do not want to prolong the discussion; I think the sooner it is concluded the better; but I certainly much regret that after the full apology that Mr. Robson gave last night, the member for Albany should have seen fit to deem it right and proper to have

brought on to the floor of the House and read to the House a letter in which, after having resigned his seat, Mr. Robson practically withdraws part of his statements made here last night. I think it is scandalous, and I certainly think the member for Albany (Mr. Leake) should not have read the letter to the House.

MR. LEAKE: Scandalous?

MR. HIGHAM: I do say it is scandalous that you should have read in this House that letter from Mr. Robson withdrawing statements he made from his seat in the House last night. He made an unqualified apology last night to the members of this House whom he had insulted.

MR. LEAKE: The letter did not touch that.

MR. HIGHAM: I consider the letter you read to-night nullifies the apology. I have not a copy of the letter.

MR. LEAKE: And therefore you know nothing about it.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It does not nullify the apology at all.

MR. HIGHAM: I consider the letter practically cancels the apology he made last night.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: No.

MR. MORAN: Well, the hon. member's (Mr. Higham's) amendment accepts the apology.

MR. HIGHAM: We accept his apology made last night, and I very much question whether I am wise in moving the amendment I now move, because it may be taken as an acceptance of the qualified apology made in that letter. Still, I move the amendment of which I have given notice, and in so doing I am leaving altogether out of consideration the letter that has been read so unadvisedly.

MR. MONGER (York): I second the amendment.

THE SPEAKER: It must be seconded by some one who has not spoken.

MR. LOCKE: I should like to oppose the amendment, if I might be allowed to do so.

MR. WOOD (West Perth): I second the amendment.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Strike out "unreserved."

A MEMBER: He (Mr. Robson) used the word "unreserved."

MR. GREGORY: No; he did not.

MR. DOHERTY: Which of you is counsel for him?

MR. MONGER: I do not like that word "unreserved."

THE PREMIER: It was said. It was in the newspapers. I read it myself.

MR. MONGER: Then leave it as it is.

MR. MORAN (East Coolgardie): Speaking to the amendment, I should like to appeal to the House, now that we have got to this stage, to forget absolutely that Mr. Robson ever sent a letter to the House at all. As a member of this House, sitting in his place, he has absolutely apologised. We cannot go into the actions of Mr. Robson afterwards, as a private man. If he likes to apologise one day and to do something else next day, the verdict of the public will be: "The man apologised when the evidence came forward, the charges were not proved, he left the House, the House cleared its own character, and it allows Mr. Robson to wriggle away as long as he likes, seeing he has made his apology." What matter does it make to the House? If we wish to punish the man, we should follow him up; but I say to do that would be beneath the dignity of the House. From his place in the House he has offered an unreserved apology; he resigns his seat, the charges have been absolutely unsubstantiated, the public now know the charges were not true; therefore let us not follow him up any further. Let us adopt the amendment proposed to my motion, with which amendment I heartily concur; and let us have done with this business for ever.

MR. LEAKE (Albany): I shall not support this amendment.

MR. HIGHAM: I did not suppose you would.

MR. LEAKE: And I do not desire this evening to import the same element of venom and vindictiveness into this debate which I regret has already been shown by more than one hon. member. If it be the intention to punish Mr. Robson, let that be done in a straight, plain, and honest manner. If the House is not satisfied with the apology which he tendered last night to those members of the House upon whom it was said he had personally reflected, I do not know with what the House will be satisfied. I, for my part, am satisfied with that withdrawal; and I maintain as a public man,

as a politician, that public men and politicians must not be too thin-skinned with regard to public criticism; and I say that public criticism upon public men in which Mr Robson indulged—and in saying this I refer to the body politic, to the Government as a body politic—was not in terms deserving of the gravest censure of this House, nor was it a breach of the privileges of this House. It is a mistake for hon. members to attempt to place a forced construction upon words. The statement made was that the Government, as a body politic, as a political entity, was rotten and corrupt. It may be that those words amount to vulgar abuse. I do not approve of them; but I deny that they were a breach of the privileges of this House when used in the sense in which Mr. Robson used them. And when we come to weigh these words, and to gauge them by the explanation which immediately followed, it is abundantly clear that there was no intention on that occasion to accuse the individual members of the Government of corruption in the sense which hon. members have sought to attach to that word. No doubt that word is capable of several meanings; and amongst others it may in certain circumstances mean that persons charged with corruption have been guilty either of bribing or of accepting bribes. But I take it no one either on this (Opposition) or the other (Government) side will for a moment accuse any member of the Government of having done any such thing. If it were so, the guilty members would be corrupt. But I say no such charge has been made, and that therefore the words used cannot have been meant to apply to individuals. They may mean that the Government were unsavoury, that they were useless, that they were unworthy to be trusted with the administration, or that they were clinging to Ministerial office for too long a time; but beyond that the charge does not go; and severe as those words may be, yet I submit they do not import or imply a charge of personal dishonour. I happen to be well known by, and I happen to know well, hon. members occupying Ministerial positions; and let me single out one of those members—say the Minister of Mines—I would rather cut my tongue out than accuse that hon. member of corruption in the sense in which

it is thought the word was used on the occasion in question. Nothing would be further from me than to do so; but I say, when we are talking of the body politic we do not mince words, we do not weigh every letter, and the general effect must be taken; and when we have an assurance, not only from myself but from every member who has spoken on this (Opposition) side of the House, that we have not accepted those words in the exaggerated sense in which other members have taken them, surely it is more manly to accept such statements as bearing the impress of truth, than to force this question in the manner in which it has been forced.

MR. HIGHAM: What about the public?

MR. LEAKE: And to attempt, not only to humiliate the man, but to rub his nose in the dirt—it is that I object to.

MR. MOOREHEAD: What about hon. members being paid?

MR. LEAKE: The hon. member (Mr. Robson) has made an unqualified apology and withdrawal in respect of that expression; and I have always understood in these matters, when words have been used in the heat of the moment or on a public occasion, in the criticism of a public opponent, that an apology, if honestly made, would be regarded as an abundant exoneration from blame, and an avoidance of further censure. Do not hon. members agree with me in that regard? Are they not satisfied with the apology of the late member for Geraldton?

MR. LOCKE: It was only a partial apology.

MR. LEAKE: Or is it intended to humiliate him?

MR. HUBBLE: That is what we intend to do.

MR. LEAKE: The hon. member last interjecting carries his vindictiveness beyond the reasonable bounds of this debate. I do not propose to make further reference to the personal attack upon me: I have already explained it, and I desire to avoid personalities; but I appeal to hon. members, and I appeal to the public outside this Chamber, to say whether or not I have personally had cause to complain of the wicked, unmanly, and cowardly abuse that has been showered upon me in this Chamber, nay, even during the proceedings in this

debate. Was I not accused by the Premier of having attempted to "feather my own nest" at the public expense? And how did I meet that charge? Did I squeal, and appeal, and run to the Speaker, and invoke the aid of hon. members? No; the wrong was covered by an apology, which I had the manliness to accept. Why cannot hon. members deal with this matter in the same straightforward and manly way as that in which, as I submit, I have met the charge levelled at me?

MR. MORAN: You are working up the agony for nothing. That is just what you want to do.

MR. LEAKE: I am not working myself up to an agony; I am quite as cool as the hon. member; and I say, not only was that remark made to me, but the moment after it was withdrawn I was stigmatised as "discreditable." And yet hon. members took no notice of that statement. "Oh, no; it is only George Leake; he does not mind hard knocks; we laugh at him." And so it is generally throughout the debate. If I hit hard, I usually hit with clean hands, and nobody can accuse me of not being able to take a fairly strong blow in a manly way; but what applies to me apparently does not apply to somebody else; and I ask hon. members whether, supposing some member on the opposite (Government) side of the House had made those remarks about a member of the Opposition, or about the Opposition as a body, there would have been any inquiry such as we have had to listen to during the last few days? I notice, too, that nobody came to my rescue a moment ago, when the member for the Gascoyne (Mr. Hubble) attacked me.

A MEMBER: You can look after yourself, I think.

At 6:30, the SPEAKER left the Chair.

At 7:30, Chair resumed.

MR. LEAKE (continuing): I do not propose at any further length to answer the attacks which have been made upon myself, by what I may call the rank and file of the Government supporters. If on an occasion of this kind I am to be brought into contact with anybody, it is my intention to fly at higher game and,

if necessary, to attack the leaders; but in attacking the leaders, I hope I shall avoid personalities and attack principles, and not mix up either the leaders or any other individuals more than is absolutely necessary in the ordinary course of debate and explanation. I have said that I cannot accept the amendment which has been proposed by the hon. member for Fremantle (Mr. Higham), and I should be content—I ask hon. members to listen to what I say—if this motion stopped at the suggestion that the report of the Select Committee be adopted. The amendment begins, "That this House adopts the report of the Select Committee appointed to inquire into certain charges made by the late member for Geraldton (Mr. Robson)." If the Government and hon. members will accept that suggestion, I am prepared to sit down and say no more on this subject. I do not know whether it is within my province to move, as an amendment, that all the words after "Robson" be struck out?

THE SPEAKER: I think that amendment would come better after we have struck out the words of the original motion, and this amendment would then become the main question.

MR. LEAKE: I throw that out, and I really think the object we all have in view would be met, because Mr. Robson has withdrawn his remarks so far as they reflected upon individual members of the House, and the matter really resolves itself into a question of the general administration of the Government. That would practically amount to a vote of no confidence, and I am bound to admit I think that in the House as at present constituted the majority the Government have is too large to allow me or anybody else to expect that such a motion could be carried.

MR. MORAN: Why are you moving it, if it is a vote of want of confidence?

MR. LEAKE: I am not moving it as one, but I am perfectly certain it would be regarded as such. Why cannot we on an occasion of this kind endeavour to arrive at some compromise? Why should there be extremists on either side? [MR. DOHERTY: Hear, hear.] Why not give way to a certain extent? Why not follow the suggestion which has been made by the Select Committee? And

whilst I am upon this subject, I desire at once to say that the thanks of the House are due to the Select Committee for the way in which the investigation was conducted. The decision, so far as we can judge, was unanimous; and whilst some harsh things were said and suggestions made in the course of the debate, ultimate proceedings have shown that the committee have acted in a way which tends to uphold not only the dignity of themselves, but of Parliament.

MR. MORAN: They were not a white-washing committee, after all.

MR. LEAKE: I congratulate the committee on their report. The committee have reported that the words made use of by the member for Geraldton, so far as they reflected upon individuals, were not justified. Those words have been withdrawn, and in respect of them an unreserved apology has been made.

THE PREMIER: Where does the report say that?

MR. LEAKE: Paragraph 2:

That the particular statement that members of the House received financial assistance from a group of financiers (or a financier, as explained by Mr. Robson in his evidence), interested in keeping the Government in office, has not been borne out by the evidence.

So that if we adopt the report, we affirm that suggestion. Paragraph 5 says this:

Mr. Robson this morning intimated through his counsel that, inasmuch as he did not intend his charges of rottenness and corruption to be accepted in their literal sense, and as he made no reflection upon members of the Government, but only referred in a more restricted and limited sense to bad and loose administration on their part, he would consequently call no further evidence. Your committee must therefore leave the decision as to whether this explanation is sufficiently satisfactory, and amounts to a withdrawal of the charges of rottenness and corruption against the Government, to your honourable House.

MR. MORAN: In our motion we say it does.

MR. LEAKE: We might add, in adopting the report of the committee, words to the effect that, in consideration of the apology and the resignation, no further notice need be taken of the matter. I say to the House in all sincerity that I honestly think that is the best course to pursue. If, however, the mover of the amendment insists upon carrying it, that will mean a very lengthy debate.

MR. HIGHAM: We are prepared for it.

MR. LEAKE: Am I to understand, then, that the hon. member will not accept my amendment, and that the issue between Mr. Robson and the Government must be gone into as far as possible this evening? I am prepared to do that, but before I start my remarks on this subject, I suggest that the amendment I have intimated should be adopted. [A pause.] Then, I take it I am to go on.

MR. DOHERTY: What do you suggest?

MR. LEAKE: I suggest that the amendment should take this form, that the report of the Select Committee be adopted, and that in view of the apology and resignation of Mr. Robson no further steps be taken.

MR. MORAN: My motion is very nearly the same thing.

MR. DOHERTY: What further steps can we take?

MR. LEAKE: It is because we cannot take any further steps that I think we should let the matter drop.

MR. MORAN: Will you say because of the "unreserved" apology.

MR. LEAKE: I say because of the apology of the hon. member. The apology speaks for itself.

MR. MORAN: Mr Robson said "unreservedly" in his apology.

MR. LEAKE: I do not want to be misunderstood, or to trick any member into voting in any direction he does not think he ought to vote, so I advisedly leave out the word "unreservedly."

THE PREMIER: Although he said it.

MR. LEAKE: Perhaps. With a view of allowing this matter to be considered, and also remembering that I shall have an opportunity of speaking later on, I will not for the moment proceed with this matter. I am not going into questions which may lead to a conflict of opinion, but will pause to ask hon. members to consider, and if necessary adopt, the suggestion which I have made.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I do not know why the hon. member for Albany (Mr. Leake) should pursue the tactics he is pursuing in this matter.

MR. LEAKE: All right; let us fight it out.

THE PREMIER: I will not say anything of the past, but the hon. member seems to think that because he has taken

a certain line in defence of the late member for Geraldton, we who constitute a majority in this House should be guided by his advice. Surely hon. members will agree with me that such a course is not reasonable, and I do not think many hon. members on the Opposition side of the House are really in sympathy with the suggestion, which is not in accord with the position the member for Albany ought to take up. Why should we be guided by the hon. member in this matter?

MR. LEAKE: I suggest it as a compromise.

THE PREMIER: What is there in the proposal of the hon. member for Fremantle (Mr. Higham) which is objectionable? It merely states what the Select Committee have found, and what the late member for Geraldton himself said, and nothing more. The motion sets out that Mr. Robson was not able to substantiate what he had said at Geraldton, and further that he had been guilty of a grave breach of privilege; and then the motion goes on to say "but the House having regard to the subsequent withdrawal by Mr. Robson of all reflections on hon. members, and to his unreserved apology to the House last evening," and so on. The very words taken from a newspaper report to which I will refer, although I need not read them, are "He now desired to withdraw the reflections made on hon. members of the House, and to unreservedly apologise to the House." The motion proposes that as Mr. Robson has withdrawn the reflections he made on the House, and unreservedly apologised, and as he has resigned his seat, no further action need be taken. What is the difference between the proposal of the hon. member for Albany (Mr. Leake) and our own? I myself cannot see that there is any difference at all. The suggested amendment of the hon. member cannot be justified either by the finding of the Select Committee, or by the words of Mr. Robson last evening; and, therefore, if the member for Albany is desirous, as he says he is, of settling the matter, why not agree to a motion which has absolute truth on the face of it? If there is a word in the proposal made by the member for Fremantle (Mr. Higham) that is not in the finding of the Select Committee, and in the statement of Mr.

Robson last evening, I should be one to strike that word out. So long as the resolution embodies what the Select Committee have found, and what Mr. Robson himself said, I cannot see that anyone here should object to it; that is, anyone who, like the member for Albany (Mr. Leake), is in favour of the report of the Select Committee being adopted. I regret that personalities should have been brought into the debate, and I regret personally that the member for the Gascoyne (Mr. Hubble) should have read out what he did to-night. But we must remember that there are often hard things said, and in judging another person we should try to put ourselves in that person's place; and there is no doubt that hon. members have been referred to in the evidence before the Select Committee as persons who, occupying an honourable position, are without visible means of support, and they have been so placarded not only all over this colony, but all over Australia, and far beyond.

MR. MONGER: That is the part we take exception to.

THE PREMIER: Do not let any hon. member think that these matters do not go beyond the colony, because they are heard everywhere, and a grave wrong has been done which we ought to try and do away with if we can, although I believe that is impossible. That being so, we must try to put ourselves in the position of these members in regard to the matter; and I expect if we were in their position we should feel cruelly wronged and most incensed, and not at all careful of what we said. We sometimes say hard things when there is not much occasion, but when a person has been cruelly wronged and held up to ridicule and contempt throughout the length and breadth of the country where he has lived all his life, or for the most part, one can imagine the feelings he has, and must not judge too harshly of what he says. My own opinion is that Ministers or any persons in a public position, especially in a democratic country, should not be too thin-skinned. We must take the rough with the smooth, and public men are very often unjustly treated by public writers throughout Australia. But for all that there is a difference generally made by newspapers, even by those of the

type which seek notoriety, and an effort is made to avoid saying anything against a man's personal character. It is very well known that such attacks are not tolerated, and are not fair, and unless there is something against a man's private character—and even then the facts are not always used—he is criticised as a public man, and his private matters are not dealt with. My own opinion is, as I said before the committee, that you cannot reconcile two things: if a man be a public rogue, he must be a private rogue; if he is dishonest in his public actions, he will be dishonest in his private actions; and a man has to try his best to do right, whatever position he is in. Our public actions are criticised by people who do not hold the views we hold, but if we do not agree, it is rare—and I am very glad it is so—for public men to tell their opponents that they are acting corruptly and dishonestly. We, the Government, were called rotten and corrupt, and every member of the House was more or less abused. Mr. Robson said he would expose the rottenness and corruption he encountered last session, and spoke of bribery, saying the Government tried to buy hon. members, and so on. An hon. member might say all these things and have in his mind no desire whatever to attack the private character, honesty, or honourable calling of the persons to whom he was referring. But to judge of that one has to look at the facts and see how the public Press of the colony viewed the statements, and whether the hon. member sat still when he saw the Press was taking a view altogether different from what he intended. If the hon. member saw that the Press of the colony looked on the charges as very serious indeed, and demanding an investigation, holding that such aspersions on the characters of members of the Ministry should not go unchallenged, it was his duty to explain himself. When Parliament met, there was a feeling that this matter ought to be investigated, and if the Government had not investigated it we would have been open to very adverse criticism, which we get whether we deserve it or not. Seeing that several months passed over, and some severe criticism was passed—we were described as a pack of thieves, the "forty thieves" I believe—and the House was held up to ridicule and con-

tempt, and worse; that we were called dishonest, and the hon. member's words were taken seriously throughout the length and breadth of the country; that he said nothing in explanation; that he came to the House and still said nothing, that he never made a move to explain until the motion was submitted by the member for North Murchison (Mr. Moorhead), which he heard in his place: then he ran away, urgent business taking him to Geraldton. He knew the matter was coming on: I expect he must have known we could not sit still with the eyes of the colony on us.

MR. LEAKE: It is absolutely untrue that the hon. member ran away. He was back again on the Tuesday morning.

THE PREMIER: But he went away before: I think he went on the Friday, and the motion was made on Thursday.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: But it was given notice of for the Tuesday, and Mr. Robson intended coming back.

THE PREMIER: But we had to put the matter off, I believe.

MR. MORAN: What does all this matter now?

THE PREMIER: At any rate, Mr. Robson was not too eager to come and face the committee.

MR. KINGSMILL: I do not think that is right.

THE PREMIER: Well, I will not press that, and I withdraw it, as it is not material at all; but what I want to say is that Mr. Robson did not seem very eager to remove a false impression. He must have known that what he had said was abroad all over the colony. He must have known very well what he intended. What was the view taken by the people of the colony? Mr. Robson made no move to remove that impression. He acted very wrongly. If you say a thing about another and you find a false impression goes abroad, it is your duty to remove that false impression to put yourself right. That Mr. Robson did not do. Therefore I say, in judging of this matter, we should take into consideration the view taken of Mr. Robson's words, and actions too, from the time he made the statement. Mind you, he made it twice; first at a social gathering, which was reported, unfortunately, and then at a public meeting before his constituents. More than that, the view that the people

of the colony have taken in regard to the late hon. member's words is the view the Select Committee have taken. They have taken the same view. What do they say? They say that the statements admittedly made by Mr. Robson, and subsequently adhered to, are a reflection on the character of the members of the House: the very impression that the public all over the colony—or rather put it the Press, because we hear of the public impression through the Press—is the very opinion that the committee have formed, that a grave reflection on the character of the House has been made. All along, even to the last minute, at the beginning at any rate, we find Mr. Robson somewhat defiant. He was going to prove his statements, and he set to work to do so. If he did not mean to impute to myself and those sitting with me during the last ten years any personal dishonour, how is it that at the Select Committee all the cross-examination I was subjected to was in that direction? All the cross-examination I was subjected to was in the direction of proving dishonourable conduct on the part of myself—I do not think so often on my own part as on the part of my colleagues, showing that it was personal corruption he was trying to prove. If he was not trying to prove that, what was he trying to prove? Maladministration, he says. I do not know, but I think he went further than that. If we look at the evidence we find the questions asked of me were not in the direction of maladministration, but in the direction of dishonesty; and we all—not only myself and the present Ministers were assailed, but it was desired to go back the whole ten years and rake up everything that had been raked up before in this House and before the people and Press of the colony—all these things are dished up again to show that either I, or those associated with me in the past, were doing something dishonest. In fact a lawyer would say Mr. Robson tried to justify himself. When a man is charged before a court with libelling a person, he has two courses open to him, either to apologise or to justify. The hon. member did not apologise, but he tried to justify, and to show that corruption existed. Seeing that is the course Mr. Robson has chosen to take, how can he

say he had no desire to reflect on the personal honour of members of the House? because those who sit on the Treasury benches are as much members of the House as others are. We sit here in this House as other members do, representing our constituents. We are elected and are responsible to our constituents just the same as other members. Mr. Robson ought to have said "except those members sitting on the Treasury benches." But he seeks now to distinguish between members sitting on the Treasury benches and other hon. members of the House. He is willing to whitewash everyone else except the Government. Seeing the committee have told the House that the statement in regard to the group of financiers has not been borne out by evidence, I will remark this for the information of hon. members. During the time the evidence was given, and all the time since the statement was made at Geraldton some months past, the name of the member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest), who is my respected brother, has been bandied about a good deal as the man who was supplying all the cash, who was keeping all these members; he seems to be the only man amongst us who has got any money.

MR. GEORGE: I have a threepenny bit.

THE PREMIER: It is curious that the member for West Kimberley was not called before the Select Committee. Why was it the late member for Geraldton did not call the member for West Kimberley and ask him all about these things, and get from him his relationship with members as to keeping them? Why was that not done? Other people were called, people not members of Parliament, in regard to small matters of administration, but the chief man, the man who was finding all this money and was really at the bottom of all this corruption, spending money wholesale at all elections, supporting the Government and the group of financiers, was not called at all. It would be said in court, "Well, he was afraid to call him because they know he had not done any of these things," for out of his own mouth we should have heard there was no truth in it. I only mention this to hon. members to show that the late hon. member for Geraldton,

who is not in his place now, I regret to say, did not act I think in the way we expected him to act; because we know very well the man who has been talked about, the man who was doing all the wire-pulling, paying people here and there and everywhere, was the man he dare not call. I am not a lawyer, but I am sufficiently a lawyer to know that if that had happened in a court of justice, both the judge and the opposite counsel would have told the jury to take a very serious view of the fact that the principal man who could have given them so much information in regard to these matters had not been called. What do the Select Committee say further in regard to these matters?—because there are a lot of charges about obtaining members' support and members being paid. All these charges the committee say were not proved to be correct by the evidence brought before the Select Committee; and the member for Albany (Mr. Leake) congratulates the committee on the excellent report and the excellent way in which they dealt with the evidence. I think this man out of his own mouth has been condemned. He has tried to justify; he has tried to prove the Government were corrupt and dishonest. His questions to me were in that direction: they had nothing to do with maladministration, because I am just as likely to make a mistake as other people, even in regard to appointments. We can appoint bad justices of the peace as well as good ones. We take as much care as we can, but hundreds of justices have been recommended to me for appointment whom I have never seen in my life. There are hundreds of justices on the goldfields and other places whom I know neither by name nor by face. I have taken them on the recommendation of other people. I have had to do it, and generally the appointments have been good. There have been very few complaints. No doubt there are some who are not suitable. Throughout the administration there are sure to be some faults where there is a large service and a lot of people to trust. Some of the people will run off with the cash and some will waste it. It takes time to catch or find out these officers, and then to get rid of them; and when they are found out and got rid of, these persons come with petitions to the House

speaking about injustice. That is the way, a very good one perhaps in a colony like this. I wish to say that all these charges made by Mr. Robson were not proved to be correct by the evidence brought before the Select Committee. Why all this sympathy for this man? I am the last in the world to be harsh and vindictive; in fact, no member of the House wishes to be vindictive. The only members I think who may feel very angry and incensed are those who have been very cruelly wronged by having their names brought before the House. With regard to the Government, I do not mind people having a shot at me: it only shows that we are worth powder and shot.

MR. GEORGE: A good-sized target.

THE PREMIER: When a man sets himself to work to destroy a reputation or to injure it, and we find that man wrong, people should not have too much sympathy for him: still we do not want to be vindictive. I am perfectly satisfied. The calumniator has been nonplussed: in fact he feels so nonplussed that he has run away even from his seat in the House. All of us can afford to be generous; we can afford to think he has been misguided, that he has been ill-advised. We were all young once, perhaps we were young and conceited, and thought a little applause from the people was worth having, especially when on a crusade, as Mr. Robson was. No doubt he got hundreds of letters from all parts of the colony saying, "Go on! You will prove your case: we will help you." The *finale* is that he is brought before the House and found guilty of saying that which he has not proved: he has to resign his seat, go to Geraldton and ask the electors to re-elect him. If they like to re-elect him, all right. I do not want to take part in opposing him.

MR. MONGER: What position will he be in if he returns?

THE PREMIER: When the apology was made last night, I thought it was a very candid one. If Mr. Robson were now in his place the motion of the member for East Coolgardie was not intended to be harsh. It says that if the late hon. member apologises and expresses his regret, that should be accepted; but if not, the Speaker should censure him in his place. But Mr. Robson has apologised and resigned. The motion says

that Mr. Robson has been guilty of a grave breach of privilege; it seeks to place on record that he has been guilty of a grave breach of privilege, but that if he express his regret and unreservedly apologise to the House, no more notice will be taken of it. Anyone who takes any exception to this motion is very hard to please. We do not want to be unduly harsh; no one does; at the same time we do not want to be foolishly lenient. I am glad now to say that, by permission of the Speaker, the *Hansard* reporter has given us the exact words Mr. Robson used, and I have no doubt they are also the words reported in the newspapers, because I notice, when there is any titbit, anything really good uttered in the House, the papers report us very accurately; and I am quite sure the reports in the daily Press of Perth were verbatim on this point. However, I will read the passage from the *Hansard* report, and we shall be able to see. Mr. Robson said:

Having heard the report of the Select Committee, and also the notice of motion which has been given to-night for to-morrow, I now withdraw any reflection which I have made on members of the House, and unreservedly apologise to the House, and to individuals who may deem themselves affected by my remarks.

I say again, before I sit down, if there be one word in this amendment moved by the member for Fremantle that is inconsistent with the finding of the Select Committee, or with the expressions of the member for Geraldton last night, I shall be only too glad to assist my friend opposite (Mr. Illingworth) in having the amendment of the member for Fremantle amended to whatever extent may be necessary.

MR. ILLINGWORTH (Central Murchison): I have not during this debate, nor once when the question was before the House on a former occasion, expressed any opinion whatever in regard to the action of Mr. Robson. I have endeavoured, as I felt myself in duty bound to endeavour, to secure for the hon. member—as he then was—a hearing, and a fair hearing; and that being secured, I had no other duty to perform in my position as leader of the Opposition. As a private member, I have expressed no opinion whatever upon the episode from start to finish, and I do not at the present time propose to speak at any length in

connection therewith. I should, however, like to call attention to the fact that Mr. Robson came into this House, and was in it for his first session. He was a young man, and he made the mistake which has been made by thousands of young politicians—a mistake of which we all have had experience—the mistake of supposing that information furnished us is absolutely correct. All of us know as politicians that people come to us with information, give us the most clear and definite statements, statements strong enough to convict any Ministry and to destroy any reputation; and if we take the precaution, as some of us do, of asking those individuals to put their statements in writing and to sign them, we generally find they are very unwilling to do so. It seems to me Mr. Robson got some information concerning this House, the Government, and certain individuals, and that he firmly believed that information to be correct. He thought the evidence he had was sufficient to justify his belief in those statements; and, having convinced himself, he made those statements in a public place in peculiar circumstances.

MR. MORAN: Hear, hear.

MR. MONGER: While very sober.

THE PREMIER: He was a follower of your own, a supporter.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I think the Premier will do me the justice of confirming what I say, that Mr. Robson could scarcely be considered a supporter of mine at the time he uttered those words.

THE PREMIER: I meant a follower.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Well, if he did follow, he was a long way off.

THE PREMIER: I do not mean politically.

MR. KINGSMILL: He used to backslide a lot.

MR. DOHERTY: He followed you in ginger-beer.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Perhaps the hon. member means to say Mr. Robson followed me in charges of bribery and corruption; because I have no hesitation in saying I have made statements quite as strong about the Government, in my place in the House and elsewhere.

THE PREMIER: That is different.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Of course it is, because I happened to use different

terms; and in this Mr. Robson has perhaps been a little unfortunate. Of course it is possible, when a man has made a statement that is not positively accurate, to use a strong term, and to call him a very ugly name; but if you say the person in question is drawing upon his imagination for facts, you will probably get through without insult or difficulty. Having made these statements in some peculiar circumstances, it afterwards transpires that Mr. Robson makes the same statements in a public place and at a public meeting. I am not seeking to justify the language used: I think the language was uncalled for and unwarranted, and so far as it affects members of the House it was certainly very much unwarranted; and I regret as much as anyone in this House that statements should have been made which hurt the feelings, and I must confess to a certain extent, as far as it was possible for such remarks to do so, damaged the reputations of the persons to whom the statements referred. The expressions at first were general expressions, and I think it only just to Mr. Robson to call attention to the fact that the names of individuals were not mentioned by him.

MR. MORAN: That is all the worse.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Until they were demanded from him in the Select Committee.

MR. MONGER: All the worse. Do you want it all over again?

THE SPEAKER: Order!

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Wait a moment. I say the names were not mentioned by Mr. Robson until they were demanded by the Select Committee.

MR. GEORGE: Had he any right to mention even the members of the House in that connection?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I have not said he had any right.

MR. GEORGE: Then why excuse him?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I am not excusing him.

MR. GEORGE: It looks like that.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The hon. member is looking through spectacles having glasses not properly focussed. I have already stated I did not excuse the language; I have already said the language was unwarranted, and so far as it affected individual members of this House, that I deeply regretted the words

were ever uttered. [THE PREMIER: Hear, hear.] As far as those words were concerned, the House is now in possession of a distinct apology, and I admit an unreserved apology as far as the words affected individual members. As far as they affected the honour of individual members of this House, we have an unreserved apology from Mr. Robson. And more than that, he, feeling that he has failed to justify the action he has taken, and feeling, as he does feel as an honourable man, that the language he used was unwarranted and therefore called for the apology he has given, follows up the apology by resigning his seat in this House. I want hon. members to ask themselves, what more it is possible for a man to do than what Mr. Robson has done? That he is wrong is admitted by his own apology.

MR. MORAN: He afterwards writes a letter to the leader of the Opposition.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That may be; but up to the stage at which we deal with the question, and the only stage at which we can deal with it, he had unreservedly apologised. I submit that as soon as his resignation was handed to the Speaker, he was no longer a member of this House, and in his business, his words, and his actions he was not amenable to the House for anything he did.

MR. GEORGE: Why was his letter read?

MR. MORAN: That is the point.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: For other reasons. Not to vindicate Mr. Robson, anyhow. I ask, what more could Mr. Robson do than he has done? He has admitted by his action that the words he used were unjustifiable, and he has withdrawn them; he has apologised on the floor of the House; he has even gone so far as to give a written apology to one member; and here we are sitting to-night, what to do? Is it dignified that this House should be so careful of its honour that, after an unreserved apology has been made, after the resignation has been handed in, we should be here struggling to find out some means by which we can in some way stigmatise the late member, notwithstanding his apology?

MR. MORAN: I do not know whether it is exactly correct, in replying to a motion in the House, to say we are trying to

stigmatise a man who is not in the House.

THE SPEAKER: I think the hon. member is in order.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I do try to use language that is in order, and to keep myself within proper bounds. It is proposed to pass a motion: why should we pass a motion against Mr. Robson? He is not a member of the House. What business have we, who are here to-night to deal with the Select Committee's report, to pass such a motion? I am happy to say I can speak of this report as I can seldom speak of reports of select committees, because hon. members know quite well we have very little confidence in committees for the most part; but I think this Committee, and especially its chairman, deserve the thanks of this House for the way in which this examination has been conducted and the report sent in; because there was matter for an interminable examination, and we might have been landed in a great deal more trouble than we are in to-night; and I again say we have to thank that committee, and especially its chairman, for the able way in which this business was conducted. We, as a House, have to deal simply with the committee's report. We have not Mr. Robson before us, we have the report before us; and if we adopt that report, I contend we shall be going as far as ever we need go. It seems to me the House is determined to do something; and, as far as I am concerned, I am prepared to accept this amendment of the member for Fremantle. It amounts to very little. [MR. DOHERTY: Hear, hear.] It amounts to very little indeed; in fact, if we stopped at the first line, as suggested by the member for Albany (Mr. Leake), we should be acting more wisely than by passing the remainder; but the remainder means very little.

MR. MORAN: Then why all the noise and waste of time?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The noise has come from those hon. members who want satisfaction.

MR. MORAN: Certainly not.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That is where we have had the noise from to-night. When it was proposed to appoint a select committee, I said it was not worthy of us to do so, and I say so again. I say,

considering the words used and the surrounding circumstances, they were not worthy the attention of this House.

MR. MORAN: That is for the House to judge.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: And it is an absolute waste of time; and more than that, this discussion and this inquiry have done more to degrade this Parliament than twenty such speeches by Mr. Robson could have done.

MR. MONGER: I do not think he will ever make another.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Personally I feel it is a degradation to mix in this debate, and that the best we can do at the present stage is to get rid of it as quickly as possible; and in view of that—I think some others are with me on this (Opposition) side—personally, at any rate, I am ready to accept this amendment—[SEVERAL MEMBERS: Hear, hear]—or any motion that will get rid of this disgraceful thing from the floor of the House.

MR. MORAN: Well, control your own party.

MR. WOOD: It is not a party question.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The hon. member (Mr. Moran) would do much better if he could manage to control himself. The difficulty I find is not so much in controlling myself, or even my party, as in bringing hon. members on the other (Government) side into control. If they will themselves exercise a little self-control, they may perhaps prove they are worthy of controlling others; but at present they must just try and control themselves. I think the best thing we can do at this stage is to finish this business, and, in order to finish it, I am prepared to accept this motion—not because I approve of it, for there is more in it than there ought to be, but the little that there is more does not amount to much. To get rid of this question from the floor of the House I will accept the motion of the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran), or any motion, because the whole thing is discreditable to the House, and we never ought to have touched it. We ought to be able to stand a little bit of criticism, and even remarks like these. Hon. members have had to submit to a great deal worse than this.

MR. MORAN: We are not used to it.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: We get used to it. We get hardened, because we have to hear it so often. I have heard hard things said about me even by the Premier.

MR. GEORGE: He never said you had no visible means of support.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: He might have said it, with justice sometimes, and I do not know that I should have been any the worse. Of course it is very inconvenient to be poor, but I do not know that it is a great disgrace. I repeat that the right hon. the Premier has said harder things about me on the floor of the House and on public platforms than these things. For the life of me I cannot see what members sitting on the Government side of the House have been troubling themselves about. A great deal worse things have been said before, and published in almost every newspaper; and why members have struck upon this thing and occasioned this turmoil is beyond my comprehension. However, with deference and not desiring to press it unduly, I will take the responsibility of moving that the question be now put.

MR. VOSPER: No. Why?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: If anyone objects, of course it cannot be done. I will withdraw it.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. W. Pennefather): I am very sorry the hon. member who has just resumed his seat was not permitted to proceed with his motion. In the speech made by the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth), that gentleman has shown a judicial temperament that for some time previously I had doubted he was possessed of, but on this occasion it has been certainly expressed in language that is entirely unexceptionable, and I think the language used by him has been very much influenced by the address that preceded his, namely that of my colleague the right hon. the Premier. I think the House will agree with me that he approached this subject in excellent taste, and that, as we are pretty well all of one mind that the time has come when this discussion ought to be terminated, in the interests not only of individual members of the House but the corporate honour of the House, this debate should

not be any further prolonged. I will not say any more at present, but I do hope that hon. members will now make up their minds to accept the motion proposed by the member for Fremantle (Mr. Higham).

MR. VOSPER (North-East Coolgardie): During the course of the debate to-night we have heard much concerning Mr. Robson, much concerning the honour of private members, and much concerning the Government; but, until the last two or three addresses, we heard very little about the amendment before the House, and so far as I have seen there has not been the slightest attempt made to analyse the evidence upon which the report of the Select Committee is based. I say that before we decide to pass a motion of this kind on so momentous a question, we ought to show a certain degree of consideration regarding the honour and humiliation of a gentleman who was lately a member of this House. We ought, I say, to take this point into some consideration, and I think that the question so far has only been obscured by that personal sense of grievance which members have been so anxious to ventilate. The proceedings which took place in the House prior to the retirement for tea, were—I do not want to use any harsh terms respecting them, but I certainly think they were derogatory to the tone of debate and the dignity of this House. The members who spoke at that time—and I do not want to specify them more particularly—seemed to be actuated more by the idea of getting square than by any other motive. I do not think that is the temper in which members of the House ought to approach a question of this kind. We are here for the purpose of defending the honour of Parliament.

MR. MONGER: You would not like an aspersion like that.

MR. VOSPER: No; but I think if I had been placed in the same position as the hon. gentleman, I should have voluntarily given evidence before the Select Committee. I should not have thought I was in any way vindicating my honour by simply throwing a certain amount of mud because mud had been thrown at me. I cannot for the life of me think it helps the honour of the member for York (Mr. Monger) to say that the person who traduced him was himself immoral.

MR. MONGER: I never used the word "moral" or "immoral."

MR. VOSPER: The hon. member accused him of commercial immorality.

MR. MONGER: I am only sorry he was not here.

MR. VOSPER: I am not altogether sorry he was not here, for if he had been, things would have been even more lively. I am not so much finding fault with the hon. member's action as trying to point out to him that no amount of besmirching of Mr. Robson's character would help him in the slightest degree. What do help him are no doubt Mr. Robson's apology and withdrawal, and also the report of the Select Committee; and, as far as the former is concerned, the House would have done well to be contented.

MR. MONGER: And to have sat down.

MR. DOHERTY: It is not your own faith. You teach it, but you do not practise it.

MR. VOSPER: But I do not think I am a person who nurses a grudge.

MR. GEORGE: Oh! do you not?

MR. VOSPER: At all events, I am not here to discuss my character and the character of the hon. member.

MR. DOHERTY: You must first have one.

MR. VOSPER: I do not know that I should be subjected to interjections of this kind. It happens almost invariably when I rise to address the House that one member in this corner, and another there, endeavour to make insinuations of a gross character. That is unfair, and surely I may reasonably appeal to the chivalry and honour of those members not to pursue that course.

MR. MONGER: Go for him.

MR. VOSPER: I am not inclined to "go for him." All I want to say with regard to the hon. member (Mr. George)—and I say it with the more pleasure because I frequently have a brush with him in the House—is that in the speech he made he displayed a spirit of mauniness; and I should be glad if he would always endeavour to act in that way, and not lower the dignity of the House by making remarks which his better sense would not indorse. But let me get back to my subject. I want to say a few words about Mr. Robson himself. In my opinion Mr. Robson has been foolish and misguided throughout, and I say that as

a person who fought vigorously for him during the proceedings on the floor of the House. I did everything I could by making objections and defending him in every way through this trouble. But he acted in this foolish and mistaken way. I think he has had a great deal of what is very cheap on occasions of this kind, and that is advice. He has had a large number of advisers. They have advised him to do one thing and another, and he did nothing at all. If he had been a strong man, a man of strong will, he would have come out of this strait in very much better form than he has done. But, as a matter of fact, he has shown himself guilty—and I speak now as a friend to Mr. Robson—he has shown himself guilty of deplorable weakness. I am not going to analyse his conduct further. All I want to say is this: I quite agree with those members who have said that if it was the intention of Mr. Robson to apologise, his apology should have come earlier in the proceedings. If it was not his intention to apologise, he should have stuck like grim death to his charges, if he thought them true. If he received overwhelming evidence to the contrary, which showed that those charges were not true, it was his duty to apologise as soon as he received that evidence. But from information I have received and from statements that have been made to me—not in this House but by those most affected—I understand there is evidence in the background which Mr. Robson and his counsel deemed it fit to suppress. I do not know why. One of the reasons seems to me to be that there is a certain syndicate connected with a diamond mine in the north of this colony which was to have been exposed.

MR. MONGER: Sling it out.

MR. VOSPER: I am going to say all I know. More than that I cannot say. The reason given to me was that there were certain persons involved in that whom it was not desirable to drag to the light of day.

MR. MONGER: I will take all the odium of that on my shoulders.

MR. GEORGE: All those papers were on the table last year.

MR. VOSPER: The hon. member for York (Mr. Monger) is quite wrong in thinking that I allude to him. He is

hypercritical about that. I believe the members of the syndicate, whoever they are, include persons whom Mr. Robson for some reasons best known to himself did not consider it desirable to bring to the light of day. His counsel said so before the Select Committee, and he himself has said so on various occasions.

MR. HARPER: He said it would not take his case any further.

MR. VOSPER: I will quote his exact words so that I may be sure of being accurate. Mr. Harney said:—

There is the matter of the Nullagine Syndicate, in which there are many names which I am sure the committee, and certainly I myself, would be very glad to see not brought before the public; and the same remark applies to other charges.

MR. MONGER: I will give the whole list publicly.

MR. VOSPER: I am only dealing now with Mr. Robson's remarks as made through his counsel, and it appears from these that Mr. Robson had some reason or other for desiring a withdrawal of some portion of the charge. What those reasons are we do not know. At all events, we are not in a position to know at the present time.

MR. HARPER: He said with regard to all these things it would take them no further.

MR. VOSPER: And why was that statement made? I think it will be found on reading through the evidence. We find that on a certain occasion Mr. Harney acting for Mr. Robson, applied for certain papers in connection with an arbitration case at Bunbury. The files or jackets of those papers were furnished, but it was a remarkable circumstance that the very papers which were essential to the proof or disproof of his case were missing, one being the telegram from Sir John Forrest to the people concerned, and the other the Executive minutes.

MR. HIGHAM: There was an explanation given.

THE PREMIER: The whole of the papers were placed on the table of the House in 1895, but they could not be found, later.

MR. VOSPER: It so happened that the whole of the documents were not produced, and does not that justify Mr. Robson's counsel to some extent in saying he would take the case no further? After he found some of the papers missing, wa-

he not justified in supposing that the same loss might have been found in connection with other files?

THE PREMIER: That was searching for evidence, and he was supposed to know these things.

MR. VOSPER: I quite agree with the Premier that Mr. Robson, when he heard there was some reason for charges of a grave character against the Government, should have held his tongue until he had sufficient evidence to substantiate the charges; but like any other rash person, he brought his charges first and sought to prove them afterwards. That was his initial error, but no doubt at the time he made the charges he believed all he said. The Premier and other members will recognise that it is easy to be deceived in these matters. I recall a case in which I obtained information from a person I thought reliable, and not content with getting that person's signature to a statement, I went further and caused him to swear to the facts on oath; but it turned out on inquiry before a select committee that the allegations were quite untrue. It is quite possible for any member to be deceived by circumstantial particulars given to him which he believes to be perfectly correct; and the reason I speak of this is that I contend the terms of the Select Committee's report do not exonerate the Government as fully as we would like to see, because in no single instance do they suggest that Mr. Robson's statements are not true, but merely say that evidence is not before them.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: How can you prove a negative?

MR. VOSPER: You cannot: all you can do is to express an opinion.

THE PREMIER: We do not want anything in the motion that is not in the Select Committee's report, and Mr. Robson's own statements.

MR. VOSPER: The point that strikes me is that there is not sufficient in the report to be called a complete exoneration of the Government from the allegations.

MR. MORAN: The Committee cannot exonerate.

MR. GEORGE: It is not for the Committee to exonerate.

THE SPEAKER: Order! An hon. member must not be interrupted when he is speaking.

THE PREMIER: The charges are not proved.

MR. VOSPER: The verdict of the Committee is simply a verdict of "not proven," and not one of "not guilty."

THE PREMIER: We take it for what it is worth.

MR. VOSPER: If I were a member of the Government I would not be content with the present verdict, but would want a verdict of "not guilty."

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: "Not guilty" is a much wider verdict than "not proven."

MR. VOSPER: Quite so; and I think the Government would be justified in asking for a wider verdict than one of "not proven."

THE PREMIER: The verdict will do.

MR. VOSPER: The verdict should go further, and say "not guilty," and the Government would do well to try and press the investigation further until they get that verdict.

THE PREMIER: We do not want to go further than Mr. Robson's apology.

MR. VOSPER: What is Mr. Robson's apology or withdrawal?

THE PREMIER: There is his statement.

MR. VOSPER: What is his statement? In the first place he says:—

Having heard the report of the Select Committee and also the notice of motion given to-night for to-morrow, I now withdraw any reflections which I have made on members of the House, and unreservedly apologise to the House and to individuals who may deem themselves affected by my remarks.

THE PREMIER: We ask for no more.

MR. VOSPER: The whole of the apology from beginning to end is governed by the last clause. The apology to the persons who may deem themselves affected is not to any body corporate. He does not apologise to the Government.

THE PREMIER: He does apologise to the House.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The greater includes the lesser.

MR. VOSPER: He certainly apologises to the House.

THE PREMIER: That is all we ask.

MR. VOSPER: But I contend the word "Government" is capable of a wider interpretation than the Government seem inclined to give it. The Ministry seem inclined to confine "Government" to the five occupants of the Treasury benches,

but it is a wider term, and Mr. Robson meant something wider.

THE PREMIER: Use his own words.

MR. VOSPER: There is grave reason for the suspicion which exists throughout the country, and these proceedings will not get rid of the suspicion that there is a considerable amount of maladministration and bad government in the various departments.

THE PREMIER: Bring the matter up next session.

MR. VOSPER: I will tell the Premier now that I intend to devote some effort in that direction.

THE PREMIER: Quite right.

MR. VOSPER: Only I shall do differently from Mr. Robson.

THE PREMIER: I would do the same as you propose to do, if I were in your place.

MR. VOSPER: But I will hold my tongue until I have my evidence and am ready, and then I will speak. The Government all the way through have been urging their anxiety to vindicate their honour, and I contend that neither the report of the Select Committee nor the so-called apology of Mr. Robson is sufficient.

THE PREMIER: We are willing to take them.

MR. VOSPER: That is your affair, and I am now commenting on your willingness.

THE PREMIER: You want us to ask for more.

MR. VOSPER: I am endeavouring to voice the opinion of the country, and when the evidence goes forth, and is thoroughly read over in cooler moments by the public, they will say there is grave evidence for suspicion left; and the Government would be acting wisely if they endeavoured to get the whole of the file of papers asked for by Mr. Robson.

THE PREMIER: We cannot find them, but we will try to find them.

MR. VOSPER: And they should be placed on the table of the House.

THE PREMIER: They were on the table of the House.

MR. VOSPER: That may be, but the papers have been forgotten by this time, and if we are to have a vindication of the Government, let it be complete, for the present one is incomplete.

THE PREMIER: We are content with it, you know.

MR. VOSPER: I am only trying to express my discontent, and not the feelings of the Government.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The papers connected with diamond mining at Nulla were in the hands of the Select Committee.

MR. VOSPER: They were not in the hands of the public, where I would like to see them.

THE PREMIER: We will put them on the table next session, if you like.

MR. DOHERTY: The member for Pill barra (Mr. Kingsmill) could tell the House all about that matter.

MR. VOSPER: I contend the evidence given before the Select Committee is very incomplete, because it does not contain documentary evidence on which Mr. Robson relied to some extent. If we are going to have a complete vindication of the Government, we require to see the papers again, and have them published indeed, as a matter of fact, they should have been attached to the report of the Select Committee.

THE PREMIER: It would take a year to publish them; there is a cartload.

MR. VOSPER: After all the fanfare made about personal honour, who cares if it takes three centuries? Let it be published as a volume of history, if required.

THE PREMIER: I will let the hon. member see the papers, if he so desires.

MR. VOSPER: I want to show that if Mr. Robson had the courage of his convictions he need not be in the position he is in now, because the evidence contained elements of suspicion all the way through.

MR. HIGHAM: Which way?

MR. VOSPER: I am going to show. Look at the shocking bad memory displayed by one of the witnesses; indeed take the case of the Premier himself.

THE PREMIER: Let us have that.

MR. VOSPER: The Premier came before the Committee, and was asked if certain representations were made to him in respect to a certain Mr. Madden, who is now appointed police magistrate at Roebourne. The Premier denied the serious statements point blank, but the remainder he had forgotten all about. For one thing he did not remember having a conversation with Mr. Knight, who was at the time mayor of Northam.

THE PREMIER: I do not remember it now, though it is very likely I had.

MR. DOHERTY: Mr. Knight was in the dark.

MR. GEORGE: How many conversations has the Premier in the course of the year?

MR. VOSPER: Next the Commissioner of Crown Lands and Mr. Knight himself were brought before the Committee, and made statements which can only be described as sensational. Mr. Madden was characterised by Mr. Knight as one who carried on shady transactions as bank manager, and Mr. Knight declares he told the Premier that Mr. Madden's appointment was absolutely impossible.

THE PREMIER: I denied that.

MR. VOSPER: And Mr. Knight said Mr. Madden was so heavily indebted all over Northam that he could not administer justice properly if appointed police magistrate; and that evidence is partly confirmed by the statement of the Commissioner of Crown Lands, and yet the whole of this is completely forgotten by the Premier. Then we had a more glaring case in that of Mr. Alexander, who was examined before the Committee. That witness confessed that he said to me personally he could be an important witness in bearing out the charges of corruption, and before the Committee he admitted he deliberately intended to forget, and he did forget. Papers which were valuable and essential to the success of the inquiry are missing, and we have witnesses unwilling and reluctant to speak, and their memories guilty of a treachery which seems to be of the most extraordinary and inexplicable character. All that kind of evidence is supposed to go forth to the country as the exoneration of the Government, and if the Government are satisfied with an exoneration of that kind, they are easily satisfied.

THE PREMIER: We are satisfied.

MR. VOSPER: Another point was that the Premier in his anxiety—which was of the most chivalrous character and did him credit—to exonerate the memory of a dead man from reproach, said that a matter was not decided by that man when Minister for Lands. That was the Londonderry jumping case; and the Premier went further and said the case

was not decided by Mr. Marmion, but by himself and Mr. Burt.

THE PREMIER: I think I said Mr. Parker also.

MR. VOSPER: But the Premier was not sure about Mr. Parker, and repeatedly said it was settled by himself and Mr. Burt.

MR. MOORHEAD: That was the second jumping by Huxtable.

MR. VOSPER: The fact is the Minister gave his decision on the point, and the Premier now takes the responsibility on himself and Mr. Burt. What was the position of this jumping affair? Mr. Burt is a partner in the firm of Stone and Burt, and was himself one of the solicitors for the successful applicants in the matter. Here is a gentleman who one moment is a solicitor for an applicant, and the next moment is taking part at a meeting of the Executive Council and helping to decide the very case in which he is a feed advocate.

MR. HIGHAM: Even so, he could act straight.

MR. VOSPER: I do not doubt that, but what I am trying to show is that this report of the Select Committee is not sufficient exoneration of the Government, and does in a great measure justify the action of Mr. Robson.

THE PREMIER: Was the decision not right? I think you will agree that it was a right decision.

MR. VOSPER: I do not know; but Messrs. Stone and Burt said that the regulation under which the decision was given was *ultra vires*.

MR. LEAKE: It was confirmed by special legislation.

MR. MOORHEAD: That was the second case.

MR. VOSPER: It was like other matters which have been settled here. When anybody disobeys the law, instead of the law being allowed to take its course the first thing is to whitewash the offender by bringing in special legislation. That was done in the Traylen case, the Hainault case, and the Londonderry case; and anybody in the country with influence, money, or strength enough can always get an Act passed through Parliament. What does all this amount to? I am not dealing with wild charges.

MR. DOHERTY: You are.

MR. VOSPER: I am dealing with historical facts; and we find a wealthy

syndicate like the Hainault, who get into a hole because of the neglect of certain people.

THE PREMIER: The Government were in a hole, that time.

MR. VOSPER: What happened? A Bill in order to secure the syndicate was rushed through at the fag-end of the session, and it was only by bargaining and threatening to expose all this, that the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) managed by a special Act of Parliament to get a certain amount of compensation for the party who had been dispossessed. If people occupy prominent positions and have influence, they seem to be able to do a great many things which people without influence cannot do.

THE PREMIER: It was the Government who was in trouble there.

MR. VOSPER: That does not apply to the case of the Londonderry Company. We have a solicitor for a certain set of applicants sitting as a Minister, and helping to decide a point on which he is feed as an advocate; just as we had a Minister sitting as managing director of a company, and also as Minister of Mines, consenting to a grant of £5,000 to the company as a private loan. These are the sort of things Mr. Robson meant, and which are in the minds of the public; and these things will remain in the minds of the public no matter what the Committee may do, or what votes of censure are passed on the late member for Geraldton. All the censures in the world will not avail the Government and the House, in the face of historical facts which no man can deny; and if the exoneration is going to be worth anything, it will have to show the history of the colony has been written wrongly, and that these things have not occurred. There is sufficient in the ordinary records of the colony and of the House to show that Mr. Robson was, at all events, justified in using the language he saw fit to use.

MR. MORAN: Why is Mr. Robson not here to-night?

MR. VOSPER: He is not here this evening owing, I think, to a mistaken sense of honour. He thought the proper thing to do on receiving the censure of the House was to resign. That is my opinion of what he did.

MR. MONGER: He might have waited for it.

MR. VOSPER: Mr. Robson is a gentleman who, instead of holding his tongue and being self-contained, consulted every one in the House, and amongst the multitude of counsellors he found foolishness. He acted rashly in the first place, and in a vacillating way in the second. As I said before, Mr. Robson's plain duty was either to apologise in the early stages or stick to his guns. No doubt Mr. Robson's guns were good ones with a certain amount of good ammunition in them, but it may have been that the ammunition was a little damp, when he attempted to fire the guns.

THE PREMIER: You have had four or five years here, and you have not fired many.

MR. VOSPER: If hon. members will read some of the right hon. gentleman's speeches in *Hansard*, they will see that the hon. gentleman has dealt with me in language which even transcends that which has been used by the member for Geraldton, and one must come to the conclusion that I must have managed to provoke the Premier. The right hon. gentleman says I have been here four or five years and yet have not made myself troublesome. Why? Because I am a peaceful individual. If I have not made as much trouble in the House as I might have done, then it is my forbearance and my magnanimity. I contend this is not the time to handle things with gloved hands. I wish to say, in my final utterance on this matter, that I do not think the Government will clear themselves by the terms of the report or by the apology which has been forced from the late member for Geraldton. The finding will be that of public opinion. For the sake of themselves the Government should lay on the table of the House every scrap of paper, no matter how unimportant, in connection with this matter that might affect them; the Bunbury arbitration case especially.

THE PREMIER: The member for Albany knows all about that.

MR. LEAKE: Why was not the telegram produced?

THE PREMIER: We could not find the papers, that was the truth of the matter. I had not the custody of them.

MR. VOSPER: Is this matter to be likened to the Dreyfus case, in which some of the papers were lost from the secret

dossier? I cannot congratulate the Government on the impression which I have formed in my mind. I have endeavoured through these remarks which I have made to give the House a clear idea of the impression on my mind. I have no feeling of animus to any hon. member, nor have I any great desire to shield the member for Geraldton. The Administration have been lax, and if not corrupt in themselves they have permitted corruption on the part of subordinates. That interpretation is justified by the right hon. gentleman's own words, and the small amount of evidence which has come before the Select Committee. If the investigation had proceeded further, we should either have had a complete exculpation of the Government or we should have found the member for Geraldton in a better position than he is in to-day.

MR. MOORHEAD (North Murchison): I had not intended to interpose in this debate, having been concerned as chairman of the Select Committee; but I wish to explain one or two remarks which have fallen from the hon. member (Mr. Vosper). First, I would point out to the House that it is not the duty of the Government to exculpate themselves in this inquiry. An hon. member of this House made certain statements, and the House directed a certain inquiry to be held as to the truth of the charges. The onus lay on the hon. member to establish his position. The onus could not lie on the Government to establish a negative. It was the fault of Mr. Robson himself if he did not prove his charges, and not the fault of those called as witnesses. Allusion has been made to the absence of certain papers, and that allusion has been made so as to perpetuate throughout the country a suspicion which has occasionally been referred to in the House and circulated in the newspapers. The hon. member (Mr. Vosper), with a view to perpetuating this suspicion and nullifying the effects of the inquiry, says Mr. Robson called for certain papers and these were not forthcoming, and that Mr. Harney, counsel for Mr. Robson, alluded to this and said he could not go on. There was only one paper missing, and what was the result of that? As chairman of the Select Committee I offered, if Mr. Harney so desired, to have the Premier in attendance again. I am referring now to the evidence, and I said

that I would procure or endeavour to have procured a copy of that telegram. But what was Mr. Harney's reply? "I do not wish to pursue the Bunbury inquiry further." There is a direct intimation.

MR. LEAKE: Read before that.

MR. MOORHEAD: I am reading that portion to which the attention of the House has been directed, and Mr. Harney's answer is: "I do not wish to pursue the Bunbury inquiry further." Then the champions of Mr. Robson come forward and say, "Here is one of the grounds which is the foundation of our suspicion," because the papers were not forthcoming. As to the Nullagine Syndicate, the hon. member (Mr. Vosper) has referred to the fact that Mr. Robson did not wish to pursue the inquiry further, by reason of the names mixed up in it. I would direct the attention of the House to what occurred towards the conclusion of the inquiry:—

Mr. Wood: I should like to know why this Nullagine matter has not been threshed out?

Mr. Robson: I may tell you that in connection with that, there are the names of other parties, and I do not wish to drag them into the conflict.

Mr. Wood: You started with some, and you stop suddenly, which leaves the imputation that still these things exist, but that, out of consideration for certain members of the House, you will not go on with the charge.

There is a direct intimation for him to go on and for him to explain; and how does counsel explain?—

Mr. Harney: It is right that I should inform members of the Committee that the reason I advised Mr. Robson not to go on with that charge was, not that it leaves any imputation at all, but he says even if he established that view it would not put our case further than it is now, that of showing a general looseness and want of uprightness on the part of the Government.

Not because he was apprehensive of dragging further names in. Why should he? Had he not already dragged in the names of his host and hostess, and what reason was there for the hon. member to suppress other names? If we are to take the learned counsel as Mr. Robson's mouth-piece, and we do so because his language and his explanation have been adopted to-night by the member for Albany (Mr. Leake), there he was voicing the real grounds for not going on when he made these remarks towards the conclusion of

the inquiry. I want to refer hon. members to what the real charge was. The charges of rottenness and corruption levied against the Government in Mr. Robson's speech were not made in the restricted sense now sought to be placed on them—and I can speak freely now, as I have ceased to occupy the position of chairman of the Select Committee, and am now an ordinary member of this Assembly—they were not charges levelled in that sense, but in the sense which we gather from the speech itself. On the conclusion of his speech Mr. Harney said, "These are my grounds for my charges of rottenness and corruption." What are the grounds? The endeavour to bribe members in connection with the Sluicing and Dredging Bill. What is the first thing Mr. Robson says? "I withdraw that absolutely, as the offer was not made by a member of the Government or anyone in the House." That is the first point. Then we go on in his speech: "Looking at the Government benches," he says, "I have seen certain members," etcetera, "and I have often wondered to myself how they could make a living. What is the explanation? There is a group of old financiers interested in keeping the Government in office, and they pay them." Those are substantially the words. Mark you the explanation made by Mr. Robson. "What do you mean by paying them?" He says, "I never made use of those words: I have been misrepresented. No reporter was present, and the report was taken down in longhand." "Did you not see the speech before it was in print?" "Yes; it was submitted to me by the editor of the newspaper." Then for the first time we hear the explanation that he did not make use of the words "paid them," but the words "financially assist them." "Do you see any distinction between the words?" I asked, and he replied "Yes." If the use of the words cast a reflection on members and made it appear they were guilty of corruption and rottenness in supporting a Government by accepting bribes, was it not the duty of the member to at once retract, and call the attention of the newspapers to the fact that he had been misrepresented? But he allowed the report to appear in the newspapers. Attention has been called to a letter which is in evidence, and which is attached to the

report. Mr. Robson's attention was called to that matter, and he was asked what was his reference to the newspaper article. He had called attention to the *Kalgoorlie Miner*, saying it gave him a fair criticism. These are his own remarks which are now before the House attached to the report. This criticism by the *Kalgoorlie Miner* he sent to Mr. Alexander, saying it gave him a fair criticism; and in the article of the 24th February in the *Kalgoorlie Miner* there is the direct interpretation placed on the words that the House has placed upon them. It seems that the corruption and rottenness charged against the Government were interpreted by that newspaper in the same way that the committee have interpreted it; that members were supporting the Government and receiving money for their support, as well as the withdrawal of Bills from the House. Surely members on the other side, no matter how clouded their intellects may be by sitting in Opposition must at once see that the members who live by receiving bribes are equally wrong with the Government they support. That being so, is it not idle to say the corruption charged here is very different from the corruption attributable to negligence and maladministration, which is a term that I think has been adopted from myself. As far as I can see, were I the leader of the House I should not be inclined to support an amendment of the description which has been brought forward, but to support a motion that Mr. Robson be called before the bar of the House, and be severely censured for his language. However, as the Premier, who I think is even more directly interested than those gentlemen who have been particularly referred to, has intimated that he is willing to bury the hatchet, I do not wish for a moment to stand in the way by proposing or suggesting an amendment in the direction to which I have alluded. All I can say is, Mr. Robson had a fair and impartial hearing; all the papers in the custody of the Government were placed at his disposal; any witness he wished to summon he could have summoned; we were prepared to sit as long as Mr. Robson chose; but in spite of that I may say—and as I have now ceased to act as chairman I am entitled to give the opinion formed in my mind on

his conduct—that the hon. member “climbed down.” He found he could not substantiate his charges; and the impression left on my mind is that there was not one tittle of evidence to support any one of these accusations.

THE MINISTER OF MINES (Hon. H. B. Lefroy): I should like to say one or two words regarding the remarks of the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper). He stated that we were here for the purpose of vindicating the honour of Parliament. I believe the hon. member admits that, and yet desires that we should abandon this discussion without in any way attempting to vindicate the honour of this House. The amendment of the member for Fremantle (Mr. Higham) distinctly lays down for future generations the opinion of this House in regard to the behaviour of the late member for Geraldton. The Select Committee frame a report and bring it to this House; they ask the House to deal with the question, and to say what the House considers the conduct of the late member amounts to. The Committee do not say what Mr. Robson's conduct amounts to, but they say there was no evidence brought forward which would in any way whatever back up the charges made. If we close this discussion without coming to some decision on the matter, we shall not be carrying out the course we ought to follow. The amendment distinctly lays down, for the information of hon. members in future, that words such as those used by the late member for Geraldton, unless they can be proved to be true, are a distinct breach of the privileges of this House; and I think it right we should know it, and that members of Parliament should be careful in the future, when they speak to the public of this colony, of the language they use either towards the Government itself or towards private members. I think it is well this House should express an opinion with regard to the words used by Mr. Robson, and I trust hon. members will support the amendment. I distinctly agree with that amendment, for I think we all should have something to guide us in the future, and that new members of this House should be told what the House expects of them when they go before their constituents or before the general public.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: This is not a school, you know.

MR. KINGSMILL: It has been a “school for scandal,” I think.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: It is well they should be told what this House thinks of the language used by the late member. I should like to make a few remarks regarding a question very strongly emphasised by the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper), namely the celebrated Nullagine diamond business. In the evidence taken before the Committee, I see Mr. Wood says:—

I should like to know why this Nullagine matter has not been threshed out.

Mr. Robson replies:

I may tell you that in connection with that there are the names of other parties, and I do not wish to drag them into the conflict.

The late hon. member seems to imply by this that he does not mind how many insinuations are allowed to remain on the character of the Government, nor how base those insinuations may be, but that he dislikes to bring into the matter the names of other parties in order to clear the character of the Government.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: And so you have condemned him.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: I should like to ask why Mr. Robson did not request that the Minister of Mines should be called to give evidence before the Select Committee. I think it only natural that the Minister should be expected to be able to give more information on this subject than anyone else.

MR. MONGER: The question has been already asked in this House.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: And I think, had the Minister been called, he would have been in a position to prove most conclusively to the Committee that, with regard to this question, there was no corrupt behaviour on the part of the Government.

MR. GREGORY: Or of any official?

THE MINISTER OF MINES: I say again that no corruption could have been saddled on the backs of the Government with regard to the matter; and I think it would have been better, before the late hon. member abandoned this charge, that he should have asked for some further evidence, if he could not get such evidence from the papers dealing with the matter. The member for North-East Coolgardie

hung on to that little file like a limpet for some considerable time, and he wants to impress the people of the colony with the idea that there is something hidden behind all this, something kept back; but I say, why was not the Minister who was in charge of the administration of this department called to give his evidence with regard to the transaction?

MR. GREGORY: Why did not you go?

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The member for North Coolgardie knows a great deal about everything.

MR. GREGORY: I have read the papers in this House.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The hon. member knows nothing whatever about this matter. If he would only listen to me, it would do him more good than interjecting.

MR. DOHERTY: He dare not listen.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: I do not think it fair for any hon. member to say that matters are concealed and kept back, when the principal witness was not asked to come forward and give his evidence in regard to the matter; and I was surprised at the hon. member (Mr. Vosper) making use of the language he used to-night. I rose simply because I know very well what is usually done outside this House, that unless the Government, when they get an opportunity, deny conclusively and absolutely statements of this sort, unless they are in a position to show that such statements are incorrect, as these statements are, then such statements are often used against them outside the House. While I have the opportunity, I wish to deprecate the action of the hon. member (Mr. Vosper), and to say it would have been better had he not referred to the matter in the House, and that he should rather have expressed surprise that the late member for Geraldton did not call me as a witness on the question. The hon. member refers to the Hainault case. It was some time ago that this happened. Every one in this House knows perfectly well all about the Hainault case, but the people outside the House do not know about the matter. Hon. members know very well it was an official blunder.

MR. KINGSMILL: The other was something like that, was it not?

THE MINISTER OF MINES: And the House had to rectify the blunder by

passing a special Act of Parliament. There was nothing corrupt about it. The whole thing was perfectly straightforward and above-board, and the Government and the House did the only thing they possibly could do in the circumstances.

MR. KINGSMILL: Maladministration.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: It is a marvel to me, knowing what I do about these matters, when notice of the forfeiture of so many leases is published in the *Government Gazette*, that this is the only instance where any mistake has occurred. It is marvellous, when one considers how much alike are figures, that this is the only case in which there has been a mistake made.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It is a wonderful Government!

THE MINISTER OF MINES: I think it is a wonderful Government, seeing it has lived so long and has only made one mistake, and that one with regard to the publication in the *Government Gazette* of leases for forfeiture. I shall only say I think it right for the House to mark in some way for our future guidance what their opinion is in regard to such matters.

MR. DOHERTY (North Fremantle): I would suggest at this late hour that this discussion be drawn to a close. I do not think anything we can say will ever give the public an opinion different from that they have already formed about Mr. Robson. We cannot paint the lily white, and there is a gentleman, whose name I shall not mention here, whom we cannot paint any blacker than he is.

MR. KINGSMILL: Have both of them gone away together—Robson and the other man?

MR. DOHERTY: I think that is the company the late member keeps. But I say the country has already judged Mr. Robson, and I think we can safely leave the opinion of the country to be the final opinion. Mr. Robson has made a very grave mistake, and possibly he was encouraged by the support he received from certain members of the Opposition, and the silence of the leader or subleader of the Opposition—I do not know which position that hon. member (Mr. Illingworth) occupies. The position taken up by him has not been to his credit. He said he kept silent during the entire

discussion. We admit he kept silent: he was sitting on a rail. If these charges had been proved, he would have made of them a very loud electioneering cry; but when the result of the inquiry is against Mr. Robson, the leader of the Opposition is inclined to tell this House that he sympathises with the accused parties, and that he always believed in the honest and honourable character of the Government. He believed nothing of the sort. What he tried to do was to stand out of the discussion until sentence was passed; and when sentence is passed he then comes in on the winning side. If that is a specimen of the general conduct of the leader of the Opposition, he will not raise the tone of his side of the House.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: We want you over here, and then the tone would be raised.

MR. DOHERTY: Well, the weight would be raised, at all events. One thing I may say before sitting down. A lot of members of this (Government) side of the House regret that mention of the name of the member for Albany (Mr. Leake) was made in the way that it was made this evening; and I can say in an absolutely friendly spirit that the statements made do not cause me to think one whit the less of the member for Albany. The friendship I extended to him before I extend to him now. I regret he was put in such a position; I think his letter in reply was a manly, straightforward letter; and I am sure members on this (Government) side of the House regret, and deeply regret, that his name should have been mentioned. I think its being mentioned was a huge mistake, a mistake that I for one feel. I convey to the hon. member my deep regret for it, and I wish to say that my friendship for him is in no way altered, and in fact my sympathy goes out towards him even more strongly than before. I would ask the House to end this discussion, and to let us catch the 10 o'clock train.

MR. GREGORY (North Coolgardie): I must enter my protest against this amendment being passed as it is framed at present. While it contains the word "unreservedly," it creates an absolutely false impression. It has been asked why Mr. Robson made the speech he did last night, and also withdrew as he has done by the letter read this evening. Let us

look at the facts of the whole case. The Premier willingly agreed that, if Mr. Robson would unreservedly withdraw all his charges and apologise to the House, no further action should be taken. Mr. Robson was unable to withdraw the whole of the charges, but wished to withdraw the only charge of a personal nature either against the Government or any individual member of the House, and the hon. member regretted ever having made these statements; but he could not withdraw the charge of maladministration, and not being able to withdraw that, he simply made the apology he did to each and every member of Parliament, and then he resigned his seat.

THE PREMIER: He said "unreservedly apologise to the House."

MR. GREGORY: Yes; but the intention was—

MR. DOHERTY: You know nothing about his intention.

MR. GREGORY: I do not know as much as the hon. member. I did not have Mr. Robson's confidence at this time, and I wish to impress that, because it has been said I was in his confidence and that I helped him. As far as maladministration is concerned, I do not wish to impute it to any member of the House, but I think that word "unreservedly" should be thrown out.

THE PREMIER: Did he not use it himself?

MR. GREGORY: But you cannot apply the whole of his speech to each member of the House.

THE PREMIER: He said "unreservedly apologise to the House."

MR. GREGORY: If this is passed and it gets on the records, it will read that the Government did no wrong, and that the whole of the charge is worthless.

MR. DOHERTY: That is what the Select Committee say. You cannot go behind the Select Committee.

MR. GREGORY: We are quite prepared to adopt the report; but I do not agree that the Government have made no mistakes.

MR. MORAN: That is not the point.

MR. GREGORY: The Minister of Mines said no wrong was done with regard to this Nullagine mine question.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: No; I did not say that.

MR. GREGORY: Is there not a certificate purporting to be dated October 27, 1898, which was an absolute fraud?

THE MINISTER OF MINES: I denied before, and I deny now, that there was any corrupt action on the part of the Government. A clerk may make a mistake.

MR. GREGORY: Now I will point out where corruption comes in. You have a warden on that field. Has that warden ever been reprimanded?

THE MINISTER OF MINES: Yes; he has been.

MR. GREGORY: With an increase of salary?

MR. KINGSMILL: He received instructions, not from the Minister?

THE MINISTER OF MINES: No.

MR. GREGORY: Did the syndicate have the 320 acres?

THE MINISTER OF MINES: You know that a reward claim has nothing to do with the Minister of Mines, and is granted by the warden. You ought to know that.

MR. GREGORY: And I presume that if he had given 3,000 acres, it would have made no difference.

MR. DOHEERTY: Is the hon. member speaking to the motion?

MR. GREGORY: I am speaking to the motion.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member must not cross-examine another member of the House, but must address himself to the Speaker.

MR. GREGORY: I do not want to go any further in this matter. I suppose a time will come when we can deal with the whole of this question.

THE PREMIER: Hear, hear.

MR. GREGORY: I know quite sufficient to be able to assert that there has been corruption in that department with regard to that matter, and it has been to a great extent condoned by the Government. I did not intend to speak about this matter to-night, but it has been brought up. All I wish to do is to speak with regard to Mr. Robson. I have had nothing whatever to do with him with regard to his charges, and I want to see him put in a proper position. He was unable to accept the motion which was going to be moved by the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) the other night, which was that he should unreservedly apologise, and that no action should be

taken. He could not see his way to do that.

MR. MORAN: He did that.

MR. GREGORY: He could not see his way to do it. He apologised to members of this House individually, and then handed over his resignation, a thing which I am quite satisfied the Premier himself did not desire. I feel sure I am expressing the opinion of all members of the House when I say the right hon. gentleman was most magnanimous. The Premier had not the slightest desire to do an injury to Mr. Robson after that attack upon him. All he wanted was an apology, but Mr. Robson could not see his way clear to give the unreserved apology the Premier asked for. Mr. Robson said "No; I will apologise personally to every member of this House. I will resign my position and go back to the electors, and see if they will return me again. I still hold that there has been maladministration." If this is passed, it will mean that the whole of the House agree that all the charges were withdrawn, and I do not think that is Mr. Robson's idea.

THE PREMIER: He said so. It would do no harm to pass his own words.

Question put, and all the words after "that" struck out with a view to inserting other words.

Further question—that the words proposed to be inserted be inserted (Mr. Righam's amendment)—put:

MR. LEAKE (speaking to the amendment): Hon. members do not seem disposed to accept the olive branch or the amendment suggested by me before the adjournment, and a still further attack has been made on Mr. Robson for his remarks with regard to the administration of the Government. I told the House that I could not support the amendment. I have not changed my mind, and although the Select Committee may have held that the so-called charges against the Government were not proved, yet I think there is sufficient in what Mr. Robson has brought to light, at any rate to justify his observations. But in that justification he repudiates the suggestion that he desires to reflect personal dishonour upon any member of the Ministry. His attack was an attack by a public man upon a public body, and he himself instanced more than one matter.

It is not necessary to maintain and to prove up to the hilt charges of corruption in the sense that members either bribed or accepted bribes. No one has attempted to do that, nor do they wish, I think, that it should be done; but if we can show that there was, in the opinion of Mr. Robson, some questions of public importance which in a political sense would not bear the light of day, then, if he can suggest one good cause of complaint, Mr. Robson ought not to be treated in the way that the House propose to treat him. He began with the Londonderry case, which happened in 1894. It is said that is ancient history; but, ancient or not, it was an action, and a questionable one, on the part of the administration. The member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) has referred to it, and I therefore do not propose to go into detail, but at once I must deny the statement which was made by the Premier the other evening to the effect that I was a member of the juniper syndicate. That is not so. I was acting for the original holders whom it was sought to deprive of their property. A *bona fide* point of law was raised in order to test the legal position, when the Government of the day, for some reason best known to themselves, threw every possible obstacle in the way of that matter being determined by the Supreme Court. My friend the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) has pointed out that a decision was come to by the Executive, and the leases were forfeited in favour of the syndicate, who were represented by a firm of solicitors a member of which was in the Ministry. I do not mean to say for one moment that member of the Ministry was in any way personally interested in the decision. I am not going to bring that charge against him.

MR. HIGHAM: I do not think you would.

MR. LEAKE: But I say that was at any rate a colourable transaction. The property was forfeited to a syndicate well known, and in that syndicate there was a Minister who had an interest.

MR. MOORHEAD: It was forfeited to one Court, and he sold to the syndicate.

MR. LEAKE: Yes; as a matter of fact, pending the negotiations in relation to forfeiture proceedings, these people

purchased from Court. The case there brought bore upon the Ministry of the day, and the decision was given in favour of the syndicate.

MR. MOORHEAD: Which had purchased it two months before.

MR. LEAKE: I remember the circumstances, and in January, 1895, I published a letter over my own name in the *West Australian*, which was headed by the *West Australian* as "A grave charge." And it was a grave charge: it is practically what I am saying now; yet I assure the House that no notice was taken of that charge. There was no investigation: the whole matter was allowed to fizzle out, and why?

MR. DOHERTY: Were you a member of the House?

MR. LEAKE: I have said I was, a member of the House.

MR. DOHERTY: And you wrote the letter?

MR. LEAKE: Yes; certainly. I wrote detailing the whole of the circumstances for public information.

MR. DOHERTY: Why did you not bring it before the House?

MR. LEAKE: It fizzled out because, after the Londonderry fiasco, the property became no good. Then we turn from that to the Bunbury arbitration case, which was one of the matters which Mr. Robson, in his speech the other night, said he relied on, and which was practically anticipated by the Premier. A bundle of papers was produced before the Select Committee, consisting of formal applications, offers, counter-offers, payment of arbitrators, and so forth; but the particular paper which contained the gist of the complaint which Mr. Robson had to make was absent from the "jacket," and is absent from the "jacket" now, and cannot be found.

MR. HIGHAM: A copy can be got very easily.

MR. LEAKE: The original telegram could not be found, and if a copy could be found it was not produced.

MR. MOORHEAD: A copy could have been found, but it was not asked for.

MR. LEAKE: According to Mr. Harney's remarks, one reason for the abandonment of the charge was, "What is the use of inquiring into a charge when the papers we rely on are not forthcoming?"

MR. MOORHEAD: Read what was said.

MR. LEAKE: What was said was as follows:—

The Chairman: Excuse me for a second, Mr. Harney, but supposing the telegram could not be found, would you be satisfied with a copy of the telegram from the Post Office?

Mr. Harney: Certainly; but we have asked for the telegram itself and cannot get it.

No copy was brought, although it was open to the Government to produce the document. This application for the telegram was not made on the last morning, but the matter had been before the Government for a week or more, and they knew the papers were asked for.

MR. MOORHEAD: They were asked for the day before the inquiry closed.

MR. LEAKE: Inasmuch as we have not the original document, we have to find out from the admissions of the Government what the purport of the telegram was. In the course of his observations the other evening, the Premier said this was ancient history, and he remarked that it was known that one of the arbitrators was receiving a commission on the award. Anybody will know that this is a most improper thing, and the law officers of the day advised that the award should be upset, and proceedings were taken to that end. The Premier himself told us he was away in Albany, and that he received a letter from Mr. Spencer, who was a member of the Upper House and lived in Bunbury, saying, "This is too bad: the Government are getting into disrepute about the thing; why do you not pay this amount?" Impelled by that communication from Mr. Spencer, the Premier, as he admitted, then sent a telegram which has been printed, and has been laid before the House, but curiously enough we cannot get that telegram now. What were the facts? In Bunbury certain lands were resumed, and Bunbury we know is the constituency of the Premier. Influence was brought to bear on the Premier by his constituents, and in order, as he himself says, to avoid the Government getting into great disrepute about the matter, the whole thing was quashed. These are facts, and there is no need for me to draw inferences: it is for the public to do that. Is Mr. Robson to be charged with being a malicious and wicked person because he draws what is an obvious

inference from facts of this kind? That is the position I want hon. members to remember; not to go so far as to say there is corruption and bribery rife amongst the Government, but that with these facts before him Mr. Robson was justified in using the extremely severe language he did in Geraldton.

THE PREMIER: Did the Attorney-General not advise that the money should be paid?

MR. LEAKE: I do not care what the Attorney-General advised, but if he did so advise, I have no doubt it was after consultation with the right hon. the Premier.

THE PREMIER: I had no interest in the thing whatever.

MR. LEAKE: We have your admission that the Government were getting into disrepute about the thing; and in order to avoid the disrepute the Ministry prevented an inquiry in an obviously improper transaction.

THE PREMIER: You were connected with it.

MR. LEAKE: I was, and it was on my advice that these awards were to be attacked.

THE PREMIER: Did it not come out that the man you complained of did not settle the matter, but that it was settled by one of the arbitrators and the umpire? You know the case very well, and you know that I had nothing to do with it; that I did not even know the parties?

MR. LEAKE: I will not be led from my line of argument, or into imputing personal dishonour to the Premier, or any other hon. members. I am talking of attacks on the body politic, and with these circumstances before him Mr. Robson ought not to be condemned in the language the Select Committee desire to direct against him. Then again, we find that in the inquiry before the Select Committee it came out that it was proposed to appoint a certain person to a magistracy, and the character of that gentleman was rightly or wrongly not considered to be of the best. Representations were made in the proper quarter, in the proper manner, and to the proper authorities, namely the Ministry; but notwithstanding these representations it appeared that without any further inquiry, a certain appointment was made. This gentleman was not appointed,

it is true, to the place to which he was originally to have gone, but he was still appointed to the magistracy.

THE PREMIER: Was there any personal interest in that appointment?

MR. LEAKE: No; unless, as has been suggested, he was a personal friend.

THE PREMIER: He was not a relation.

MR. LEAKE: You told the Select Committee he was a personal friend.

THE PREMIER: And he was your personal friend, too.

MR. LEAKE: I do not say he was not, but I knew nothing about the representations which were made.

THE PREMIER: Well, you would have supported him, I know.

MR. LEAKE: Mr. Knight, in his evidence before the Select Committee, said:—

I told the Premier there was a feeling against — appointment, and the nature of it was that — indebtedness to everyone in the place would certainly militate against the possibility of his acting as a magistrate. I also referred to the fact that his transactions with the bank's clients were also of a very shady character indeed.

THE PREMIER: That was the trouble.

MR. LEAKE: If a statement like that was made of a gentleman, he ought not to have been placed on the magisterial bench without inquiry; but we do not find that the slightest inquiry was made. I do not desire for a moment to attempt to blacken this gentleman's character, because there is no absolute proof here; but there was sufficient to put the Government on an inquiry. If this gentleman was not good enough for Northam he was not good enough for Newcastle—that is the point—and he was not fit to sit on the magisterial bench if there was a slur on his character; and in appointing this gentleman without inquiry the Government acted in a very improper manner.

MR. HIGHAM: You cannot say an inquiry was never held.

MR. LEAKE: Oh, dear me! If an inquiry had been held, should we have not heard of it long ago?

MR. HIGHAM: It need not have been public.

THE PREMIER: We do not care about injuring people's character if we can help it.

MR. LEAKE: That is just it, but you did not object to making the public suffer; and it is in the public interest

that all these statements are made, and that we are now attempting to justify Mr. Robson. I am not going to be led away from my point, nor dragged into making personal charges against anybody.

MR. HIGHAM: Tell us how the public can suffer by this appointment?

MR. LEAKE: I say the public do suffer.

MR. HIGHAM: Prove it.

MR. LEAKE: I say the public suffer if the administration of justice is not kept pure and unsullied, free from every possible suspicion; and if you appoint as magistrate a person who is reported to the Ministry as being of a shady character, and who is indebted to everyone in a certain place, that will militate against his acting as a magistrate; and I say that is against the public interest.

MR. HIGHAM: Will you say the gentleman appointed was unfit for the position?

MR. LEAKE: I say that the gentleman was reported as unfit for the position.

MR. HIGHAM: Never mind "reported."

MR. LEAKE: It was reported to the Premier by the mayor of Northam, and not only by that gentleman but by other people.

THE PREMIER: I deny that.

MR. LEAKE: Well, I believe Mr. Knight.

MR. HIGHAM: And I believe the other.

MR. LEAKE: Then again, there is the question of the appointment of justices. What happened last session on the floor of this House when the member for East Fremantle (Mr. Holmes) was blamed for not supporting the Premier and his Government, notwithstanding the hon. member had been made a justice of the peace? That member was upbraided by the Government for voting against them although he had been appointed to the bench. What was the result? The matter cannot have been treated as a mere joke, because the member for East Fremantle the next day resigned his commission as justice of the peace, and the incident created at the time a certain amount of public indignation. All these matters were present in Mr. Robson's mind when he made his statements, and I say he did not go out of the bounds of fair public criticism in the very extravagant language he used. We are entitled to consider what has been the practice of the Government

hitherto. We can go back as far as the famous Newcastle speech. Take the tactics of the Government at the last Murchison election; but that has already been detailed, and I will not go into it. Take also the practice—and this is common knowledge—of their parading the country on the eve of a general election, promising big sums for public works here, there, and everywhere, and at the same time asking electors to return Government supporters.

THE PREMIER: Who did that?

MR. LEAKE: You did.

THE PREMIER: When? Where?

MR. LEAKE: On your trip from Norseman round the goldfields just before last election.

THE PREMIER: I never mentioned election matters.

MR. LEAKE: I do not say that is corruption, but I am saying it is not fair-play in politics.

THE PREMIER: There was no election when I was at Norseman, except for the Upper House.

MR. HIGHAM: Of course, Mr. Leake would not do it himself.

THE PREMIER: I never mentioned election matters at all.

MR. LEAKE: It has manifestly been done time after time, and it is a matter of public knowledge, and if I am misstating I suppose my statement will be discounted.

MR. MOORHEAD: We are not going to waste time in discounting it.

MR. LEAKE: Then it would be far better to accept my statement as correct, because it cannot be discounted.

MR. HIGHAM: Cannot it?

MR. LEAKE: There are other matters which have cropped up in the course of our Parliamentary experience which are not altogether creditable to the Government, but we do not want, as Mr. Robson said, to refer to them, because we would have to mention names unnecessarily. Some things have been referred to, and amongst others we know many defalcations have happened in the public service.

THE PREMIER: The Government cannot make people honest.

MR. LEAKE: But sometimes you could make due inquiries into their improprieties.

MR. HIGHAM: So the Government do.

MR. LEAKE: Is the hon. member a Minister? Take, for instance, a matter

which cropped up last session, the compensation paid to the Ivanhoe Venture Syndicate: that was a Government proposal, and the House carried it out. We do not want to go into that matter, as it will necessitate dragging others into it. So with regard to the surrender of the leases at Kalgoorlie. All these papers were before the Select Committee, and in making their report, although these papers were on the table, the Select Committee do not appear to have read them, but they certainly appear to have based their report more on the oral testimony: I have gone outside the oral testimony and have referred to certain documents.

MR. MOORHEAD: You want to go one better than Mr. Robson.

MR. LEAKE: No; but apart from personal reflection I am prepared to say, and you can try me for it if you like, that I believe the Government are rotten and corrupt. I am taking them as a public body, and in using that expression I do not mean that they accept bribes or anything of that kind, but I mean their administration is bad, they are in an unsavoury condition, and are not fit to be administering the affairs of the country.

MR. HIGHAM: Make your statement.

MR. LEAKE: Prosecute me if you like: I will bring more evidence in justification, although not perhaps proof of what I say.

THE PREMIER: You will bring the same old things up again.

MR. LEAKE: A fraud is a fraud all the same if it is seven or eight years old, and if it is not punished we have a perfect right to unearth it. It is true no one can be punished twice for the same offence, but the Ministry have not been punished for any of those enormities. Whenever they have cropped up they have been slurred over.

MR. D. FORREST: They would have been if you had turned them out.

MR. MOORHEAD: That is for the "gallery."

MR. LEAKE: If I am addressing the "gallery" in this case, then I may say the "gallery" are better judges than another tribunal—I refer to this House; and if the member who has used the term "gallery" means the electors of Western Australia, I prefer to trust them rather than this House, the members of which are prepared to condemn Mr.

Robson and inflict on him punishment or a stigma which the circumstances of the case do not justify.

Amendment (Mr. Higham's) put, and passed on the voices.

Resolution as amended agreed to, without dissent.

PROROGATION.

ASSENT TO BILL.

A message from the Administrator was presented by the PREMIER and read by Mr. SPEAKER, as follows:—

The Administrator has the honour to transmit herewith a Proclamation under his hand and the Public Seal of the Colony, proroguing Parliament till Tuesday, the 7th day of August next.

The Administrator thanks your Honourable House for the attention you

have given to the important question of referring the Draft Commonwealth Bill of Australia to the vote of the people of the colony, and the Bill you have passed for that purpose he has already assented to in Her Majesty's name.

The Administrator hereby assents, in Her Majesty's name, to the following Bill which you have passed:—

A Bill intituled "An Act to apply out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund, and from Moneys to Credit of the General Loan Fund, the sum of Four Hundred and Fifty Thousand pounds to the Service of the Year ending 30th June, 1901."

Government House, Perth, 14th June, 1900.

Proclamation read by the Clerk.

The session then closed.