

## Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 19th October, 1897.

Question: Restriction in Granting Exemption on Gold Mining Leases—Question: Lengthy Exemption on Gold Mining Leases—Question: Sale of Business Areas on Goldfields—Question: Illegal Hawking by Afghans—Sessional Orders: Business Days and Hours, Standing Committees, &c.—Address-in-Reply: Amendment (Mr. Leake's) re Food Duties; third day of debate—Paper Presented—Reporting and Publishing of Debates—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the Chair at 4-30 o'clock p.m.

## PRAYERS.

## QUESTION—RESTRICTION IN GRANTING EXEMPTION ON GOLD MINING LEASES.

MR. GREGORY, in accordance with notice, asked the Premier, Whether he had instructed the wardens of the various goldfields, in consequence of the amendment of the labour regulations, to restrict, in a greater measure than was formerly observed, the granting of exemptions on gold mining leases.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied that no definite instructions had been issued, but it had been pointed out to many of the wardens that less exemption should be given.

## QUESTION—LENGTHY EXEMPTION ON GOLD MINING LEASES.

MR. GREGORY, in accordance with notice, asked the Premier, Whether exemption had been granted on any gold mining lease since the passing of the Mines Act, 1895, for a longer term than six months in any one year. If so, on what lease or leases, and for what reason?

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied that the Mines Department were unable to furnish the information for a few days, as all their registers would have to be searched.

## QUESTION—SALE OF BUSINESS AREAS ON GOLDFIELDS.

MR. GREGORY, in accordance with notice, asked the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Whether it was his intention to sell by public auction any area legally held by virtue of miner's right or business license for residence or business purposes,

without giving the holder thereof the first right to purchase at a declared upset price.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. G. Throssell) replied that there was no intention to depart from the procedure prescribed by Section 30 of the Goldfields Act.

## QUESTION—ILLEGAL HAWKING BY AFGHANS.

MR. HARPER, in accordance with notice, asked the Premier, Why Afghans were permitted to hawk wares throughout the country districts in contravention of the law, and whether the Government would take such steps as might be necessary to prevent a continuance of the same.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied that the law was unable at present to reach these men who tramp the country soliciting orders. An amending Act was, however, being prepared to deal with the matter.

## SESSIONAL ORDERS.

## BUSINESS DAYS AND HOURS.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest), in accordance with notice, moved That the House, unless otherwise ordered, shall meet for the despatch of business on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays at 4-30 p.m., and shall sit until 6-30 p.m., if necessary; and, if requisite, from 7-30 p.m. onwards. He said this motion was the usual one at the beginning of a session; and he desired to consult the House as to whether it would be convenient to have an extra sitting day, in addition to the three days proposed in the motion. As the session was commencing late in the year, and summer was coming on, the members might not find great inconvenience in attending the House on an extra day in the week, for he had noticed that those country members who resided within easy reach of Perth were often in town on Mondays, and would doubtless be glad to be at work, as the business of the session must be got through; and he thought also that those members who resided in Perth and Fremantle, and their vicinity, might not find it inconvenient to attend the House on Mondays. If members generally were agreeable to that suggestion, he

would ask some member to move for adding Monday to the sitting days proposed in the motion. Members of the Government would be glad to add another day for getting through the business, because there was so much to do in the present session. He desired to have an expression of opinion from members as to whether they would be agreeable to have Monday added to the business days of the House in the present session.

MR. LEAKE said that, personally, he would be glad to fall in with the suggestion of the Premier to have Monday added to the sitting days.

MR. GEORGE suggested that Monday's sitting should be in the evening only, commencing at 7.30.

HON. H. W. VENN said the arrangement made last session for sitting on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays was found to be agreeable to the majority of those members who were engaged in business, and it had been stated during the discussion last session that it would be inconvenient for them to attend the House four days a week. Speaking on behalf of country members, he believed four days a week would not be convenient to most of them; although, so far as his own convenience was concerned, he was willing to sit six days a week if desired. He hoped the practice of sitting three days a week would be continued during the present session, as it was found convenient and satisfactory last session.

Question put and passed.

On further motions by the PREMIER, the following Sessional Orders were agreed to without debate:—

**PRECEDENCE OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS.**—That on Tuesdays and Thursdays Government business shall take precedence of all Motions and Orders of the Day.

**STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE.**—That the Standing Orders Committee for the present session shall consist of the following members, viz.:—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Burt, and Mr. Harper; with leave to sit during any adjournment, and with authority to confer upon subjects of mutual concernment with any Committee appointed for similar purposes by the Legislative Council.

**LIBRARY COMMITTEE.**—That the Library Committee for the present Session

shall consist of the following members, viz.:—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Burt, Mr. Harper, Mr. Simpson, and Mr. Illingworth; with leave to sit during any adjournment, and during the recess, and with authority to act jointly with the Library Committee of the Legislative Council.

**PRINTING COMMITTEE.**—That the Printing Committee for the present Session shall consist of the following members, viz.:—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Piesse, and Mr. Harper; to assist Mr. Speaker in all matters which relate to the printing executed by order of the House, and for the purpose of selecting and arranging for Printing Returns and Papers, presented in pursuance of motions made by members, and all Papers laid upon the table, whether in answer to Addresses or otherwise.

**REFRESHMENT ROOMS COMMITTEE.**—That the Refreshment Rooms Committee for the present Session shall consist of the following members, viz.:—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Wood, Mr. Simpson, and Mr. Monger; with leave to sit during any adjournment and during the recess.

## ADDRESS-IN-REPLY TO THE GOVERNOR'S SPEECH.

### AMENDMENT *re* FOOD DUTIES.

#### THIRD DAY OF DEBATE.

MR. LEAKE (Albany), in accordance with notice, rose to move as an amendment that the following new paragraph be added:—

We, however, regret that Your Excellency's advisers do not propose to introduce any legislation with a view to amending the tariff, as we are of opinion that it is desirable to reduce the duties on food supplies; and we therefore respectfully suggest that Your Excellency's advisers should be invited to reconsider their decision, with a view to such reduction.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege, I know, if I so desire it, to criticise generally the observations which have been submitted to us by His Excellency the Governor in his Speech; but, since I moved the adjournment of the debate a few days ago, a motion was tabled which perhaps will have the effect of concentrating attention, to a certain extent, upon the subject matter of the notice. The notice which I gave was this: That I should move as an amendment to the Address and as a new paragraph these words:—"We, however, regret that your

Excellency's advisers do not propose to introduce any legislation with a view to amending the tariff, as we are of opinion that it is desirable to reduce the duties on food supplies; and we therefore respectfully suggest that your Excellency's advisers should be invited to reconsider their decision, with a view to such reduction." Hon. members are aware that the question of food duties and the necessity for their reduction has been before the country for many months past. During the recent elections it was a matter of considerable public interest. It was one to which every hon. member at the hustings had to direct his attention; and every hon. member, or nearly every hon. member, when seeking election, expressed himself emphatically one way or the other. Therefore it was naturally to be supposed that, as soon as possible after the House was called together for business, this question would arise in one form or another. Hon. members, no doubt, thought that some expression would be given by the hon. member the leader of the Government (Right Hon. Sir John Forrest) upon this subject; and, when the Speech was read to us by His Excellency the Governor, those anticipations were realised—perhaps not exactly in the direction that we expected, but whatever expression was voiced in that Speech was emphatic. It emphasises this fact, that notwithstanding the agitation which has been on foot, notwithstanding the pledges of hon. members upon the hustings, notwithstanding the interest which was taken by the public at large on this all important question, the Government affirm that they will not reduce the food duties. You are aware, sir, that during the short session of Parliament we have had previous to our departure for the Federal Convention, I tabled a direct motion upon this very question, declaring, or seeking to declare, that the reduction of these food duties—the immediate reduction of the food duties—was necessary in the best interests of the country; and, with that resolution upon our votes and proceedings, we know that the Government have had the matter under consideration. It was well discussed, I have no doubt, in Cabinet. It was ultimately determined that they would declare in favour of the retention of those

food duties. And that expression of opinion was in these words:—

My Ministers do not propose this session to introduce any legislation with a view of amending the tariff. In regard to the question of remitting or reducing the existing duties on some articles of food which are capable of being produced in the colony, they are of opinion that the present time is inopportune to do anything that will either reduce the revenue or discourage the rapidly increasing occupation and improvement of the lands of the colony, from which a large increase of production must result. My Ministers have no intention, nor have they any desire, to protect food products for an indefinite period, and they are of opinion that it will not be necessary to do so, as, aided by a recurrence of the bountiful season we are this year experiencing, and by the good markets existing on our goldfields, this colony must, in a short time, become self-supporting.

So there we have this announcement with regard to the food duties, firstly, that the tariff will not be amended; in the second place, and equally emphatically, do Ministers declare that the food duties will not be touched during this session; and they go on to say, in effect, that although they have no desire to protect the food products indefinitely, they are not of opinion that it will be necessary to do so because, "aided by a recurrence of the bountiful season we are this year experiencing"—and there, gentlemen, I have cause to remind you that the element of speculation has evidently entered into their consideration, for they are anticipating, of course, a recurrence of the bountiful season—"this colony must, in a short time, become self-supporting." The bountiful season cannot recur until this time next year, therefore there can be no reduction until this time next year; and, if there is not a recurrence of the bountiful season, then there certainly will not be a reduction next year. Consequently we shall go on and on until we get a recurrence of bountiful seasons, or, in the alternative, until in a short time the colony becomes self-supporting. There is nothing in those words but an attempt to hedge with this important question; and I declare that the Government have not any real or honest intention of reducing those food duties either this session or next session. So it becomes necessary, according to the course that I pursued during the last session, to bring this matter clearly and straightforwardly before the House; and

can there be any more direct challenge to me and my friends on this side of the House than that declaration in paragraph 22? It is idle for the hon. gentleman, as he did the other day, to say that my notice of an amendment was a challenge to him. His was the challenge; and had I failed in accepting that challenge—in picking up the gauntlet when it was thrown down in this arena—I should have been wanting in my duty; and, had I waited until after the conclusion of the debate on the Address-in-Reply and tabled a substantive motion, it would have been open to the Premier and to you hon. gentlemen opposite—all of you—to have told me that the proper time was on the consideration of the Address-in-Reply. And I have done so. I have accepted the challenge. Whether you can regard this as a counter-challenge or not, I do not care; but it is a challenge by the Government to me and to those who sit on this side of the House, to test the feeling of this House, and, in the testing of the feeling of this House, to test the feeling of the representatives of the country upon this all-important question. In the observations which I have to address to you, sir, during the course of this debate, I have no doubt that there will be very little that is new—less, no doubt, that is original. And, notwithstanding that, I make no apology for addressing this House and advancing nothing but what may possibly appear to many hon. members to be old arguments. But I say now—and you will hear this referred to more than once before I sit down—I want hon. members to remember their pledges. Of course this amendment—as the right hon. the Premier has intimated—amounts to a motion of want of confidence in the Ministry. But, as a matter of Parliamentary procedure and practice, every amendment to the Address-in-Reply, if it comes from the opposite side of the House, must be and always is regarded as a motion of want of confidence. But how can they throw that back upon members on this side of the House, when they themselves practically shake their fists in our faces and tell us that we dare not challenge this question at the proper time—namely, in the debate on the Address-in-Reply? I leave it to the right hon. the Premier to make the

most of the cry that this is a motion of want of confidence, and to frighten you hon. gentlemen—or, I should say, sir, to frighten those hon. members who sit below and at the right hand of the Premier—with the intimation that if this is carried against him he will resign. Well, perhaps we had better not discuss such a terrible thing as the fate of the Ministry. Better let the Ministry live, and the country die or the country suffer, than that we, all of us, should do our duty in this particular regard. It is a very nice thing, I have no doubt, to have vast personal influence, an influence which will induce hon. members to forget everything else but the desire to pander to the wishes of the individual who has the influence; but let me remind hon. members of a little bit of our past political history. We know that it is very easy to “climb down.” We have known it done before in this House. [A MEMBER: Cross over.] And cross over too. The hon. member no doubt will have an opportunity later on of climbing down on this motion. He will find that there is no difficulty in climbing down at all; that it does not hurt in the slightest degree. But we do not care how we get the reduction of these food duties—whether it is by climbing down or anything else, or by the resignation of the Ministry. We say we want the food duties reduced, irrespective of the consequences, because we say it is of paramount importance to the country. If it is not of paramount importance to the country, or if it is not a matter which is likely to engage a great deal of public attention, why was it mentioned at all in the Governor's Speech? We want to see a reduction of the duties at the present time; and after all, supposing the Ministry do, in treating this as a motion of want of confidence, run the risk of having to resign, it simply means that this House can put them out; but if this House can put them out, this House can put them in again. We are twitted, often enough, on this side of the House with the statement that we could not carry on the government of the country for twenty-four hours. Well, that may be so; and therefore the hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House run no risk, for when they are put out, put them in again. You can do it by your votes. But insist, first of all,

upon the reduction of the food duties. If you are going to disregard the popular will and the public good, and if you are going to place the fate of the Ministry above it all, well, I am afraid Parliamentary government in our colony will not flourish as it should do, nor will it command the respect of this or any other community. We can get a reduction of these food duties, if we insist upon it; and every hon. gentleman on the right-hand side of the Premier knows it. If Parliament will only show its teeth, and, if necessary, bite, we shall get the reduction of the food duties; and there is not a single hon. member, I believe, on the other side of the House who honestly can say that he does not think a reduction in this direction is necessary and essential. Are hon. members to be the servants of the country or the slaves of the Ministry? Will they be political factors, or will they be dummies, and what some hon. gentleman on this side of the House once called voting machines? Will they be guided by the requirements of their constituencies and by the welfare of the colony, or will they consult the convenience of the ruling power? Is it to the advantage of the colony that we should have class legislation, or legislation for the country's good? If I do not misinterpret this paragraph 22, there is contemplated here class legislation of the most pronounced type. It is setting, as clearly as it is possible to do so, one class against the other. It is setting the farmers against the miners. [A MEMBER: Not at all.] Perhaps the hon. gentleman did not hear what I said. It is setting the farmers against the miners. It is the farmers first, and the rest nowhere. What we advocate, here on this side, at any rate, is that we should distribute our favours evenly, and let each member of the community bear his fair share of the burden. This policy of the Government means, protect the farmer and protect nobody else. But he has been protected for the last thirty or forty years; and not once, I believe, during that time have they made any concessions. No concession whatever has been made. Wherever there has been protection, it has been piled up, heap by heap, in this particular direction. Although, perhaps, even the hon. members on this side of the House do not go to the same extent as I would on this

question of protection, yet I would lay down, or argue in favour of, the general proposition, at any rate, that protection, particularly of this kind, is not necessary in an unsettled community such as ours is at the present moment. It has been argued in the Press and on the platform too that we have the lowest tariff in Australia, except the tariff of the free-trade colony of New South Wales. But that does not prove that these food duties do not press heavily on our community. Opposed to that proposition or that fact we have this fact, that the taxation per head is, in this colony, three times as high as it is in most of the other colonies; and that our taxation through the customs is twice, and in many instances three times, that of the other colonies at the rate per head. And it goes to prove that whilst we have possibly a low tariff, and whilst we have this excessive protection in these particular directions, we cannot produce enough. It follows, therefore, that where we get so much through the customs, so much food through the customs, these duties must affect, and they do affect, us to an appreciable extent. The other colonies have this advantage, that they do not have to import food stuffs to the same extent as we do. We have been trying to produce sufficient for years past, and we cannot do it; and the natural consequence, of course, is to increase the local market prices owing to the shortness of the supply, and, in addition to that, to increase the cost to us through the customs. If anyone doubts the dearness of living or the cost of living in our community, let him go round to one of the other colonies and do a little marketing on his own account, and then come back here and try the same thing. Let him experimentalise with the small sum of half-a-crown, and I will be bound to say that in Melbourne, in Sydney, or in Adelaide, the working man or the miner, or the member of Parliament, can buy far more eggs, butter, cheese, bread, meat, bacon, and vegetables—he can cover his table more thickly with half-a-crown in the other colonies than he can here. The bucolic instinct is being aroused: the Commissioner of Railways is beginning to interrupt. We are getting “home” now. I will repeat, for the information of the hon. member, that half-a-crown will buy more butter, cheese,

bacon and vegetables in Melbourne or Adelaide than the hon. gentleman would care to eat.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I expect you are gauging my appetite by your own.

MR. LEAKE: That interruption is irrelevant. The Speech declares that "they are of opinion"—that is, His Excellency's Ministers—"that the present time is inopportune to do anything that will either reduce the revenue or discourage the rapidly increasing occupation and improvement of the lands of the colony, from which a large increase of production must result." If they think the imposition or maintenance of these duties, or the abolition of these duties, will "discourage the rapidly increasing occupation and improvement of the lands of the colony," what effect has it on the mining community? We cannot help remembering that the mining community is the biggest consuming community and the most important community, and when you add on to that the artisans, the labourers, and the workers generally, you will find how huge a majority are interested in the reduction of the duties, in comparison with the small farming class. It has been argued, and faithfully and truly argued, that the maintenance of these duties is apt to discourage the miners. It will prevent, it must prevent, the growth of the consuming communities, which include all those who come here to our mines. They are all sorts—miners, farmers, artisans, and labourers, and they form the floating population from which the farmers and agriculturists must recruit. They are not attracted, the majority of these men, as a rule, by the harvest of golden grain that may be reaped possibly in a year, but by the glitter of the golden harvests which they may glean from the hand of fortune. They go on the goldfields, the miners and others, and they find there is not an opportunity for everybody to make a fortune, and back they go to their homely pursuits. It is from that very floating population that the farmer and the settler must recruit their ranks. We may deprecate as much as possible the speculative element which brings these people here, but there is no reason why we should not utilise it and keep them here, once

they are here; and one of the surest ways of keeping them is by showing not only that they can settle on the lands, but that they can live cheaply. They come, and unfortunately in many instances men come without their wives and families, and with what result? That, almost monthly, sums which aggregate in the twelve months a million pounds all go out of the country to maintain the wives and families of those men who have been attracted here by our mines; and surely it would be better if we could keep them here. We shall not keep them here unless we show them that the cost of living is reduced, and the surest way of reducing the cost of living is by a reduction or the abolition of the food duties. [MR. HUBBLE: And reducing rents.] A very good suggestion by the hon. member for the Gascoyne. I should be glad to see that done. The landlords sit on that side of the House, and we must leave them to grapple with that problem. [A MEMBER: You have a few over there.] Do hon. members realise that these duties do not operate in favour of the settler? That was evidently in the mind of the gentleman who drafted this paragraph: "In regard to the question of remitting or reducing the existing duties on some articles of food which are capable of being produced in the colony, they are of opinion that the present is inopportune to do anything that will either reduce the revenue or discourage the rapidly increasing occupation and improvement of the lands of the colony, from which a large increase of production must result." If you reduce these food duties, you do more than anything else to encourage occupation, because the farmer wants cheap food whilst he is clearing and cultivating. He does not go into the bush and start producing straight away. It takes him at least twelve months or two years before he can get any return, and what does the man live on in that time? [A MEMBER: The storekeeper.] The storekeeper! Yes, the storekeeper, who makes him pay "through the nose." I suppose the hon. gentleman knows something about this.

A MEMBER: The storekeeper comes in and gets the farm.

MR. LEAKE: That is it. They only protect the old settler, of which there are not a few here, and they only protect

those who for a few years have been nursed in the cradle of protection. If the Commissioner of Crown Lands wants to settle his unoccupied Crown lands and attract a hardy set of farmers, he cannot do better than, in addition to the other favours which the Government have bestowed, give them the means to live until they have had an opportunity of clearing the land ready for cultivation. I cannot help referring to the farmer, because it is the farmer against everybody. The average farmer only understands growing grain—grain which he, perhaps, may ultimately turn into flour, or cut for horse feed. The farmers cannot eat hay, and they cannot stand “chaff.” They cannot grow sufficient to supply our markets, and what do they do? They eat tinned meats, imported butter, imported potatoes, imported bacon, imported cheese, and imported tinned milk. You cannot go anywhere in the country without finding every table spread with these things—not the fresh foods, but the tinned foods. These very men who cry out against the removal of these duties are eating this very food which pays the duty. I cannot understand the shortsighted policy of these people. They tell us we are not the friends of the farmer, that we want to crush a growing industry. We say to them, we want to lift you up; we want to help you to make fortunes, but you must help us to make your member vote to remove the food duties. They would benefit by this reduction as much as anybody. In addition to the duties on wheat, the farmer is protected by freights; he is protected by the bad seasons when they occur in the other colonies—and they have occurred both in South Australia and Victoria lately; he has the advantage of cheap rates on the railways; he has the land under the Homesteads Act given to him for nothing, and a bountiful Government comes forward and supplies him with money at a ridiculously low rate to improve his land; he has the advantage of the free list; and finally—which is better than all the protection—he has the magnificent demand of the markets; markets which are at his door; markets which he can neither fill or supply to the fullest extent. If they want more protection I do not know what they will ask for next. I may refer

incidentally to another possible advantage which may occur to a section of the community in another portion of the colony, the advantage of a huge water supply, in respect of which the Government are going to spend two and a half millions of money. Therefore he has this advantage. I am talking not so much of the farmers proper, the wheat and hay farmers, but the agriculturists generally. They have fruit practically prohibited from the other colonies, and wine is protected as far as it can be, and the advantage of good seasons. What class of men in this colony are so well placed as this section of the community? And yet they positively deny to any other section the least concession. They will not allow them an opportunity of testing whether they can live cheaply with the duties off the food supply or not. The whole howl comes from a section of the community which has been hitherto, and is now, enjoying all the advantages of the position. Remember, this motion does not demand, it does not ask for, the total abolition of the duties: it asks merely for a reduction. But the Government tell us they will neither remove nor will they reduce the duties. Well, it is for the House to say how they are going to deal with the question, and whether they will force the hands of the Government to do what is obviously fair to the majority. We hear a great deal about the butter, bacon, cheese, and milk, and all that sort of thing, produced in the dairying districts, and we go down to Bunbury and find Victorian butter, bacon, potatoes, and tinned milk in Bunbury itself. In Bunbury, which I am told is the home of the potato and the pig, they cannot grow enough butter and they cannot grow enough bacon, and they have to live on tinned milk. [A MEMBER: They can grow politicians.] Well, yes, they grow good politicians down there, do they not? On the top of all this we have other duties, and the duty which presses most heavily is the duty on meat. What can be more unfair than these differential duties, which impose three times as much duty on the frozen as on the live meat? Can anything be more unfair? I particularly urge hon. members to look at this phase of the question, and see how unfairly these meat duties bear on the community. For years past there has

been some agitation for a reduction of the stock tax, and we have had left-handed promises that this tax will be removed; yet in spite of that, down comes paragraph 22 of the Governor's Speech, and says they will not alter the tariff at all, and they certainly will not reduce the meat duties. I hope some hon. member on the other side of the House will bring in a Bill—and I will assist him—to reduce the meat duties, and, if they are allowed, I honestly believe most hon. members of the House would support such a measure. They certainly will, if they are guided by the views of their constituents and their own individual views. The advantage of reducing the duties on frozen meat would be great to the farmer himself, for this very reason.

A MEMBER: The farmers would not eat frozen meat.

MR. LEAKE: The farmers would eat anything. If we reduce these duties on frozen meat, we must undoubtedly increase the importation, and we should bring down the price of meat which we see in the butchers' shops. It would hit a few members of the community: it would break up perhaps a ring or two.

A MEMBER: It might hurt the lawyers.

MR. LEAKE: It would not hurt the lawyers; it would hurt the meat ring, as we know and as the member for East Fremantle knows. So far as the Treasury is concerned, if we reduced the duties on this frozen meat and increased the importation of meat, the greater portion of which goes to our goldfields, it would have to be carried over our railways. We should get in increased freights that which we should possibly lose in duties. At any rate there is some compensation. There would be a direct advantage, and there would also be the indirect advantage of enabling people to eat this form of food and getting accustomed to buying it at a cheaper rate, and the reduction would have the inestimable advantage of enabling the butchers to sell it as fresh meat, as we know they constantly do; so that even they would reap a corresponding advantage to themselves—they who set their faces against this reduction. Another possible advantage is that we might so accustom ourselves to eating this form of food, that we should find it desirable to establish meat-freezing works

in our midst, and that would be an inestimable boon to the squatter in the North, who could bring his live cattle to the Southern centres of population, slaughter them in the place, put the carcasses into the frozen chamber, and distribute the meat over our goldfields. We should have many indirect advantages. We must have, and I submit to this honourable House we should insist upon, a reduction of these meat duties. Referring to the condition of the pastoralists up North, and I am sorry to observe the hon. member for the Murchison (Mr. Hooley) is not in his place, if we make close inquiry we will find that the squatter is so unfortunately placed that he has now to draw, not upon his surplus stock for his food supply, but owing to losses and so forth he has really to encroach upon and kill the mass of his flocks and herds for the butcher. If we take the duty off live stock, the squatter will have a little advantage there, though perhaps he won't care about it. Still he will not be absolutely crushed, and it will give him time to recuperate.

MR. A. FORREST: You don't understand that question.

MR. LEAKE: Perhaps I do not, but I know enough to throw a suggestion out to catch the hon. member, and I know perfectly well we shall get his view; and every hon. member of this House, though he may not respect the opinions of the member for West Kimberley, or may not be influenced by them, will yet be eager to listen to that hon. member on the meat question; so that I hope the hon. member, when he rises in his place, will point out the few mistakes which I am conscious I must necessarily make in talking on such a question as this. As I am here to collect information, I would like to collect it from him, as I know he understands all the internal arrangements of the meat ring, and the squatters' ring, and every other ring connected with these duties on the dead and live meat trade. That is the man I want to hear speak, and perhaps the hon. member and those who are with him may be able to convince me if I am wrong; but, as I am at present advised, I cannot see that anything he might say would be likely to change my opinion as to the necessity of reducing the duties on live and dead meat.



And particularly do I think it unfair that the duties should be continued in the disproportionate way in which they are now levied, but only by assimilating them to the greatest possible extent. The only reduction in duty that has been made in recent sessions was that made a short time ago when the duty was taken off tea and sugar. We know that remission of duty is not likely to have affected the cost of living to any appreciable extent; and, after all, the merchant and the importer, and particularly the brewer, were the only people benefited by that reduction. I mention this rather in anticipation of the arguments or assertions which may be made from the Government benches. Other members on that side may say: "Oh! look how liberal we were some time ago, when we took the duties off tea and sugar, and the price of these articles has not been affected very much by the abolition." But I fear the question of reducing the duties on tea and sugar affects hardly anyone, for it is only the big man—the merchant, the importer, the brewer, the director of a company, and those fellows—who are affected by such a reduction as that; but reduce the food duties generally, and you at once touch everybody. We have been asked, what are we going to suggest to make up a possible deficiency which there may be in the revenue, if we reduce the food duties? I say there is no necessity to make any suggestion, for the reason that, unless we go on building agricultural railways, and bridges over rivers which they cannot find, and other works of extravagance, as they have been doing in the past, there is no necessity to make up a deficiency, for there will be no deficiency. The food duties, in round figures, amount to something like £200,000 a year; but that is just about the amount of the unestimated surplus which the Treasurer finds in his hands at the end of the financial year; so that we shall have no deficiency to make up. There were over £200,000—[THE PREMIER: Over £300,000]—of a surplus for the last financial year; and if they get that amount of surplus, in the face of the necessity for reducing our food duties, how can we better dispose of that surplus than by a reduction of those duties? The Government and their supporters are always pluming themselves on their over-

flowing Treasury chest; but I notice that, when they have done pluming themselves, the Government always make a beginning by spending, if not wasting, the money. Could we not have done without many of the works which are now either constructed or in course of progress? Is not the reduction of the food duties of paramount importance, and should it not be placed before these and some other matters which I shall mention? Take, for instance, the Mint, the Observatory, the agricultural railways, the public buildings all over the country, the ornamentation of different parts of the country, and finally take, if you will—and I ask the Commissioner of Railways to make an explanation of this when he speaks—take those extravagant improvements along the Eastern railway, from Perth to Fremantle and onward to the Eastern districts—are not all these matters which might fairly well wait, and is not the reduction of these food duties and the cost of living of far greater importance than those works? How can the Government say they have never had an opportunity, that their finances would not allow them to make these reductions, when we know they have got £200,000 or £300,000 more than they can fairly well spend? They cannot spend it without wasting it, and yet they say "We cannot afford to reduce the food duties." There is no necessity, then, for suggesting some scheme of recouping the revenue, because the Treasury chest will not be depleted. The Government have got their surplus, and at what time can you more fairly reduce taxation than in a time of great prosperity? That is what we are asking for, and the reduction of this huge surplus in our revenue will go further to check extravagance than any course any hon. member can suggest. Those agricultural railways and those other extravagant works are, practically, built out of the breakfast table of the worker—they are built out of the food duties, every one of them. I have no doubt that any hon. member who doubts that assertion may try to prove the contrary; but there stands this fact staring us in the face, that we have an unestimated surplus of upwards of £200,000 in the year, and that sum fairly represents the amount of the food duties. I have not much more to urge for the consideration of hon.

members in support of this amendment; but I trust that, having due regard to the importance of this question, and to the interest that is taken in it outside, hon. members will really weigh the question carefully, and not be influenced by decisions formed, and possibly forced on them, before they came inside this House. If there is any member who feels strongly on the subject in the other direction to which I have referred, by all means let him urge his reasons, and try to convince me and those who think with me. We are capable of appreciating argument when it is advanced, but I must admit that arguments must be based on sound principles, before they can convince us that these food duties should not be reduced. We do not ask, remember, for the absolute removal of the duties. We are asking that they shall be reduced, but reduced at the present moment—that there must be no delay; and I have no doubt, judging from what is in the air, that the members of the Government will be urged by the more reasonable supporters on their side to consider this question, and make some sort of compromise that the duties shall be removed. Well, if hon. members will use their influence in that direction, the country will thank them for it, and I have no doubt they may act with some influence and with probable success. If I am anything of a prophet, we will be told before this session is over that the Government intend to consider the matter, and to reduce the duties either now or next session. We shall be told that; but I say we are going to insist on an immediate reduction of the food duties, and will not be satisfied with a reduction next year, because such a suggestion as that, in the face of the statement in His Excellency's Speech, could hardly be allowed, for there we have it particularly stated that the Government will not amend the food duties until “by a recurrence of the bountiful season we are this year experiencing, and by the good markets existing on our gold-fields, this colony must, in a short time, become self-supporting.” I really hope that if the Government will not reduce the duties this session, they will make a promise to do it next session, although I confess that such a promise will not satisfy me. We want them reduced at once. There is no time for delay, for the more

delay there is, the more opportunity you give for the Government to follow out the extravagant policy of the past, and we want to put a check as soon as possible on this unnecessary expenditure. But whatever that promise is, I appeal to hon. members to have it definitely stated, so that we may know what to expect, and not only what, but when. If we cannot get all we demand, all we plead for on this side, then we will take what we can get. But hon. members know very well that during the recess they run certain risks, if they go amongst their constituents and tell them—[MR. A. FORREST: That is their look-out.]—and tell them they have not thought fit to redeem the pledges made on the hustings to vote for a reduction of the food duties.

A MEMBER: Some of them will vote for a reduction.

MR. LEAKE: Those who are wise certainly will vote in the direction which is suggested by the amendment. If, every time a matter of public moment is brought forward, we are to be flouted with the expression that “the Ministry is going to resign,” I would myself support a Bill to secure the present Premier and Ministry in power for a term of years, if they will only give the country a reduction of the food duties. [MR. VOSPER: Fourteen years?] I do not mention any term, but leave that to the gentlemen on the Ministerial side of the House. Do anything you like to keep the Premier and his Government in power, but give us a reduction of the food duties—that is what I ask. [MR. DOHERTY: You would still growl.] We do not want to growl; and I am sorry an hon. member should make such a suggestion. What we want is to see measures brought in for the advancement of the country, and the best interests of the majority in the country considered. We do not ask that any one section should be protected or set against the other. The request in the amendment is a reasonable one. When this division comes off—and of course there will be a division—I venture to predict that those who vote with me for my amendment will represent the majority of the voters of Western Australia. I commend this amendment to the favourable consideration of hon. members, and I trust they will vote as their consciences dictate.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): Mr. Speaker, I think hon. members who have listened to the observations of the leader of the Opposition must have felt, as I felt, that if he had a good cause, he certainly did not do his very best with it. He seemed to have been overpowered with the weight that was upon him, and to be very depressed all through his utterances. I think the feeling must have been brought home to him that the amendment he has brought forward, and which has for its object the changing of the Government—[Opposition Members: No, no.]—does not meet with the approval of the people of this colony.

AN HON. MEMBER: Another red herring.

THE PREMIER: If the hon. member had really felt that the people of this colony desired that he and his friends should occupy these benches—

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That is not the question.

THE PREMIER: And become the dominant power in the country for a time—

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That is not the question.

THE PREMIER: I must ask the hon. member not to interrupt. If, as I have said, the leader of the Opposition had really felt that the people in this colony desired that he and his friends should occupy these benches, he no doubt would have made a speech with some fire in it, and would have tried, at any rate, to make out some case by stating facts and figures, rather than by, as he did, dealing with generalities. It is very easy for hon. members to get up and speak generally as to the advantage of cheap food: any one might do that. Every one desires, I think, that food should be as cheap as possible, and every one desires there should be freetrade. Every one desires there should be free intercourse, if free intercourse were advisable. Naturally we do not want any restrictions on our actions, or on our ways of doing business. It goes without saying that those who have to buy food or anything else desire to get it as cheaply as possible; but, in dealing with a great matter like this, one has to consider it from a national standpoint. We have to consider what is the case in other parts

of the world. There may be circumstances in this colony that are different altogether from circumstances that exist in every other place on earth. That, however, is very unlikely. In dealing with the question of protection or freetrade, we have a large experience to guide us throughout the whole of the civilised world. We know very well that in new countries—in all new countries, I may say—the practice has been, and is at the present time, to protect industries with a view of encouraging manufactures and promoting the settlement and development of the land. The leader of the Opposition has told us himself, and cannot get away from it, that the amendment to the Address-in-Reply must be taken by the Government as a motion of want of confidence. [A MEMBER: No, no.] It is no use interrupting and saying that this amendment must not be taken as a motion of want of confidence. If it was desired there should be some expression of opinion in regard to any particular matter connected with the colony, and there was no desire to harass or imperil the Government, there were plenty of opportunities of obtaining that expression of opinion. But the hon. member for Albany has taken the course he desired. There is no doubt that he intended to find a paragraph in the Governor's Speech on which to fasten a motion of want of confidence. I knew he was going to fasten such an amendment on some paragraph or other, and I threw down the gauntlet and gave him the opportunity he so much desired.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: There is no harm in taking up the gauntlet.

THE PREMIER: The form of amendment must appear to everyone as very mild. Those who are inexperienced in politics might even think it of no real consequence to the Opposition or to the Government. But the amendment is not mild in terms because the hon. member desired it should be so. He would have desired to make it as strong as possible: but he was not able to get a sufficient following from Opposition members and from some, perhaps, on this side of the House—but at any rate from the Opposition—in order to make it of the strength he desired. So I do not thank the hon. member for the mildness of the amendment. It is so mild that even I myself

might almost say that I am in accord with it, in the abstract. Let none of us be led away from the issue by the way the amendment is expressed. The issue is whether the present Government or our friends opposite are to administer the affairs of this country. So far as I am able to judge—though, of course, perhaps I am looking at the question from a prejudiced point of view, while trying not to do so—I believe that throughout the colony, and I think the hon. member knows this, there is no general dissatisfaction with the present Government. We have been through a general election and have come back from the general election; and our reception by the people of the colony is shown by the men they returned to the House, and by the general and generous support the Government received. The only difference between a majority of the House and hon. members opposite is in regard to the proper time to deal with the question of the tariff. That is the only difference between the majority, and hon. members who were elected to oppose the Government and are determined to oppose the Government on all possible occasions. The question of the tariff—the policy that should be adopted, the things that should be taxed, and those that should be free, and the amount of the tax—is an old one. I suppose it has been a controversial subject from the beginning of time, almost—at any rate from the beginning of civilisation. A few countries believe in freetrade, but these countries are very few on the earth's surface. The great country we all come from is one great exception, but England is a great manufacturing country, with iron and coal. Britain's greatness is due to the energy of her people, and her natural production of coal and iron, and with these advantages she has become the great centre of commerce of the world. The people will tell you in England, and perhaps my friend here, Mr. Illingworth, who was a protectionist in Victoria—[MR. ILLINGWORTH: And is yet.] Oh, that is all right. I will fire no more powder and shot at you. I was going to say that in England you will be told the greatness of the country is due to freetrade. My own opinion is that its greatness is not due to that cause, but is due to the great natural production of coal and iron, and the great energy of the English people.

This question of freetrade and protection is one in which there is a lot of room for controversy. Everyone who is in trade desires to do the best in his business. If he is an artisan or a manufacturer, he likes to protect his productions, especially when they are in their infancy. A manufacturer will tell you that he does not desire protection for ever, but only wants a good start in order to compete with other countries. The labourer wants protection because he does not desire anyone to come into the country who will work at a cheaper rate than he himself thinks he is entitled to. I do not blame him for that. And he has a great objection to coloured labour. No doubt black is not as good as white; but the objection is that the labourer does not like the competition of the coloured man who lives on next to nothing, hoards his money, and carries it away with him, does not become a good citizen, and is not wanted. The labourer does not want any competition, whether from black, white, or yellow. The competitor may be as white as the Englishman, but if the competitor works for less wages, his competition is not desired, and therefore protection is called for. Then the farmer, as well as the grazier, will say he too wants protection for a time, until he can develop the resources of the country; and so they go on. Every producer, I think I may say, more or less desires for a time, he will tell you, to be protected. [MR. VOSPER: What about the miner?] He wants everything. He wants you to do everything for him. If he goes into the bush, he wants a "progress committee" formed and a grant of money. He wants a troop of police to protect him. He wants water provided for him. In fact he wants everything he can get, and quite right too. He wants his food as cheap as possible, and he wants public batteries erected wherever he goes. [MR. VOSPER: He pays for all these things.] Then there is the great manufacturer. He employs a thousand men, and he too wants a great deal of consideration. Besides these considerations this great country consists of a temperate part and a tropical part. We have different classes of people, and different industries are carried on in these different places. The man at the

North does not want to pay any duty on articles of food that he consumes, unless you give him an equivalent. He says, "I do not mind your taxing flour to help the farmer, but you must give me something in return." And then we put a duty on stock, in order to compensate that class of men. In some countries large sums of money are given from the Treasury to help one section of the community. If a man produces a certain article, a sum of money is given to him direct. In Victoria, for example, this class of protection finds great favour, and no doubt it has stimulated some industries, especially the butter industry. The object of this motion, although it is put in very mild terms, is to oust the Government. The hon. member does not seem to have any heart in his motion, but he has confessed to his object, and therefore no one can have any doubt about it. If the hon. member desired to get the feeling of this House on any particular matter, he could have done it without moving an amendment to the Address-in-Reply. I would say to those members who have supported me in the past, and to the new members who are supporting the Government: don't be trapped by any such manoeuvre as that of the hon. member. Are hon. members going to give away the substance for the shadow? Are they going to be made use of by the hon. member and his few friends on the opposite bench? Are they going to injure their own party by giving up the power they have in this colony, and to hand it over to the hon. member and his two or three followers, because they happen to sympathise with him on one single measure? I am quite sure hon. members are not going to do anything of the sort. The country does not want the hon. member and his friends. They have not won their spurs, and they have no right to ask the country to trust them with the reins of government. When they have won their spurs, and the country says it is tired of us, that will be the time for the hon. member to move the motion of which he has given notice. I will ask hon. members what are the principles which should guide us in trying to build up this great country? I cannot get any food for argument from the hon. member's remarks, because he gave us none. What are these principles

which are to guide us in trying to develop this great country? I will give you my own later on, but I will quote you just now the views of an hon. gentleman who sits on the Opposition bench, and who made a speech in this House on the 16th of July, 1895. The remarks which I shall quote represent what we consider, what is considered in Australia, perhaps I may say everywhere, the protectionist view in regard to the fiscal question. I was under the impression that the hon. member from whom I am going to quote was a freetrader; but he has told us to-night that he is a protectionist. The speech was made in connection with a proposition of the Government to remove the sugar and tea duties. The hon. member said—[MR. HUBBLE: Who is the member?—] I will tell you later on. The hon. member said—

I do think that in this stage of the colony's development, when there is so much to do and when there are calls from all parts of the country for the expenditure of money, the construction of works will do more to develop and help the people than any remission of taxation such as is proposed.

Speaking for himself then, and for others too, apparently, for he uses the word "we." The hon. member goes on to say:

We contend that it is wiser in the interests of the country to raise revenue on those things which will encourage the productions of the country, than to raise it on those things which cannot be produced here.

These are the very sentiments of the Government. They were also the sentiments of the hon. member for Nannine, who has since been elected for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth). I will also quote from the words of another hon. member on the opposite bench, whom I have often designated as representing young Australia, and who always has been an out-and-out protectionist. Here is a quotation from a speech made by that hon. gentleman in Sydney on September 8th in this year, during the Federal Convention debates, which I think altogether suits the arguments of many members on this side of the House. He says, speaking in regard to West Australia entering into the proposed federation:—

Hon. members no doubt will agree with me when I say that our gold, valuable though it may be, will be useless unless we can succeed,

while we have it, in settling upon our lands a good agricultural population.

Again he says, "We say," speaking for the whole of the people—no doubt he thought he was speaking for the people of Western Australia,

We say that if we succeed in developing Western Australia, and in settling there an agricultural population, we are adding a new province to the Commonwealth; but we shall not succeed in this unless we have the power of levying customs duties. At the present moment, with the assistance of customs taxation, we can encourage the settlement of an agricultural population upon the land. During the last twelve months an enormous increase has taken place in this direction. Thousands of acres of land have been opened up, and thousands of people have come to our shores and settled down there.

Again he says:

It is vital to the future development of Western Australia that, for five or ten years, she shall collect such duties under a system of protection as will assist, so far as is possible, the agricultural industry of the colony.

Yet again he says:

We have no desire to build up industries other than those which will directly settle people on the soil. We have no desire to have a protective system applied to all sorts of industries. That which we want to do is to get people on to the soil, and now that the opportunity has arisen to do this we do not want it taken from us.

Later on, in the course of the same speech, speaking to an interruption from the Hon. Sir P. O. Fysh, the same hon. member said:

Surely the hon. member must know that it is the competition in intercolonial produce which will injure us in connection with the desire I am emphasising—namely, the desire to settle people on our soil.

The hon. member concluded his speech on that occasion as follows:—

We wish power to levy duties having for their object the settlement of people on the soil. Foreign products can come in as they do now. We do not want to levy duties in connection with foreign products, but in connection with agricultural products; and we want to do this solely for the purpose of settling people on the soil, and, as I have pointed out, adding a new province to the Commonwealth. Unless we have this power, not only shall we not come into the federation until we have settled people on the soil; but I question—strongly attached though I am to the cause—whether I myself would advocate any entrance to a federal union which would have the effect of destroying the one opportunity we have had for sixty years of securing a population for Western Australia.

The hon. member, whose eloquent oration I have just quoted, was the representative of East Perth (Mr. Walter James). I will say that these sentiments, both the sentiments of the member for Central Murchison and of the member for East Perth, are the principles which I have advocated, and which I desire should guide me in the one great object that I have at heart, of trying to subdue the wilderness, and make this great country self-supporting and productive. One great argument has been used in regard to this matter—it is an argument we have heard used time after time, namely that a large amount of money is being sent away from the colony. We know very well that that amount has been increasing. It was one of the arguments I used when introducing the Coolgardie water scheme into this House. I hope we will be able to put a stop to this drain on the resources of the colony. I am certainly desirous of putting a stop to it; but it will be of little use inducing people to come here, if they send all the money they obtain away to the other colonies for food. I do not mean to say that there would be no gain from such a population coming here, because we should have the benefit of the population so far as it goes; but how will that population be of great advantage to us unless we can, at the same time, do something to improve the land of the colony, and enable it to produce the food which these people require? I say, by all means let us encourage the families to come here, and at the same time let us encourage the producer in every way we possibly can. Those persons who write in the newspapers about inducing people to come to the country only mention the wives and the families. We want others besides. We want all the people we can get. There has been a large influx of population during the last few years, and the men have come here first. If it had not been for the public works policy of the Government—the spending of thousands, I may say of millions, on public works—what would have become of the workmen who have come to this country? The Government spent last year over four and a half millions of money in the country. Why is it that the families do not come here? I do not admit that they do not come, for

they have come in large numbers. I say that they have come and are coming. Is it not a fact that our population during last year and the year before increased by 30,000 persons each year? Does not that show that the people are coming to the country? It is a fact that some men are leaving their friends behind them, and are able and willing to send support to them. That is not a fact to be regretted, because in time the men will bring their wives and families over here. Those men who are seeking their fortune are not going to break up their little homes all at once. That would not be at all a prudent proceeding. They come here first to see if they like the place, and whether they will make up their mind to remain here, and during that time they send what they can to support their families in the home they have left. As soon as a worker has established himself—and it takes fully twelve months, or even longer, to do so—then the man brings over his family. That is the ordinary procedure of a prudent man. We do not want—I do not want—the men to come here with their families and find themselves stranded. The strong and able-bodied fellow should come first, and then send for his family. There is one great reason I can give—it was not given by the hon. member—why the men working on the goldfields do not bring their families here with them. It is the absence of cheap water. Would any man bring his family to a place where there is no water to wash them with, and no water to drink except at a high price? These duties are nothing compared with the great expense of providing a family with water. The whole of the duties on meat only come to a few shillings a year, whereas supplying a home with water would come to £20 a year at least. What is the use of talking about a few shillings? [Mr. LEAKE: Then take them off.] The hon. member would advise me to take them off because they are only a few shillings, but he will not help me, he never did help me, and he will not do it now, to give these people a cheap water supply. It shows that the hon. member is not in earnest—it is simply a party cry with him. We hear a great deal about the money sent out of the colony, but we hear nothing from the hon. gentleman opposite or the news-

papers that are supporting him—or rather, that are supporting his views, not him—we do not hear a word about the money sent out of the colony to buy food. What amount do we send out of the country to buy dairy and agricultural produce every year? In 1896—I take these figures because they are in the report of the Collector of Customs—we sent out of the colony £783,372 for dairy and agricultural produce, and £70,000 for sheep and cattle for slaughter. The cry is, “Keep the money in the country.” My cry too is, “Keep the money from going out.” My idea is to keep the money in the country which is sent out for supplying food. We can supply it here as well as in any place in the world, and my desire and object is to see the country supply enough for our requirements. Let the £1,000,000 which we send out of the country go into the pockets of the farmers and graziers, rather than send it to other lands, to support in another country—white, or black, or yellow, or any other kind of labour. Let us make our colony self-supporting, and not send the money to other parts of the world. And what will happen if we go on in this fashion and remove the food duties? The hon. member does not say, “Sweep them away.” He dare not do it. He is trying to trim, to catch a few votes. He could not say—although some of his followers wanted him to say it—“Remove them.” He said “Only reduce them.” The hon. member said that this colony was not able to produce the necessary food for the people. As to that, I say it is a standing disgrace to every man in the country if we cannot supply enough produce; it is a disgrace and a stigma to every man who is in the colony for anyone to be able to say of this country, with all its advantages—with railways from one end of the country to the other, and with every inducement that has been given for cultivating the soil—to say that we cannot supply enough food for 160,000 people. As I said at Bunbury, if the people do not like farming, and do not go in for the cultivation of the land, I say let the Government clear, crop, and cultivate the land.

A MEMBER: That is treading closely on socialism.

At 6-25 p.m. the Speaker left the Chair.

At 7:30 p.m. the Speaker resumed the Chair.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): Mr. Speaker, when we adjourned, I was bringing under the notice of hon. members the fact that, for 1896, this colony sent away to purchase dairy and agricultural produce the sum of £783,372, and also £70,000 to purchase cattle and sheep for slaughter. I drew from this fact that the cry which we heard so much about, as to the money sent out of the colony to provide for the maintenance of the families of men already here, was a cry which I, too, joined in, with regard to the large amount of money that was being sent out of the colony to purchase food which people here required. And I went on to say that if we do not encourage and stimulate production, we will soon have to send a good deal more money away every year for agricultural and dairy produce than we do at the present time. I now come to that part of what I have to say which deals with what we are doing in order to stimulate and encourage production. Everyone in this House, and I am sure everyone in the colony who has watched the course of events during the last six or seven years, must be convinced that the present Government have always desired to encourage the productions of the colony, and to make it self-supporting. We have tried all sorts of means with that object in view. We have amended the tariff in some directions, by way of enabling all kinds of machinery, tools, and agricultural implements to reach the producer free of duty. We have introduced the homestead system, which has worked so well and done so much for the settlement of the United States of America, and also for the Dominion of Canada—the homestead system which gives 160 acres of land free to anyone who likes to live upon it and cultivate it; and we have also introduced the Agricultural Bank Act, by which the man who gets his land free, if he gives evidence of *bonâ fides*, is enabled to borrow from that Bank at a cheap rate of interest, and for a term extending over a long period of years. He has over thirty years in which to pay the money with which he is enabled to improve the land he has settled on. These two measures—the Homesteads

Act and the Agricultural Bank Act—are intended to work together; and they are, I think, beginning to bear good fruit. You must not forget that in this colony, considering the experiences we have gone through during the last few years, there have been great inducements to persons to run away from the land, and seek their fortune on the goldfields. I should like to know who is there amongst us who, being young and strong and enterprising, would have settled down upon the land for the purpose of cultivating it during the last few years, when within a few hundred miles of him there were all those rich discoveries of gold going on day by day? It was not reasonable to expect that, during the early days of gold-mining in this colony, when people were coming here in hundreds and thousands, there would be any great attention given to the occupation and settlement of the land. But that time now is coming. The time has arrived already when persons who come here are giving their attention to agriculture, the reason being that a large population is now settled in the colony in districts which are not producing, and in that way a good market is established. People are now turning their attention—with success, I believe, and in large numbers—to the occupation and settlement of the soil. The Agricultural Bank Act has been in force only two years. During the first year, I may say, it was not availed of to a very large extent; for although the money was there, people would not take it, because they did not understand the advantages offered. But these are now beginning to be understood; and I feel sure that this measure which I have been the means of placing on the Statute Book of the colony will remain long after I have passed away and am forgotten; and I dare prophesy that it will be many and many a long year before we find any Legislative Assembly willing to repeal an Act which is capable of doing so much good, by reclaiming the wilderness and making the people happy. During the operations of these two years—the figures are not yet very large, I am sorry to say, but they are going to be large directly, and although they are small, the measure has had a great influence—we have advanced only £22,300 from the Agricultural Bank in actual money, up to the present date.



For this advance there has been £45,793 worth of improvements completed. We have promised to advance a little over £30,000 more for improvements worth somewhat under £60,000; and, when all is completed—which will be very shortly, because the people on the land are hard at work—we will have added, by the operations of this little bank in two years, 23,664 acres to the area of cultivation of the colony; also 26,728 acres have been cleared, and 27,397 have been ringbarked. Surely this is a very good record for a small institution, working quietly amongst you, trying to overcome the great difficulty which we have to combat, viz., that of settling people on the land. I think this is a very good record. It is small, no doubt; but it is not small as compared with the cultivation that exists in the whole colony. I have not the figures by me, but I think that the cultivation of the whole colony is less than 100,000 acres at the present time; yet, as I have said, in two years from the commencement of the operations of this institution, over 23,000 acres have been added to the cultivation, and 26,000 have been cleared. In a short time, next year or the year after, what will be the result of the operations of this bank alone? The progress which has already been achieved may be quadrupled. That being so, an index is provided of what is going on in regard to cultivation throughout the colony. That is one phase of the question. There is also the agricultural development. We have all heard that during the last year there was a great demand for land. People came from other places to seek for land, and the purchase of the Great Southern Railway by the Government threw open a great area for settlement. If you compare the conditional purchases in existence at the end of 1896 with those in existence on the 30th September of this year, you will see what marvellous progress has been made. All lands are taken up under conditional purchases, even when they may have been paid for outright, because improvements have to be completed before the land is finally granted. In 1896 there were 628,545 acres under conditional purchase, while on the 30th September this year there were 862,955 acres, showing an increase, in nine months, of 234,410 acres, all land taken up by the public from the Crown.

Surely that fact alone tells a tale which shows the people are now giving their attention to the occupation and settlements of the lands. I said just now that I had not by me the figures in regard to cultivation. I find I have; and that in 1895 the area under cultivation was reported as 97,821 acres, while in 1896 the figure was 111,738. I am sorry to say that 13,817 acres is not a large increase, but when the totals of 1897 are told the increase will be considerably greater, as we will have to deal with about 300,000 acres of new land taken up this year. All this goes to show that production is going on, and the efforts now being made should not be retarded, but encouraged. I do not want to encourage one class of people excessively at the expense of another class. All classes and sections of the community should be considered in this matter. There should be no excessive duties imposed on one section for the benefit of another section. What we desire is that the colony should be self-supporting. That is the first thing. We wish therefore to encourage production, and I have already dealt with that point. It seems to me a scandal, and it makes my blood boil when I think that, in view of the immense territory entrusted to us, any one should dare to say, as has been said, that we are not able to produce sufficient for the requirements of our own 160,000 people. That reproach must not be allowed to remain. If the reproach cannot be removed by ordinary means, there is only one policy, and I say this advisedly. Some may say I am advocating a socialistic doctrine; but whether it be a socialistic doctrine or not, I will go for it. I believe in cultivating and improving the lands and making the country productive, and if people are not numerous enough or will not do it, then we, the proprietors—this Parliament who are the proprietors—will take steps to do it. I believe the Government could cultivate the land, and make it pay as well as any private individual, if we got the proper men to manage. I will not follow such a policy, unless there is necessity; but I assure you that during this session or the next, if I am not satisfied that the lands of the colony are being occupied and cultivated rapidly enough, I will advocate—as I have advocated two or three

times before, but unsuccessfully—that power should be given to the Government to clear the land and let it to the people for cultivation and improvement. I see no reason why that could not be done. I have advocated it here time after time, and unsuccessfully, but I shall try again. The conditions of this colony are not the same as elsewhere. The country is thickly wooded, and the expense of clearing is so great that it is almost impossible for a person of moderate capital to enter upon the undertaking. In these conditions I see no reason why the Government should not enter on the land, clear it and make it ready for cultivation, in the same way as they construct railways and other public works for the good of the community.

MR. GEORGE: You cannot get food out of red tape.

THE PREMIER: The Government and their supporters are of opinion that it is better to give employment to our own colonists than to people of other countries. I am overflowing with good-will to my countrymen in other parts of the world, but I think it my first duty to first look after the people here, and see that they are contented and prosperous. Let legislators of other countries perform their first duty and look to their own people.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: What about railway clerks?

THE PREMIER: The manufacturer and artisan and labourer are anxious not to have competition. I do not blame them a bit. They think they ought not to have to compete with the foreigner, and especially with a foreigner with a coloured skin. They are especially anxious on this latter point because the conditions of black labour and white labour are not the same, and the competition is not fair. I would like to ask, why should the farmer and grazier have to compete with the whole world, black and white? I appeal to those who represent the cities, and the hon. member for South Fremantle in particular, as to whether they are prepared to advocate that artisans and manufacturers should compete with black and white throughout the world. I am sure the hon. member is not prepared to advocate that policy, and will vote against it; but he is willing to give a vote to turn

out this Government in order that the farmers and graziers of this country shall compete with the black and white people throughout the civilised world, and the uncivilised world too. What black mark is there on the farmer and grazier that he should not have the same consideration as the manufacturer and the artisan? The farmer and grazier should have some consideration, because he is the foundation of the prosperity of the country. He lives an isolated life, and he produces the food we eat. [MR. ILLINGWORTH: He does not.] Yes, he does, and if you give him a chance, he will produce more. While the hon. member for South Fremantle, who represents a large population, is willing to protect every industry in his constituency, he is not only willing to vote against protection for the farmer and grazier, but is even willing to go so far as to vote against his old friends, the men who put him where he is, and who have voted for him for the last four times in Parliament. He is willing to vote and turn out his old friends here, and is inconsistent in refusing to the farmer and grazier the treatment he asks for everyone of his constituents engaged in trade. I think I said before, and I must say it again, that the hon. member for Albany, if he had been in real earnest in this matter—if he wished to carry out the pledge he gave to his constituents to abolish these duties—would have brought in a much stronger amendment. He does not ask us in the amendment to abolish the duties, but only to reduce them. Did he tell his constituents that he was in favour of a reduction small or large of the duties? No; he told his constituents he wanted to abolish the duties. He is inconsistent, and I hope hon. members on this side of the House at any rate will not be led into any trap by the mildness of the expressions used by the hon. member. In my speech delivered at Bunbury, and addressed to the people of the whole colony, I did not say I was opposed to an amendment of the tariff. I have never said that. There are a great many duties in the tariff that I would be willing to abolish or reduce. There is not the slightest doubt that, when we come to amend the tariff in the careful way it requires to be dealt with, some duties on

food can be abolished, while others can be reduced. [MR. ILLINGWORTH : It is coming.] But I say this matter is not to be taken in the haphazard way proposed by the hon. member for Albany. It will have to be taken with great care and discretion.

A MEMBER : As much as you like, only do it.

THE PREMIER : I want to ask whether it is to be the policy of this country that all other industries and occupations are to be left to look after themselves, except gold mining? Are we to produce gold only, and buy food from others, leaving our country a wilderness? Is that to be the policy we are to try and carry on in this country, trusting everything but gold mining to Providence? To do so would be a very easy matter indeed. Could anyone, who thinks over the matter, justify such a proceeding as one worthy of a Government or of any class of people? I do not intend to enter to-night on the great question of protection and freetrade. We know what the experience of the world is. We are not the only people in the world, and not the most wise, probably; but we have the great fact before us that all new countries are protective. Excepting Turkey, perhaps the only two countries who are really freetrade are the mother country and New South Wales. All the great States of America, Canada, also France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Russia are protective. Are we not to assume that the protective policy is wise for them, and that if it is wise for them it is wise for us? We are in a new country, and have to stimulate and encourage every occupation, and settle the community on the land. There is another argument I wish to use. It is not a very good one from my own point of view, but it is one which appeals to some people. Why should this colony be the dumping ground for the produce, free of duty, of every other colony in Australia, when they will not let us send a single thing to them, free of duty, that we can produce? There is the timber industry, for instance, which perhaps is one of the greatest industries we have. Can we send any timber to any of the other colonies, except New South Wales? No, not one. They tax us to such an extent that our timber trade

with them has ceased. We cannot afford, owing to the duty, to send a stick of our timber into any of the colonies, except New South Wales.

MR. WILSON : Oh, yes, we can.

THE PREMIER : Very little.

MR. WILSON : There is South Australia.

THE PREMIER : That is recently, then.

MR. WILSON : Ever since I came into the colony.

THE PREMIER : Will the hon. member tell us how much? I know some mills, which used to export to the Eastern Colonies, have absolutely ceased sending, and I know there is no large trade with South Australia or any of the Eastern Colonies at the present time. At any rate, we know that all articles of food are protected to such a large extent by the other colonies that, if we had such articles to send to them, we would not be able to because of the heavy taxation. You cannot send a ton of flour into Victoria unless you pay £5, nor a ton of flour into South Australia unless you pay a considerable amount—I think it is £2. I do not say it is a very good argument, but is it reasonable that these other colonies should not allow us to send them anything except by paying them a prohibitive tax, and that we should admit their goods free? We are sending them enough money already. Victoria is a protective colony. Most of the new people in this colony have come from there, and have come here to seek their fortune. We imported from Victoria about £2,500,000 worth of goods last year. Those persons who came here from there must have voted for protection while there, for protection has been in vogue there ever since the days of the Premiership of Sir Graham Berry, thirty years ago. Those men who have come here to seek their fortune from Victoria, whom I have always welcomed, must have endeavoured, by their votes in Victoria, to stimulate local industry; and what is the result? People will tell you that Victoria is depressed, and that it is all on account of her fiscal policy; but my own opinion is—I am only a looker-on—that she is going to return to her former position of prosperity. Her public debt is the lowest in Australia, notwithstanding the number of railways and other

public works she has constructed. Her indebtedness is only £40 per head, whereas all the other colonies have a debt of over £60 per head; and Victoria has manufactures and industries established, and the only difficulty with her is that she cannot find an outlet for her products and her manufactures. She is working towards intercolonial freetrade and federation, knowing very well that when she obtains federation and intercolonial freetrade she will have the power, owing to the start her protection policy has given her, of competing and of commanding the markets of the whole of Australasia. She has built up, under the system of protection, an immense industry for her dairy produce, her pastoral products, and her manufactures. Now she has come to the end of her tether, and she wants an outlet to a far greater extent than she at present possesses. When I was in Sydney the other day, I placed a paper on the table of the Federal Convention showing the position of this colony, and, among other information the paper contained a complete list of goods imported into Western Australia free of duty. The public men there were utterly astonished at the immensity of our free list, and it is by far the largest free list in any of the colonies, excepting, of course, New South Wales. Last year we imported into this colony £2,400,000 worth of produce absolutely free. It has been our policy in the past that as far as is possible those articles of food in general use which we cannot ourselves produce shall be absolutely free. I am convinced that the very best way to permanently cheapen food is to produce it. [MR. LEAKE: You cannot do it.] The hon. member must have very little faith in this immense territory, if he says we cannot grow enough food for 160,000 people. We can grow enough food for millions of people, if we only have the opportunity. Another argument which has been used and has to be considered is this. The question is often asked, why is it that the Customs duties per head in this colony are so much higher than the Customs duties per head in the other colonies? This, no doubt, is a matter requiring consideration. The reason why, in my opinion, the Customs revenue in this colony per head is so much greater than in any other colony is that we

have a much larger adult population here, and a very much larger amount is expended on intoxicants and narcotics per head than in the other colonies. Out of a Customs revenue last year amounting, to one million sterling, nearly one-half was produced from intoxicants and narcotics, while in Victoria it was a little over one-third. The adult males of the colony constitute more than one-half of the population, while in Victoria they do not exceed one-third. Our people, of course, being adults and leading roving lives, consume a great deal more of dutiable goods than the ordinary run of people do in an old established colony like Victoria. Another reason is that the people here, taking them altogether, are better off than in the other colonies. Take them man for man, they have a great deal more money at the present time in this colony than they have in the other Australian colonies; and there has been an immense expenditure going on: an immense amount of capital has also been invested here from London. All that tends to make wages greater and money more plentiful; and thus it comes about that people here have been more extravagant. I do not want to use the word "extravagant" in a harsh way; but we have lived better and spent more on what I may term luxuries than if our circumstances were not so good; and I will prove that later on. It is a fact worth considering that while Victoria obtained a third of her Customs revenue in 1896 from food stuffs, Western Australia obtained only a quarter from the same source. Our whole contributor to the revenue on account of food duties through the Customs you will find from the very excellent paper laid on the table to-night, by the Government Actuary, is only about £2 per head of the population, only one quarter of our total Customs revenue coming from that source, whereas in Victoria one-third was derived from the same source. That clearly shows that we are paying less for food duties than the Victorians. The people here paid £6 14s. 4d. per head more in Customs duties than the people of Victoria. It was made up in this way. Taking the population in the middle of 1896 as 120,000—I might have made it more but I wish to be absolutely fair—we provided £3 1s. 1d. per

head more in this colony from intoxicants and narcotics than they did in Victoria. For food stuffs we provided £1 12s. more; for drapery and clothing, 9s. 4d. more; and £1 11s. 11d. more for miscellaneous. The first item may be reduced by a few shillings—five or six shillings—by an excise duty which exists in Victoria but which does not exist here. We find however that for every £100 worth of food which was imported into Victoria a duty of £29 18s. 3d. was levied, whereas for every £100 worth of food introduced here a duty of £18 6s. 10d. was levied. My object in quoting these figures—I know they are tiresome—is to show that the case against Western Australia in regard to the Customs derived from food duties is not so bad as it has been made out, and that the principal reason for the amount of Customs revenue in 1896 being so heavy as compared with Victoria was that £3 12s. per head came from intoxicants and stimulants alone, while Victoria only contributed 11s. 9d. per head from the same source. This shows that the people of Victoria are able to cut their coat according to their cloth, and that when hard times come upon them they do not spend their money in intoxicants and narcotics, but reduce their expenditure in that direction to the very lowest limits. It has been shown that if our tariff had been applied to the colony of Victoria in the year 1896, they would have received £332,541 less than they actually received under their own tariff, so that our tariff does not seem to be so excessive as that of Victoria. The most peculiar part of it is that the reduced amount they would have received would have been very nearly all attributable to the food duties, their tariff on food stuffs being much higher than ours. It has been pointed out in the papers that, after all, the duties on food stuffs in this colony for 1896, a very fair year, only amounted to 10d. per head per week, whereas 1s. 5d. per head per week was paid for narcotics and stimulants. The people were willing to spend nearly double the amount on narcotics and stimulants that they did for the whole of the food duties. This matter wants considering. I will prove later on that the people here are as a whole, doing well and are not suffering from excessive taxation. One shilling and fivepence per head per

week was contributed to the revenue by the people of this colony in 1896 for narcotics and stimulants, while only 10d. per head per week went for the whole of the food duties. The following facts may not have occurred to everyone, in thinking over this matter, but they have occurred to me many a time. If this country is so expensive a place to live in as people say it is, you must, in considering the question, look at the question in a relative sense of income and expenditure, and take living in a relative sense. If I am getting a thousand a year, and live in such a way as to save a fair amount of my earnings, it is better for me to be in a place where I can do that than to be in a place where I can live cheaper, but where my income is, in comparison to my expenditure on living, much less. If this country is so expensive a place to live in, in comparison with the salaries and wages earned—if that is the case, how is it possible that the people here, living under these conditions, can afford to send these immense amounts of money out of the colony to their wives and families to support them in other lands? How is it possible for them to do that, unless they are able to save a good deal of money out of their earnings, and beyond that, how is it possible for them—the working people generally—to send all this money to their friends in other colonies, and also to place in the Savings Bank of this country nearly a million of money? I ask you how is that? That fact alone answers the whole argument. If this place is expensive to live in, other conditions must be equal to it, or the people would not be able to send money away, and to also place money in the Savings Bank. I know very well, that the house rent in Perth is excessive—I do not know much about what it is in Fremantle, but the members for Fremantle can speak as to that—but in Perth it certainly is excessive. I know, of my own knowledge, one house which a few years ago was let for £50 a year, and that was considered a good rent, yet at the present time the owner receives £200 a year for it! There is another instance within my knowledge where a house is let for £150 a year, which 25 years ago was let for £32 a year. It is the same house exactly, not altered in any way. I mention this to show that house

rent is a consideration. Do not let us, as honest men desirous of doing our duty, saddle the wrong horse with the cost of living. My idea is that the increased expense of living in Perth is nothing as compared to the increased cost of the house rent. I have servants of my own, and know their circumstances, and they tell me that if they had not been fortunate enough to have a little piece of ground and a cottage of their own, they would not be able to live on the wages which they get from me, and which are as good as any that are paid in the city. In this world people get as much as they can, and although members of this House and people in the street who write to the newspapers, talk about the increased cost of living, they fail to point out that some persons are extracting out of the pockets of the poor man excessive rentals, which are not justified by the expenditure that has been incurred. There is another thing I would like to point out, in the same line of argument I was following just now. Cheap food is not the only thing in the world. All of us here are in easy circumstances. I hope, neither rich nor poor. Do we ever think of the increased cost of food? We do not look to see if there is an increase of a farthing on bread or meat, or even two farthings. I do not think cheap food is the only thing in the world. I have been about the world somewhat, I have travelled over a great portion of it, and I have seen places where food is cheap and great poverty existing. There you get food almost for nothing. Very often where food is easily obtained, it causes idleness, and the struggle for life is too easy. There is another thing to which I should like to direct the attention of my friends—I think I can call them my friends, for I have never done any harm to them in my life, I mean the working classes—and that is, that cheap food often means cheap wages. If the conditions of life are easy, why it goes without saying that wages are as a rule low. I do not want to see in this country wages too cheap. Our great duty is to try and encourage self-reliance, to make the country self-supporting, and to make the people flourish and the country prosper. Why are the wages on the goldfields higher than in the city of Perth? Let the people who represent them tell

us. The only reason in my opinion is because the conditions of life there are worse. I know no other reason why a man can get more wages in out-of-the-way places than in Perth, other than the conditions of life are worse. A man has to pay more for things there.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: He can get water here for nothing.

THE PREMIER: The very thing my friend opposite will not give him on the Eastern goldfields.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: You will not give it to me (a Murchison water scheme).

THE PREMIER: We will deal with your matter at another time. We may give it to you, if you will be good. The reason why goods are dearer in some outlying places is that the conditions are worse, and the people have to spend more, and altogether that there is more discomfort; so that, of course, the people require better pay. The mover of the amendment talked like a great financier in regard to the easy way in which he would deal with this matter. He said, "You had £300,000 at the beginning of the financial year. Take that." But the hon. member knows that every year the balance is used up. Last year we absorbed the whole of the balance of £300,000 in our Estimates, and this year we shall also absorb it all. We never had so much revenue as at the present time; yet I shall have a considerable difficulty in trying to put on the Estimates the works in hand all over the colony, and providing for others that are pressing and should be carried out. The hon. member talks about taking £200,000 or £300,000 off the Estimates as if it was an easy matter. I tell him it is not an easy thing to take £200,000 off the Estimates, which he will find when he is Treasurer of the country. It is a difficult thing in a growing country like this to comply with the various and numerous demands, when we have so many works in hand. We shall use nearly half the revenue in carrying on the works we have in hand. You must remember that if you reduce the revenue, you reduce the borrowing power of the country, and the power to spend. Is it a time to talk about reducing the revenue, when there are thousands of people who have come to this country not to seek gold but to seek work? Is this a time to cut down

expenditure to the lowest limit? We wish to welcome these people from other lands, and to give them work and it is not the time to cut down the expenditure. I read this morning a letter in a newspaper under three initials. I have seen those initials before; they may be those of a great political economist. He tells us, in a positive and straightforward way, that the Government have ceased borrowing, and that the public works were being reduced. That goes forth to the country as an actual fact, that the Government have ceased borrowing, and the public works are being reduced. If the writer has been in the country long, he must know that last session power was given to borrow three and a half million pounds, that of this amount two and a half millions have yet to be raised by the sale of inscribed stock, and that £750,000 has been borrowed on the strength of the loan to carry on works, also we shall have to borrow more in order to carry on works as soon as the market is suitable. Instead of the public works being reduced, there never was a time in the colony when such a large expenditure of public money has been going on throughout the country as at the present time. There are five railways, I think, being constructed; there are also harbour works at Fremantle, and water supplies on the goldfields. We never have had one-half the works that we have at the present time going on. Still, this writer tells us that we have ceased borrowing, and that the Government are reducing the public works. Yet we have two and a half millions to borrow, besides the two and a half millions for the Coolgardie water supply. I say it is gross ignorance, and most misleading, to make these statements which are absolutely without any foundation. We have heard a great deal in the House about a little Act that was passed. I think now we were unwise, as we thus gave undue prominence to it. We passed an Act some time ago—a stock tax; but that stock tax was on the statute book already, and had been there a number of years; but some provisions were not very clear, and in my innocence, not being so well versed in political matters as I am now, I introduced a Bill to make them perfectly clear. If I had been wise, I should have left those provisions in the Tariff Act, and nobody

would have known anything about the stock tax; but we introduced it, and it is a well-known Act now. The tax has existed here for many years—20, years I think—long before I came into office. There is a similar tax in Victoria, and it is flourishing there, and the present Government have no intention of repealing it. A similar tax flourishes in South Australia, and nobody has said anything about it there. And, after all, what does this terrible tax produce in this colony? Last year it produced 3s. per head of the population. It will produce nothing soon, for we will soon be able to supply our own stock when we have facilities for shipping on the coast. When the jetties are completed which we are making at Wyndham, Derby, Roebuck Bay, Carnarvon, and other places, we will be able to compete with the other colonies in fat stock, and we will not want the tax, unless to preserve the home market for our own people; but after all 3s. per head was all that it produced, while the sugar and tea duties, which we were the means of abolishing, saved the people eight shillings per head during 1896. Now all we said on the subject in the Governor's Speech was that we do not propose this session to introduce any legislation with a view of amending the tariff. Nor do we. We have no intention to amend the tariff this session. I admit myself fully, for I do not go about without noticing what is going on, that there is a feeling that has developed into a political cry among the people in the chief centres of population, particularly in Perth, Fremantle, and on the goldfields, for remitting the food duties. Public opinion has been strongly directed towards a reconsideration of the tariff. A great deal of misconception has arisen; the question has been made unduly prominent, and it was made an "election cry;" but, if you want a "cry," I can give you a better one than that in regard to the money that is going out of the country for the support of families and persons living elsewhere—and that is, that every endeavour should be made to prevent the immense sums going out of the country for food supplies, which can be produced here, and the money kept in circulation among our own people. We owe nothing to those now living elsewhere, and deriving the means of support from

this colony, whereas we owe a lot to our own people, and any money we have to spend we should distribute amongst those who are in the colony, instead of sending it away to people who have never been here, living elsewhere. I think the whole question of the tariff might well be dealt with next session. There is no time to do it in this session, for if anyone thinks over the matter, I am sure he will see we have no time to devote to a large question which will take us perhaps three months to deal with effectually. It is a question that must take months of consideration and deliberation, and that consideration and deliberation I promise this House and the people of this country, if I have health and strength, I will devote to it. We are not going to deal with this tariff in the way the hon. member (Mr. Leake) might deal with it, by shirking it; but when we do deal with it, we will do it thoroughly. The principles which will guide us in dealing with it are these. We will have to carry out our policy of encouraging native industries and the increase of native productions, so as to give our own people an advantage in our own market, with the one object of making the country self-supporting. We will have to make the tariff produce a certain amount of revenue, or get what is required from other sources, and excepting excise and stamps, there are no other sources of revenue, unless we embark on a land, property, or income taxes, these being expedients which I, for one, am not inclined to go into at the present time. We would also have to provide for as large a free list of imports as we can, for articles of food and other things which we cannot produce in the colony. My policy has been, and is, that we should make our free list as large as possible. We must try also to encourage local manufactures and to establish industries, so as to give employment to our own people. The Government are quite prepared, on the foregoing lines, to deal with the tariff question; and, without this motion and this debate, the question of revising the tariff would have received our attention. Indeed, I may say I have always desired to deal with the tariff question, but it is a difficult and troublesome one, and I am sure no member of this House will say that it is not a matter

requiring consideration, or that it should not be dealt with thoroughly and well when it is dealt with at all. I would ask all hon. members, not only those sitting on this side of the House, but even some on the Opposition side who are not desirous of ousting the Government from office, I ask them, what can it matter to the people of this country to have the revision of the tariff delayed a few months, so that we may be in a position to deal with it thoroughly and well? Are we going to hand ourselves over to the leader of the Opposition and his two or three followers, in order that they may revise the tariff and upset the arrangements of the session? Are we going to stop all the public business for the next three months and throw the country into a general election, in order that the hon. member and his few friends may take our places on the Treasury benches? [MR. LEAKE: What! A general election?] The hon. member knows it would be impossible for him to carry on the public business, with parties as they are in this House. We all know that very well. That is what this amendment means, that we are all to be sent back to the country in order that the hon. member and his two or three friends may take office. I think that is an unreasonable proposition, and one that will not be listened to for a moment. In carrying out the policy which I have placed before you, and it is not a new one, we made sugar and tea free two years ago, because, as I then said, we could not produce these articles in the colony, and they are in general use by every man, woman, and child in the country. In carrying out this policy we relinquished two years ago—and it was not easy to do so in those days, because money was very necessary for the works required—we relinquished, in 1896, a sum of £49,159 of revenue derived from those two articles, equal to eight shillings per head of the population. We have been told this remission was of no value. We were told when we proposed it that the people would never see or feel the benefit of that remission of duty. I do not agree with that argument; but if the people cannot see any benefit in a remission of £4 a ton on sugar, and 4d. a pound on tea, how will they see the benefit of a remission of a farthing on the two-pound loaf, or a



half-penny a pound on meat? That argument will not hold good. A remission of taxation must be felt, because competition will be keen enough to deal with the question of distribution. If that were not so, it would not be worth while remitting duties at all. Another point, an important one I think, is that in this colony we are in a different position from a country having large armies and navies, a large portion of them probably serving in other parts of the world, and costing millions to support; for here we are in a country within ourselves, and not having to maintain any army or navy, every penny raised from the people by way of taxation is spent amongst the people, and no money goes away to other lands to support an army there, therefore, whatever is raised by taxation is distributed every year amongst the people in the country. The taxation paid by the rich, as well as by those who are not rich, and no one will deny that rich men have to pay some taxation—is used to provide work for people in the colony, and is not spent on an army or navy, or any great organisation of that kind. The money is not hoarded, but is all expended and distributed throughout the colony. Another reason I will urge—though I do not want to urge it very strongly, because I believe that, whatever happens in the country in regard to change of Government, the effect may be over-estimated in some respects—we know that in this colony we have gone through a trying time, that we have had what is called “a slump,” during which we have been able, at the least, to keep our heads above water, and although we have been hurt somewhat, we have never ceased to move on the up-grade. Our credit is good in the English market, and this Government is trusted there; and I ask whether, if the hon. member and his friends came into these seats as a result of carrying this amendment, our credit in the English market would be improved? Hon. members on this point will be able to judge for themselves. These considerations show that the present is not an opportune time for change, and that we need great stability now. Looking at the great works going on throughout the colony, and looking at the large population here, and that which is coming here continually and requiring work pro-

vided from the large expenditure of Government money, from loans, and from Revenue, I say this is a critical period in our history; and seeing that the confidence which we all desire in reference to the colony has been established to a large extent, we should be doing unwisely in interfering with that confidence by any change of Government now. Another reason why this amendment is inopportune is that the financial arrangements for the year have been already made and completed. The annual Estimates are almost ready, and if it were not for this amendment and the debate upon it, those Estimates might almost have been on the table by this time. The obligations from last year have been carried on, and a great deal of work is in hand and to be done. Therefore, unless we re-cast the whole of the Estimates and go through the thing *de novo*, it will be impossible for us to do without a single sixpence of the revenue estimated for this year, and this I shall be able to show when I place the Estimates on the table. We are building railways throughout the colony. We are building a railway to Menzies, and I believe that £50,000 will be required from revenue to supplement the loan vote, as the expenditure is greater than was anticipated. The railway to Kanowna is in a similar position. We are building a railway to the Boulder, also a railway from York to Greenhills—both these lines being built out of revenue. We are also building a railway to Bridgetown, the vote for which will require supplementing from revenue. There are various other works going on for supplying water to the goldfields, and these require a lot of money. We have the Fremantle harbour works in progress, and the vote for them is altogether exhausted, so that we shall have to come to this House and ask for power to re-appropriate from some other items in order to keep these works going, and we shall also, probably, have to supply some money from current revenue for the same purpose, as there is really no money available at present, last year's vote for the Fremantle harbour works being absolutely exhausted. Added to all these there is a large population in the colony, and other people are coming here seeking employment on Government works; therefore, what would

be said of us if we were to curtail or to stop any of the works we are engaged upon at present? All these reasons and many more I can urge upon hon. members, to show how inopportune is the occasion of which the hon. member (Mr. Leake) has taken advantage. As to the position of the colony, everyone knows we are most prosperous, that we are more prosperous than any other colony in Australia. We are, in that respect, the envy of almost everyone; and we are not only in a position to do good for ourselves, but we are also able to do good for our fellow countrymen on the other side of the Australian continent. The people of this country have been able not only to send away something like three-quarters of a million this year to their friends and relations in other colonies, but they have nearly £1,000,000 in the Savings Bank. On the 30th September, 1891, nine months after this Government took office, the amount in the Savings Bank was £44,269. Five years later, on 30th September, 1896, the amount was £561,540, while on the 30th September of this year the amount to credit of depositors was £989,748. In fact, between the 30th September last year and the 30th September of this year the Savings Bank deposits increased £428,208. Does that look as if the people were hard up, or as if they were not doing well? The people have done well; and when we travel along the road by Subiaco and Claremont and see hundreds, almost thousands, of houses occupied and built by working people, it is evident—unless those people brought a lot of money with them, which is not the case—that the people are satisfied they have done fairly well in this country, and desire to throw in their lot with us and make their homes here. The cry that the people here are not able to live because all their money is taken from them by the Customs is absolutely untrue. If I were to say that during the last few days the subject now before the House has not given me some anxiety, I would be saying what is not correct. I could not but reflect on the whole conduct of affairs during my seven years' term of office, and having considered the whole position I have come to the conclusion that the people have nothing to complain of, even with the tariff as it is now. That tariff will be thoroughly investigated, and the wishes of hon mem-

bers met in some of the reductions they desire. I have come to the conclusion that the country is prosperous, taking it altogether. We have passed a record year, in the face of many obstacles. The revenue is larger than ever before, and public works are going on from one end of the country to the other. We enter on a hopeful year—perhaps a more hopeful year than last, or any other year during the term of the present Government. There is not a dark cloud, from one end of the colony to the other. "From Dan to Beersheba," you cannot find a single dark cloud on the horizon. The farmers are having a good season, and pastoralists are fairly satisfied, while the gold mining industry is progressing by leaps and bounds. I would like to know what is the cause of this commotion about the food duties? What reason or justification is there for the hon. member for Albany, with only a handful of followers, trying to spring a mine under the Government, and thinking in his unwisdom that he can alienate from me and the Government our old friends and supporters who have fought side by side with us for so many years? Is it likely that we are going to allow him to succeed? The hon. member must win his spurs, and go quietly and cautiously. He must not expect to jump into the position of Premier of this colony all in a moment. There is one other important matter—important not only to the goldfields people, but to everybody in the country. What has encouraged so many people to come to this colony? I know the answer every one gives, and the answer I would give, perhaps, if I were asked, is "The gold." I freely admit that is the fact to some extent. I admit that gold has been the main factor in the prosperity of the colony; but will anyone tell me that everybody has come here to dig gold? Has not the immense public expenditure which has been going on had something to do with it? Have not the present Government during their seven years of office borrowed six or seven millions of money?

A MEMBER: You would not have got it but for the mines.

THE PREMIER: Did we not expend from revenue and loan funds last year 4½ millions of money? Have we not had a revenue jumping from £400,000 in 1890 to nearly £3,000,000 in 1896-7? Has the enormous expenditure of public

money nothing to do with the influx of people to this country? Has that expenditure not had something to do with building up Perth and Fremantle so as to almost make them one town? Would these results have been obtained, had the Government gone on as advised by some of the hon. members who now desire to take the Government's places? Would Perth and Fremantle be the cities they are at the present time, if we depended solely on the gold-mining industry, and had not carried on a policy of large public expenditure? No; the answer is clear enough. We would have languished. But for the Government and its supporters the goldfields would have been neglected. No doubt a great factor in the prosperity of the country is gold, but even a greater factor during the past seven years has been the policy of the Government. The present Ministry have been equal to the occasion, and have borrowed money and devoted it to the development of the goldfields of the country. Who has taken the greatest responsibility in this borrowing and this carrying out of public works—the responsibility of embarking the colony on a career of debt? Who is it that influenced the people of this country, including the farmers and graziers all over the settled parts of the colony, to join in borrowing these immense sums of money and in mortgaging everything they had in the world, in order to make the country great and develop its resources? Why, it was myself and my colleagues. The hon. member for Albany and the hon. member with him (Mr. Illingworth), when I proposed a railway to Coolgardie, said there was no need for the Government to do the work, which ought to be given to some private individuals. That was their statesmanship and the policy they placed before us in 1894. I am thankful that their advice was not followed. The Opposition also opposed the Coolgardie water scheme. The result we all know. We carried that scheme, involving £2,500,000 of money. Who was it obtained the approval of the people to that great scheme? Was it the Opposition? [MR. LEAKE: No, no.] Have the Opposition not tried to thwart us in every way they can? Are they not just now trying to undo an Act of Parliament?

These are the men who are asking members for the goldfields, sitting on this side of the House and also on the other, to support them. I cannot understand hon. members who represent the Southern goldfields, at any rate, allying themselves with persons who have never done anything for the goldfields, and are not prepared to do anything—who are not even prepared to give the goldfields good water. It is easy to speak and easy to laugh about the responsibilities that have been undertaken by this country, but it is a very serious matter, especially for me, entrusted as I am by Parliament with the leadership of the Government. I had to say to those associated with me, "Follow me in this great Coolgardie water scheme, which will pay, and which will in the end be beneficial to you and to all of us." My associates were patriotic enough to do so; and the people of the goldfields owe an everlasting debt of gratitude to these members of Parliament, those old settlers, and sons of old settlers, who have borne the heat and burden of the day, and have for seven years done their duty to the people of this country.

MR. LEAKE: Why do you now try to shelve this water scheme?

THE PREMIER: There is no wish to shelve the scheme. I have nearly come to the end of what I have to say. It has been a long duty. I would ask the hon. member for Albany, and those who have been advising him, why he has not made a general indictment against the Government. Why have they selected, in very mild terms, something to do with the tariff? If they do not believe that the Government are fit to be entrusted with the carrying on of the administration of the country, why not put forward a motion which is common enough in other Parliaments, "That the Government no longer enjoy the confidence of the House." They do not do that, because they dare not. They know they could not carry such a motion, and discretion is the better part of valour. What is their indictment, after seven years of honourable service? The indictment is a simple request that we should reconsider our views in regard to the food duties. Is such an amendment the action of a real, live Opposition—of men prepared to take over the administration of affairs? If they are anxious to take over

the administration, why not say that the Government no longer possess the confidence of the House? The whole matter of the tariff will be dealt with next session, when we can do it carefully. We are not going to do it at the point of the bayonet, or at the dictation of the hon. member for Albany and his friends.

MR. LEAKE: Then do it at the butt of the musket.

THE PREMIER: I have concluded all the observations I propose to address to the members of this House, in whose hands I with confidence leave the issue. Under our Constitution this House has the right to say whether or not an administration shall remain in office. The Government have during the last seven years tried their best, with the assistance of hon. members, to promote the interests of the colony. I regret to say—it makes one feel almost sad—that there are very few sitting around me to-night who were with me in 1891. One after another, for various reasons, have left the Government; and I regret to say that my old friend and colleague, the Attorney General, now desires to sever his connection with the present administration. Still, for all that, the Government are here yet. I have loyal colleagues around me who have won their spurs in this House, and in the service of their country, and are all prepared, if you desire it, to continue to carry on the Government. We have seen the colony emerge from a state of obscurity, from being unknown, to a position of considerable importance. We are “crossing the stream” still. I am sorry to say, we are having anxious times, as we have always had during the past seven years; but there is a great reason for hope and confidence in my mind, and I believe, if we all pull together as we have pulled during the last seven years, we have nothing to fear, and there is a brighter future before us. I believe the verdict will be in favour of the Government; but, whatever the verdict is, it will be our duty to loyally accept it. I hope that the statements I have placed before hon. members, the views I have expressed not hesitatingly, but directly and emphatically, will be accepted by a very large majority in this House; and if we continue to retain the confidence of hon. members, I can only say it will give us new life and new vigour to continue to work with you,

and to carry on the Government of this country.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I do not intend to detain the House at any length, because we find ourselves in this position—one I think that is deeply humiliating to the Government, and deeply humiliating to their supporters. It is not so very long ago since the right honourable the Premier, speaking to a select assembly at Bunbury, said they should march over his dead body before he would remove the food duties.

THE PREMIER: I don't think I said that.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The Press, which is always to be relied on in Western Australia, and not only the Press of the Bunbury district but also that illustrious paper the *Herald*, agreed that the hon. Premier did make that statement, and it was repeated all over the country. Now, it is not so very long ago—only a few days ago—since we had a deliberate utterance in an oration, not delivered under the impulse of feeling, but a calmly debated and deliberate statement placed in the hands of Her Majesty's representative, declaring positively and emphatically that the Government did not propose this session to introduce any legislation with a view of amending the tariff. What do we find to-night? Where are we now? It is where we are on every occasion when the Government are attacked. When the Government climb a tree and get to the top, and somebody offers to shoot at them, the Government say, “Don't shoot; we will come down.” What is the declaration made by the Government now?—that there is no time to deal with the subject this session, but that they will climb down next session and give all they are asked. The nature of the complaint of the Government against the Opposition to-night is: “Why do you not ask for this as a substantive motion? Why did you spring this great mine under the Ministry for the purpose of putting the Government out?” There has been nothing more insincere uttered in this House than the appeal thus made. I venture to say that the Government deliberately put that clause in the Speech, for the purpose of making this question a Government test question. The Premier and his Ministers and all Parlia-

mentary men know that it was utterly impossible for the Opposition to deal with the question in any other way than they have dealt with it. If the Government desired to leave the House and the Opposition free to discuss this great question, in view of what passed at the last elections, they ought not to have included it in the Governor's Speech. They knew this question must come on the floor of the House, and they took action in order to compel the Opposition to bring the motion on in such a way that there must be a vote of want of confidence, so as to place hon. members who have pledged themselves to vote against the food duties, and at the same time to support the Government, in a false position. It is idle for the Premier to come and make an appeal to this House on the ground that the process taken by the Opposition is unconstitutional. No one knows better than the Premier that it is not only a constitutional process, but the only constitutional means that the Opposition had of getting the opinion of the House on this great question. We have come from the country. There has been a general election, and a large number of new members have been returned to the House. Twenty-eight of these members have publicly declared themselves in favour of the abolition of the food duties. The voice of the country is, then, if we are to take its voice so far as it is given in this House, distinctly in favour of the abolition of the food duties. A clear majority of the members of this House have been returned pledged to support a motion of this kind. The Government knew it, and in order to prevent these 28 men fulfilling that pledge, they made it a question which involved the life of the Government. It is not part of the Opposition purpose to make it a question of no-confidence. It was never intended or dreamed of by the Opposition that we should be placed in this false position. A desire has never been expressed by the Opposition to oust the Forrest Government. It is simply drawing a "red herring" across the track. All Governments are supposed to rule by the will of the people. We have had an expression of that will, as I have already said. The will of the people, as expressed at the last election, was that the food duties should be

abolished, or at any rate reduced. That was the will of the people. Now, under constitutional Government, a Government is supposed to rule by the will of the people; but what do we find? The Government determine at all hazards—at the cost of honour itself—to hold the Treasury benches against the definite, expressed will of the people. We know, if we are to judge at all, that the vast mass of the people of this colony are adverse to the retention of the food duties. It is not a question whether the people are as fully educated on the question as the Premier or the Director of Public Works, but it is a question of the will of the people being carried out by the Ministry of the day.

THE PREMIER: How is it to be expressed?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: If you had been in the Chamber and listening to my remarks, you would have heard me say that it was expressed at the poll and at the ballot-box. Twenty-eight members were returned pledged to the abolition of the food duties. A clear majority of the members of this House are pledged on this very question, but, as I have already said, the Government knew that they were bound to be defeated if they allowed it to be made a substantive motion, and the only means of saving defeat on this particular question was by taking the course they did. We find now the Government are quietly backing down. They have placed their faithful supporters in a difficult position—in a position no Ministry ought to place their supporters in. In nine cases out of ten they have compelled these members to vote for the Ministry, or to forfeit their pledges. It is a false position to place them in, and not at all necessary. All that was necessary to do was to leave reference to this question out of the Governor's Speech. The Opposition would simply have tabled a substantive motion, as the Premier says we ought to have done. What are we to say with respect to the attitude of the Government with reference to the will of the people? No one in this House is grander, when in a dissertation on the rights of the people, than the right hon. the Premier, and I am never better pleased with him than when he is engaged on that particular topic. But what is the will of the people? If it is possible to

obtain it so far as Parliament is concerned, you can obtain it from the members who are returned, and here we have a clear majority against the continuance of the duties.

**THE PREMIER:** I do not think that is quite correct.

**MR. ILLINGWORTH:** Before I say any more, I would like to refer to a statement constantly made in this House and in the press in something like these words: "The only object of the Opposition is to put the Government out, without regard to the interests of the country." That is the argument which is being used in this House to-night. I deny, once and for all, that the whole integrity of the universe or this country is on the Treasury benches. I deny that all the disinterested feeling to see the country progress is to be found on the Treasury benches. There may be differences of opinion on the modes, but I claim that every member on this side of the House is as honest in his intention to promote the interests of the country as those members who have the direction of the affairs of the country. What is the duty of an Opposition? It is to see that the minority has proper representation in the House; to see that the subjects are discussed, and the two sides of every question placed before the country. Another great object and great duty which devolves on Her Majesty's Opposition is to see that the Government rule the country in accordance with the will of the people. The Government are placing their own supporters in an invidious position, and they are acting diametrically in opposition to the will of the people of the country. [**THE PREMIER:** I deny that.] Facts are against you, and the polling booths have told the story that 28 members were returned pledged to the abolition of the duties.

**THE PREMIER:** The hon. member is all wrong.

**MR. LEAKE:** They have sent a majority. That is enough.

**MR. ILLINGWORTH:** We will say a majority have been returned, of two or three at any rate. The Premier will admit that. There is another thing that has been brought before the House. Nervous people have always been saying that the heavens will fall if any Government is changed. I never knew of a Government going out without that

being said, or that some dreadful thing will happen if the Government goes out of power. I am not going to express my opinion whether it is desirable or otherwise that the Government should go out of power at the present time, but the Premier has forced an opinion on the House as to the credit of the country. I have communication with some of the best men in London who are capable of judging on this question, and my latest advices are to this effect. I mention this to show a difference of opinion does exist on such an important subject as the retention of the present Government in power. My advices are that the confidence and credit of this country are dependent on the defeat of the Forrest Government. I am not going to say that, but I am pointing out that it is possible that intelligent and capable men may differ at times on great subjects. No person in the country, no person in the House, could suppose that a better Ministry than the present could be obtained: that is impossible. Here the Premier stands to-night in the seventh year of Ministerial office, and he has changed his Ministry every year, and to-night we have another evidence of its chameleon policy. It is after the American system: "If it does not suit, it kin be changed." I like to agree with the Premier whenever I can, and I am glad to say that I can sometimes. To-night he has expressed a sentiment that the Government and its policy have not so much to do with the welfare of the country as people sometimes imagine.

How few, of all the ills that human hearts endure,  
Are those which kings or laws can cause or cure!

It does not depend on the Government: it depends on the people themselves. The one thing that will have to be faced is the question of the necessity for a continuance of borrowed money for the purpose of carrying out our public works. My friend from Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans), who knows a great deal about finance—more than I do, and perhaps more than a great many members in this House—has said that the people who are lending money look a great deal more to the population of a country than to almost anything else. I think that is an axiom in all questions of borrowing.

We are placed in a very invidious position. We have authorised the Government to borrow a certain amount of money, and what is our position? We tried to raise a 3 per cent. loan, and the price we got for it was 93. [The PREMIER: 95, if you please.] Well, 95. We have authorised this Government, or rather a previous Parliament authorised this Government, to borrow if they choose three millions on Treasury bonds at 4 per cent. A 4 per cent. Treasury bond would probably command in London £109 to £110. What is the necessary inference on this interim piece of financing? We are paying first of all 4 per cent. for the money, and then we lose £10, which in the first year is equivalent to paying 14 per cent. for the money. If we establish confidence in the London market we may continue to borrow money at 3 per cent. The Government have placed before the House two points. The first is, we want the money, and cannot afford to do away with food duties because we want the money, and we want to support and help our producers. What have our producers been doing? I have in my hand a Custom-house report, which, I presume, is a reliable document. I find in the years 1894, 1895, and 1896 this colony has imported more than it has exported to the amount of £8,141,636. In order to make myself plain, during these three years the whole of the money that has come to the country in any form—gold, machinery, or goods of any kind—the difference between the exports and imports is £8,141,636; that is to say, we have received so much and sent out so much, and this is the difference. Two and a half million pounds was borrowed money. Amongst the exports we have the following:—Gold, £1,068,808; and the next largest items are wool, £267,506; timber, £116,420; sandalwood, £65,800. The difference between our total exports and our imports shows (less our loans) the total amount that has come to us for investment in our mines; not more than about five millions altogether. I want to point out that a country can only make its way in the world by producing something with which it can purchase things required. We have been enabled during last year to export the best possible product the world knows of. Gold in the world is not a depreciable product. What are we

asked to do in this particular case? We are asked to encourage an industry which has no possible chance of becoming an exporting industry. The things off which we ask the duty to be taken are not exported, and there is no possible chance of their becoming exported articles. If a man can work a day and produce a bag of potatoes for 10s., and the same man can work a day and produce £1 worth of gold, he is going to produce the gold—to use an Americanism, “You bet.” What is the use of persistently trying to build up an industry which cannot hope to become an exporting industry? I know a time in Melbourne when butter was 5s. a lb. Why was this? Not because the country did not possess the land to produce it, but because all who could get there were on the goldfields. The Premier says it is a disgrace if we cannot produce sufficient food for our own consumption. The trouble is, we will not produce it. The people are engaged in other things which are more profitable. Our most profitable industries are gold, timber, and wool, as shown by the Customs returns. It is said we cannot afford to take duties off, because we want money for other purposes. This is practically the argument, and I want to call attention to one thing before I deal with figures. On March 16th last we had this statement from the Premier—assuming, of course, that a correct statement was reported in the newspaper, for I find that when something is reported that does not quite suit his argument, the Premier blames the reporter:—

We have decided upon another great work, which will be of immense benefit to the colony. . . . The Government has come to the conclusion that the time has arrived for the erection of public crushing plants in the various centres throughout the fields. (Hear, hear.) For a long time past, the poor men who own property in very many centres (at the outlying centres especially) on the fields, have been working under very great difficulties. They have raised a considerable quantity of good payable stone, but they have not been able to carry on their good work for the want of some place to crush it. The companies that have crushers there are busy with their own work, and will not crush for the smaller men. The demand, too, for these public crushers has come from all over the colony.

So said the Premier; but we have not to deal with the premier alone, for we find

the Acting Premier, who is the Minister of Mines, making this statement on the 8th June last, as reported in a newspaper:—

It was not the intention of the Government to erect batteries at any centre as permanent institutions. All that the Ministry contemplated was the construction of small batteries of from three to five heads of stamps, in centres remote from existing mills. These will only be temporary structures intended to prove the ground, so as to induce private enterprise to come in afterwards. The Government does not intend to afford any means of relief to those prospectors who are now prevented from crushing by the prices charged by private mills. And no battery at all will be erected within a radius of at least thirty miles of any works now in existence.

MR. MORAN: Take the latest utterance of the Ministry.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: No. I want to know which utterance we are to believe; for we may have another one to-morrow, and we may be asked to believe that. I want to know whether the Premier means to take these duties off, and whether he means to erect the kind of batteries he here speaks of, or erect the kind that the Minister of Mines speaks of.

THE PREMIER: Ten-head batteries we intend to erect.

MR. MORAN: Do you know what a ten-head battery is?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: This is the kind of thing we have to deal with in regard to the Ministry, that one Minister says we are going to have ten-head batteries another Minister says we are going to have three-head batteries. The Premier says, "I will erect them in places where they are called for, in places where other batteries will not crush for the miners." The other Minister says: "We will only erect them in places that are thirty miles away from any other battery." Which are we to believe? I say that when members of this House were on the hustings at the general election, they were asked to state their views upon the programme which the Premier had put forth in his Bunbury speech, and they were not asked to express an opinion about the erection of 3-head batteries in places 30 miles from any other battery. Referring now to figures bearing on the argument that the food duties cannot be remitted because we need the revenue for public works, and that the duties are necessary to help producers, I find that in June,

1896, our population numbered 101,235, and at the end of that year it had increased to 137,946; so a fair average would be not less than 130,000 people. The total duty paid was £996,804—say in round numbers one million of money, and the average population being 130,000, the proportion is about £7 19s. per head. Of this sum, the food duties amounted to £156,000, or £1 4s. per head. The net duty per head of population was therefore £6 15s. per head. We are now sending out of the country over a million of money, and I want to show that the remittances which go through the money-order offices do not represent the whole of the money that is going out of the country for the support of families living elsewhere. I know, for instance, that over £8,000 was sent through the banks of Victoria for this purpose. Consequently, while we cannot say that all the money which was sent through the money order offices went for the support of families elsewhere, yet the difference is probably made up by the sums which we know were sent through banks mainly for that purpose. A fair estimate would be a million of money sent out of the colony to support families elsewhere. This sum would keep in employment 6,600 men at £150 a year. The average wages of men in this colony, taking lost time and other contingencies into account, is not over £150 a year; therefore, these persons living here, keeping up two homes by supporting their families in another place, and the average wages being not over £150 a year, this sum would keep not only these men, but their families. The usual way of estimating the average number of persons in a family is to take five; but I estimate the number of a family at four as an average. [THE PREMIER: Not in this country.] I am taking the average of families on the other side; and I say a fair average would be four. That would represent 26,000 people kept abroad by money sent from this country; and I say that, by inducing those families to come here, they would pay to the revenue £6 15s. per head, less the food duties, and they would thus add to the revenue of this colony. All we ask the Government to do is to remove the food duties, which bring in £156,000 a year; and I ask the House to consider the contention



put forth by the Premier, that we are not in a position, financially, to spare this money. My contention is that the doing away with the food duties will increase the revenue of the country, because it will bring to this colony the proportionate increase of population I have mentioned, equivalent to 26,000 people.

**THE PREMIER :** What about the money for the farmers?

**MR. ILLINGWORTH :** I am dealing with your contention that you cannot spare the money from the revenue. I will deal with the question of the farmers directly. Now the gain to the country by the abolition of the food duties would be £21,000 a year, according to my argument; but there would be not only this gain, for there is no export of the kind of goods we import, and there is not likely ever to be an export of them from this country, which will never be able to compete in the markets of the world in products of this kind, though it may and will produce other things of greater value. When you come to such products as cereals, potatoes, bacon, ham, cheese, and things of that kind, I say this country will never take its place as an exporter of these articles in competition with the products of other places. One way in which you can help the producer is to establish public batteries in this colony, and thus increase the profitable market existing on our goldfields for agricultural products. The Premier has told us there has been a very large increase in the settlement of agricultural land; but would there have been that increase if there had been no Coolgardie and no goldfields markets for the consumption of agricultural produce? The goldfields have created the demand, and this demand for agricultural produce has caused more people to settle on the land; so that I say it is not that wretched little thing, the Agricultural Bank, and it is not the 160 acres of free land, that have induced these people to go on the land in increasing numbers; but it is the good market which the goldfields have provided within the colony. As we increase our population, we increase our consumption; and I say we shall further increase our population by what is proposed in this motion by 26,000; and we shall thus make the market in the colony so much the better for our farmers; conse-

quently we shall do more for the farmers by increasing the population than by keeping on the food duties. Coming now to another question, the Premier tells us the food duties average only 10d. a head per week amongst the population. When the sum reaching the Treasury for food duties is stated at £152,000, I say that, by the time these imported foods reach the consumer, that sum is nearer £450,000.

**MR. GEORGE :** Not so much as that.

**MR. ILLINGWORTH :** I know something about it, and I say the importer pays this £152,000, and charges his profit on it to the retailer; and the retailer charges a proportion of profit on these duties, as well as a percentage on the cost of the article. Consequently, if £152,000 is paid on duty, and if the wholesale man puts £30,000 on that, the sum is increased to £182,000; then the retailer puts his proportion on it; and by the time the article reaches the consumer, the total cost of the duty is something like £450,000. If it is intended to give to the farmer a protection amounting to £152,000 a year, I think it would be infinitely better to give it to him directly; and we might do it as is done in Victoria, by giving a bonus on butter or other products. I would much rather that we should give this amount directly to purchase the butchery business of Messrs. Forrest and Emanuel, and the butchery business of Messrs. Connor and Doherty, than that the money should be paid by the population in the form of duties on food products. So I say this is not a simple question of so much duty payable to the Government, but it is a much more important question to the consumer. The Premier has talked, as other members often talk, about the high price of rents in Perth. If you increase the cost of living, you necessarily increase the cost of the erection of a house, and one thing acts on the other. But that is not the trouble—that is a mere side issue. The true reason for the high rents is that families are being crowded two and three into a house, and every second or third house in Perth is a boarding house. And why? Because men are separated from their families. They cannot bring their wives over here, not because of the high rents, but because they cannot afford to live here. I do not say the abolition of the food duties would

make all the difference, but it would do something to help. I know these matters are all arranged on the Treasury benches, and that I am only talking to the air now. The Premier has expressed himself as anxious to settle the people on the land. I believe the Premier is perfectly honest in that, and probably better informed than I on the question; but it is my deep-seated conviction that he would get more people to settle on the land by abolishing the food duties than by any other means. I am quite sincere in that opinion.

THE PREMIER: What about the duty on sugar and tea?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I opposed the abolition of the duty on tea, for the explanation I have already given. The Premier thought he had me, but he would have to get up pretty early to do that.

THE PREMIER: I think I have you there.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: No; you have not, and I will show you why. I will say the same thing now. If the taking off these duties would restrict the Government in funds for necessary public works, I would say, retain them. I said so then, and I say it still. Speaking to my electors—and it is by the electors that a man's words are tested—I said to them, using my own words which the Premier has quoted, "Now I think the time has come, after two and a half years of development, to remove the food duties." The year before, I advocated the removal of the duties on mining machinery, and the Government brought in a Bill to that effect; not on my suggestion, of course. The Government accept no suggestions from the Opposition, but they brought that Bill in. The time has come when the condition of the mining industry is such that we ought to get the families of the miners, and the families of the workers in the large towns, over to this colony. The additional revenue would make up more than the loss of the duty on foods, and the additional consumption would make up more than the reduced profit to the producer. These are the reasons why I support the amendment of the honourable member for Albany. I never support anything contrary to my personal convictions. If I could only convince myself that the present Ministry were acting in every direction in the in-

terests of the country, I should be only too happy to go over to the comfortable seats on the Ministerial side. But, while I hold the conviction I do, that the Government, in their general and internal policy, are not acting in the best interests of the country, I must sit where I am. While I feel there is a minority which ought to be represented and voiced, and while I feel that every Government, though unfettered, should have a critical Opposition before them, I shall retain my present position. If the day should come—which is about the most improbable thing that can be suggested—when honourable members on this side of the House should take up the responsibilities of governing this country, and the present Premier should take up the position of leader of the Opposition, I would be pleased, and I am sure every other honourable member would, if the then Opposition gave to our measures the honest criticism that members on this side of the House give the measures of the present Government.

MR. QUINLAN: I can only say I rise to oppose the amendment on the ground of its inexpediency, and because it introduces into the policy of the country a false principle of political economy. I recognise the intention of the amendment, but, as to the wording, I am somewhat at a loss to see the reason why it is so mild. My friend the member for Albany is usually a mild gentleman, and he has been particularly so in the introduction of his amendment on the Address-in-Reply. Probably he has not the ground for argument which we on this side of the House have the pleasure to put before hon. members. The Customs receipts for 1896 totalled £966,804. Of that sum, for necessities, such as flour, bacon, eggs, fruit, milk, potatoes, vegetables, and meat, the duties only amounted to £105,793. It is but right to say I am not including cheese, because I am not a cheese eater myself; but if the Opposition desire, I shall be able to tell them the additional sum the duty on cheese would make in these items. For luxuries, such as wines, perfumeries, tobacco, cigars, cigarettes, beer and spirits, the amount is £611,619. Those figures show at once the luxurious living of the people of this colony, and are almost in themselves a complete answer to the prophecy of

calamity that is about to befall the country, according to the honourable members for Albany and Central Murchison. It will be readily seen that the people swell the revenue, not by the food duties, but by the duties on luxuries. The balance of sundries in the tariff receipts totalled £279,392. At this stage I desire to say that I have taken the figures from the report of the Collector of Customs. The Premier stated in his speech to-night that he wished to deliver himself in his own way, and I do likewise, although I may differ from him in some measure as to figures. I shall be prepared, if any figure is challenged, to answer that challenge with the report of the Collector of Customs before me. Taking the population of 1896 at 140,000 people, the revenue on the food duties only amounted to 15s. 1d. per head, the balance being for luxuries and other articles. That, sir, I think, is a complete answer to the cry now being raised by the Opposition, and which has already been truly referred to as an electioneering cry. There are, I admit, some anomalies in the tariff. No one would deny that. But there is a time for all things, and I consider that in the necessary development of a new country it is but right the Government should look at what will be reproductive at a future date. While we are able now in prosperous times to raise a revenue, I think the Customs tariff is a reasonable means by which to do so. It has been argued also that the taxation per head in this colony is much above the other colonies. In this colony, through the Customs, we raise about £7 2s. 5d. per head in all. In Victoria it is £1 3s. 6d. per head; South Australia, £1 1s. 6d.; Tasmania, £1 15s. 10d. It must not be forgotten that in these other colonies there are other sources of revenue, such as income tax and land tax, which we do not possess in this colony. Consider the larger population, which lessens the amount per head, and it will readily be seen by any reasonable man that West Australia does not figure so badly as the Opposition would make it appear. Then, again, I would quote a few items which are dutiable in the other colonies, but which are free in Western Australia. I may mention especially the sugar duties, which have already been referred to by the Premier.

It will be admitted that £49,151 loss by the absence of sugar duties is a big amount to cut off the revenue of this country, seeing that our friends on the opposite side so often wait on the Government by deputation or otherwise to ask that sums of money may be spent in their districts. Farinaceous foods—arrow-root, sago, cornflour, and oils—are all dutiable in Queensland; some of them are dutiable in South Australia, all in Tasmania, all but one in Victoria, but all are free in Western Australia. With regard to flour, in Queensland a duty of 20s. per ton is paid; in South Australia the duty is 2s. per cwt.; in Tasmania, 2s. per cwt.; in Victoria, £5 per ton. Victoria is the country from which the hon. member for Central Murchison came. In Western Australia the duty on flour is 30s. per ton, so that the duty here is less than in the majority of the other colonies. It is a most remarkable thing that nearly all gentlemen from the other colonies complain bitterly of the tariff in this colony. They may come from a mad protectionist country themselves where they were protectionists, and yet when they arrive here the first thing they ask is that the Government should find revenues by some other means than through the Custom-house. This seems most inconsistent, and particularly so that the hon. member for Central Murchison should place it before the House, as he has done, as one who came from a protectionist country. I must refer to the enormous amount sent out of the colony for flour, grain, chaff, fruit, wines, butter, bacon, milk, and eggs—almost half a million per year for the last three years. [MR ILLINGWORTH: Shame!] If the hon. member had his way, it would be a greater shame still, because we require protection in a new country, and it would be a bad thing for the hon. member if we did not get it. I am sure every member who has the interests of the colony at heart must admit that industries in their beginning must be encouraged by protection. Some candidates during the election campaign expressed themselves as in favour of reducing the tariff and giving bonuses. Were the bonuses to come out of the pockets of the Opposition? There is another topic worthy of note, and that is this sudden influx of population, which has naturally resulted in a sudden increase in

the amount of imports. The farmers cannot grow corn or cereals by steam or electricity, and time will show if they are not doing all that can possibly be done to develop the agricultural resources of the country. We require a steady market, and the only way to get that is by having a protective tariff on those things that can be produced here. The time will come when we shall be able to compete with the other colonies, and we ought to, as the market is at our very doors. The Opposition should have a little reason, and recognise that circumstances are different here from what they are in other colonies to-day. We have an immense territory to manage, and only a handful of population. We have been spending money in all directions, especially on the goldfields, constructing railways and various other works. Almost every day they are at the Treasury with the hat in their hands asking for more money for some district or other. I do not disapprove of any reasonable expenditure, because I have confidence in the people and in the future of the colony; but I do hope the Government will be judicious in their generosity, and will see that the money is wisely spent.

A MEMBER: What about Newcastle?

MR. QUINLAN: Newcastle has had very little. It is almost a neglected district.

A MEMBER: A wasted district.

MR. QUINLAN: No, not a wasted district. I would like the hon. member to go there. It is the only district that did not cause the Government to spend any money at the time of the small-pox scare for a hospital.

MR. VOSPER: Nobody ever goes there.

MR. QUINLAN: The hon. member ought to go there. Returning to protection, hon. members must know what it has done for other countries. Look at America. As has been pointed out by the Premier, protection has been in force in Victoria for many years, and she only wants a market for the things she has produced. Reference has been made by my friend the member for Central Murchison to rents, and to the fact that he himself has been a good Samaritan in that direction. It is true that house rent is dear, but I am sure the hon. member will not deny that he has been able to sell property in Perth perhaps at £100 a foot.

He was not a good enough Samaritan to say to the would-be purchaser, "I won't take your £100: you shall have it for what I gave for it." I may as well say at once—and I am probably in a position to speak with authority in regard to rents—

A MEMBER: You are.

MR. QUINLAN: I say emphatically that those who pose as liberal leaders and as lights of the city and the colony generally are the very men to-day who are getting houses from myself and partner, and making thousands out of property for which we were willing to receive a reasonable rent. I know an instance of £5 a week being paid as the rent of a house for which the lessee is now getting £12, and of £6 and £9 a week rent for which between £20 and £30 is being received.

A MEMBER: That has nothing to do with the question before the House.

MR. QUINLAN: Those very people who most complain of the high rents in this colony are the very people who actually bleed every poor individual they come across, and drain the last drop of blood out of their victims either by land sales or by rents. The subject before the House deserves to be thoroughly debated. I, for my part, believe in the policy of the Government as the best for developing the resources of the country, and I hope the day is far distant when the policy proposed by the Opposition will become the policy of this colony. The Government are going to do what is the right thing to do. They are going to amend the anomalies of the tariff; but there is a medium in all things. The Opposition want to abolish all protective duties. [A MEMBER: No.] To put it shortly, the members of the Opposition are like an incubator. They have hatched their amendment in the wrong season, and it will not prove fertile, as they may see to-night by the strong following on this side of the House. I take this opportunity of thanking hon. members for their kind attention. I did not weary them during the last short session because, there being so many federationists on the other side of the House, I thought it was better left to themselves. I hope, and I believe, that the House will vote, and vote strongly, and oppose the amendment by a very large majority.

MR. GEORGE: 'Twenty-eight members of this House gave certain pledges at the elections, when they asked the people of this colony to return them to this Assembly. If I have any qualification at all, it is that of going direct to the point, and so far as I am concerned at any rate on this question, I do not intend in any shape or form to prove false to the pledges I gave my constituents when I asked them for their votes. I stated before my constituents most distinctly that there were certain articles on which I considered the duties could be fairly reduced, and the Premier also at Bunbury said the very same thing; and having given this House the pledge that this question should receive consideration, I was quite prepared to receive a statement from him on the subject. The question has been asked very pertinently by several gentlemen on this side of the House: How is it that the people who have come to this colony do not bring their wives and families with them? So far as my experience is concerned—it does not extend very much to the gold-fields, but it certainly does extend to a large proportion of the working classes of the colony—I am going to answer that question after seven years' experience in this colony. If a man had a home in one of the colonies where all his little household gods were established, where his children were going to school, and where his friends were living, and a depression came, would he not find it difficult to get the money to take his family to some other colony in search of work? Would it not be more prudent for him to go to the new country by himself first to find out what it was like, as the Israelite spies did, and then to send for his family afterwards? The spies who went out from the Israelites to spy out the land did not take their families with them, because they did not know what they were going to encounter, and the people who come here from the other colonies do not bring their families for precisely the same reason. They come here to earn a living and spy as much as they possibly can, and then send for their wives and families, and that is what they are doing. I propose to address myself to this question particularly as it affects my constituents, in two ways. I have the honour to represent perhaps the most difficult

constituency in the colony, there being two classes of working men there. The one works for his daily wage at the sawmill, and the other is the working farmer—the yeoman of the country. With regard to these men—the workmen in connection with the sawmill—no one can speak with greater authority than I can. The men who come to the sawmills of the colony come, in the first instance, as mill hands, or simply as cutters of timber; and when they have been there a few months, they ask, Is it good enough to bring the wife and family over? I have never hesitated to say, "The country is good enough: bring the wife and family: and if you keep from the cursed drink you can support them well." That has been my answer invariably. Another reason why the gold-seeker does not bring his wife and family when he comes over is that he has been a sufferer by the depression in the other colonies. The hon. member for the Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth)—I hope he will excuse me for saying it—when he talked about the question of imports and exports, talked, in my opinion, judging from a business standpoint, arrant nonsense. I do not care about the finances of the world. We have to deal with the finances of the colony the same as we deal with our own business. In my opinion, when he says you bring so much raw material into your concern, and you send so many finished articles out, and the difference is so and so, I do not think he would get much credit at the bank on that statement. You want to have so much capital, to get your credit at the bank, and then you have to have a threepenny bill stamp. I say, if there is an excess over imports, that shows an addition to the material wealth of the colony; and if the hon. gentleman could have gone further, and shown the wages that came to pay the freights, and that sort of thing, he would have shown a further addition to the material wealth of the country.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It is all shown in the Customs.

MR. GEORGE: That remark of the hon. gentleman reminds me of the remark, "Manners they have none, and their customs are beastly." I am not at all sorry that the hon. member at the head of the Opposition has brought forward his amendment, because it has done

a considerable amount of good. I congratulate him on having the courage of his convictions, if it was only that he brought on his head the vituperation of an irate Premier. But I am sorry the member for Albany, who is a native of the country, and ought to know more than I do, who have only been seven years in the colony, has such a poor opinion of his native land. He does not think it can produce food for the country. [MR. LEAKE: It does not.] The hon. member for Central Murchison told us that there was no possible chance of trying to build up an industry that does not produce. The hon. member for Central Murchison does not know what he is talking about. If he likes to come into the South-Western District, I will undertake to show him land which, two years ago, was producing nothing whatever except the beautiful wild flowers which the Commissioner of Crown Lands is trying to preserve; and I will show him there a hundred men who have come from Victoria and settled down in the South-Western District and are farming there; and their cry was: "Is there any chance of the duties on what we are going to produce being taken off? If there is, the country is not worth living in for us farmers." I should be false to my constituents if I was not prepared to lay that information before the House and such portion of the public as is present. The South-Western District has not had fair play until the last three or four years — until the railway was built to Bunbury, which, as was stated by some of the old residents, who now seem to know better, would not pay for the axle grease. The farmers there were without hope until the railway was built. They would have to cart their produce 100 miles into Fremantle. The same thing that operated in the Williams district is operating in the South-Western district. Hon. members could see for themselves, if they went down there, in the Maradong district, that it would take half the little load to convey it into Perth and feed the horses going back again. You can find it easy to talk against the farmers, the same as the newspapers talk against the much-maligned City Council. It is easy to abuse; but it does not seem easy to tell us what to do. There should be some consideration for the men who take their

lives in their hands, and go out into the wilderness and attempt to produce what the colony can produce. There was another question raised about house rents, and the member for Toodyay (Mr. Quinlan) spoke about the house rents, and the people getting large increases from property leased from him. The house rents we complain about—and the Premier was quite right in what he said—are the rents which affect the working man. It has been impossible in Perth to get a four-roomed cottage for 25s. or up to 35s. per week; and how can a man earning from 7s. to 10s. a day pay that rent? Any man who would bring his family to Perth under those conditions would be acting the traitor to them, and would be no good to the colony. There is another question, and I have done: it is a question in regard to the wages. I never did believe in low wages; and I hope I never shall see the day when wages will be low in the colony. If ever we have low wages here, depend upon it, the material prosperity of the country will fall. It is all very well to talk about cheap food and clothing, and so forth. If we are to have cheap food and clothing, it will bring the wages down to the starvation level of some of the other colonies; and I should be false to the interests of the colony if I helped to bring it about. One hon. gentleman spoke about agricultural railways being made out of the food duties. I do not know where these particular agricultural railways are, but the South-Western Railway, I suppose, is considered an agricultural railway; and if the other agricultural railways pay as well as that railway, this colony need not be ashamed of having constructed them. [A MEMBER: You made that railway.] Yes; I made the railway. [ANOTHER HON. MEMBER: I hope it paid you.] It is not for me to say; because, if I were to tell hon. members that I lost over it, they would not believe me. The railway was made through an agricultural district, and when it was being constructed, it was stated it was going down to grow a few potatoes at Pinjarrah and a turnip or two at Bunbury. With regard to the farmers, and the reproach raised against them for non-producing, I may say that in the South-Western District this year they will most distinctly produce something like six times as much as has

ever been produced before; and twice as much land has been broken up and placed in fallow for the next season. We should all do what we can to assist the producing portion of the community, and not throw stones at them, but wish them God speed in the future, and, as far as we can, help them. The pledge of the Premier that the matter would be gone into next session is enough for any right-thinking man. I think that hon. members would do well in this short session to get as soon to the real business of Parliament as possible.

MR. EWING: I was to a certain extent pained and grieved to hear some of the remarks of the Premier; and the pain and grief I felt was due to a large extent to the unworthy motives attributed to the gentlemen on this side of the House. I was sorry to find that the Premier found it necessary to say that the reason for the amendment brought forward was that the members now sitting on this side of the House wished to occupy the Treasury benches. If the right hon. gentleman took the trouble to consider the electioneering speeches of hon. members on this side of the House, he would see clearly that their object is not to endeavour to take up the position the Government now hold, but to carry out the pledges the members made on the hustings to the electors. This is the object for introducing the amendment; and the moderate manner in which it is worded ought to show the Premier and his supporters that it is not the intention of the Opposition to seek to oust the Ministry, but is to force the consideration of the food duties on them, and to endeavour to get the reduction the country seeks. It is quite unnecessary, in order to support the amendment, to be a freetrader. I do not think it is a question of free-trade or protection at all; but even if it were, the first question we have to consider, to my mind, in looking into fiscal matters, is—What is to be the effect of the interference with the duty? In considering that question there are various subjects to be dealt with. What is to be the effect on the commercial life of the community and on the labouring classes? If we can see that by interfering with the tariff we are going to break down an industry or interfere with an industry to the material detriment of the financial prosperity of the colony, in depriving any large section of the com-

munity of the means of earning a livelihood, I would be the last to record my vote in support of the amendment. The amendment merely affirms the principle that it is desirable to reduce the food duties. As far as the farmers in this colony are concerned, I am unable to see that the question of food duties materially affects them. The farmers of the country, where they are producing food stuffs, are producing such things as by their very nature cannot readily be imported. By the abolition of the food duties, the genuine farmers are not touched at all. There is another class, called the graziers; and the question is—Will it affect the graziers of Western Australia—and, if so, what will be the commercial consequence? Admitting, for the sake of argument, that the removal of the duties would interfere with the sheep-growing industry, can any hon. member of the House assure me that the pastoral industry of the country employs labour to any great extent, or causes a large circulation of money? Members have only to go up North and observe the condition of the pastoral industry, and they will find there is almost as much labour employed on one mine upon a goldfield as is employed on all the pastoral stations in the North. Of course I am referring to white labour, and am not referring to the principle of enslaving the blacks. The squatters not only have a pauper labour, and practically no rents to pay, or the lowest rents of any squatters in the Australian colonies—

THE PREMIER: No; they are lower in South Australia.

MR. EWING: We do not wish to take away the squatters' profit, but to reduce it to reasonable and proper limits. I think members will admit that the squatters in the North have pauper labour, that they have cheap rents, and that they have every assistance, as far as I am able to see, which the Government can possibly give them—they have all these advantages, yet they want the assistance of a heavy stock tax and a heavy duty on frozen meat. In addition to all this we cannot forget the fact that they have also protection by the heavy freights which importers have to pay, and losses by the sea voyage in the case of live stock—the hundred and one things which are attendant on the transit of stock from the

other colonies. They are protected with a duty of nearly 100 per cent., for that is what it comes to on dead meat. We know that the price of a sheep up North is some six shillings, and the duty on the dead sheep imported into the colony is about six shillings. [Mr. A. FORREST: No; half-a-crown.] I say it is 100 per cent., and the member for West Kimberley will have an opportunity of proving to the contrary, if he can. Even supposing the effect of this amendment were to sacrifice the pastoral industry, yet I say no great harm would be done to the financial condition of Western Australia. There would be harm done to individuals, and that is the trouble; but to the community, as a community, I say there would be very little harm done, because the industry that is assumed to be sacrificed employs practically no labour.

MR. DOHERTY: Remember, you are one of us now—a West Australian.

MR. EWING: I am, and have been for two years, and, now that I represent one of the oldest districts in the colony (the Swan), I think I can claim to be a West Australian. The farmers of that district evidently did not think the removal of the food duties was going to affect them injuriously, or they would not have supported me in the way they did at the general election. I say now, as I said then, that the food duties will not strike at the farmer, and I defy any member on the Government side of the House to show that it will affect the farmer injuriously. What are the food stuffs produced in the colony? There is no material production of food stuffs here. Farmers produce horse feed, and produce to some little extent fowls, eggs, potatoes, and a few things like that, which will not be affected by any taxation, because they are not likely to be imported. The second ground on which I support the amendment is that I believe in government by majorities, and I believe the only true principle of government is the government by a majority, not of this House, but of the people; and any Ministry which sits here, supported by a minority of the electors, sits in a false and wrong position. [THE PREMIER: That's what you do.] I say the Forrest Ministry at the present moment represent a vast minority of the electors of the colony, and

on the food question the numbers against them are positively overwhelming. I will take, as instance, a few of those members in this House who are pledged to abolish the food duties, and who told the electors that have sent them to Parliament they would do their level best for the repeal of those duties. I refer first to the member for West Perth (Mr. Wood), who represents thousands of electors, and I ask, can the Government say they have the support of any member on that side who represents so many electors as the member for West Perth? He pledged himself positively to vote for the abolition of the food duties. [MR. WOOD: Not unconditionally.] If I am wrong, then the people of the colony are the judges, and the electors of West Perth will be the judges at the next general election. If I am wrong, the honourable member is perfectly safe, and need not trouble himself in the slightest degree; but the electors will remember him at the day of judgment that is coming, when he goes again to contest that constituency. Take the member for Central Perth (Mr. Lyall Hall), who pledged himself to vote for the repeal of the duties.

MR. LYALL HALL: With a reservation.

MR. EWING: With a reservation. I think the man who enters Parliament should stand on the strength of his political opinions, and if he does not represent principles and political opinions, he has no right to be in Parliament. The reservation made by the honourable member was to this effect:—"I believe in the repeal of the food duties, and I will vote for their repeal altogether; but if it means the defeat of the Forrest Ministry, I will sink my avowed principles." That is what he said, and that is the kind of supporter the Ministry like. They do not want supporters who will vote on principle; but they want supporters who, like the member for Central Perth, are ready and willing to say, "These are my political principles—return me to Parliament on them;" but when such a member gets there, he turns round and says, "Although I have pledged my word to do certain things, yet when it means the turning out of the Forrest Ministry, I will not fulfil my pledges." The posi-



tion taken up by the Premier is absolutely inconsistent. We have only to read paragraph 22 of the Governor's Speech to see that, although he does not intend at present to interfere with the food duties, he intends to interfere with them at some future time, but thinks that the present is an inopportune time to do so. It is evident the time he contemplates is a time that is at some distance, for the paragraph says that, "aided by the recurrence of the bountiful season we are this year experiencing, and by the good markets existing on our goldfields, this colony must in a short time become self-supporting." That passage says it is not the Minister's intention in the near future to carry into effect any principle which will entail the removal of the food duties; but when the right honourable gentleman was met with a resolution that gave him an opportunity of seeing the error of his ways, and of going back on his principles—when invited to consider this amendment, framed in very moderate language, giving him an opportunity of backing down—the right honourable gentleman took the opportunity, and nobly did it. He has met the occasion like a man. But we, on this side of the House, do not, as he says, want to get on the Treasury benches; for what we want is that our principles shall be carried into effect, and we do not care in the slightest degree whether they are carried into effect by the Forrest Ministry or any other Ministry, so long as our principles prevail. If this Ministry will give effect to our principles, let them go on; but while they refuse to do such things as they refuse to do here, I trust they will not long stay in power. When they see the strength of our position, the rational arguments we bring forward, and the reasonable things we ask for, they say: "Although we won't do it to-day, we will do it in two or three months time." As long as the right honourable gentleman does that, he will be fulfilling the noblest wishes of the Opposition. I say the position of the Government is absolutely inconsistent in stating that it is inexpedient at the present time to abolish or reduce these duties, or in any way interfere with them; because, if time has anything whatever to do with the question, I should think it would operate in the opposite direction to that which the Governor's Speech indicates; for to my

mind it is clear that if protection is necessary to-day, with a large market and with no competition, if it is necessary to keep out the foreign products under these conditions, how much more necessary will it be to keep out those products when we have keen internal competition? We have got a market now, yet the Premier says that when we have more competition we will open that market to the world. The position is illogical. It is shown clearly in the Governor's Speech that when they have this bountiful season, when they have all the blessings of Providence, they will remove these duties.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS : That would be much better for the people.

MR. EWING : I will leave it to the Commissioner of Railways to study the question, and when he has done that we can discuss it. We next have to consider the effect of the abolition of the food duties on the community generally. The abolition would be for the benefit, not only of the mining industry, but of all industries, and, consequently, for the benefit of the farmer. It is admitted that the cause of the country's prosperity is gold production and consequent employment of labour. If we do anything to foster the goldfields, we are doing that which will indirectly benefit the farmer. If the goldfields have already benefited the farmer, they will, with increased prosperity, still further benefit him. I am always given to understand that there is no true settlement on the land unless a man makes his home there; and "home," in the true sense, means the presence not only of the head of the family, but of his wife and children. That is the only way to get good, sound citizens. The effect of the food duties is to keep the very men, women, and children out of the country, those whom it is desired to see here. The Premier stated that our artisans and labourers had an objection to the competition, within this community, of aliens, especially aliens of inferior race. He showed that by a freetrade policy the men of this country would be put into competition with the same alien labour outside the limits of the community. The Premier, I think, has not quite grasped the question. The reason the artisans and working men object to those aliens is not so much the actual competition. The objection is on broader and more national

grounds. The objection is based on the influence which inferior races, directly and indirectly, have on the community—their influence in lowering the price of labour and the conditions under which they live, and the consequent lowering of our national standard. The next ground of objection is that the social consequences of the introduction of inferior races are absolutely disastrous to the community. These are the two noble principles which actuate the working men in their endeavour to exclude aliens and Asiatics of all kinds. I would ask hon. members not to be frightened by the remarks of the Premier as to the possibility of a general election. The Premier referred to the amendment as a trap. I do not see anything of the trap in the amendment; but, if ever there was a trap put before us, it is in the paragraph of the Governor's Speech under discussion. The paragraph means nothing, and it means something. It means the Government will do just exactly what they may choose to do in the next session of Parliament. [A MEMBER: Hear, hear.] An hon. member says "Hear, hear." Well, it is no doubt desirable the Government should do as they choose. I am not asking the Government to do what I know they will not do; but I am asking hon. members, who are pledged to the electors to repeal the food duties, not to be led into the trap laid. The Government have promised nothing whatever. They have not said, "We will repeal or reduce the duties next session." All the Premier says is, "We will give the revision of the tariff our careful consideration." There is positively nothing in the Premier's statement, and it might as well have been left unmade. If a member pledged to the repeal of the food duties accepts such an assurance, he is failing in his duty to the electors, and just as fully and absolutely breaking his pledges as if the statement of the Premier had never been made.

MR. VOSPER: I move that the debate be adjourned until to-morrow.

Put and passed.

#### PAPER PRESENTED.

THE PREMIER laid on the table a Report by the Government Actuary on Comparative Customs Tariffs of Western Australia and Victoria.

#### REPORTING AND PUBLISHING OF DEBATES.

THE SPEAKER stated that arrangements had been made by which the official reports of Parliamentary debates would be issued to members each Tuesday, the publication being weekly. Three days would be available after publication for hon. members to read their speeches and make such corrections as they thought proper, and to forward them to the chief reporter. It must be understood that hon. members would not be at liberty to rewrite their speeches, but any reasonable corrections, forwarded within three days from the day of publication, would be made before the final printing. The corrected reports would then be published in volumes.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 10.55 p.m. till the next day.

### Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 20th October, 1897.

Paper Presented—Question: Incarceration and Discharge without Trial—Question: Issue of Miners' Rights to Asiatics—Question: Importation of Railway Clerks from England—Question: Investigation of Recent Frauds in Coolgardie Post Office—Question: Legislation re Trades Unions and Arbitration—Question: Public Batteries for Goldfields—Question: Salaries of Subordinate Civil Servants—Question: Survey of Watersheds on Goldfields—Question: Dismissal of Stationmaster Horn—Question: Trial at Marble Bar for Man-slaughter—Question: Afghans and the Queen's enemies—Question: Minister of Mines as Director of a Smelting Company—Motion: Question of Privilege; admission of distinguished visitors—Motion: Address-in-Reply; fourth day of debate—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.