

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 Homin—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.

PAPER PRESENTED.

THE PREMIER laid on the table a Statement of Receipts and Expenditure of the Metropolitan Waterworks Board.

QUESTION—INCARCERATION AND DISCHARGE, WITHOUT TRIAL.

MR. ILLINGWORTH, in accordance with notice, asked the Attorney General:—1. The name of the individual incarcerated for several weeks, and afterwards discharged without trial. 2. The name of the justice of the peace who committed the said person for trial. 3. The charge on which the said person was committed. 4. Whether the justice still held the commission of the peace.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest), for the Attorney General, replied:—1. David Flanagan. 2. Hon. J. A. Wright, J.P., and Capt. W. Smith, J.P. 3. Larceny. 4. Yes.

QUESTION—ISSUE OF MINERS' RIGHTS TO ASIATICS.

MR. ILLINGWORTH, in accordance with notice, asked the Premier:—1. The number of miners' rights issued to Asiatics. 2. The names of persons to whom such miners' rights had been issued. 3. The dates of issue. 4. The name of the officer or officers who issued such rights. 5. Whether it was the intention of the Government to enforce Clause 92 of the Mining Act in any or all of these cases.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied:—1. Four. 2, 3, and 4. To G. Dean, a native of Mauritius, on 4th August, 1896, not since renewed; and to Din Mohammed, on 3rd February, 1897 (a Hindoo). Signed by T. Hannah, Mining Registrar, Broad Arrow. To Ameer, an Afghan, on 30th March, 1897, being a renewal of miners' right issued by the Resident Magistrate, Geraldton. Signed by G. H. Liddell, late Registrar, Mt. Magnet. To T. Sarogings, on 10th April, 1896, not since renewed, at Kalgoorlie. Issued by Chas. Taylor, who has now left the service. 5. The Government intend to enforce the law in all cases. The Government will make inquiries as to why these miners' rights were issued, as a circular was sent out on 7th March, 1895, forbidding their issue to Asiatics or Africans without the ex-

press approval of the responsible Minister. That was issued even before the Act was assented to, which provides that they shall not be issued without the approval of the Minister, even in the case of persons who say they are British subjects.

QUESTION—IMPORTATION OF RAILWAY CLERKS FROM ENGLAND.

MR. ILLINGWORTH, in accordance with notice, asked the Minister of Railways:—1. Whether it was true that the Railway Department had imported 13 or more railway clerks from England. 2. If so, whether there was any special reason why these positions could not have been filled from the list of applicants within the colony.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied for the Commissioner of Railways:—1. Yes. 2. The reason for obtaining these clerks from England was that the General Manager recommended it on the ground that there was a difficulty in obtaining the services of persons of knowledge and experience to fill certain important positions in the goods and coaching branches. The department had already drawn considerably on the railway staffs of the other colonies, and consequently the General Manager found it necessary to take the above action, so as to obtain men of long experience in the work of these branches.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Is it true that each of these 13 men had told off to him another man for one month, to train them in the work?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The hon. member should give notice of that question.

QUESTION—INVESTIGATION OF RECENT FRAUDS IN COOLGARDIE POST OFFICE.

MR. VOSPER, in accordance with notice, asked the Minister of Education:—1. What steps had been taken to investigate the condition of affairs in the Coolgardie Post Office which afforded the opportunity for the recent frauds committed in that establishment. 2. What officers, if any, had been suspended, transferred, or otherwise punished for alleged complicity with Bertoli, or in connection with the detection and punishment of that criminal. 3. Whether it was true

that such punishments had been inflicted without direct evidence of the responsibility of the persons so punished. 4. Whether there had been any neglect on the part of the postmaster at Coolgardie, and whether, if so, any penalty had been inflicted upon him for such neglect of duty.

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION (Hon. H. B. Lefroy) replied:—1. A complete investigation of the condition of affairs in the Coolgardie post office was made by the inspectors immediately upon the discovery of the recent frauds. 2. Two officers were dismissed and one transferred, for irregularities revealed during the inquiry made into Bertoli's defalcations. 3. There was good and sufficient evidence to warrant the action taken. 4. The postmaster, though deceived by cleverly forged certificates which, being written on bank official-stamped forms, would have been taken as genuine by any ordinary man of business, showed a want of circumspection in the administration of the affairs of his office, scarcely attributable to neglect. No penalty has been inflicted.

QUESTION—LEGISLATION RE TRADES UNIONS AND ARBITRATION.

MR. VOSPER, in accordance with notice, asked the Premier:—1. Whether it was the intention of the Government to introduce a Bill during the present session to provide for the recognition and registration of trades unions. 2. Whether it was the intention of the Government to introduce a Bill during the present session to provide for the settlement of disputes between labourers and employers by means of arbitration or other forms of conciliation.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): The Government do not propose to do so, this session.

QUESTION—PUBLIC BATTERIES FOR GOLDFIELDS.

MR. VOSPER, in accordance with notice, asked the Premier:—1. What had been done by the Government to secure information relative to the erection of public batteries on the goldfields. 2. Whether such information, if obtained, would be laid upon the table of the House. 3. If it were true that the Government

had already purchased a battery, and if so, whether such battery would be used in connection with the scheme for public batteries. 4. If such purchase had been made, what price was paid by the Government for such battery.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied:—1. The following circular has been sent to each Inspector of Mines, asking for certain information:—

WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

From the Under Secretary for Mines to the Inspector of Mines.—Urgent.—For the information of the Royal Commission on Mining, I am requested by the Honourable the Minister of Mines to ask you to supply me with the following information with reference to Government batteries, at your earliest convenience, the data to be supplied under the following headings:—1. *Government Batteries*.—State your views as to the necessity or otherwise for such in the districts under your control. 2. *Sites*.—If any, please name them, and state separately for each item, the following information:—(a.) The distance from the nearest public mill; (b.) the quantity of water which you are assured may be obtained for battery use, the depth at which it exists, and its quality. 3. *Future Prospects*.—(a.) State the quantity of ore per week which you estimate would be supplied to the Government battery for treatment; (b.) State the quantity of ore, and estimated yield per ton at present at grass, which you believe would be sent to the Government mill if erected; (c.) What charge would you recommend be made per ton of ore treated, to cover working expenses, interest, and depreciation in plant, in the event of a battery being erected. Kindly adhere to the above headings in your reply, which should be as brief as possible.—September 29th, 1897.

2. The Government has no objection, if it is desired. 3. No. 4. Answered by reply to No. 3.

QUESTION—SALARIES OF SUBORDINATE CIVIL SERVANTS.

MR. VOSPER, in accordance with notice, asked the Premier, whether it was the intention of the Government, in view of the excellent state of the finances of the colony as set forth in the Speech of His

Excellency the Governor, and in consideration of the frauds recently discovered in the post offices at Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie, to make any increase in the emoluments afforded officers occupying subordinate positions in the Civil Service.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied:—1. The question as to emoluments of officers will be considered upon the Estimates. 2. The Government are not prepared to make the actions of two or three dishonest persons a reason for increasing salaries, nor are they prepared to admit that the reason for the dishonesty had anything to do with the amount of salary received.

QUESTION—SURVEY OF WATERSHEDS ON GOLDFIELDS.

MR. VOSPER, in accordance with notice, asked the Premier Whether it was the intention of the Government to cause surveys to be made of the lakes in the interior of the colony and the watersheds surrounding them, with a view to their utilisation in aid of the water supply of the goldfields.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied: No complete survey has been made of these lakes. A preliminary survey has, however, been made of the "Cane Grass Swamp" on the Coolgardie-Menzies Road. The matter will be considered.

QUESTION—DISMISSAL OF STATIONMASTER HORAN.

MR. VOSPER, in accordance with notice, asked the Commissioner of Railways, Whether the recent dismissal of Stationmaster Horan was in any way connected with his alleged obnoxious remarks to His Excellency the Governor.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied: No; he was dismissed for insubordination. I have been informed by His Excellency the Governor that at no time did Mr. Horan use in his presence any language unfitting his position, nor did he ever in his presence do anything to which His Excellency could take any exception whatever.

QUESTION—TRIAL AT MARBLE BAR FOR MANSLAUGHTER.

MR. ILLINGWORTH, in accordance with notice, asked the Attorney General:

—1. The name of the magistrate or justices of the peace forming the court at the trial of Edwin Anderson and Ernest William Anderson, at Marble Bar, for manslaughter, on or about the first of October, 1897. 2. The sentence awarded in each case.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest), for the Attorney General, replied:—1. The Messrs. Anderson have not been tried for manslaughter at Marble Bar or elsewhere, and therefore no sentence has been awarded. 2. An information for murder against the persons named in the question has been laid by the police, and they were committed to take their trial at the next sitting of Criminal Sessions of Supreme Court, Perth, the preliminary hearing having taken place yesterday (the 19th of October). The preliminary hearing was taken before Mr. Ostlund, sitting alone.

QUESTION—AFGHANS AND THE QUEEN'S ENEMIES.

MR. VOSPER, in accordance with notice, asked the Premier—1. Whether his attention had been directed to the evidence of Mr. Gilbert Probyn Smith, given before the Royal Commission on Mining at Coolgardie, to the effect that the Afghans in that town were contributing sums of money for the support of the Queen's enemies. 2. If so, whether the Premier would cause an investigation of the allegations to be made with a view to the prevention of such treasonable practices in the future.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied: My attention has not been directed to this matter. I will ask the police to make inquiries, but I hardly think the alleged incident worth much notice.

QUESTION—MINISTER OF MINES AS DIRECTOR OF A SMELTING COMPANY.

MR. VOSPER, in accordance with notice, asked the Premier—1. Whether it was true that the Minister of Mines had become local director of a company which intended to carry on the work of smelting at Fremantle. 2. Whether such company had received, or was to receive, any subsidy, grant of land, or other substantial gift or bonus from the Government. 3. If such gift or grant

had been made, or was to be made, by what officer of the Government it would be allotted, or had already been so allotted. 4. Whether such officer was or would be under the control in any way of the Minister of Mines.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied:—1. Yes. 2. Yes. 3. Parliament will be asked to approve of the agreement and of the subsidy. The payment of the subsidy will be under the control of the Treasurer, and the lease of the land will be made by the Commissioner of Crown Lands. 4. No.

MOTION—QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE.

ADMISSION OF DISTINGUISHED VISITORS.

MR. VOSPER: Before the orders of the day are taken, I desire to move the adjournment of the House in order to call attention to a question of privilege. I do it more for the sake of obtaining information and taking the Speaker's ruling on a matter which I consider of some importance, than for any other object. During the day of the opening of Parliament, and I think on the subsequent day, a gentleman who represents one of the English constituencies in the House of Commons was admitted into the precincts of this House, and took his seat somewhere on the floor of the Chamber. I am sure no member of this House would take exception to that, but every one would agree in extending hospitality and courtesy to distinguished visitors of that kind. But yesterday a visitor came here from South Australia, Mr. King O'Malley, and some mistake was made in regard to the place assigned to him within the Chamber. Mr. O'Malley took his seat in the gallery usually reserved for members of the Legislative Council, and the Sergeant-at-Arms came to me and suggested that I should request Mr. O'Malley to move from the gallery. I appealed to you, Mr. Speaker, and you kindly gave permission for Mr. O'Malley to be in that gallery. It would be better if it were well understood amongst members of this House what is the exact position of persons who come here as visitors, being members of some other Legislature. I think the members of the House of Commons possess no privilege over and above that possessed by members of Parliament in the colonies; and I

would like to know definitely what course should be followed on similar occasions. My own knowledge of Parliamentary forms is so limited that I cannot say much about the matter; but I may say that, in my capacity of a journalist, I have been in the habit of observing the procedure in other Assemblies, and the practice was for the Speaker to announce to the House the presence of a member of any other Legislature. That practice was not followed in the case of Mr. Lowles; and I think we should be glad, Mr. Speaker, if you would give us your ruling on the point.

THE SPEAKER: I have authority, by direction of the Standing Orders, to admit four persons on the floor of the House; and I generally admit distinguished persons who may be visiting us, or members of any Legislative Assembly or Legislative Council from any other colony, to that privilege. If I see them or know of their presence, I invite them to take a seat on the floor of the House. I did that last night, for when Mr. Lowles came here and sent up his card, I immediately directed the messenger to ask him to take a seat on the floor of the House. Mr. King O'Malley asked if he could occupy a seat where the Legislative Councillors sit, and I said, "Certainly."

THE PREMIER: Having had some experience in visiting other parts of the world, especially in the Australian colonies, I may say I never for a moment understood that I had a right, as a member of the Legislature of this colony, to enter any Assembly in those colonies or in any part of the world. The procedure is perfectly clear. You get some member to ask for an order from the Speaker. If the Speaker does not see you himself, you send your card and ask him. He gives you an order to go into the House, or in some other convenient part. In Victoria, a resolution is passed before a visiting member or any visitor can get a seat on the floor of the House. If Mr. King O'Malley desired a seat, the least he could have done was to ask for it. I should be sorry if the idea went forth that we did not desire to show every courtesy to distinguished visitors; but the least they can do is to let us know they are here, and I am sure no one would be more anxious than the Speaker of this House to show every consideration to

them. If they do not let us know they are here, they have no right to walk straight into this House as a matter of course.

MR. VOSPER: I beg leave to withdraw the motion, and to thank you, Mr. Speaker, and also the Premier, for the information given me. I should not have moved the adjournment of the House, but for the fear that we might gain an unmerited reputation for discourtesy.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

MOTION—ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

FOURTH DAY OF DEBATE.

[Debate resumed on the motion for adoption of the Address-in-Reply to the Governor's Speech, and on the amendment moved by Mr. Leake to add certain words expressing regret that legislation was not to be introduced this session for reducing the food duties, which amendment was treated by the Government as a motion of want of confidence.]

MR. VOSPER: In the course of his speech last night the Premier took exception to the want of heart and vigour in the speech made by the leader of the Opposition. I confess I am not personally cognisant of any lack of vigour on the part of the hon. gentleman. On the contrary, the impression I formed was that he seemed rather to revel in the task before him. Further, the right hon. gentleman complained that there was a lack of statistics and figures on the part of the leader of the Opposition. I can only say that whatever complaints the right hon. gentleman may have made on that score will not lie against myself. I rise in support of the amendment before the House with the greatest possible pleasure; and I can assure the right hon. gentleman that there will be no lack of facts and figures, so far as I am personally concerned; in fact, I expect a complaint that there will be a good deal too many of them. I heartily congratulate the Premier on the excellent speech he gave us yesterday. It was a forcible deliverance, and in many respects a masterly utterance. Taken from his standpoint, it was everything that could be desired. It certainly seemed to have the effect of rousing the flagging members of his party, and of giving them a little more firmness on their legs than they

previously possessed. The speech, I think, fulfilled all the requirements of a speech of that kind but one, and that was, it failed to convince. It did everything but carry conviction. I will say, though, that if the Premier failed to carry conviction, he went within a measurable distance of attaining that object. When I heard him, in the strongest language at his command, affirm that the food duties were absolutely essential to the welfare and well-being of the people of this colony, I began to think that possibly he was right, and that, if that were the case, I was sitting on the wrong side of the House; but, after giving us so much eloquence on the advantages and merits of the present fiscal system, the right hon. gentleman deliberately turned round and gave a half promise, for it was very little more, that in order to keep the Government majority together and conciliate the goldfields members, he pledged himself to a programme of reform. He was prepared to throw the food duties to the winds. I came to the conclusion that either the first part of his speech was a display of oratorical fireworks, or else the right hon. gentleman was not sufficiently convinced of the merits of the case himself to be able to stick to his guns. As a member of the Opposition, I say that we have no need to be grateful to the Ministry for the course they have taken. First of all, they threw down the gauntlet in the most emphatic way, and afterwards, when the leader of the Opposition took the gauntlet up, he received a very severe scolding from the Premier for having done so. We do not feel grateful to the Premier that he has seen fit to "climb down," because looking at it from our standpoint there was an easier method of getting down than to climb down, and that was to fall down, and I must say that, for my part, I should witness the fall of the Ministry with the utmost indifference. The Premier went on to say that, however much we might complain of protection in any form so long as that protection affected us injuriously, we were all in favour of it so long as there was anything to be gained from it; and he went on to say that the labourers in this colony were anxious to protect their labour against the cheap labour from abroad. That is a form of protection which I think every one will

be inclined to indorse, but I deny that we advocate it as a question of wages alone. There is a moral side of the question, and the most important side of the question is that of racial degeneration. I believe that the people in this colony are capable of taking care of themselves by means of their trade unions, and that they will keep wages up, whatever may be done to bring them down. I would not advocate the exclusion of Asiatics if it were only a question of wages; but I would like to ask the Premier what he has done in the last seven years to give the labourers that protection which he claims they are pining for. I remember that three years ago when I came down here on behalf of the goldfields, a portion of which I represent to-day, to seek an interview with the right hon. gentleman on this question, I was refused an interview because the Government did not consider it convenient at that time to deal with the Afghan question. If there be an outcry against Asiatic aliens in this colony, I say it is very largely due to the faults of the existing Government, for during the last seven years we have had ample opportunity of putting an end to the state of things which produced that outcry. The Government have distinctly refused to give the labourers the protection they demanded. They have been so busy giving protection to farmers, that they have not had time to give it to anybody else. After this we were told that even the miners desired protection. Of course that pretence is untenable. You cannot pretend that the mining industry is one which requires protection. No fiscal system that could be devised could help the miner in the slightest degree. We may always get a fiscal system that would harm us, and I contend we have one now. The Premier recognised the impossibility of protecting the miner; but, he says, the miners have had concessions made to them in the form of works. There has never been a railway or a post-office, or any other kind of public work, constructed on the goldfields unless substantial guarantee has been given that the cost would be repaid. That has been the case in every instance. Even in the case of the Coolgardie railway, there was ample promise that it would be paid for before the line was opened, and no one knew that better than did the right

hon. the Premier. If he did not know it, there was everything to indicate it. We are told that the pastoral people required and obtained protection. I do not deny that. They certainly do get protection, and a great deal more than the importance or the value of the industry warrants; and, so far as I can see, the only return the pastoralists make is to occasionally come here and practically demand remission of rents, which they generally get.

THE PREMIER: They have not got it yet, anyway.

MR. VOSPER: Well, it has not been for the want of asking, at all events. I do not know any class, taking them as a whole, which asks for more from the Government, or is more disloyal to it. I say that distinctly and emphatically, for the simple reason that the members of the pastoral industry have been at the bottom, the top, and the middle of the movement for separation for years past; and that movement has been rising and falling by turns for several years past, and the pastoral industry has been solely responsible for it. And as for the agriculturists, they certainly are exceedingly well protected; and they pay for the protection they receive at the hands of this country by not even producing enough food for their own consumption. The Premier asked the members not to sacrifice the substance for the shadow. I think that, like most similes, that is capable of more than one application. There is absolutely no doubt that the hon. gentlemen on the Government side of the House have pretty well all the substance which this country can afford; and it is a fact that the people of this country, for the most part, are obliged to be satisfied with the shadow. Let those who are associated with the various rings which control the price of produce in this colony talk about substance and shadow, if they dare. Let those who go in for sham reforms talk about substance and shadow. There is no doubt whatever that the substance of everything worth having in this country is to be found on the Government side of the House, and the shadow of it on the side of the people. It is the people here who have to be satisfied with the shadow thrown by the substance. And, carrying this simile a little

further, the right hon. gentleman certainly has asked his following—more particularly that portion who are of a more liberal type than he and his colleagues—to be satisfied with a mere shadow. He says, “Give us a substantial majority; give us the substance and keep us in power, and we will give you in return a shadowy and vague promise that, when it suits our convenience, we will give you some small portion of those things you ask for now.” Now, I think that under the circumstances it will be acknowledged—if not on both sides of the House, at least on this side—that the most shadowy thing which occurred in the course of the Premier’s speech was that promise to reform, at some future time, the fiscal system of this country. And as the Opposition are not in the habit of being satisfied with mere shadows or of grasping at them, I for one distinctly refuse to be satisfied with anything of the kind. And I say that I stand in the same position as if I had moved this amendment myself, and am entitled, if I so choose, to discuss all the points which have been raised during the last portion of the debate. Now, coming down to the subject itself, I contend that, in dealing with the agricultural industry of this colony, there exists, in reality, no need for protection by means of specific duties. I say that, in this colony, we have the advantage of no less than three distinct forms of protection. First of all, we have the advantage of being closer to the markets than the people in the eastern colonies and elsewhere. People who grow vegetables and food of various kinds in Victoria and in New South Wales are very much further off from the markets than our own farmers—so far off, in fact, that it makes a difference in the price of the article to the amount of £1 10s. or £2 per ton. This is a duty which is not attributable to the Government, but which is attributable to the natural order of things. That, in itself, I think, should be considered as a very valuable form of protection; and besides, we have a second form of protection, and it belongs more especially to the food supplies, which we contend should be admitted either duty free or at a very reduced tariff. All kinds of vegetables and cereals are liable to various accidents. They become stale and unfit for use, and consequently

the value of every importation of that kind is diminished. Part of the protection imposed by the Government consists of duties so extremely heavy as to be almost prohibitive. I say you can scarcely call anything in the nature of taxation protective, when there is little or nothing to protect. I have already contended that the farmers do not now produce sufficient for our own consumption. Look at the agricultural districts: visit the farmers, and you will see very little of their own produce on their tables. Let us take for example the yield of wheat. The estimate for the current year—an estimate made in the early part of 1897, and one supposed to be under favourable conditions—the yield of wheat was estimated not to exceed 250,000 bushels for the current year, and the consumption of this colony is at least 1,000,000 bushels. There remains a difference of 750,000 bushels for the year. No matter what specious arguments may be adduced by the Premier and those who sit on the other side of the House, in regard to the reason why money goes out of the colony, there you have sufficient reason for a large export of money continually taking place from our shores. Every scrap of meat that comes here has to be paid for, and as long as that continues it must be a continual drain, and nothing can possibly prevent it. Until food supplies approximate more to the demand, the Government has no right to wring an unjust impost out of the people. I say a tax is not protective, the incidence of which falls unjustly on any particular section of the community. Take for example the instance of the Customs taxation as it stands at the present time. The Customs returns for 1896 show that certain articles—luxuries for the most part, which only the rich or middle classes can afford—are in almost every instance imported at a comparatively low rate of duty, while those articles which every man consumes, and which form the staple food of the poor classes, are most heavily taxed. I will take, for example, luxuries. They are called luxuries, although to some people they become necessities of life. These articles are taxed *ad valorem* or at a certain percentage on the cost. Then other articles which the poor must obtain in order to live are specifically taxed, that is at so much per pound, ton, or bushel, as the

case may be, and it is singular to observe, when we reduce all to one standard, the percentage the duty bears to the cost, and how much greater the tax is on the necessities of life than it is on the luxuries. For instance, carpets and watches are 10 per cent.; silks, satins, lace goods, gloves, drugs, apothecaries' wares, and pianos, 15 per cent.; carriages, fancy goods, furniture, jewellery, perfumes, precious stones, fancy soap, gold and silver plate, 20 per cent.; champagne, 24 per cent.; but no man, since the boom has gone, can afford to take champagne with regularity, but he must take bacon, and bacon has to pay no less than 50 per cent. I am taking the Victorian prices as against our duties. Butter is 20 per cent.; cheese, 55 per cent.; flour, 23 per cent.; currants, 140 per cent.; raisins, 110 per cent.; other dried fruits, except dates, 50 per cent.; hams, 35 per cent.; onions, 29 per cent.; and potatoes, 48 per cent. In every instance I find that the necessities of life are most heavily taxed as compared with the luxuries. A tariff of that kind is unjust. It is legislating for the benefit of the rich as against the wants and requirements of the poor. It is such a tariff as should be swept off the statute book as quickly as possible. If it should have the effect of wrecking fifty Governments, I should have no hesitation in assisting to bring about that wreck.

THE PREMIER: The same duties exist in the colony you come from.

MR. VOSPER: The fact that unjust imposts exist in other colonies is no reason why they should exist in this. [THE PREMIER: It is an argument.] It is no argument. Because a murder is committed in Perth, it is no reason why a murder should be committed in Fremantle. No two wrongs will ever make one right. If you take your 250,000 bushels of wheat and change it into bread, as a basis for illustration, it means that the farmers of this colony, who are enjoying a most bountiful season, as it is called in the Governor's Speech, having all the advantages of natural and artificial protection which the Government give them, under all these advantages are capable during the present year of producing a food supply of half a loaf of bread per week for every member of the population. That means that, if we

confine ourselves to the local food supplies, the prisoners in the Fremantle Gaol would be better off, if they have the legal ration, than members sitting on the Government benches. The right hon. gentleman yesterday, and other members, spoke of the amount of money being sent out of the colony. The fact that so much money is sent out of the colony is a grave indictment against their policy. I will admit that all they have said, and all that has been said on the Opposition side, is perfectly correct. The colony leaks money in the same way as a colander leaks water. The question is how is it best to stop the leakage? The reason of this large leakage of money is that life is so much more attractive in the Eastern colonies than it is here, and it should be the duty of the Government to make life more attractive here than it is. [A MEMBER: What about Tattersall's?] It may be that Tattersall's does take away some money; and, seeing we have so many small "sweeps" in this colony, the Government might do worse than invite Tattersall to come here. We already swallow the gnats; and we may as well consume the camel. I contend that the first effect of taking off these duties will be to materially increase our population, and in that way the Government, the country, and the Treasury will be amply compensated for any temporary loss of revenue they may encounter. I do not believe any such loss of revenue will be produced. The probability is that there will be a gain instead of a loss. Even if we are to have a loss, and it is twice as much as is set forth by hon. members on the other side, it will be better to face that loss and have a greater gain in the long run. The question has been asked, how can the revenue be made up in the event of our losing it? I do not see the necessity of making up the revenue, because the circumstances of the Government are such that it would not be necessary. The revenue of this colony is at least £200,000 ahead of South Australia, which colony has three times our population, and that being the case we can afford to lose that revenue and still maintain the Government as they do in that colony.

A MEMBER: They have no public works policy there.

MR. VOSPER: Possibly they have not, but at the same time a large proportion of the embarrassment here has no doubt been caused by constructing works out of revenue which should have been constructed out of loan. I say that if we require to make up this difference which it is alleged will take place in our revenue—speaking for myself and for my constituents, and I believe I speak for a majority of the goldfields members and the members of the Opposition—our people would not object to the imposition of taxation to make up that difference. The Government might impose some form of direct taxation. I will not suggest an income tax, because most of the incomes are on the other side, and the poor men are on this side so that it would be useless. We might surely put some taxation on land and dividends. We all know that in this colony we have thousands of acres of land locked up which should be turned to account for settlement. The owners of that land are living in London or elsewhere; some cannot be found; and some of this land could be turned to good account. If it would not yield anything else it would yield a tax, and if the owners would not pay the tax they should give up the land, as owners have to do in New Zealand. We have a Government purchasing land for every conceivable and inconceivable purpose. What we object to in the taxation that is imposed at the present time is that you tax our capital and labour before we have a chance of turning them to a profitable account. Every farthing of English and colonial capital that comes here, and every farthing of the capital in the country, is taxed. A duty is charged on nearly everything. [THE PREMIER: Oh, no.] Take for example the case of mining machinery, that is supposed to be duty free, but how does it work out in actual practice? While the Government do not charge duty on the actual machinery, such as stamper heads and so forth, they tax all those things that are required for the making of the beds of the batteries, the vats for cyanide works—all these things have to pay heavy duties. It would be infinitely better for the colony as a whole, for the capitalists and the labour classes, if taxation were imposed, not on the capital entering into the country, but on the profits they take

out of it. I am willing to admit, in referring to this land question again, that the Government have tried, in their own peculiar way, to do something to provide a remedy for an evil which they admit. They passed recently a Land Purchase Act, and that Act must fail in its object. The land which in years gone by was purchased for a song is now paid for by the Government under that Act, at boom rates. The country has to pay the piper. The tendency of exchanging land for capital in the way now adopted is to ensure the property again accumulating in the hands of a few, and thus the evils intended to be remedied are in reality perpetuated. Besides that, such an Act as this on the statute book gives a power to the Government which they should not have. It gives them a power which might lead to corruption. The fact is that the whole of the benefits are shared by only a portion of the population, while all the population is taxed for that benefit. I have another reason why the existing system of semi-protection should not be continued. There is an old saying that experience teaches people various things. When you try to do a certain thing, and find your method fail, that is proof it is not suitable, and you look for something better. Everybody who is acquainted with the history of the colony must know that the old Legislative Council and the present Parliament have been tinkering with the tariff for thirty or forty years. Hardly a year has passed by without some tinkering taking place. We will take for example the changes that have taken place during the last 40 years. Prior to 1854 all food stuff, except tea, coffee, and sugar, which were specially taxed, paid an import duty of 5 per cent. if they came from Great Britain and the British possessions, and 6 per cent. if from foreign ports. In 1854 flour and a number of other articles were placed on the free list. In 1856 grain, salt, and pressed meats (except hams and bacon) were added to the free list. Butter from 1872 to 1876 paid a duty of 3d. per lb.; from 1876 to 1879 it was admitted free; from 1879 to the present time the duty has been 2d. per lb. Cheese from 1872 to 1876 paid 2d. per lb., when it was raised to 3d. Dried fruits of all kinds, except dates, from 1872 to 1879

paid 2d. per lb.; in the latter year the duty advanced to 3d. In 1872 grain of all kinds, except rice, was taxed 6d. per bushel; in 1876 it was placed on the free list; in 1879 a tax of 10 per cent. *ad valorem* was imposed; in 1882 it was changed to 4d. a bushel; in 1888 oats and barley paid 4d. per bushel; wheat, maize, and grain 6d. a bushel. In 1879 flour paid a duty, the first time since 1854, the amount imposed being 10 per cent. *ad valorem*; in 1882 it was changed to 20s. per ton. In 1872 hay and chaff paid 20s. per ton; in 1876 it was changed to 10 per cent.; in 1879 to 12½ per cent.; in 1882 to 12s. 6d. per ton, and in 1888 to 20s. per ton. In 1872 the duty on potatoes was fixed at 10s. per ton, in 1888 it was advanced to 20s. In 1876 bacon was 2d. per lb., in 1879 it was raised to 3d. Onions in 1879 were 10s. per ton, in 1888 the duty was increased to 20s. per ton. In 1872 meal was taxed 20s. per ton, in 1876 it was placed on the free list, and in 1879 meal, bran, and pollard were taxed 10 per cent.; in 1882 it was changed to 10s. per ton, and in 1888 advanced to 20s. Live stock of all kinds were admitted free of duty from 1854 to 1888, when a duty of 20s. per head was imposed on horses, 30s. on cattle, 2s. 6d. on sheep, and 4s. on pigs, except animals for breeding purposes. The same thing has gone on up to the present time. Scarcely a year has gone by without the tariff being tinkered with. Every Legislature has had a trial at it, and has failed to make it produce the result expected of it. Such being the case, I think it is nearly time we abolished it altogether from the subject before our Parliament. I think in all these long years—from 1854 to the present time—when the farmers have had more or less protection, they should have reached a point where they were able to defy competition, but up to the last few years we have had only a small and un-productive farming population. From 1891 to 1897 we have had excellent work, and now when the population demands a million bushels of wheat, the farmers are producing only 250,000 bushels. It is a peculiar fact that during the period from 1891 to 1897 in which the duties have undergone reductions, all the real progress in regard to agriculture has taken place: before that, the progress was not worth taking notice

of. There is an improved market now, and there is the inflow of new-comers from the Eastern colonies—men who appear to be built of different material altogether from the old West Australian farmers. I do not say that as a reproach, but they seem to be imbued with different ideas, and they evidently mean business, while the old race of farmers seem to me to mean nothing in particular. We have also the advantage of the infusion of new energy into the Lands Department since it has been handed over. Under the old administration the department was simply a kind of political mummy: now, happily, it has a vigorous and energetic man at the head of it; its old swathings have been taken off, and it has become a living and breathing thing. One good Minister of Lands is capable, in the term of his office, of doing more good for the advancement of agriculture than all the duties that were ever imposed in the way of protection. Another thing which has helped that advancement has been the pushing out of agricultural railways in different directions, and, although I am a goldfields representative, I shall never oppose an agricultural railway where I can see the faintest chance of its doing good to its particular district and to the colony. I believe this is the policy which will be followed in regard to agricultural questions by all the members in this part of the House. That is my position, at all events, and I will be prepared to do a great deal more for agriculture than people generally suppose a goldfields member is inclined to do. I say the true direction in which to foster the agricultural interest does not lie in the imposition of protective duties; that it lies in developing your lands, promoting and extending your railway system, and it lies also in that successful form of protection known as the bonus system. More good can be done to agriculture by the bonus system, two or three times over, than can be done by all the tariffs that were ever imposed; for under a protective tariff, all are protected equally, whereas with a bonus in favour of particular agricultural products, the greatest portion of the benefit will go to the energetic and the industrious.

MR. PENNEFATHER: To the middle-man.

MR. VOSPER: The hon. member for the Greenough, as an old Victorian, will at least bear me out in this—and no one has fought more for free-trade than the hon. member did as a Victorian, although he finds himself now on the verge of entering a protectionist Cabinet—that the bonus system has done more for the butter industry alone in Victoria than any other form of protection.

MR. PENNEFATHER: Why has it been taken off?

MR. VOSPER: Simply because it has done its work. It may be difficult to carry out a bonus system, but the Premier is sent into this House to overcome difficulties, and he is not expected to bow down before natural difficulties in the same way as he does before the Opposition, for if he were to do that he would do nothing at all. It is sometimes said the onlookers see most of the game. I know that when I went to Beverley recently, as one of the members who started on the trip round by Esperance, at the Beverley railway station we were fed with preserved potatoes, which did not induce us to form a high opinion of the agricultural activity of the people at Beverley. When I went down to Bunbury some few months ago and made some inquiries there, in a district which appears to be an agricultural paradise in many respects, I found that visitors were fed on butter imported from Victoria, on tinned meat imported from outside, and on fresh fish imported from Mandurah and Perth. One does not form a high opinion of the intelligence and enterprise of an agricultural people who live on importations such as these; and it does appear to me that, if they were not spoon-fed with Government works, they would probably soon be as extinct as the dodo, and I do not know that it would not be a good thing if they were. What a contrast is presented between these agricultural districts and the condition of things which obtains on the goldfields, even in reference to agriculture; for although there is no water on the Eastern goldfields, yet when you do go to a mining district you will find that in any camp of miners there is an attempt to cultivate the soil and raise something. If the old race of farmers in this colony could have their way, they might be inclined to put an excise duty on Coolgardie cabbages. When I was at

Norseman, with other members who made the trip by way of Esperance, I saw some cabbages grown on the field, and I remarked then that the only fault I saw in those cabbages was that they lacked heart, and I was not surprised, after the treatment the people on that side have received from the Government, and the neglect they have suffered during the last few years, that even a cabbage should lose heart. Comparing these examples of what is being done in different districts, it seems to me clear that on one side you have an enterprising population who are surrounded with hard conditions; that on the other side you have a population occupying one of the finest pieces of country in this colony, a very land of Goshen, a land flowing with milk and honey, but the people settled in it lack enterprise enough to scoop in the honey, and have not energy enough even to skim the milk. Of course the farmer knows perfectly well that if he produces what he considers too much of any class of article, it may have a tendency to make prices fall; and so he is inclined to agree with others of his class in lowering the production as much as possible, for keeping up the prices. That has occurred in this colony, and the rest of the population has suffered as a consequence. Referring now to the duties which have been in operation during the period from 1857 to 1889, though I cannot show there has been a steady increase in the duties, yet taking a few specimen years at intervals of 5 or 7 years apart, it will be found that there has been a continual increase of imports. Thus, in 1857 the imports of food stuffs amounted in value to £7,235, in 1873 the amount had increased to £25,491, in 1877 the imports had gone up to £59,719, in 1883 they rose to a total of £90,409, and in 1889 to £98,953. I say it was up to 1889 that the increase in the duties took place; and I want to show that this increase did not stimulate production in the colony to the extent expected, nor did the area of land under cultivation increase proportionately to the increase of population.

THE PREMIER: There was no increase of duties in 1889.

MR. VOSPER: I am not sure. How much did the area under cultivation increase during that period? I find that in 1857 the area under cultivation in the

colony was 17,973 acres; in 1873 it had increased to 51,724; in 1877 it had decreased to 50,591; in 1881 it went up to 54,260; in 1889 it had further increased to 73,408 acres. But are these small increases in proportion to the increase of population and of imports? In 1873 the population in the colony was 25,761; in 1877 it was 27,838; in 1883 it had increased to 31,700; and in 1889 the population had risen to 43,698. This, I contend, is a simple matter of proportion; and I say there has not been, during any period, a sufficient quantity of land cultivated to feed the population, as is proved clearly enough by the imports. It is a peculiar fact that the imports have increased in a proportionate rate with the food duties. Since 1890 we have seen those new markets and new conditions which should encourage agriculture very greatly, and yet in 1895, after five years of the improved conditions, we find the population amounted to 101,325 and a cultivated area of only 97,921 acres, or considerably less than one acre per individual. Then there is another feature. At the time when duties were very small the exports were large. In 1865 the articles imported into the colony free were live stock, bread, biscuits, bran, corn and other grains, flour, and meal. Except bacon and ham, all soil and dairy products were charged 7 per cent. In that year the imports were £6,188, while the export of flour was £8,270, grain £123, potatoes £353, making a total of £8,746, or an excess of exports over imports of £1,558. The area under cultivation that year was 38,180 acres, of which 22,249 were under wheat. In 1866, owing I suppose to the bad season, imports suddenly increased to £11,711, and exports went down to £1,301. Still there was an export trade which does not exist at the present day. In 1867 imports and exports just about balanced. In that year £12,078 was spent on imports, and £12,788 received for exports. In 1869 the imports were £9,126, while the exports were £21,463. In 1869 the imports rose again to £23,728, while the exports fell to £1,102. In 1871 the exports were £4,852, and, strange to say, the exports were larger than the previous year, although there was a free tariff for live stock, flour, and meal. Everything else was charged 7 per cent. In 1872 we

had another change of tariff; bran and pollard were charged 20s. per ton, butter 3d. per lb., cheese 2d. per lb., fruits 2d., hay 20s. per ton, meal 20s. per ton, potatoes 10s. per ton, meat 2d. per lb., and other products 7 per cent., while flour was admitted free. In that year the imports were £9,583, and the exports £3,242. In the year following, immediately on this increase in the tariff, the imports rose to £25,491, while the exports fell to nothing at all—absolutely nothing. In 1874 the imports did not increase, showing £24,664, while the exports were again nothing. The cultivated area, I may say, for these two years fell off from 51,724 acres in 1873 to 45,292 acres in 1874. These were the first two years of the operation of a portion of the present tariff. In 1875 the imports amounted to £15,929, while exports were *nil*. In 1876 imports were £18,769, exports *nil*. In 1877 imports again went up to £59,719, exports again *nil*. In 1878 the imports were £54,729, and again no exports. In 1879 the tariff was once more raised, and in that year the imports amounted to £51,378, exports *nil*. Then we go on from that time to the year 1882, when there was another increase of the tariff. The imports in that year amounted to £94,696, and the exports were again *nil*. In 1883 the imports were £90,409 and the exports nothing, as usual. I may say that for the years 1882 and 1883 the area under cultivation fell from 56,691 acres to 54,260 acres. I contend that all these fluctuations indicate clearly enough that the agricultural industry in those days was a great deal more affected by the state of the weather than anything else. If the tariff affected the industry at all, the effect was to lessen the amount of energy and enterprise of the farmers, and to decrease the production of the country. In 1865, which was practically a free-trade year, there was a large export of food; and we find the same thing in 1866. So it goes on for some years.

MR. MORGANS: What were the exports?

MR. VOSPER: Flour, potatoes, and articles of that kind.

MR. MORAN: Why not give the population each year?

MR. VOSPER: I can do all that.

MR. MORAN: You are proving nothing, as it is.

MR. VOSPER: I have no desire to inflict a mass of figures on the House unless there is necessity for it, and I will be content with the figures I have already given which show the increase of population. In the old days, when agriculture had to rely on itself and was not bolstered up by tariffs and Government concessions, and by the general petting by Ministries generally, it exhibited more enterprise, energy, and vigour than at the present time. The producers were not only able to grow enough for themselves, but also to contribute to the world's food supply. In those days the exports did not always pay, but the fact that there were exports showed that those engaged in agriculture desired to do trade, whereas now it is doubtful whether they have the desire to supply the necessities of the people. The moral these figures teach, if they teach anything at all, is that the Government should take off the duties, pull down the forcing house which has been erected around agriculture, and place the producing industry in the keen atmosphere of competition. Let those engaged in the industry understand that their position in the world is like that of the hog in the fable, that they have either got to "root or to die." If it were fully understood that those engaged in the agricultural industry must work for a living like those in any other industry, a great deal more work would be done and better results would be obtained. The policy the Government should endeavour to pursue is to take the tax off all those things necessary for our existence, and, if it be necessary, to impose other taxation. Let taxation be placed on some of those luxuries I have just enumerated. Let the taxation be put on idle lands, and on the dividends of those companies who are fortunate enough to take wealth out of the country, instead of on the capital which is invested here. Such a policy would be much more fair and equitable than that at present pursued. I believe, with the hon. member for Central Murchison, that such a policy would result in direct national profit. I very much regret what fell from the Premier with regard to the mining industry. It seems to be regarded—in the Premier's mind at least—as almost an offence for a member to strongly urge the claims of the mining industry on the attention of the House.

My friend, the hon. member for East Coolgardie, had reason to complain of that in the last Parliament, but I think there is a sufficient number of mining members here to take care that nothing of the sort occurs in this Parliament. The secret of this country's greatness and of the prosperity of its industries—including agriculture—lies in the cultivation and development of the mineral industry. The more mining is developed, the more agriculture will develop. Mining makes the market, and where the demand is there the supply will be also.

MR. MORAN: The agricultural party are our best friends.

MR. VOSPER: I am told by an hon. member, who should know a great deal better, that the agricultural party are our best friends. If so, they are a very peculiar kind of friends. In this House and outside, they are always telling us, "Codlin is your friend, not Short." That is the attitude of the Premier on every possible occasion.

MR. MORAN: The Government gave railways to the goldfields.

MR. VOSPER: Can the member for East Coolgardie deny the well-known fact that, for every concession given to the goldfields, the goldfields have had to pay "through the nose?" The goldfields do not owe any debt of gratitude to the Government, who simply gave them their own, grudgingly and reluctantly, in many cases.

MR. MORAN: I have had four years' experience of the Government.

MR. VOSPER: I regret that the member for East Coolgardie has not made better use of his experience. A man who comes into the House and simply loses sight of the facts he knew on the goldfields, and gets himself into such a state of mental obfuscation that he cannot remember the things he said on the platform, is deteriorating by his parliamentary experience. We have the advice of a great statesman given to some of the most prominent men of our colony. Mr. Chamberlain, speaking at a public function in London, said: "Get population, and all else will follow." I think that is good advice, well worthy of being followed by this colony. Mr. Chamberlain is not regarded as an ignorant man, or a man of no intellectual quality. What he says bears on its face the impress of sound

wisdom; and the more his advice is followed, the better it will be for the colony and for the record of the present Government. It has been said the majority of the members of the House have given their adhesion to the principles of this amendment. So far as I have been able to ascertain from the speeches on the hustings, that statement is perfectly correct; but unfortunately the deteriorating influence of the atmosphere of Parliament House, to which I have before alluded, seems to make people rather weaker than they were. Men who were Samsons and giants on the goldfields platforms become men of a different character when they get into this House. I do not know why, but it is a very great pity those members cannot stand by their principles rather than by the convenience of the Government. Governments may come and governments may go, but a man's principles and pledges should be to him sacred, and he should be prepared to carry them out and force them to the extreme limit, letting the consequences take care of themselves. It is not our fault if the Government refuse to carry out reforms, or are acting in direct defiance of the mandate of the people. It is the duty of the goldfields members, and hon. members who have pledged themselves to reforms, to show those worthy men who sent them here that they are prepared to act up to their principles to the fullest extent. The position of the Government party reminds me much of the condition of affairs that obtained in 1870, when the Sultan of Turkey decided he would have constitutional government. He started a Parliament and followed English forms, so far as he was able. He got representatives from all the different portions of the empire, and these people met in a large room in one of the palaces at Constantinople, everything being on a strict Parliamentary basis, to all appearance. There was a Government and an Opposition, and all the rest of it. The trouble was that as soon as the Grand Vizier moved a motion, the members simply salaamed, and gave their assent to the motion at once. When it pleased His Imperial Majesty to send down a firman, so soon as it was received the members prostrated themselves on the floor. That seems to be the position of affairs on the

Government side of the House. Whenever the right hon. gentleman has anything to say to the House, his followers prostrate themselves all round. I wish him joy of the position.

THE PREMIER: That is a very old story you are telling.

MR. VOSPER: Yes; I said I went back to the seventies, but I do not think it has been told in this House before. It certainly would not be fitting in me to say much about the members for the goldfields, as I represent a portion of the goldfields myself; but I do say this, that if they are willing to forsake their principles and fail the electors now, the time is not very far distant when the electors will fail them. If this amendment is not carried, it will be due entirely to the personal influence of the Premier, coupled with political pressure in some instances, and want of political backbone in others; but, overriding all, is the immense personal influence which the right hon. the Premier is known to possess. The time will come when those hon. members who have forsaken their pledges will be called upon to answer for their deeds before the country. Before I resume my seat I would like to say something with reference to the right hon. gentleman who commands what I have already termed the Turkish side of the House. I will only say this. There is much to admire in the Premier, but there is also much to deplore. There is another old story—which the right hon. gentleman will pardon me for repeating it—in “Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress,” a very respectable authority. There is a parable there of a man who was seen with a muck-rake gathering straws, while over his head an angel was holding a crown of glory which the man with the muck-rake would not see. It reminds me of the right hon. the Premier, who is busily engaged in getting a few miserable votes that are not worth the trouble of obtaining, and trying to preserve a few miserable imposts which are impeding the progress of the country, while he is losing the opportunity of bringing about real popular government, and assisting in advancing the interests of the country. He is neglecting the great ends for the sake of the small ones. In order to carry this simile to its logical conclusion, I would remind you of a novel called “Sybil, or the Two Nations,”

by the late Lord Beaconsfield, in which he pointed out that in England there were two nations—one was the rich and the other the poor—and between the two there was a great gulf fixed. The position here is precisely the same. The Premier has not taken advantage of the immense opportunities which his political position has placed him in. He has deliberately chosen to go backward, rather than to go forward in the path of progress.

THE PREMIER: We have made plenty of progress.

MR. VOSPER: Progress in public works, perhaps, but little or no attempt has been made to progress in any other way. I predict that the time will come when the writer of the record of the right hon. gentleman's distinguished career will say that he made the most of his many opportunities, but missed the greatest opportunity which his life presented to him. I say that we are not advocating any rash or revolutionary doctrine, we are not asking you to abandon anything you have done in the past, but simply asking you to return to the wisdom of the ancients. This colony was practically freetrade at one time. I say, let us go back to something like what we had in our own history some few years ago. I do not say, let us be absolutely freetrade, but I do say, let us make our ports as free as possible to the ships of all nations and of all peoples. I want to throw open our ports to the world. It is of no use for me to say that I hope the amendment will be carried. I know full well it will not be carried. I know also that anyone speaking as I am speaking is simply beating the air—I won't say absolutely wasting the time of the House, because I do not believe that is the case. A matter of this kind should be thoroughly debated. If the discussion we are having will not educate the Government, and it would take a very great deal to do that, it ought to have the effect at any rate of showing the people how they are treated by the existing Ministry. Speaking as a member of this House, and as a member of the Opposition, I shall always endeavour, when the necessity arises, to obtain something like justice for the mass of the people. I contend that the existing system is unjust and iniquitous; and, even if it were certain that the country would suffer a loss by

the remission of the food duties, the sense of justice and of honour should lead the Government to reduce, if not abolish, these duties. The existence of these duties is the one thing which prevents us from becoming the premier colony among the Australasian group. I hope the promise of the Government will be carried out next session. After all that has been said and done, the efforts of the Opposition will not be altogether thrown away upon the Government benches, because they will at least have led the Government to promise to take some practical step. I believe the result of this debate will be to bring about some substantial reform; and if that be the case, the time of the House will not have been wasted in listening to myself and my colleagues. On the contrary, we shall have served the country well, and perhaps have saved the Government from its own damnation.

MR. HUBBLE: I rise to oppose the amendment, so ably proposed by my friend the member for Albany. After listening to the very many eloquent speeches which fell from the lips of the members of the Opposition benches, I feel certain that all right-thinking members in this House can come to only one conclusion, and that is that they have had a very bad case laid before them. It seems to me that the one great need of the Opposition side of the House is, not to get the food duties remitted, but to get the present Government ousted.

A MEMBER: That is a matter of detail.

MR. HUBBLE: I would like to see this great leviathan coach of Western Australia in the hands of the Opposition side of the House, for I am sure that any driver who might attempt to drive these new colts would get them in such an entangled mass that he would have to call upon the good old horses to run the coach. After listening to the speeches that have fallen from the other side, it seems to me that hon. members opposite think the Government are climbing down. All I can say is that, to my mind, there is no climbing down at all. Paragraph 22 of His Excellency's Speech states that the Government do not intend to interfere with the present tariff during the coming session; and therefore I think it is very clear that they intended to bring a motion forward at the next session, and

the Premier has told you, since this debate has commenced, that he intends to take that course.

A MEMBER: Can we take that as Ministerial?

MR. HUBBLE: The present debate is on the food duties. During the last month or two there has been a great cry about this one important question, and to my own certain knowledge it has been made one of the planks by most of the gentlemen on the opposite side of the House. It was not one of my planks at all. In no shape or form did any one of my constituents want a reduction of the food duties. I quite agree that, to a certain extent, living in this colony is much higher than in some of the other colonies, but I do not blame the duties to any extent at all. When we come to look at the rents—a question on which I interrupted the hon. member for Albany during his speech on the previous day—I think hon. members will agree with me that when the working man has to pay 10s. or £1 a week for his house rent, and not 5s. or 10s. which is the cost in the other colonies, it is a great disadvantage to him. [A MEMBER: And so is his meat bill.] So is his meat bill, as the hon. member says; but the hon. member cannot tell me that his meat bill will be materially affected if the duties are removed.

A MEMBER: What about the meat ring?

MR. HUBBLE: I was not aware there was one. We have heard a great deal about this meat ring, but I for one know of none. I am speaking now from information I have gained during the last two or three weeks in reference to the food duties which are being imposed by the Government. We will take articles such as butter, cheese, bacon, and eggs, four of the principal lines talked about, leaving out flour and meat. As the Premier said last night, the duty per head for these four articles is something like 10d. per head per week. I think every person in the colony can well afford to pay that amount. When you consider how the working man spends his money in other ways, he has nothing to grumble at in having to pay 10d. per week duty on these four articles of food.

A MEMBER: They don't grumble: it is the Opposition.

MR. HUBBLE: Last week I saw a working man go into a tobacconist's shop and spend 3s. 6d. for a week's tobacco supply. It is a shocking thing—[AN HON. MEMBER: Oh, it is terrible!]
—when you compare this luxury which the working man was going in for to the 10d. duty per week. He has nothing to grumble at.

A MEMBER: The working men do not grumble.

MR. HUBBLE: I do not think they do. It is those agitators who go about, and who are looking after their own personal benefit. They would like to have payment of members, and a few other luxuries for the benefit of the working man. A short time ago a Bill was passed in this House known as the "free breakfast table." Parliament took the duties off tea, sugar, galvanised iron, and kerosene, which is a luxury to the working man and to the miner, mining machinery, of which we have heard a great deal, and many other articles I might mention. I say they have had their free breakfast table, and now they want the food duties removed. I do not know what next they will want. They want cheap rents, and soon they will want the houses for nothing at all. But I think the landowner might reduce the rents and give them a chance. I think the free list of this colony will compare favourably with that of any of the other colonies. If you take it right through, as hon. members have said, it is equal to the free list of any of the other colonies, with the exception of New South Wales. With regard to protection, I must admit I am a protectionist to a certain extent. The agriculturists and the people who are tilling the soil—who are working from morning to night trying to promote an industry which I am sure hon. members would like to see succeed—need encouragement. Also the pastoralists, who have gone into the northern part of the colony and opened up the country; who have suffered hardships walking and riding; who have been put up to be shot at by the natives, and the natives have killed their cattle. They have had to put up with the droughts which have taken place during the last few years, and many other things, and it is only right that they should receive some encouragement at the hands of the Government. If hon. mem-

bers opposite were interested in this particular industry, they would have a very different opinion about taking the duties off. **MR. GEORGE:** What about the ticks? The member for the Murray has reminded me of the ticks. That is one of the greatest of all evils the pastoralist in other places has to put up with, but I hope they never will be brought into this country. I would like to ask hon. members how many pastoralists have been able to retire on what they have made out of the industry? I will say that not ten are able to enjoy a hard-earned rest by their success in the pastoral industry, which hon. members opposite are now trying to put down. In reference to the subject of the goldfields, I do not think any one will say for a moment that the Government of this colony has not done everything in its power to foster that particular industry, and here we have hon. members representing goldfields districts coming forward and telling us we should reduce the food duties for the miner. If I may be permitted, I will read a few of the prices of articles at Klondyke, which will astonish the people here. Flour per 100lb. £10; beef per lb. 4s. to 8s.; bacon per lb. 3s. 3d.; hams each £6; ham per lb. 8s.; rice, 3s. per lb.; tea, 12s. per lb.; coffee, 9s. per lb.; butter, 10s. per lb.; eggs, 12s. per dozen; lemons, 1s. each; oranges, 2s. each; drinks, 2s. I really fail to see why everybody in this country should not pay their fair proportion of Customs duties. It seems to me a very iniquitous thing that one class of the community should be allowed to obtain all they want duty free, and that another class should have to bear the burden. You are asking us to take off the duties for the masses, which means giving the working man absolutely a free table, and the rest of the community will have to pay a tax to make it up. If we do not pay for it in one way we shall have to pay for it in another. The hon. member who has just sat down mentioned a land and income tax. If an income tax is put on, it will produce very little or nothing, as we have no incomes to tax. What we want to do is to encourage the people to come to the country, and I think the Government have tried in every possible way to do that. They have taken the duties off certain articles, which has made a great difference in the Customs returns.

And now the Opposition wish to take the food duties off, thus injuring industries which are being fostered in this country. We have heard a great deal about the miners and others refusing to bring their wives and families here. I know that during the last few months the working men have been bringing their families over here in hundreds. While their wives and families remain on the other side they have to keep two homes, whereas if they are brought over here they can live at a cheaper rate. They have, to a certain extent, the privilege of bringing in furniture, to the amount of £50, without having to pay duty, therefore in bringing their furniture over they have only to pay freight. The many buildings which are going up along the line between Fremantle and Perth show to what extent the working men have been bringing their families to this colony. A great deal has been said about members' pledges to their constituents in reference to the food duties. I am sure if the constituencies hear from members the reasons why they voted against the amendment they will be perfectly satisfied.

MR. LEAKE: What is to be the excuse?

MR. HUBBLE: To tell them that the Government stated in the Governor's Speech that they did not intend to interfere with the duties this year, but that we have heard from the Premier that the whole tariff will be gone into next session.

MR. LEAKE: It will be considered, but will the duties be reduced?

MR. HUBBLE: I think everyone in this House will agree with me that the wages in this colony are higher than they are in the other colonies. [**AN HON. MEMBER:** Question.] It is an undoubted fact, and if it were not so the masses would not have come over here in the numbers they have. Every right-thinking member in this House will admit that while wages are high everything is prosperous, and we have gone through a most prosperous time during the last two or three years. Only a few years ago houses were empty, but the people have come from the other colonies and have taken them, and the men have been induced to bring their families to settle here, and they have been received right royally and with open hands, and they will be given cheap living.

At 6.30 p.m. the SPEAKER left the chair.

At 7.30 p.m. the SPEAKER resumed the chair.

MR. HUBBLE: Before the adjournment, I was alluding to the high rate of wages that are being paid in this colony at the present time, and which have been paid for some considerable time past. In my mind there is no doubt that the working man here has many more advantages of living than he has in the other colonies. [MR. GEORGE: Why should not he have?] He is in a position to buy land here as cheaply as in the other colonies—[A MEMBER: A good deal cheaper]—and, no doubt he will, in time, be able to buy land as cheaply on the goldfields as he can in and about Perth at the present time. Where wages are high, everyone is prospering; and I think that, at the present time, and for the past two or three years, the prosperous position we have been in has been the means of bringing to this colony a great number of the masses, knowing they could not get work over there at the same rate of wages as they can do here. I say again that, should the working people do away with this system of keeping one home here and another home in some other colony, and if they will make their one home here, they will be able to live far more cheaply than they are doing at the present time. As the member for North-East Coolgardie remarked, if these duties are taken off, the result will be that land will have to be taxed. I think we can well say that we are, at the present time, encouraging the farmer to come into this colony by giving him 160 acres of land, and by providing money to develop that land. If we are going to put a tax on land, I want to know how that man is going to pay the tax, after we have given him the land, and then lent him money to improve it.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: We are not going to tax the land.

MR. HUBBLE: The hon. member for North-East Coolgardie would rather tax land about the towns, perhaps.

MR. VOSPER: Unimproved land.

MR. GEORGE: Absentees.

MR. HUBBLE: All I can say is that we must have a certain amount of revenue. I cannot agree with the hon. member on

this point. The public works that are going on in the colony at the present time are very numerous, as all hon. members know—railways, telegraph lines, post offices, hospitals, and public buildings of all descriptions are now being put up in the various districts of this great colony; and how are we, without a certain amount of revenue, going to complete all these works?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: This would increase the revenue.

MR. HUBBLE: The hon. member may have some particular way of increasing it.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: If everybody spends all he earns.

MR. HUBBLE: According to the Premier's statement last night, and considering that the Savings Bank at the present has a million of money in hand, and taking into account all the money that is being sent out of the colony for supporting families elsewhere, I think the working men must be putting away a nice little nest egg. I am pleased to hear it, because there is no one who tries to encourage the working man more than I do, and I believe this House and the Government will do everything they can for attracting to these shores the families who are being supported by workers who have come to this colony; but when they do come they must remember they will have to pay a certain amount of duties to the revenue. When we consider the small amount that is represented by the food duties, 10d. a head per week, I cannot see that the working men have got much to grumble about. We have to study that one great interest in particular, those engaged in the agricultural industry, who are now, with their butter and cheese, trying to foster this industry; and we have the small amount of 3d. a pound on bacon, 3d. on cheese, and 2d. per dozen on eggs. I fail to see where the masses have got so much to grumble about in reference to these small food duties.

MR. DOHERTY: They do not grumble.

MR. HUBBLE: No. We know who are grumbling. The agitators—those gentlemen who have got elected on the one plank, and who are frightened to come over and vote on our side. They are frightened to do it. We have heard during this debate a certain amount of

talk about what some members on the other side call a "ring." There is a lot said about this ring; but, if there is one which is supposed to be called the butchers' ring, I know nothing about it. [A MEMBER: Oh, I do.] But I firmly believe there are rings of other descriptions. There are rings in all classes of trade. Why, there are rings even for the lawyers. I was going to call theirs a six-and-eight-penny ring.

MR. LEAKE: You would not get off so cheaply as that.

MR. HUBBLE: The member for Albany would not let me off so cheaply; but I think lawyers have got a very good protection, for they will not allow any new-comer to practise here unless he has been in the colony six months. Why should lawyers be protected any more than the farmer who produces the food we eat? Why should not the producer in the agricultural industry, which we try to foster, be protected the same as lawyers?

MR. DOHERTY: Lawyers generally protect themselves.

MR. HUBBLE: I think I am only echoing the sentiments of nine-tenths of the people of this colony when I say there is no real desire that the present Government should go out of office. We have a good Government, who have piloted us through the last seven years. To-morrow is the anniversary of their accession to power, and we can look back on their period of office with very great pleasure. I ask hon. members both on the Ministerial side of the House and on the other, supposing on a division this Ministry were turned out, whether the future Government would be able to look back on as good a career as the present Government now can.

MR. GEORGE: After seven years they would.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: To which Government do you refer?

MR. HUBBLE: I am speaking of the present Government.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The present administration is only a remnant of the original Government.

MR. HUBBLE: I am sorry the member for Central Murchison has misunderstood my remark. I would like to impress upon members on the Opposition side of the House the necessity of encouraging the

timber trade and every other branch of industry now being carried on in the colony.

MR. GEORGE: What about those industries that have been killed?

MR. HUBBLE: I have one opinion, and that is we ought to make "live and let live" our motto. If this motto were acted upon, the Opposition would see the folly of bringing this amendment before the House. I feel certain that, when a division is taken, should there be a division—

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Oh, there will be a division.

MR. HUBBLE: Then I shall see six or eight members walk over from the other side of the House, leaving the remainder of the Opposition in the comfortable seats they are now enjoying.

MR. OLDHAM: It is not my intention to try and follow the Premier in the feeble attack which he has made on those of us who, up to the present at any rate, can be charged only with trying our best to fulfil the pledges we gave to the people who sent us here to represent them. It is worth while, just in passing, to notice the nature of the complaints which have been brought against us. Strange to say, it is not that the issue has not been made clear or concise, but that the leader of the Opposition has put before the House a proposal divested of all those side issues on which the existence of this Government seems so much to depend. This motion was not proposed with the purpose of putting the Government out of office. Do not mistake me in this. For my own part, personally, I would not have the slightest hesitation in putting this Government out of office; but, still, this proposal was not made with that object. I recognise at any rate that while we are not desirous of putting the Government out of office, there are many hon. members on the other side of the House who are pledged to a reduction of the food duties, and who are also pledged, in a certain degree, to give a general support to the policy of the Government. It was with the object of securing a reduction of the food duties that the proposed amendment was made as mild as it has been. I am rather surprised to find the Premier taking upon himself to ask hon. members on this side of the House to stultify themselves as public men, and go back on their

pledges to the people, simply for the purpose of keeping his Government in power. Coming to the real issue, I have been very much struck during the course of this debate with the wonderful amount of ingenuity possessed by hon. members on the Ministerial side. If they could only prove one-half of what they have said in regard to those food duties—if they could only justify one-tenth of the virtues they claim for those duties—then I, for my part, sitting as I do as far away from the Government as possible, would be very pleased to be found voting for them on this occasion. But one is compelled to examine their statements, for truth's sake. I have been compelled, strange as it may seem, to come to the conclusion that a connection with the agricultural or pastoral interests of this colony has a tendency to develop in a remarkable degree the faculty of imagination. The Premier has developed that faculty. He imagines for the moment that he and his Government represent the majority of the people of this colony. But how can it be said they represent the people of this colony? Last night the Premier quoted biblical history, and spoke about travelling the country from Dan to Beersheba. Let the Premier travel from Encla to the most northern part of the colony, and then I will ask him how many men he will find who are qualified under the Electoral Act to have a vote. Not one man in ten has the franchise. How is it possible, then, that this Government can represent the majority of the people of the colony?

MR. A. FORREST: Whose fault is that?

MR. OLDHAM: I am asked whose fault it is that only one man in ten possesses the franchise. I would ask the gentlemen on the front Ministerial benches to explain one little transaction which occurred in connection with this Electoral Act in my own constituency. Last year, on the last day on which claims could be received, some three hundred were sent in, and fully testified to by the proper officer; but the applicants were not put upon the roll. Mr. Cowan was asked not to sign the roll, so that an inquiry might be made, but did he accede to that request? Certainly not; and yet I am asked whose fault it is that so few men are on the roll. The fault lies with the Government.

THE PREMIER: Oh! that is very good.

MR. OLDHAM: The hon. member for the Gascoyne, who spoke last, also went in for some little imagination. When he was speaking, I believe he said we had a free breakfast table in this colony. His imagination is so vivid that, in response to an interjection by myself, he said that galvanised iron had something to do with a free breakfast table. I had the misfortune during last session of Parliament to say something that was not very polite, and it drew down upon me the 81-ton eloquence of the hon. member for West Kimberley. If I exhibit to-night some degree of nervousness, and speak with more than my ordinary amount of diffidence, I can assure the House that it is not from any want of conviction in the opinions I am expressing. It is really only because I am afraid I should transgress some of those laws of courtesy which are so admirably exemplified in the person of the hon. member for West Kimberley. That hon. member during last session said that the working men did not want a reduction of the food duties. I am very sorry indeed to have to question that statement. I can assure the hon. member that up to the present time he has not been recognised as an authority on the wishes, desires, or aspirations of the working classes of this colony.

MR. A. FORREST: Far more than you: I am satisfied of that.

MR. OLDHAM: We were told by the Premier that the food duties were responsible for high wages.

THE PREMIER: I do not think I said that.

MR. OLDHAM: That is what any person would gather from the Premier's remarks.

THE PREMIER: Oh, yes, "gather."

MR. OLDHAM: We are told also that the food duties are responsible for railway construction, and that they are going to be responsible for public batteries.

THE PREMIER: I did not say so.

MR. OLDHAM: All this reminds one very forcibly of some of those nice little paragraphs in the *West Australian* and the *Morning Herald*. These paragraphs commence with reviewing some historical event—some of the deeds which one may admire—and as we go over those stirring incidents we find all at once that we are

reading an advertisement of some patent medicine. I do not see what connection there is between the battle of Waterloo and Dr. Williams's pink pills, but there is certainly quite as much connection as there is between the food duties and those things which the Premier says will have to be abandoned unless we can continue receiving the revenue from those duties. It is proved very conclusively that in West Australia we have, at the present time, a gentleman who has introduced a new science in political economy. The state of the other colonies, where food is cheap and wages low, is triumphantly pointed to, and it is said the wages are low because the food is cheap. Is that so?

THE PREMIER: I did not say so.

MR. OLDHAM: I think you did say so, and it can be proved by *Hansard*. If this is true, it simply amounts to this, that if South Australia wants a certain revenue, all she has to do is to knock off producing wheat and put a tax on the imported article. If Victoria wants a period of prosperity, let her knock off producing butter and put a tax on the imported article, and then she can go on in the same old game and be a prosperous colony. [A MEMBER: She would be bankrupt.] The hon. member says Victoria would be bankrupt. Last year she had a heavy duty on butter. According to the hon. gentleman, that should make her prosperous. Let New South Wales, if she wants a period of renewed prosperity, inoculate her cattle with the tick or tuberculosis, and put a duty of 1½d. per lb. on meat from New Zealand. I do not wish to say for one moment that the right hon. the Premier has not brought forward some decent arguments. There are two sides to every question, which can be fairly stated, and I think he made the most out of our loss of revenue. I understand from him that we shall lose something like £200,000 per annum, if we abolish the duties upon food supplies; but it is a question whether on the whole our revenue would be decreased, if these duties were taken off. I do not believe it would, but still, admitting for the sake of argument that the right hon. the Premier would receive £200,000 less per annum, what would be done with the money if the Government did not get it? Why, the people would have it. Take my own constituency: if

these people had this money in their pockets, what would they do with it? [THE PREMIER: Spend it in whisky.] They would buy bricks, timber and iron for the purpose of increasing their little freeholds. Would the abolition of the duties interfere in any way with the spending power of the goldfields? Have not the people a better right to spend this money than the Government, and can they not spend it in a better way than if the Government spent it for them? Can they not spend it to far greater advantage than the Government can do for them? I think they can. I hope hon. members opposite will not deny to hon. members on this side of the House the same privilege that hon. members opposite demand for themselves, and that they will allow that we are equally desirous with themselves of legislating for the best interests of this colony. Where do our people come from? The eastern colonies. Do they intend to stop here? I ask hon. members this question seriously: do the majority of people who come to this colony intend to stop here? Can that question be answered truthfully and at the same time satisfactorily? I say that it cannot be answered satisfactorily. When the people come to this colony they do not intend to stop here, and if, after a time, they do stop here, it is not for the most part from any inclination but from the force of circumstances. Why is this? It reminds one of that old prophet in Holy Writ who, three times a day while in captivity, threw up his window and prayed with his face towards Jerusalem. Believe me the majority of people who come to this colony from the Eastern States look towards the East and pray for their deliverance from Western Australia. It is no use blinking this fact: it may not be palatable, but still it is the truth. The hon. member who is so anxious to attract population to this colony says that he does not mind this fact. I do not know whether his constituents agree with him or not. I may say the bulk of the people and those who have the interests of this place at heart do not agree with him. What is wanted here? We want to attract the population. And in what manner can we attract it?

A MEMBER: Offer them a free breakfast table.

MR. OLDHAM: We can only attract them through their wives and their families. The hon. gentleman, the leader of the Government, gave us to understand last night in his speech that the majority of the people of this colony were, to say the least of it, not teetotallers; that they spend more money in drink than on anything else, or at any rate he said the Government had received more money through the drink bill than through the food supplies. Is there not a reason for this?

A MEMBER: Yes; it is owing to their prosperity.

MR. OLDHAM: Go into the town and into any of the centres of population, and see the men hanging about the public-houses. What is the reason? They have no home to go to. The hon. gentleman must recognise that, if we gave these people the same facilities that they have in other colonies, they would bring their wives and families here, and would not be hanging about the public-houses. Let me draw the attention of the House to the hon. member's remarks last night. He appealed to hon. members not to be trapped, and he asked hon. members most pathetically: "Are you going to hand over the affairs of the colony to the Opposition, because you do not happen to agree with us on one particular subject?" Is the right hon. gentleman sure of that statement? Is he sure that those hon. gentlemen who sit upon this side of the House only disagree with him on one subject? What about the Electoral Act? what about one man one vote? what about payment of members? what about the Asiatic question? Hon. gentlemen upon that side of the House who represent the goldfields are pledged right up to the hilt to the exclusion of Asiatics. What is the hon. gentleman, the leader of the Government, going to do on that question? Does he believe in the exclusion of the Asiatics? I think not. Here is a record of the Asiatic question since 1890. Mr. Solomon, the member for East Fremantle, on the 30th November, 1892, asked the Government, taking into consideration the increasing number of Chinese, "Is it true that the Act dealing with Asiatics is not being strictly carried out?" The hon. gentleman said it was being strictly carried out. Further on the hon. gentleman said that he would be introducing a

Chinese Immigration Bill, which would contain provisions that only one Chinaman should be allowed in this colony for every ship of 500 tons burthen; and in a flowery speech dealing with the exclusion of these people, he said that he wanted to keep this colony for the British race, but he concluded by stating that he was not prepared to say that they could do without Chinamen in the colony. Since then, while the hon. gentleman has been able to pass a measure through this House, he has allowed it to be thrown out in the other Chamber. When the question came to be fought out in this Chamber on the motion by Mr. James, what was the result? The right hon. gentleman and his friends are prepared to support anything in the abstract, but when it comes to placing a statute on the records of the colony, they jib. When the hon. member for East Perth made his first real attempt to deal with this question, and brought a Bill before the House which insisted upon a £100 poll tax on every Asiatic, the leader of the Government was responsible for the rejection of that motion. It was defeated by 19 to 8, and defeated upon the instance of the hon. gentleman. I bring this matter forward for the purpose of showing that too much faith cannot be placed in the promise of the Government to deal with the question of food duties next session. For the purpose of showing that we are not taxed more than any other colony, the right hon. gentleman said last night that, if our tariff had been applied to Victoria, the Victorian Government would have received about £300,000 less than they did. Certainly they would. That is exactly what we are complaining about. I should be ashamed myself to put forward such a very disingenuous argument. The table compiled by the Government Actuary shows that in 1896 there was a duty of 2d. per lb. on butter in this colony, and also in Victoria, but that whereas we received a revenue of £27,107 from it, the Government of Victoria received only £27. Now we have a population of 160,000, and Victoria has a population of something over a million. The House will understand quite distinctly that, to properly compare the tariffs of the two colonies, it would be necessary, before Victoria could receive the same amount of revenue as we do, that they

should put about no less than £5 duty on every pound of butter. The reason is not very distinct.

THE PREMIER: They produce it: that is why.

MR. OLDHAM: They produce it, and we do not produce it. That is the reason why. [THE PREMIER: We want to.] Now the honourable gentleman goes on to say, "I think that every honourable member in this House is in easy circumstances," and he said, "I am sure I never look at the bills." The honourable gentleman I am sure never does look at the bills; but supposing the honourable gentleman lived on seven shillings and sixpence a day and kept a wife and five children out of it, I think he would look at the bills then, and would recognise the severe hardship placed on the workers by this unjust taxation for which he is responsible, and yet we are told that all the trouble is high rents. One honourable gentleman who, I believe, is the greatest sinner in the city of Perth in this respect, told us last night that all the trouble was high rents. Does the honourable gentleman intend to legislate for this high-rent difficulty? Is there any argument in this. Does the honourable gentleman see any logic in saying high rents are the cause of high living? Is that not all the more reason that to counter-balance the high rents we should have cheap food? The honourable gentleman says we have, and I wish particularly to call the attention of the goldfields members to this. I wish to know particularly if they are satisfied with the explanation of the Premier as to the position of affairs. He says we have no time to deal with the tariff, but we will deal with the whole of it next session. This is the speech of the honourable gentleman at Bunbury when he placed the policy of the Government before the people of this colony, and on which he was elected again to the position of leader of the House. "Next session I intend to deal with it." Now he says he only wants time to establish the agricultural industry. "Give us a few years," says he. "Give us five years, and I believe then we will tell you a different tale." Are honourable gentlemen satisfied with that position of the matter? I ask the honourable gentlemen who represent the goldfields, and go and sit on the Government side of the House, to ask the

Premier what he is prepared to do next session. I will be satisfied with any explanation he can offer. Let any honourable gentleman representing a goldfields constituency ask the leader of the Government if next session he is prepared to take the tax off frozen meat.

THE PREMIER: We will not require any frozen meat.

MR. OLDHAM: Whatever the result of this debate may be, whatever may be the intention of the Government, I do not know; but one thing I do know, that in every constituency in which there was a contest, the successful candidate was elected pledged to vote either for or against a reduction of these food duties. [A MEMBER: No.] With the exception, I believe, of my friend the honourable member for Pilbarra; I believe his was the only constituency in this colony in which there was a contest, where the honourable gentleman who was successful was not pledged either for or against a reduction of the food duties; and the result of the general election was simply this, that a majority were returned to the House pledged to a reduction of the food duties. [THE PREMIER: I deny it.] The honourable gentleman may deny it as much as he likes; still it is the truth. Whatever political exigencies of the moment may compel my honourable friends, the democrats on that side of the House, to vote against their convictions or not, I do not know; but even putting aside those honourable gentlemen who were diplomatic enough to lead the electors to believe that they were in favour of a remission of these duties—and they would not have stood "Buckley's show" of being elected to the House if they said otherwise—leaving this out of the question, I say most emphatically a majority of members were returned to this Chamber pledged to vote for a reduction of the duties on food.

A MEMBER: Not for turning out the Government.

MR. OLDHAM: Certainly not for turning out the Government. I should be sorry to take it on myself to try and instruct honourable members how to vote; but this is a question that has been before the people, upon which the people have given their verdict, and upon which the people have a right to expect implicit obedience on the part of those gentlemen

whom they have elected as their representatives in this Chamber. They have a right to expect that obedience. It is a question on which depends not only the welfare of the gold mines, not only the mining industry, not only the welfare of the people who live in the centres of population, but it is a question on which depends even the welfare of the agriculturists themselves; and I appeal to honourable gentlemen supporting the Government—I am appealing now to gentlemen pledged to vote for this particular question—to remember that they cannot shirk their obligation. This obligation is far above that of any Minister of the Crown here. It is an obligation which cannot in any way be sacrificed without bartering the trust of the people whose representatives they are in Parliament.

MR. MORAN: I think we have heard from the two opposing sides of the House a good deal of the sum and substance of the question; but the matter as it appears to members on this particular part of the benches is, have they no confidence in the Forrest Ministry? Some honourable members on the Opposition benches have thought necessary to read to the goldfield members homilies how to vote and act. It is not those who have been a long time in this House who have taken upon themselves to direct the goldfield members how to vote; but it is the schoolboy in knickerbocker politics who reads these lectures to others. The member for Central Murchison, who is an old politician, has not ventured on that line of conduct which formed the principal part of the 19½ yards of pump water we had from the honourable member for North-East Coolgardie. The honourable member who used to represent Nannine, but who now represents Central Murchison, knows too much about the common courtesy due to new members, and he has too much wisdom to lecture them. When the honourable member for North-East Coolgardie has been a little longer in the House, he will show a little more attention to the subject at issue, and not, as I said before, deal us out these long homilies, mixed up as this was, I am sorry to say, on almost the first occasion he has spoken in public life in this House, with the most insulting remarks on the oldest inhabitants of Western Australia. This may be his

view of carrying out the interests of his constituency. He may feel it is his duty to insult a majority in the House; and when he says and boasts as he does that he does not fear the success of the amendment, and the downfall of the Forrest Ministry, but he would note with satisfaction the wreck of the Forrest Ministry, I would remind the honourable member that if he turns his telescope backwards, and looks through it the wrong way, he will see that during the greater part of his life he has taken up a position of wrecking; and it is about time he took some part in formulating some constructive policy, instead of carrying out this system of wrecking. It is all very well for the honourable member to read a homily to those who were returned at the same time as himself. They may explain themselves, and it is for the honourable member to stick to his own last, as it may not last very long. We have had several references to the goldfields on this matter, and apart altogether from the virtue of the food duties, upon which I intend to say a few words later on, I want to look at the question as we are bound to look at it, and as I am bound to look at it—one of no confidence in the Ministry. What is the public feeling on the goldfields upon this question? A good deal of what at present exists on the tariff of the country might with credit be swept away; but there is a time for everything, and everything should be taken in its right place. The goldfields, as far as I understand public opinion—and I speak on behalf of the largest of them, the largest paying goldfield of the lot, which pays nine-tenths of the wages earned—when I stood at the last election I went into the question deliberately, and in a way that some of my supporters might think was endangering my side. My views I stated distinctly to that constituency, which deals out one-half of the gold of Western Australia, and is the largest paying constituency of any of the gold producing constituencies. Before I have done, I will ask honourable members who have pledged themselves entirely to a reduction of the food duties, at what price are they prepared to turn the Government out of office? Do not let the question be divested of what it means. The Forrest Government have pledged themselves to a public policy, and to supply Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie

and the adjoining goldfields with water. There is a matter of three and a half millions at stake, and we are asked by the Opposition, in return for a reduction of about 30s. a year in Customs off the men's wages, to take away from them the hope of getting a water supply which will relieve them from the heavy charge now amounting to £25 per head per annum. These were my views in direct answer to the question of Customs duties, when I spoke as a candidate at the general election. I said :—

I am opposed to reducing the duties on all the schedule which the Opposition hope to reduce next session. I am, I may say, opposed to a reduction even on the necessities of life, except those of bread and meat; and as to sweeping away these Customs duties immediately, I am opposed to it altogether. Whatever is done must be done gradually.

And why? I went on to say that the present was not the time to interfere with the tariff of this country. Speaking now on behalf of the working miners of Kalgoorlie, I say in this House, as I said then, that the question of Customs duties is one of infinitesimal importance in comparison with three other mighty questions. They are, firstly, have we any hope of obtaining a supply of fresh water on the Coolgardie goldfields, independently of the supply to the batteries? On this point we are getting further evidence from the working of the mines; and I say, we goldfields members in this House must weigh all the facts. I do not blame the Opposition for making as strong a case as they can. I do not blame the leader of the Opposition, although he is not keeping the pledge made to his constituents at the general election.

MR. LEAKE: What pledge was that?

MR. MORAN: I have here a speech of the hon. member for Albany, and though it might not be convenient to him if I were to quote from it now—

MR. LEAKE: Oh, go on. Don't mind me.

MR. MORAN: In that speech he distinctly stated that it was not always the duty of an Opposition to turn the Government out of office; that, as far as he was concerned, this was not his ambition, and that he did not go in with that intention. Yet here, in the face of that pledge, we have the present procedure introduced by the member for Albany. I say if he, as leader of the Opposition, had desired

simply to reduce the cost of living and did not desire to turn out the Government, he would have taken a different course of procedure. It is true that some members in this House are pledged to a reduction of duty on several items of food; and, that being so, if the leader of the Opposition wanted to secure their votes, if he wanted the mere reduction of duties independently of his desire to make out a case as leader of the Opposition, he would have brought in a motion to the effect that certain items in the tariff were too high, and that the tariff should be reconsidered with the view to reducing some items.

MR. LEAKE: It would still have been treated as a motion of want of confidence.

MR. MORAN: Well, you took all sorts of fine care to make this a no confidence motion, and I blame the leader of the Opposition for doing this. Looking at the position altogether apart from the goldfields, and viewing it from the general standpoint of the country, we are now two months from Christmas, the session is going to be a short one or a very hot one, perhaps both; and no one can deny that Western Australia is just getting over the little jar that has happened to financial and business men, for we know how the financial institutions here began to tighten in, and they were the index to the change that was coming. We know there had been a tremendous splash in this colony, with all sorts of speculation and a plentiful supply of money; and there ensued a great spirit of unrest and uneasiness. I say the main cause of this was the bursting of the false boom in mining properties in the London market.

MR. SIMPSON: What is a false boom?

MR. MORAN: You ought to know. You promoted one or two. The House will perfectly understand I do not wish to impute to the hon. member anything that any other mining man would not do himself. I say this was not a legitimate boom; that the amount of money invested in the colony was represented to be altogether beyond what it actually was, and on this point I think that what the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) said was about correct, that instead of 150 millions of money having been invested in Western Australia during the boom, there were about five

millions of cash invested here. The end of that boom must come. In and around my own district of Kalgoorlie, to say nothing of other places, many mines were floated that ought not to have been put on the market; and we all know that, a year ago, you could float almost anything called a mining property on the London market, whereas now you can hardly float anything. That is the change. There is a difference of opinion as to whether the Government should, or should not, have done something to check the placing of doubtful mining schemes on the market. No doubt the Government might have taken cognizance, in the interests of the colony, of some of the "cronk" things going about; but, perhaps, it is as well that the Government has not made itself responsible in any way for the genuineness of mining investments in this colony. We know, at the same time, that the credit of the Government suffered severely as a result of the loss of confidence on the London market. We know that our loan was a failure, as one consequence, although the Government of Canada was able, a few days ago, to float a loan at $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. [A MEMBER: That was at 91.] Even so, a long way ahead of any Western Australian loan. In the face of all this, I am willing and free to admit that the Premier went to London and did his best, according to his lights, to lift that depression. He went there to re-establish confidence in the mining of Western Australia; and I may say he has succeeded to a certain extent, for there is now a distinct improvement in the financial prospects of this colony, and the goldfields of Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie are looking, perhaps, better than they ever did before. But I ask the mining members of this House, are they at present prepared to allow it to be bruited abroad that there has been a political crisis in Western Australia, that the Premier who has lately been to England trying to re-establish the colony's credit, the Premier who is pledged to the policy of erecting public batteries on the goldfields, and pledged to the Coolgardie water scheme, the Premier who is also pledged to borrow so many millions for the development of Western Australia—are mining members here willing to allow it to go forth that he has been absolutely, or almost, defeated on a

motion of no confidence in this House? I say that, if the Premier is to win in the division by a small majority, it will be as bad as a defeat, at present. [MR. SIMPSON: Hear, hear.] It would injure the rising tide of prosperity, because your investor at home does not look exactly at who is right or who is wrong in a political question arising in the Parliament here; but it will be said the Premier of Western Australia has been put out of office, or nearly so—by whom?—by the votes of the mining members! Shall that be said? I would remind the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) that my political experience here is one extending over four years, and that I have had to fight the battle he has had to fight on many questions; but during those four years I never found it necessary to use one word of sneering or contempt against the agricultural interest in this colony, or against the members who represent that interest in this House. For who are these men of whom the hon. member for North-East Coolgardie speaks so contemptuously? They are the men who carried in this House the Coolgardie water scheme, and these are the vampires who are described as seeking to suck the blood of the mining community! I say these are the men who pledged themselves to this great scheme for supplying cheap water to the goldfields population. Then, I ask, who opposed it? Why, the very men who ask us now to vote against the Government, and against the party who are going to carry out that great scheme. This is the true position of affairs, and you cannot get away from it. A quotation or two from some of the leading journals on the goldfields will show whether I am in touch with the goldfields feeling or not. I know the responsibility I am taking in speaking here; and, bear in mind, I do not reside in Perth, and do not visit my constituents at long intervals, going back for $17\frac{1}{2}$ minutes once in every two years, but I meet them frequently and spend a large part of my time in visiting the different centres on the fields. What are the questions that are troubling them? The question I gave notice of this evening, relating to residence areas on goldfields, is the leading question now, because miners know the question of a water supply has a fair chance of being settled.

This question of residence areas is the one on which the Forrest Ministry have failed more than on any other—not from want of desire, but want of knowledge of the circumstances of life on the goldfields. There has never been a proper chance of giving miners a fixed place and home to which they can bring their wives and children. The Customs duties amount to a certain sum, in the case of a miner getting £4 a week and free water in wet shifts, or £3 10s. and free water in dry working; and such a man can live comfortably for £1 a week, when he has no rent to pay. Are our miners on the fields willing to allow to go forth a statement made by that astute politician, Mr. S. H. Parker, who was to have been the leader of the Opposition in this House if returned to it at the general election? What was the assertion he made? He said, "I want the cost of living brought down, in order to bring down the cost of labour." Speaking now on behalf of working miners on the goldfields, I say they are not anxious that politicians like Mr. Parker and members of the Opposition in Parliament should have an opportunity of cutting off a pound a week from the wages of working miners, in order to save two or three pounds a year in Customs duties; but they are anxious that the Government should be given a trial, not only to carry out the great water scheme for the goldfields, but also to provide the working miner with a piece of that wilderness around the goldfield towns which they can call their very own, and then they will bring their wives and families over from the other side, and those families can get work as soon as they reach Kalgoorlie. In the face of all these facts, I stand here to say it is our duty not to be intimidated. I do not think any mining man who represents a constituency is hide-bound enough to vote for the reduction of the food duties just when and where he is asked to do it. There is a big chance now for an affiliation of agricultural and mining interests. On behalf of the working men, I say there is no objection to contribute to a fair Customs revenue so long as decent railway, postal and telegraphic communication is provided. The Government are already providing these means of communication. What is wanted is a water supply, not only for

Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie, Kanowna, and other districts, but for the Murchison also. If the hon. member for Central Murchison can show a good case, I am sure the Government will help him in the matter of a water supply. It is my strong conviction that there are no firmer believers in the goldfields than the Premier and his Ministry. I do not think there are any firmer believers in the undoubted future of the fields than the agricultural party in this House. In fact, the agricultural people have pledged the colony to an expenditure of 2½ millions to give a water scheme to the Coolgardie goldfields. If they want a little protection—although, like the member for West Perth, I believe cheap food to be a good thing—I am willing to be friendly with those who are friendly with me. The success of the colony does not depend on extreme measures, one way or the other. The leader of the Opposition cannot believe a political crisis to be a good means of raising the prospects of Western Australia. It is on that score I have taken, ever since this amendment was tabled, a leading and anxious part in saying that we should prove our individuality on this occasion. We should not be dictated to by anybody. We here on the Government cross-benches are as independent as any of the supporters of the Government or any of the supporters of the Opposition. We believe that, taking the whole matter together, the balance of benefit, so far as we are concerned, lies on the side of the Government. Can I forget the time when the old Coolgardie road was closed for want of water, and when in consequence a panic arose? The Government came forward, and with most extraordinary measures kept the road open. The Government had to initiate measures which perhaps not another Government in Australia would have been found willing to adopt. The Government, at my instance, had to come before this House and ask for a vote of £50,000 for the benefit of working miners, prospectors, and others on the goldfields. Can I forget how, on that occasion, the Opposition would have moved a vote of want of confidence if there had been any prospect of carrying such a motion? I do not say that the Government have not made mistakes, or that the Opposition are not good friends

to the goldfields. No doubt the Opposition are liberal-minded in many ways, but on the two great questions I have mentioned—particularly that question of the gigantic water scheme for Coolgardie—we are pledged to help the Government. I am not going to blame the Government for hanging back a little in regard to that scheme now. I do not believe it is the desire of the Government to hang up the scheme. I understand the position of the colony perfectly well, and so do the people of the goldfields. What we ask is that the Government, if they cannot carry out this scheme now, will go on vigorously with local works in the way of providing salt water and other necessities; and I believe the Government will do that. We are not going to rush madly in and vote against the Government, because circumstances over which they could not possibly have any control have forced them to hold back with the water supply scheme for a few months. I hope we are more reasonable than to do that. What we do say is that we are not going to add to the difficulties of the Government just now, when they are trying to re-establish the credit of the colony, and to do all the good they can for the benefit of the goldfields, at the same time building up a yeomanry on the lands of Western Australia, which are well capable of supporting ten times the present population. We are not going to embarrass the Government at the present juncture, when we know perfectly well they have done as much as they could have been expected to do. The Government have said they will regulate the whole tariff from beginning to end next session, and then perhaps we may arrive at an amicable arrangement among all parties. The cost of living may be reduced, and by that time the old pristine prosperity of the colony may have returned. If that be so, you will not hear much from the goldfields about the abolition of the food duties. I want to point out to the mining members that I am the only one amongst them who will not benefit by the establishment of public batteries, although I took a leading part in making their establishment a political cry. My electorate is small and compact, and there are batteries there already. The constituency of the hon. member for North-East Coolgardie will no doubt benefit by the establishment of public batteries. I know that hon.

member's constituency as well as he does himself, and I know that in most centres there, if the question were put, "What do you want—public batteries or the abolition of the food duties?" the answer would be "public batteries."

MR. VOSPER: There is not an alternative before us.

MR. MORAN: But if the question was put as an alternative, that is the answer which would be given. On the present occasion the mining members must use their own discretion. The hon. member for North Coolgardie has a large, expanding and growing electorate, with numerous centres that could well support public batteries. He knows his constituency does not expect him to rush into heroics in a matter of the kind now before the House, while the question of public batteries is urgent, and he is not going to hamper the Government to whom we look to supply those public batteries. I hope that hon. member, and also the hon. member for Norseman, will reap their reward. I hope the Government will not be ungenerous, when they see the goldfields members willing to make concessions, and that the agricultural party will always be found willing to help the Government to assist in developing the gold-mining industry, which is now, I take it, far beyond that of any other colony. Those interested in gold mining will, in return, never be found wanting when assistance is required in building up other industries in the colony. Millions might be supported on the land from Geraldton to Albany. We are not so blind as not to see that the same thing which has happened in Victoria and in Queensland will occur here. The first impetus given to those colonies was given by gold mining, and then afterwards the people settled on the land. Not a week goes by in my electorate but I send down two or three men to the Commissioner of Crown Lands to ask for information as to land to settle on. It is from the miners that settlers are being recruited. When they make a few pounds they come down to the agricultural districts, because they know that, after all, there is nothing in the world like a home and a piece of land they can call their own. Every encouragement ought to be given to this process, so that there may be established a population which can be relied on

when, perhaps, our gold mining is no more. I would urge on the mining members to take no notice of taunts which may be levelled at them for supporting the Government on this occasion. Their constituents are not hide-bound or narrow-minded, but will allow their representatives discretion. It would be absolutely ruinous to force a political crisis, and to barter away £3,000,000 in return for £200,000. I trust the result of the debate will be to allow the work of the session to go along quickly, because we do not want to be here until Christmas or the New Year. I am certain the Government will redeem their promise to consider the tariff next session, and have the items dealt with *seriatim* in a spirit of compromise. What is meant by the "climbing-down" business which has been referred to in connection with the Government? It simply means that the Government may climb down, but the Opposition are not going to be given a chance to climb up. The Opposition have not sufficient power behind them just now to climb up to the Treasury benches. What did Sir George Turner do? He is the first Premier for a long time in Victoria who is succeeding in pulling that colony out of the mire; and he is doing it by ignoring party politics. He went into power with the one sole idea of adopting any good measure, no matter by whom proposed. That is "climbing down," if you like to call it so. First and foremost he considers the country, and, secondly, his dignity. That is what our Premier shows a tendency to do, and I hope he will do it. I believe, too, that the leader of the Opposition will always be found willing to lend a hand in any legislation which will tend to establish Western Australia on a firm and sound basis. If we are to have federation in a few years, our agriculturists may, by that time, have got their lands fenced in and crops planted, and the colony will be more on the same basis as that of the other colonies. It is to be regretted that a spirit of rivalry has been introduced by the hon. member for North-East Coolgardie against those in this House whom he does not yet know, and whom he will find to be as good white men as he is, willing to help the country along according to their lights, as he does according to his lights.

Mr. WALTER JAMES: As a member who has no axe to grind, and who does not expect any favour from the Government, I can say at once that I intend to support the amendment. As I have arranged to pair in the division for the amendment, and shall not be able to record my vote, I want to express my views on the question before the House, so that there may be no misunderstanding. This question of the tariff is no new one to me. It has been fully discussed on many occasions since I had the privilege of sitting in this House. The question first cropped up in 1893. Then, however, it was not discussed in connection with food duties, but related to the stock tax or meat duties. From the very first I opposed the stock tax. On addresses-in-reply, and every other occasion when an opportunity presented itself, I have expressed a strong opinion against the continuation of this tax. I am one of those who think that when an amendment of this kind is brought forward, we are not justified in minutely analysing it in order to see whether we can give our unsavouring and fullest support to every word. That is a trick which is too frequently played; and I regret to think it is not done with any good purpose, but simply to afford an excuse to colourless politicians who give pledges on the public platform, and then seek the earliest possible opportunity of recording their votes in a different direction from that in which their promises went. I think it tends to obscure the real issue. If, every time a motion is brought up, we are going to insist that, unless we agree with every word in it, we must vote against it, we shall be making political principles the mere puppets of party politics. I agree with the hon. member for East Coolgardie in deploring the presence of too much party government in this House. In this colony, where we have not got a party government, it is, to say the least of it, ungenerous for an hon. member who has always behind him an overwhelming majority, to condescend to tricks of party, so as to make his majority still more overwhelming, and to efface all opposition which does not sit on this side of the House from any impure or improper motives. I am vain enough to think that, if we were to sit on the other side of the House, we would work ourselves to the

front—not all of us, because there would not be room enough. We are not sitting here because we want to be prominent. We are vain enough to think that we should be just as prominent wherever we sat. It is still more ungenerous, when we bear in mind that, on the great majority of occasions, the members on this side of the House give a generous support to the Government policy. As a rule, the position taken up by members on this side of the House is simply a position of independence. I do not think there is a party in this House, on the Opposition side, which carries on party tactics. I think I am right in saying that there are not half-a-dozen men on these Opposition benches who are banded together as a party. The other side ought to refrain from condescending to these unworthy tactics.

THE PREMIER: What unworthy tactics?

MR. JAMES: Those who endeavour to attract members to their ranks, not from a pure consideration of the issue before them, but from a consideration of the results which it is likely to bring about to themselves; who say, "Down with measures and look at men: never mind your political principles, look at your political party"—those who do this are pursuing the tactics to which I object. I say it is still more ungenerous—and I venture to say it with the utmost respect for the right hon. gentleman, who knows the respect I entertain for him personally—to make observations on the mere *personnel* of the Opposition; to say, "How would you feel if you had to follow a Government led by the member for Albany and his few followers?"

THE PREMIER: That is not personal at all.

MR. JAMES: I am foolish enough to think that Western Australia is no exception to the ordinary rule of nature—that there is no body of men here who are absolutely essential to the future progress and prosperity of the colony; and I really believe that, if the time came when the majority of the people of this colony thought there ought to be a change of Government, the colony has big enough men and good enough men, and an ample number of men to sit on the front Treasury benches, and to carry out faithfully and well the duties of the Government. If

the argument of the right honourable gentleman amounts to anything, it amounts to this, that you can never have a change of Government until every member of the House has had a portfolio. But they will not give us a chance to get the experience which they say is necessary. It seems to me altogether ungenerous to put forward such an argument. I think it would be much fairer and much better to follow the suggestion of the hon. member for East Coolgardie, and endeavour to avoid creating party feeling in this colony, unless such is involved in the motion before us. I should like the Premier better if he were not so fond of showing his strength. I think he has a sufficient majority behind him to fight the question on its merits—to fight it as a principle, and not to make it a question of persons. Let the issue be whether the question is good or bad, and not whether the man is good or bad. I do not suppose anyone will accuse me of being anxious to shift the Ministry. I would rather support them. I recognise the troubles they have had in the past, and I have no doubt that a great many troubles await them in the future. They have had difficulties in the past, and there will be difficulties in the future. We are not anxious to shift the Ministry, so long as they are kept closely in touch with public opinion. I do not say we always represent public opinion. Of course we think we do, and of course the Government think they do. I do not think there is any chance of the public being represented unless there are two sides in the House, so that members can express the opinions of all sections of the community. I have always said that I was a protectionist; and my greatest fear about the abolition of these food duties—and I am not going to vote for the abolition of them all—is not how they will affect the Government or the Ministry, but how they will affect the settlement of the country. During the past few years there has been a very strong tendency indeed to depart from the principles of protection. I find it in the Press, and, to a large extent, in the right hon. the Premier's speech at Bunbury, when he told us that he was neither a protectionist nor a freetrader—he was a sort of half-and-half gentleman sitting on a rail. I do not like that. We shall soon have to

determine whether this colony is to be run on protective lines or on freetrade lines. I am afraid, if we introduce items which are irritating and unnecessary, they will tend to take a deal of support from the protectionists which we very badly want. To-night I am far more concerned for the principle of protection than I am for the interests of the Opposition or the Government. I think it is unfair for the Government to say that the whole of this question is answered by departing from the point at issue and saying, what is the indictment brought against the Government? Does any hon. member who sits behind the Premier, and is going to support him, expect us to have an indictment, when you bear in mind what an enormous amount of money has been spent—four-and-a-half millions sterling last year alone? Is there any spot in the world where a Ministry has had the privilege of spending so much money, but would be able to retain its place and be able to point to every sign of prosperity around it? We shall be able to judge better when this enormous expenditure of public money has ceased—when there are no adventitious aids to prosperity. And, in the meantime, it seems to me altogether unfair to imagine that the position of the Government is strong beyond exception, simply because the Premier can say, what is your indictment? and we are unable to place our finger on one. The right honourable gentleman was good enough to refer to a speech I made at the Federal Convention in Sydney. I do not want to qualify it; but when I was speaking at that Convention I was expressing what I personally thought were the terms they should give us, if they wished us to go into federation immediately. I said I was prepared to advise a sacrifice, although I was a strong protectionist here. If they would give us the duties which would enable us to build up our agricultural industries, I would be prepared to give up the right to levy duties on other industries. I do not want anyone to think that I am anything else than a whole-hearted protectionist—a protectionist for the agriculturists and also for the other industries. I cannot help being pleased with the ideal speech made by the Premier. It seemed to me a splendid exposition of the value of protection. My complaint here has always

been that protection has been so one-sided. In all my speeches and votes I have always supported the agricultural industry. I have always recognised how much the future success of the colony would depend on the growth of that industry; how desirable it is that we should take every possible step for the purpose of settling the people on the soil, and for getting that permanent population without which our goldfields would be absolutely useless. I have already said that, and I hope I always shall. I admit that I did lose a certain amount of heart when I saw the returns for 1895-6, and saw so little development had been made. I think perhaps that I was a little too sanguine before, but I was a little bit disappointed at the progress made in that year. When the election was held in May last, I then said to my constituents that, although I was a protectionist, unless I saw a more determined effort made to produce those articles of food in the colony, I should feel bound to depart from those principles of protection and abolish the duties. I told my constituents at the same time that whenever I thought, in the interests of the farmers and the agricultural population of the colony, it became necessary to impose food duties or to abolish them, I would give my vote to impose, abolish, or reimpose them. I think it is due largely to the wise and vigorous administration of the Commissioner of Lands that a great deal of the doubt—if not the whole of the doubt in my mind until recently—was removed. It seems to me that we are justified in saying that, as far as we can see at present, there is not land enough brought under cultivation in this colony to say that within a short time our local demand will be met. I think that I am prepared to take the duties off the main articles of the agricultural industry if the artisans of the city are not satisfied that the farmers are showing sufficient energy and “go” and determination in the conduct of their industry. I do not think the city workers would complain of a protective duty to the farming industry. They want protection themselves, and having protection they are prepared to give it to the farmers. They have felt that in the past, although the farmers were protected, they were not bringing that amount of energy to their work that

they had a right to expect. I am glad to think I am wrong in this. I believe the city electors are now satisfied that the farmers are alive and are getting some "go" in them, and they will be prepared to bear this burden. We all must recognise that we could only obtain cheap living by the production of the articles of food inside the colony. If we remove the food duties, it means that we shall import a larger amount. Sooner or later we have got to face the question that, before we can obtain cheaper means of living, we must be able to produce largely. I do not want to be misunderstood. I am going to support the taking off the duties on articles like cheese. I think that ought to be free. We do not produce anything like enough of that article, and I do not see how we can. Articles like cheese, bacon, and butter—I do not mention eggs, because I do not think there ought to be a duty on eggs, because fresh eggs are always better than those imported—but articles like bacon, butter, and cheese, which are not produced in the colony in anything like large quantities, and will not be produced sufficiently for years to come, should be free. If we want to protect them, the best way to apply the protection is by a system of bonuses. If you apply a system of bonuses to these three articles, and articles like them, you will give equal protection to the farmers and to the deserving men, and increase the output. Although I am prepared, in connection with the agricultural industry, to give them that support I have mentioned, I am not one of those who think that a man ceases to be a protectionist because sometimes he would think a particular duty ought to cease or be removed. Protection has a broader principle than that. In all these cases one has to consider the time, the country, and the surrounding circumstances. When I say I am prepared to vote in favour of the main articles that affect the agricultural industry for a retention of the duties on those articles, I am not prepared to vote for meat duties. I want to make myself clear. I want to make it clear that I am not departing from my adherence to the protective duties. My retention of the food duties does not apply so far as the meat duties are concerned. It seems to me they form two different branches in this colony. At all events, in

the Eastern districts they cannot supply enough meat for our requirements. You have to go to the North, and in going to the North you are passing away from the agricultural industry and going to the pastoral industry, which is not as important as the agricultural industry. The men who go up to the North and engage in this industry deserve every sympathy and support. The pastoralists do not deserve the unkind things that the hon. member for the Swan said of them. I know some of the squatters, and the life they have to undergo. I know the difficulties in connection with the droughts, the dangers and the losses, and they deserve every sympathy and consideration. The position I have taken up in connection with the meat duties is that they do not require these duties, which are not needed in their interest. They never have required them. The stock tax is no good to them, because they are so far from the market, and it would be better for them to have shipping facilities and a regular line of steamers to enable them to bring their stock to market, than to have this stock tax. That has always been my opinion. I am glad to think, from what the Premier said last evening, that my position has been established and admitted by him, because he said the stock tax is not required. When we have shipping facilities, pastoralists can compete without a tax. It is not the tax that is required, but the shipping facilities; and if that is so, what is the use of maintaining that tax? What is the use of maintaining a tax which does not assist the producer of our meat supplies, but assists only comparatively a small number of people, to whom the stock tax becomes a monopoly and not a protection. It is because I think that this tax is not required that I do not believe in it. I think it ought to be removed; nor do I think it right, in discussing a question like this, to analyse, as has been done by some members, what the tax amounts to per head of the population per day or per week. You can take any tax, and if you analyse it in that way you come to the conclusion that the most heavily taxed community in the world is lightly taxed. If you take any item, and take the mere cost in connection with it, you find that

any item, however heavy it may appear, and if it were ten times as heavy as it is now, if you analyse it in that way you come to the conclusion it is very light. I do not think that is a good line of reasoning, nor do I think that it is good for us to keep a tax that does no good to those whom it is supposed to assist, but which does a great deal of injury to protection. The squatters, I think, ought to have indirect protection. The people think that this stock tax is pressing heavily upon them, and you are keeping a tax on which does the squatter no good. I say, abolish the stock tax. I think the frozen meat tax and the other duties in connection with meat taxation ought to be reduced. I would not have them wiped out altogether, but there should be a reduction. There should be a reduction I think consistent with the interests of those who produce these articles, but the interests of those who produce these articles should not be considered alone. If the giving of shipping facilities cannot get the stock down cheaply enough to compete with the imported stock, give them similar assistance to that given to the farmer; give them a line of steamers, and deal with them as you intend to deal with the land. The Premier said he intended to clear and throw it open for cultivation, if private enterprise would not do it. The same thing might apply in connection with the meat question. Give them shipping facilities, and if they cannot get it down sufficiently cheap to compete with the imported article, give them a subsidised line of steamers, and give them a start in that way. Apply the same principle of protection to them as you wish to apply to the agriculturist.

THE PREMIER : It is not the same principle at all.

MR. JAMES : It strikes me as the same. I understand from the Government we are going to have next session a general revision of the tariff. I am glad indeed of the fact, and when considering that question I hope, as a whole-hearted protectionist, if they are prepared to give protection, a large measure of protection, to some industries which are overlooked now, I might be more inclined to meet them with regard to agricultural products and the pastoral products more than I am

at present. When the time comes for dealing with the whole question, I hope the Government will recognise this, that valuable though the agricultural industry and pastoral industry are, they must not forget other industries almost as valuable, which under our present tariff are neglected. You will find a great deal of opposition to the present duties, which press wholly in favour of one class. A great deal of that will be removed when your protectionist principle is less partisan. I hope that will be so when the next tariff Bill comes in. I am quite certain that if the Government assist the towns, the towns will assist them, more especially in connection with the duties now under consideration. I am going to vote in favour of the amendment for the reasons given, because I believe some duties should be reduced. I could not vote against the amendment, because it contains a principle I think is just. I am not going to take into consideration the men and not the measures. I would like to see that the guiding principle of every man and every member of this House in connection with this great question, for I do think the Government are quite strong enough to have a free, independent vote and free criticism. Personally, I should be sorry to see the Government ejected from office, if that is to be the result of their refusal to reduce the duties. I am afraid that if this amendment were to be carried against them, it would be only a temporary advantage, for they would come back to power, in about 48 hours, stronger than ever. I would like to see the question settled on the merits of the amendment itself, quite free from any party or side issue.

MR. RASON : Whatever complaints members on this side may have to make against members of the Opposition, I do not think we shall have any complaint as to the variety of the political views that have been called forth from those who have spoken. Almost every member, who has risen on the Opposition side of the House, has differed on most material lines of policy from members who had preceded him on that side. I do not propose to say anything in reply to the member for East Perth, who has just spoken, because I will admit I am under

considerable difficulty in understanding on which side he intends to vote.

MR. LEAKE: He said he would vote for the amendment, or pair for it.

MR. RASON: I should like to congratulate the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) on the eloquence, though not on the good taste, of his speech; but it is a significant fact that, when he has anything to say worth saying, he probably has no rival in the art of putting whatever he has to say into terse and concise language, and I believe I am perfectly fair to him when I say the lineal dimensions of his speech are generally in inverse proportion to their solid contents, and he religiously maintained that ratio in the speech he delivered to-day. As a goldfields member who has been taunted with an intention to not fulfil the pledges I made on the hustings, I have now to justify, if possible, and if it is necessary, the course I intend to pursue on this question; and I have to ask myself what is the real object in seeking to tack this amendment to the Address-in-Reply? I propose to treat this matter as though the promise of the Premier to "climb down," as the member for Central Murchison chooses to call it, had never been made, and had never been offered. I propose to deal with the question as it stood when this motion was submitted; and there in no denying the fact that, when this motion was tabled, this addition to the Address-in-Reply was sought for, because it was known that it must be taken as a motion of want of confidence. Some members on the Opposition side have denied that they had any intention to turn out the Government, or that they wished to upset the Government; but I would ask the House to remember the cheers which immediately went up from that side of the House when the Premier stated he would accept the amendment as a direct motion of want of confidence. The cheers that went up from that side showed that those members intended it so to be taken, and were pleased indeed that it was so taken. Therefore I say the fallacy of wording that motion mildly, so as to give the Government an opportunity of "climbing down" if they wished, is now an exploded farce. Those who are directly responsible for this motion counted at the time on the support they thought they would receive from members sitting on the

Government side of the House—those members who, while they have no desire to upset the Government, have a real and honest desire to bring about a reduction or abolition of the food duties. How much the Opposition members relied on that fact is shown by the indecent—I say it advisedly—the indecent manner in which, at every possible opportunity, they have thrown up to members on this side how necessary it is to remember the pledges we made on the hustings. I am not going to forget the pledges I made on the hustings. I shall remember them just as well as members sitting on that side of the House, when the proper time comes; but I am not going to be made a catspaw of—I am not going to be made use of—by members of the Opposition, simply to gain their own ends.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Our purpose is to get the duties off.

MR. RASON: I will remember that statement, and will show how earnest the hon. member must be to get the duties off. The hon. member should have a little better memory. The head of the Government has reminded him of the speech which that hon. member made on the question of duties in 1895.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Oh, I made it again this year, at Cue.

MR. RASON: The hon. member said, in a speech he made in this House just a year ago, when Parliament was on the eve of dissolution, and when he, a tried politician as he is, would weigh well what he said in the House, because he would know that very soon after saying this he would have to meet his constituents—

MR. ILLINGWORTH: He said the same to his constituents, remember.

MR. RASON: I doubt it. Perhaps the hon. member will allow me to quote what he did say. He said: "What we have to do, and what it is better for us to do, is to improve our estate rather than to take off duties."

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I said the same at Cue, in the last general election.

MR. RASON: I fail to see how that policy, which the hon. member described as being the true and proper policy to pursue, differs in the smallest respect from the policy which the Premier proposes to pursue. He proposes to improve our estate rather than to take off the duties this session. Yet, in spite of that

statement--agreeing in the most remarkable manner with the policy which the hon. member says is the right policy--the hon. member now has the audacity to propose a direct vote of want of confidence in the Government.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I did not propose it.

MR. RASON: The hon. member seconded it.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: No.

MR. RASON: Well, he supported it, and, whoever is really responsible for it, he gets the credit for it.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I get the credit for a good deal that I am not responsible for.

MR. RASON: The hon. member, to show how earnest he was in his desire to upset the Government, thinking as he says--and as I am prepared to admit he is sincere in thinking--that it was necessary for the benefit of the country that the Forrest Ministry should be upset--

[MR. ILLINGWORTH: I never said that.] The hon. member said he was in receipt of advices from London, from trusted and tried correspondents, who assured him that the one thing necessary for the welfare of this country was the turning out of power of the present Government.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I did not say I agreed with that opinion.

MR. RASON: I can understand the tactics of the hon. member, and I think the House will appreciate them. If he quotes remarks and urges facts, or so-called facts, which he does not agree with--

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I quoted them as proof of the difference of opinion.

MR. RASON: Well, there must be a very great difference of opinion, and the hon. member's correspondents are not too well informed. I think it would be to the advantage of the hon. member if he changed them; for I can assure him I have correspondents in London--possibly not of such high standing as those of the hon. member, but still men who are in a position to know the true feeling in the old country on this matter--and I can say that my advices are in direct opposition to the advices which the hon. member has quoted.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It proves the difference of opinion. That is exactly what I proved.

MR. RASON: The hon. member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper), no doubt, made a very eloquent speech. I congratulate him on his eloquence; but I regret that I cannot congratulate him on his good taste. He thought fit to refer to brother goldfields members as being willing slaves to a gentleman he compared to the Sultan of Turkey. The hon. member, in his style and in his very dictatorial manner, struck me very forcibly as being himself a much more ideal Sultan of Turkey than even the right hon. the head of the Government. I can assure the hon. member that he attempted to dictate to goldfields members in a way which the gentleman at the head of the Government has never attempted to do. We would not--I think I may speak for some of the goldfields members, at all events, on this question--we would not submit to be dictated to, even by the head of the Government, in the way the hon. member for North-East Coolgardie attempted to dictate to us. I am asked to remember my pledges. I will, and I will ask the House to consider what those pledges were. I was returned for an electorate embracing a good many goldfields. [MR. ILLINGWORTH: And a good district.] Yes, and a good district--I thank the hon. member for that--a good district, in which there are a great number of men possessing very many different opinions. It is a significant fact--and I ask the House to listen to me for a moment--that I was elected by a decent number of electors, at the head of the poll, as a supporter of the Government, with a desire to reduce or abolish the food duties. The gentleman who was next to me on the poll, with a very respectable number of votes, was also a supporter of the Government, but without a desire to interfere to any great extent with the food duties. The gentleman at the bottom of the poll, whose votes I think could be counted on one hand, was a direct Oppositionist with a desire to abolish the food duties. In asking myself what my constituents had most in their minds when they elected me, I am forced to the conclusion that I was elected not so much because I was in favour of the abolition of the food duties--the gentleman at the bottom of the poll was in favour of that--but because, in the first place, I was prepared to support the present Government.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: No; it was your superior ability.

MR. MORGANS: And the Coolgardie water scheme.

MR. RASON: And the Coolgardie water scheme, if you like. I know full well from the facts I have stated, and from other sources of information, that the course I intend to pursue is the course which is most agreeable to my constituents. I should not think of doing anything but what I was fully convinced was for the benefit of my constituents and the country. It is unnecessary—it is more than unnecessary, it is foolish—for hon. members on the Opposition side of the House to remind us of the pledges we made on the hustings. We do not intend to forget those pledges; but in a case of this nature we desire, even at some loss to ourselves, and at a loss of credit, perhaps, with a few of our constituents, to do what is best for the country as a whole. We have no course open to us other than to show that we will be no party to a motion of a want of confidence, introduced by gentlemen who, if they have really any desire for a reduction of the food duties, have, I am bound to say, so far done very little to show their earnestness in the cause. Where are the arguments in support of the abolition of the duties from either the leader of the Opposition or the hon. member for Central Murchison? From the leader of the Opposition we had nothing. From the member for Central Murchison we had nothing, and from the member for the Swan we had worse than nothing. And that nothing *plus* nothing equals nothing is a simple statement of arithmetic, which I think will be within the grasp even of the members of the Opposition.

MR. LEAKE: You pledged nothing before your constituents.

MR. RASON: On the contrary, I pledged myself very distinctly to support the present Government, and equally distinctly to endeavour to bring about a reduction or an abolition of the food duties.

MR. SIMPSON: And now you are "endeavouring."

MR. RASON: And now I come to the manner in which we have been met by the Premier.

MR. SIMPSON: What pledge have you got from him?

MR. RASON: A pledge that is quite sufficient for me, and quite sufficient for my constituents, and a pledge which the division on this amendment will show is quite sufficient for a large majority of the House.

MR. WOOD: When I first read paragraph 22 in the Governor's Speech, I must say that my feelings were those of surprise and regret. I was very much surprised to see the course taken by the Government in throwing down the gauntlet, as they did on the food duties question, when they knew full well public opinion was very warm on the subject, and that many of their supporters were pledged to an abolition of the duties. I was very sorry indeed; but when I heard the motion of no-confidence in the Government, it then became a question to my mind as to what I was going to do. I have been reminded of my pledges by the hon. member for the Swan. I wish that hon. member were present, so that he could hear what my pledges really were on this question. I have taken the trouble to hunt up the old files of the local newspapers, and in referring to my speech to the electors I find I said as follows:—

The Parliament of the country have great responsibilities cast upon them, and their duty is to consider the colony as a whole, and as far as possible to keep it intact, so that a large and settled population, embracing all trades and industries, can live and prosper. This brings me to what might be called the burning question of the hour, and that is the high cost of living in Western Australia, and I claim that I was the first person who called public attention to this matter when I addressed you last June, prior to the meeting of the last session of Parliament. Then I called attention to the fearful rents that people were labouring under, and no one knew this better than I, as I had just shortly before made a house-to-house canvas of the city as valuator for the City Council. This year things are no better, and the people are now groaning under the heavy burden of high rents, and dear food in the shape of bread and meat. Now, gentlemen, how is this state of things to be remedied? Will the abolition of the stock tax and taking the duty off flour and frozen meat bring about the desired effect? I think that abolishing the duty on meat might bring the price down one penny per pound, but that is about all. Would taking off 30s. from the value of 2,000lb. of flour, or from 1,400 loaves, reduce the price of bread? A very small calculation will show that, so far as the bread question is concerned, the duty is responsible for 0½d. per loaf, or, in a family taking four

loaves a day, or 28 loaves per week, it would ease the bread bill to the extent of 7d. per week—i.e., if our friend the baker reduced his price from 5d. to 4½d. per loaf.

At that time bread was 5d. a loaf, and now it is 4d., and the figures will be relatively altered.

MR. MORGANS: The price is 8d. per loaf at Coolgardie.

MR. WOOD: At any rate, it is 4d. in Perth. I go on to say:—

I am not defending the tariff in any way. I am in favour of a free breakfast table as much as any man, but I like to look at these matters from a practical and common sense standpoint, and, if possible, to put a finger on the weak spot. The reason of dear bread just now is a shortage in the crops all over Australasia and New Zealand. With a good season this year you will find bread down to 3d. per loaf, as it was only a few months ago. But for all this, I would favour the abolition of duties on all necessities of life, as I think the amount of protection is so infinitesimal that the producers would not feel the loss, as the local markets are just now so good. I have no hesitation in saying that the high rents at present ruling are the chief cause of the high cost of living.

That is the pledge I gave, namely, that I was in favour of the abolition or a reduction of the duties. A little later on, in an address to some society in Perth, I said I was in favour of the abolition of the duties, but that I would accept a reduction as a first step towards abolition. I am quite prepared to carry out that pledge at the proper time; but the proper time is not when the members of the Opposition think fit to introduce an amendment of this character. The proper time, to my mind, is when I think proper. So long as I support a motion for the abolition of the food duties during the life of this Parliament, I consider I have done my duty to my constituents.

MR. SIMPSON: That may not be for four years.

MR. WOOD: Never mind whether it be four years or ten years; if I do it within the life of the Parliament, that is the extent of my pledge and my promise. How are we met on this subject by the Government? We are met by a promise from the Premier that the whole question of the tariff will be taken into consideration next session; and not only that, but at an early period of next session.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: You have to thank us for that promise.

MR. WOOD: I do not admit that. I have to thank myself and members on this side of the House as much as I have to thank members of the Opposition. You Opposition members think yourselves clever, and that you bring about all great reforms. You think you were the means of introducing the Education Bill; but the education question was settled by the supporters of the Government.

A MEMBER: *De mortuis nil nisi bonum.*

MR. WOOD: So it is with these food duties. If they are settled on an equitable basis, it will be by the Government and their supporters. It is the duty of the Opposition, I know, to bring forward these questions; but if the Opposition had not brought forward the matter of the food duties, does anybody mean to say that it would not have been brought forward by members on the Ministerial side of the House? If no one else had brought it forward, I myself would, because I am pledged to my own constituents on the point. I have seen the difficulties under which people live owing to the high price of bread and meat. It is the high price of meat that is the trouble. [MR. A. FORREST: No.] I say that the high price of meat is the trouble, or at any rate the price of bread and meat. Ring or no ring, there is something that is just as bad as a ring. It is very hard for a small butcher to start business in this place, owing to the difficulty he has in getting a regular supply.

MR. A. FORREST: That is not correct.

MR. WOOD: I am certain it is correct to this extent, that the supplies are not regular.

MR. A. FORREST: Yes, they are.

MR. WOOD: I venture to differ from the hon. member. I know all about it, and the meat supplies are not regular. We shall never overcome the meat difficulty till we have a proper system of slaughter, and also have the wholesale carcass butcher, as he is known in Victoria.

MR. A. FORREST: You do not understand the trade.

MR. WOOD: I do not understand the trade perhaps as well as the hon. member does, because I have not the pleasure of taking the profits of it; but I understand it fairly well. What is wanted is the

carcass butcher, as in Victoria and other parts of the world, and then a man could get his supplies every morning. [Mr. A. FORREST: He can now.] Yes, but what do they charge him? [Mr. A. FORREST: Very little.] The middleman or salesman charges such a price as not to leave a margin for the butcher to retail it. Nearly every small butcher comes to grief.

AN HON. MEMBER: That is because he gives "tick."

MR. WOOD: Never mind: the small butchers come to grief; and if they do not come to grief, the meat they sell is hardly fit to eat, all owing to the fact that they cannot get a proper supply. An hon. friend on my right says they get it at a fair price. What are the facts? Only last week, a lot of sheep were taken from New South Wales. They numbered between 2,000 and 3,000. They were sold at 3½d. with the fleece. The fleeces are pretty heavy this year. Some of my friends, who know all about the trade, tell me that they allowed ¾d. for the fleece, so that brings the price down to 2¾d., and yet we have to pay 7d. or 8d. per lb. for the meat. Does not that show there is a ring? [A MEMBER: Oh, it is the high rents!] When we see people of limited incomes, working people, having to pay this price for meat, it is enough to make anyone's blood boil, and to insist that, somehow or other, these prices must be brought down. Something must be done to bring down the duties. So far as I am personally concerned, I am satisfied to accept the assurance of the Premier that this question will be brought forward at an early part of next session.

A MEMBER: Have we his positive assurance?

MR. WOOD: This afternoon, when the hon. member for North-East Coolgardie said he was not satisfied with the pledge of the Premier, and asked the question, "Are we to have the duties reduced?" a voice—I do not think it was that of the Premier, but it was in his neighbourhood—said, "No; of course you are not going to get the duties reduced." If these are the sentiments of the right hon. gentleman occupying the head of the Treasury bench, I do not agree with them, and, before I vote against the amendment, I must have a very explicit statement from the head of the Government that this question will

be dealt with fully, fairly, and properly at an early date next session.

THE PREMIER: I said that last night.

A MEMBER: Did you say you would reduce the duties?

THE PREMIER: I said I would reduce some and abolish others.

MR. WOOD: I must congratulate the member for the Swan on the improved method of his delivery. He was not quite so noisy as he was on the first occasion when he addressed this House, which I put down to nervousness consequent on his first appearance. The lordly way in which he tried to dictate to us rather amused us on this side of the House, and it seemed rather absurd to hear him say that the Government did not represent the majority of this country, and threatening members—particularly myself and the member for Perth—with what will happen to us at the next election if we do not vote for the amendment. I think the hon. member had better look out for himself at the next election, because I am quite sure he does not represent the majority of his constituents.

THE PREMIER: There is no doubt about that.

MR. WOOD: If we were to count up the votes, he would be outnumbered by three to one. The hon. member, therefore, had better look out for his own seat, and not trouble himself about mine. I am satisfied with representing West Perth. So long as I can retain my seat for that constituency I shall be very proud indeed. I think mine is the largest constituency in the colony. I dare say East Coolgardie will soon be as large.

MR. MORAN: It is so already.

MR. WOOD: It may be. I congratulate the hon. member for East Coolgardie on the speech he has made. It was one of the best delivered during the debate. The question has been asked: "Why do not the working men send for their families?" My own opinion on that matter I gave during the election. I pointed out that it is really owing to the high cost of living. I do not know how it is on the goldfields; I do not believe they have any rents to pay there at all; but here, in Perth, house rent is excessive. Three years ago a cottage could be obtained for 15s. a week which is now scarcely obtainable for 30s., thus adding 100 per cent. to the cost of

living. Thirty-nine pounds per year has thus been added to the working man's expenses during that period. You cannot get away from it. There is not a better authority on this question than I am. I know that house rents are abominable. I am happy to say, however, that they are coming down now. I am one of the city valuers, and I was glad to see that in one portion of the town a whole row of houses have had their rents voluntarily reduced from 25s. to 22s. 6d., and a requisition went in to the landlord that if the rents were not reduced to £1 per week the whole of his tenants would go in a body. Imagine people doing that a year or eighteen months ago! They would have had to go on their knees to entreat the landlord to raise, instead of to reduce, their rents if they wanted a house. One of the reasons why people have been unable to come here has been that they have had no place to put their families in. Rather than put their families in a tent, they have kept them in the other colonies until they were able to lodge them here comfortably. Another reason is—we all know it, and cannot get away from the fact—the people who come here have had a very sad experience during the Melbourne land boom, and their natural query is, “Is the place going to last?” They do not believe in the place. I said then—I am glad I am not able to say it now: it is, however, only a short time since things have changed—that many people came here for the purpose of making a little money and then going away. Now, I am glad to say, people come here more with the view of stopping among us. I think we need not be afraid about the future of the colony and about people coming here. Let them come here for a couple of years; after that they will settle. Let them go to Melbourne or Sydney, or wherever they like: they will come back again, for they will find on their return that things have changed in the other colonies, and they will be glad to come back here. We have only to get them here for a little while to be sure that they will stop. I would like to refer to one or two things, especially to the speech delivered by the hon. member for North-East Coolgardie, which showed that a great deal of time and labour had been expended, and the figures were very interesting indeed.

The hon. member for East Perth also made a speech. It is always very refreshing to see this gentleman get up, especially if he folds his arms and lectures us. He does not want to lecture us, but he does it all the time. After lecturing members on this side of the House on our duty, and telling us what we ought to do—which I consider a piece of effrontery on the hon. member's part: it “took the cake,” I think—he concluded by telling us that he was going to vote for this motion against the Government. After quietly lecturing us on our duty, and telling us what we ought to do, he winds up by saying that he is going to pair. There are two or three others that would like to pair if they could. I will only say that if I hear a further confirmation of the Premier's promise, in spite of the interjection from the neighbourhood of the right hon. gentleman, I shall vote against the amendment; but unless I get a satisfactory assurance that this question of the abolition of duties will be brought on, I shall vote for the amendment.

MR. LOCKE: It is rather unfortunate that I should, for the first time of rising in this House, have to speak on such an important subject as the food duties. Nevertheless, I do not think I should be doing my duty to my constituents if I did not address myself to this question. When I was returned to this House I beat two other candidates. [AN HON. MEMBER: By a head.] No; by a big majority; and my platform was that, as long as the Premier stuck to his programme as given to us in the Bunbury speech, I would stick to the Government; and there can be no mistaking it. I think every member in this House saw the Premier's Bunbury speech before he went on the hustings at all; and thus members knew what his ideas were—what the Government were prepared to do; and they must have either been returned to support the Government, or to oppose them. On the question of the duties the Premier was very emphatic. He said he would stand or fall by them, and I hope he will. I am very sorry that so many of the goldfields members—new members to me—are in opposition to the Government, and I am very sorry the leader of the Opposition should throw down the gauntlet, as it were, to the farmers. [MR. LEAKE: You mean, pick it up.] We have no al-

ternative but to pick up. The goldfields members say they are going to have free-trade, and the leader of the Opposition twits us with our agricultural railways and bridges over rivers that do not exist. If that is the idea of the goldfields members, they will not be in accord with the ideas of the Southern members. I am glad that some of them, in able speeches, have told us that that is not their will, desire, or intention. If the goldfields members are willing to support the farmers and the pastoralists, the pastoral and agricultural members will be only too glad to help them in opening up their goldfields. I, for one, have much pleasure in supporting anything that would open up the goldfields. It is opening up a market for us and the colony generally. The Government are willing to do the best they can to open up these fields, and it is a great pity that the goldfields members should start, as soon as they get into the House, to oppose the agriculturists. I hope that, when we come to a vote, the goldfields members will show that they are not entirely in favour of the abolition of protection to the farmers. We do not object to the mining industry being protected and having batteries and railways and hospitals, or any scheme that suits them, so long as we have a good market. It is my duty, as long as I am here, to look after the agricultural interests, and I think that, in looking after the goldfields, and in seeing that the goldfields are being opened up, I am treading in the right direction. But, if the goldfields members are prepared to do away with the duties altogether, I will be inclined to go against all their improvements. I do not think the stock tax has anything to do with the high cost of living, or that the duty on flour has anything to do with it. I think it is entirely due to a chain of circumstances. The Premier suggests that if he puts this question off for a year, the difficulties will have vanished—many of them, at any rate. The heavy cost of living is due to the rents; and they are righting themselves every day. I hope the Government will not be disposed to climb down, as it has been termed. I hope they will stand their ground and have a big majority, because it must be evident to the goldfields members that, as long as the Government are willing to do so much for

them—and the settlers are willing to help the Government to do it—it must do more good than having a free breakfast-table and no public works. I do not think it is necessary for me to say much more, but I want to let the goldfields members know what the sentiments of the agricultural portion of the community are. I am sorry that so many of the goldfields members sit on the Opposition side and follow the tactics of the leader of the Opposition.

MR. LEAKE: I cannot live under this sarcasm.

MR. LOCKE: We cannot live without railways and bridges in the agricultural centres, and a moderate protection; and I hope the goldfields members will realise that we have not got it all. If we get the money in one way, it goes back. A major portion of it is spent on the goldfields.

MR. MITCHELL (Murchison): Little is left to say, there has been so much already said, and, I think, enough. But in adding my mite to the already lengthy talk, I may as well at once say that there is not an hon. member of this House, or anyone outside of it, who would sooner see the total abolition of the food duties than I, providing it could be done without injury to any person, or in any way hampering the Government. I cannot see how this can be; I am, therefore, opposed to the amendment. When anyone comes before the House, as my hon. friend the member for Albany does, supported by other hon. members, and asks the Government to give up such an important portion of the revenue, he should be prepared with some reasonable and workable substitute, and such as would be acceptable to members, because it is pretty well known that the present revenue is none too much for the present requirements; therefore it stands to reason that, if the duty were taken off these articles, it would be placed on something else; and the question arises whether the new order of things would be better than the old. I for one think not. In this colony, as in every other colony, we have a Government to keep up. We have sometimes been told that our Government is a spending Government. There is nothing peculiar about that. It would be peculiar if it were not so; because all Governments are more or less spending Governments. If the present Government has spent propor-

tionately more than any other Government, it has been due to the extraordinary circumstances which have come over the colony, calling for the construction of public works and a host of other things in order to keep pace with modern times. I should not like to see the amendment carried in the House, because it would hamper the progress and the policy of the Government, which is so necessary in these days of go-ahead. A cry has been raised in our land; but it is a bogus cry. It is said that these food duties are keeping families from our shores. It is utter nonsense—"rot," I say. I have no hesitation in saying—and I speak from some little experience—that seven-tenths of those who are leaving their families behind them have no intention of ever bringing their families over here. They mean to make money on the goldfields; and, having done so, they hope to return to their former homes. Why should it not be so? All of us have a leaning for the home of our youth—to get back there if we can. This cry was first used as an electioneering fulcrum, and it is now used as a political lever. I can put no other construction on it. Coming to the free list of the colony, which has been referred to to a great extent, I think it has been shown conclusively that it compares favourably with the free lists of the other colonies, unless they have pure freetrade. I am not going to take up the time of the House in going over all the items; but I shall refer to two, notwithstanding that they have been referred to before, and these two are tea and sugar. Has the abolition of the duty on these articles made a difference to the working man or generally? I think not; and if the duty were taken off the remaining articles, the result would be the same. I appeal to hon. members to weigh the matter before voting, as a wrong vote now may mean in the future a great hardship to many of the pioneer settlers of the colony who have roughed it long before many of the hon. members came here or thought of coming. I am opposed to the amendment and shall vote against it.

MR. A. FORREST: In rising to speak on this very important question, and to address the few members of the Opposition who are present—and those are the members I wish to address my few remarks to—I do so with great confidence

that the party sitting on this side of the House will show, with no uncertain hand, that they intend that the Opposition shall not, for the present session, at any rate, take part in the Government of the country. A great cry has been made with reference to the food duties, which is the only cry the Opposition have. I intend to devote the few remarks I wish to make to the question of the meat duties; and I shall not deviate from that position, because my remarks would not be relevant to the position I intend to take up if I did. This great question has been raised before on this side and on the other side of the House; but I was sorry indeed to have to interrupt my hon. friend the member for West Perth (Mr. Wood), for I think he did not understand the question when he spoke on the meat duties. The hon. member knows a good deal about other things; but he has not given that attention to this particular subject that he ought to have done when he addressed himself to the House on that question. The subject is one I intend to deal with almost solely; because I am here speaking as a representative of a squatting district, and I am put in for that district on that platform. That is the verdict, as far as the people are concerned, on the meat duties, and I intend to adhere to it, and not to waver. [MR. LEAKE: Waver?] The member for Albany should not interrupt, for when a member who is not a lawyer is interrupted very much while speaking, he may be thrown out on the particular point he wishes to make. The member for Albany will never convince me that the opinions he tries to thrust down the throats of members on this side of the House are right. I have here a comparative statement of the cost of meat delivered to the retail butchers, the figures being taken from the books of the firm I represent (Messrs. Forrest and Emanuel), and verified by auditors. The period covered by these figures goes a long way back, beginning in the year 1885; and between the months of June and October in that year bullocks and sheep were sold to the retail butchers at 4½d. a pound weight; in 1886, June and July, bullocks were sold at £18 each, sheep at £1 2s. each, equal to 4½ lb.; in 1887, sheep at 4½ lb., bullocks at 4¾d. and 5d. lb.; in 1888, sheep at 4½d. lb., bullocks at 5d. lb.;

in 1889, sheep at $3\frac{1}{2}$ d. lb., bullocks at $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. lb.; in 1890, sheep at 3d. lb., bullocks at $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. lb.; in 1891, sheep at $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. lb.; bullocks at $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. lb.; those prices showing that the tenor of the whole, year after year, has been fairly equal; in 1892, sheep at 11s. and 21s. each, bullocks at £13 each; in 1893, sheep at $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. lb. and 20s. each, bullocks at £11 each; in 1894, sheep and bullocks at $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. lb.; in 1895, sheep at $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. lb., bullocks at 4d. lb.; in 1896, sheep at $3\frac{1}{2}$ d. lb., bullocks at 4d. lb.; in 1897, taking the month of June, sheep at 4d. lb., cattle at $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. lb.; and at the present time sheep have been sold to the butchers at 4d. lb., cattle at $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. lb., although I may add that the present prices of these two items are considerably less than are put down here. The prices here quoted are those paid to the grower.

A MEMBER: What does the butcher get?

MR. A. FORREST: I am not a retail butcher, and I do not know. I will go on to show, by comparison, what are the import duties on live stock charged in other colonies. In Tasmania, the duty on imported cattle is £2 a head, in South Australia £1, in Victoria 30s., and in West Australia 30s.; so, hon. members will see there is not a great difference in the duties payable in other Australian colonies as compared with the duty charged in this colony. The duty on pigs is—in Tasmania 2s. 6d. per head, in South Australia 5s., Victoria 10s., West Australia 4s. Sheep—in Tasmania the duty is 2s a head, South Australia 1s., Victoria 2s., West Australia 2s. 6d. New South Wales has no duties on imported live stock. In Queensland, fresh meat, that is killed meat, is charged 25 per cent. on imports; on frozen meat or any other meat imported the duty is 25 per cent.; these being the duties in the great meat-producing colony of Queensland. In South Australia the duty on fresh meat is 5s. per 100 lb., and on meat in pickle or brine 2d. lb.; in Tasmania, fresh meat 1d. lb., in pickle or brine 1d. lb.; in Victoria, fresh meat 7s. per 100 lb., in pickle or brine 5s. per cwt.; in West Australia, fresh meat $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. lb., in pickle or brine $\frac{3}{4}$ d. lb. From meat we go to flour, and in Queensland the import duty on flour is 20s. per 2,000 lb.; in South Australia, 2s. per 100 lb., or £2 per 2,000 lb.; in

Tasmania, the same; in Victoria, 5s. per 100 lb., or £5 per 2,000 lb.; in West Australia, 30s. a ton. Coming next to sugar, in New South Wales, the freetrade colony, except that it has a sugar industry to protect, the duty on raw sugar imported is 4s. per cwt., and on refined 5s. per cwt.

MR. SIMPSON: It is disappearing to-day.

MR. A. FORREST: Well, the duty is on to-day. In Queensland the duty on raw sugar is 5s. per cwt., and on refined 6s. 8d. per cwt. I want to prove, by these figures, that other colonies protect their industries by import duties. In Tasmania the duty on crushed and loaf sugar is 1d. lb., and on other kinds 6s. per cwt. In the great colony of Victoria, where the working class are the large majority, and where sugar is not produced—although we know a large amount of Victorian capital is invested in the Queensland sugar industry—what is the duty charged on sugar imported into Victoria? On cane sugar the duty is 6s. per cwt. or £6 a ton, and on sugar made from beet-root or any other matter the duty is 12s. per cwt. or £12 a ton—that is on sugar produced by cheap labour in other countries. These are the duties which are paid willingly by persons in Victoria; but as soon as these Victorians come to Western Australia they want to get everything free of duty. These are facts which I put before the House, and which cannot be disputed. Speaking next on the general question, are we prepared, is this House prepared, is the country prepared to give up our interests in the farming and the squatting and the timber industries of this colony, and every other commercial interest in it? Are you prepared to injure all these interests, and all the people who are engaged in them? I do not think you are prepared to do it. If the Opposition came into power now, I do not think they could do it. We on this (the Ministerial) side of the House have no objection to pay 20 or 25 per cent. for the increased value of the boots and other things we wear which can be made in the colony. The squatters in the North do not want to take away from that. The cart and carriage builders, from whom the farmers purchase necessary articles, do not object to pay the increased price in order to satisfy the producers who are

carrying on industries in the colony. The saddle maker too, from whom the squatters and farmers buy, would have to compete against the cheap labour and cheap living in Victoria, if the duty were taken off the articles he makes; and would you have all the carts, carriages, and other things made in Victoria and be imported free into this country, instead of paying a little more for our own people to make them? If you want that, I quite agree you should have it; but we who represent other parts of the colony do not want those duties. My district (West Kimberley) does not want duties on flour, or chaff, or oats. We do not want any duties at all; and if those members who represent other parts of the colony are prepared to take the duties off all manufactured articles which people engaged in squatting and farming have to buy and use, then we in the North will be prepared to abolish the food duties. That is the position we are in. We represent an industry; and I say there is no more important industry in the colony, for the people engaged in it are producers, and employ a large amount of labour. We were told by the member for the Swan (Mr. Ewing) that we are slave-drivers, and nigger-drivers, and cheap-labour men. That is not a fact. All this pastoral country in the North belongs to the Crown, and we have no title to it—only a lease for a certain number of years. But we improve the land; the stations are fenced in, and we are growing sheep and cattle, which feed a large proportion of the people now in this colony. But, when the Almighty does not give us enough rain, our sheep and cattle die. I do hope the natural sense of a man, when he considers this question of food duties in all its bearings, will see that there is really not much in it. It is a matter in which we should give and take. The pastoralist wants a little protection; so does the farmer, and so does the miner. We are glad to find that the members of mining districts are nearly at one with us on this important question at the present time; and why are they so? Who gave the mining districts their railways at first? Who were the men in this House who voted against the Coolgardie railway, and wanted to throw that great work into the hands of

a private syndicate? They were not members sitting on this side of the House. If we had given that railway to a syndicate, we would have been told, what a bank manager once told me in regard to a certain matter, that I should be hung up to a bed-post and there be left to dry. When the great question of the water scheme for the Coolgardie goldfields came on for consideration in Parliament, I was on my way to England; and I received a telegram from the Premier, saying there was great opposition to it, and he was rather "down in his luck," and was very doubtful whether he would be able to carry it through. But when the facts were laid fully before Parliament, the Premier's supporters—and especially those who had travelled through those goldfields and knew what was required—did not stand hesitating for one minute. They said: "We will have the water." There is a great question at present on the Coolgardie goldfields as to whether the water-bearing strata are giving out altogether; and where would we be then? Why, there would not be a solvent man in the colony, if the water-supply of the Coolgardie goldfields were taken away to-morrow. Our credit is mixed up with this question. We shall have to see there is a proper supply of water in the course of a few years. There should be no delay. The Government should start the work right away, and get the money how they can. The money question does not crop up at all, because we can always get money with the country's security at our back. On these grounds alone, the people of the goldfields should support the farmers, pastoralists and agriculturalists in the little they ask for. That little is nothing in comparison with the benefits of the water supply. There is no man in Kalgoorlie, Coolgardie, or any part of the goldfields south of Menzies who does not pay ten or twelve pounds a year for water; and, in comparison with that, what is the small amount of duty he is called upon to pay on meat and other foods, if he is getting good wages? I have travelled all over the fields, and I never heard any prominence given to the food duties question. All that was asked for was water. If the Government had not brought down this Coolgardie water

scheme, the hon. member for Albany would have done it long ago, because so much pressure would have been brought upon him that he could not have held his seat without giving his adherence to some such scheme.

THE PREMIER: And now he is trying to stop us.

MR. A. FORREST: But we are strong enough and able enough to carry out the scheme. It would be very disastrous to every man in the colony if there was any failing of water on the goldfields. I would ask the people from the gold districts what the Government have done for them. The Government are completing a new railway to Menzies, which will enable people to push out a long way into the interior, and get their goods at a very small cost over that at which they can be obtained in Perth. The Government are completing railways and telegraphs, giving water supplies, and doing everything possible for the development of the gold centres. I really cannot understand any intelligent man desiring to put the present Government out, in favour of those from whom this amendment has emanated. The leading brokers and bankers of Australia, and leading brokers in our midst, have told me that if the present Government were to go out, shares and other mining securities would fall 25 per cent. The hon. member for Albany would have to go to the country, if the amendment were carried. There would have to be a general election, because the hon. member could not carry on the affairs of the country unless he had a majority. But a general election would see the same majority returned as now; and the only result of the whole thing would be the loss of three or four months of good work.

MR. LEAKE: We will have to get rid of some of you people.

MR. A. FORREST: But you cannot get rid of us. We are too strong. We are wedged in the districts we represent.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: You have no electors.

MR. A. FORREST: I have electors who are intelligent men—they are men who are producers, and that is not what everybody is. If you count the revenue from the district I represent, with its pearl fisheries and pastoral industries,

you will see it is the most productive district in Western Australia.

A MEMBER: What! more than Kalgoorlie?

MR. A. FORREST: I am not speaking in comparison with the gold production. In gold production you can come to the end; but sheep and cattle and the land remain there for ever. New members who have come into the House this session, when they consider the issue now before them, cannot but come to one determination, and that is to vote for the Government and for the Coolgardie water scheme. If a water scheme is also necessary for the Murchison, I would certainly vote for it.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: We guaranteed 8 per cent.

THE PREMIER: Do not mix up the two things.

MR. A. FORREST: The Government have not received a great deal of support from the Murchison. I hope, however, that when the division on this amendment is taken, the Government will have the support of the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth), in whose district railways and telegraphs are to be constructed. There is no doubt the present Government will be in power at the end of four years, because nothing will remove them in that time. I am sure the Government will have the majority of goldfield votes on the present occasion. The goldfields representatives are the men who should not wish to do any harm to the great progress made in the farming and agricultural pursuits. Under the management of the Minister of Lands, great strides are being made, and in about a year or two there will be no need to talk about the food duties at all. If the Minister continues in the path he has started on, in the course of a short time the food duties will not be mentioned.

MR. HARPER: I move that the debate be adjourned until the next sitting day.

Put and passed.

ADJOURNMENT.

THE PREMIER moved that the House, at its rising, do adjourn until Tuesday next.

Put and passed.

The House adjourned at 10-55 p.m. until the next Tuesday.