

Legislative Assembly,*Wednesday, 24th August, 1898.*

Question: Railway Storekeeper—Question: Architectural Branch of Works and Electrician—Question: Fremantle Railway Crossing—Question: Rabbits on South Coast—Question: Retrenchment, and Preference to Men with Families—Question: Cash Debit Balance of Last Financial Year—Question: Coolgardie Water Supply Scheme, Survey of Pipe Track—Sessional Order: Extra Sitting Day—Motion: Urgent Telegrams, Precedence; Division (negatived)—Motion: Postmaster General's Telegram to Esperance (withdrawn)—Wines, Beer, and Spirit Sale Amendment Bill, third reading—Motion: Women's Franchise, debate concluded; Division (negatived)—Prevention of Crimes Bill, second reading: Amendment—Bills of Sale Bill, second reading: Debate concluded—Early Closing Bill, second reading (moved)—Local Courts Evidence Bill, second reading: Amendment (Bill arrested)—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.**QUESTION: RAILWAY STOREKEEPER.**

MR. HOLMES asked the Commissioner of Railways,—(1.) Whether it was the intention of the department to appoint a railway storekeeper, in addition to the Government storekeeper and the officer in charge of the public works stores. (2.) If so, what necessity was there for these three departments and officers?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. F. H. Piesse) replied:—(1.) An officer has been appointed to control the distribution of stores. This officer's duties are distinct from those of the Government storekeeper. He obtains in bulk the material required for working the railways, and arranges for its distribution. (2.) The House has been already informed, by the right hon. the Premier, that a rearrangement of the General Stores Branch is intended, when the question of the custody of Railway stores will be fully considered.

QUESTION: ARCHITECTURAL BRANCH OF WORKS AND AN ELECTRICIAN.

MR. HOLMES asked the Director of Public Works,—What were the duties of

the Government electrician attached to the architectural division of the Public Works Department.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. F. H. Piesse) replied:—The duties of the Government electrician are to establish and supervise all electric light installations in the public buildings, and keep the same in proper order, and extend as required; to test and check all electric meters; to fix electric bell communications; to fit up and maintain all telephonette communications throughout public offices; and to superintend fire prevention appliances in public buildings, and their distribution and condition. The principal buildings in which electric light is installed are:—Mint, Observatory, Government House, Legislative Assembly, Legislative Council, Technical School, Perth Hospital, Central Public Buildings, Government Printing Office, Museum, Outside Offices, Lands Department. These are mostly large installations, and require constant attention by an electrician.

QUESTION: FREMANTLE RAILWAY CROSSING.

MR. HOLMES asked the Director of Public Works,—(1.) Whether he was aware that a number of persons had been summoned at Fremantle for crossing the railway line from the new river wharf to the town, and that great inconvenience and loss were experienced by those having business to transact at that place. (2.) Whether he would provide overhead communication at a convenient point.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. F. H. Piesse) replied:—(1.) Persons have been prosecuted for trespassing by jumping over fences near the Locomotive Workshops and breaking pickets. I am not aware of any loss or inconvenience being experienced by business people. (2.) It is not at present intended to erect an overhead bridge.

QUESTION: RABBITS ON SOUTH COAST.

MR. CONOLLY asked the Premier,—What steps the Government intended to take for the restriction of rabbits on the South Coast?

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied:—An officer was sent out to inspect and report on the question of the invasion by rabbits, and he is now making his report, which will have to be considered before any decisive steps are taken.

QUESTION: RETRENCHMENT, AND PREFERENCE TO MEN WITH FAMILIES.

MR. HALL asked the Premier,—Whether, in view of the proposal to dispense with the service of a number of the employees in the public service, it was the intention of the Government to retain, as far as practicable, those officers who have shown their confidence in the colony by settling therein with their wives and families, as against those whose families are in the eastern colonies.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied in the affirmative, and added that instructions had already been given in the matter.

QUESTION: CASH DEBIT BALANCE OF LAST FINANCIAL YEAR.

MR. LEAKE asked the Premier,—Whether in estimating the cash debit balance on last year's accounts any, and if so what, sum was represented by stores.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied in the affirmative, and added that he would place the financial statement already published, giving the particulars asked for, upon the table of the House at its next sitting.

QUESTION: COOLGARDIE WATER SUPPLY SCHEME. SURVEY OF PIPE TRACK.

MR. WILSON, for Mr. Oldham, asked the Director of Public Works,—(1.) Whether it was true that the surveyors who were engaged in surveying the pipe-track for the Coolgardie water supply scheme were taking cross sections of the ground. (2.) If so, why so?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. F. H. Piessse) replied:—(1.) Yes, in some places where the sidling is steep. (2.) To obtain the requisite information for showing work to be done in the preparation of the bed for the pipes.

SESSIONAL ORDER: EXTRA SITTING DAY.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) moved, "That in addition to the business days and hours agreed to on Tuesday, 21st, July, 1898, the House meet for the despatch of business on Mondays, at 7.30 p.m." He said he regretted having to ask hon. members to sit longer than at present, but it would be to their own advantage in the end. Many members who came from the country remained in Perth, and it would not inconvenience them to any great extent to sit on Monday evenings as well as the other days. As to members residing in Perth and Fremantle, of course it would be an inconvenience to them, but not so much so as a prolongation of the session would be. We had reached that stage when as much expedition as possible in the transaction of business was necessary. As far as the business of the Government was concerned, it was almost impossible for Ministers to give that attention to administration during the sitting of Parliament which they did when Parliament was out of session. The attention of Ministers to their duties, especially his own attention to the business of the country, was urgent at the present time; therefore he would be glad when the session came to an end. If hon. members opposite had any desire to bring forward motions of want of confidence, in order to dislodge the Government from their position, of course every facility would be given to them to accomplish that object. If they had no such desire, and they were not prepared to undertake the management of the country at the present time, he would appeal to them to give every assistance in their power to expedite public business. No doubt there was a good deal yet to accomplish, but all the important measures the Government intended to bring forward were now on the table of the House. All the financial business, or nearly the whole of it, was before hon. members; therefore, they should aim at grappling with it as quickly as possible. He was in the hands of hon. members, and did not wish to take a vote on the question; and, unless there was a good deal of unanimity he would not press the motion at present.

HON. H. W. VENN (Wellington): It was all very well for hon. members who

were living in or near the city to desire that nearly every day of the week should be devoted to Parliamentary work ; but when it was known in the country districts that representatives were expected to spend nearly the whole of each week in Perth to attend to such duties, one could hardly wonder that gentlemen living in the country would not be prevailed on to come forward as Parliamentary candidates. Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays would be quite sufficient for the transaction of the business of the country, if hon. members would work up to a reasonable time ; but the House rose at half-past ten or a quarter to eleven, and did not, like Assemblies in other countries, sit till midnight or after. Not only members who lived in the country were asked to devote four days a week to Parliamentary duties, but business men in Perth were called upon to give up part of another day, which might otherwise be utilised for the transaction of their own business. To compel members to attend in Parliament four days a week would be to take a step in the direction of centralisation of a most objectionable character.

MR. LEAKE (Albany) : Being perfectly willing, personally, to sit on Monday evenings, he believed the majority of members on the Opposition side of the House were also willing ; and, in fact, he was prepared to sit every evening in the week, if necessary, and would rather be present at night than in the afternoon. He did not altogether appreciate the observations of the Premier, in suggesting that possibly the Opposition might become obstructive.

THE PREMIER : That suggestion was not made. Only assistance was asked for.

MR. LEAKE : It might be a difficult matter for some country members to get to Perth, but he would remind the House that only a short time ago sittings were held on Monday evenings, and also he believed on Friday evenings. The sooner we got through the work of the session, the better ; and members on this side of the House would do nothing either to obstruct or prevent the sitting of Parliament as often as the Government liked, or whenever they liked. Of course, members of the Opposition were always ready with their motions of censure.

MR. WOOD (West Perth) : The fact that so much time had been taken up during

the session was due to the length of speeches which had been delivered, some hon. members speaking for four or five hours. If there had been a time limit to speeches, the House might now have got to the end of the business.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : The Premier was the only one who had ever spoken for four hours.

MR. KENNY (North Murchison) : The motion had his complete approval. If the member for Wellington (Hon. H. W. Venn) had been adducing proofs and arguments in favour of the principle of payment of members, he could not have done it more effectually than in the speech he had delivered. If the system of payment of members were adopted, the representatives would lay themselves out to attend to the business of this House ; but, as things were at present, it was difficult to serve two masters, for it was by no means easy for members to divide their time between public duties and their own affairs. He found it so, and doubtless other members did the same. As to the remarks of the Premier about tabling motions of censure or want of confidence, he (Mr. Kenny) was pretty well in touch with the feelings of members on the Opposition side of the House, and could assure the right hon. gentleman that they wished not for the death of the Ministry, but rather that they be converted and live.

MR. MORGANS (Coolgardie) : It was exceedingly difficult to devote the amount of time necessary for the discharge of duties in this distinguished Assembly ; but three days a week, which we at present had at disposal, were not sufficient to accomplish the business before the House. It would be more convenient to himself to have Friday instead of Monday as an extra day, seeing that he had to travel from Coolgardie, and that if he returned at the end of the week he could not get back to Perth in time for the Monday sitting, there being no train service. The same argument would apply to other hon. members who came from the eastern goldfields electorates.

THE PREMIER : There was no objection to have Friday as the extra day, instead of Monday. His object was to get more time.

MR. A. FORREST (West Kimberley) : At the present time only 20 members out

of 44 were present in the House, and it was a difficult matter to keep the House up to the number required. If we decided to sit on Mondays, members from a distance could not be present, so the House would be counted out, and the Opposition would be exclaiming that the Government were to blame. Three days a week should be quite sufficient for the work, unless, as had been suggested by the member for North Murchison (Mr. Kenny), members were to devote their whole time to the duties and be paid for it. If that was what the hon. member required, all right. We did not want that class of men in the House, but rather men who had an interest in the country, and would give proper attention to public business.

MR. WALLACE: (Yalgoo): Speaking as a country member, either Friday or Monday would suit him as an additional sitting day, and he was willing to give the extra time required. If those members who wasted so much time in the House, by introducing fads in relation to social legislation, would only forego their tendency to excessive talking, and attend to those matters which were of real public interest, the business of the House would proceed more satisfactorily, and three days a week would be sufficient. The reason why so many seats were vacant on this occasion was that a number of members expected the debate on women's franchise question would be resumed, and so they preferred to stay away. He had been waiting for some time to speak on the Gold Mines Bill; but other questions of less importance had occupied the time of the House. Members did not come here to listen to windy speeches on subjects of a fanciful nature, but their desire was to proceed with the real business of the country. He hoped the Government would not leave a number of important Bills to be brought in near the end of the session, as was done last year; but that any Bills they intended to introduce would be placed before the House as soon as possible. Being in accord with the motion, his only uncertainty was as to whether Friday would be more acceptable to the House. Would the Premier accept Friday instead of Monday?

SEVERAL MEMBERS: Move "Friday."

MR. LYALL HALL (Perth) moved, as an amendment, that Friday be substituted

for Monday as an extra sitting day, the sittings to be from 7.30 p.m. onwards, and to commence after this week. He was surprised to hear that some members who were opposed to the principle of payment of members were objecting to give any more time to the business of this House. The strongest argument in favour of payment of members was the fact that, without payment, members were not prepared to devote any more time to the public business.

MR. A. FORREST: They would not give more time to it if paid.

MR. HALL: In view of the amount of work that had to be got through, hon. members should not object to an extra sitting day in each week; and he felt sure that a majority of the members were in favour of it.

MR. LEAKE asked the Premier to state what new business was likely to come down. On glancing at the Governor's Speech delivered at the opening of the session, it appeared that nearly all the Bills therein promised had been already introduced; and as to the few remaining Bills, they did not appear to be very contentious. What other Bills would the Government introduce?

THE PREMIER: The Electoral Bill would be brought in.

MR. LEAKE: That was an important measure. There were also Bills relating to public works and to railways. Were they to be brought in?

THE PREMIER: There was an uncertainty about them. The Electoral Bill would be an amendment of the Act, and not a consolidation measure, and it would not be lengthy. There was a lot of business on the paper.

MR. LEAKE: Yes; but when the Estimates were finished, there would not be much left, because the speeches of members had gone to "smithereens" now.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. F. H. Piesse) concurred in the remarks made by country members. The present arrangement for three sitting days per week was agreed to, on a motion proposed by himself about five years ago; and it had worked conveniently for country members, as it enabled them to get to Perth from their homes in time for the Tuesday's sitting, and to re-

main until Thursday night. As the proposed increase was only for the remainder of this session, he would not oppose it.

MR. ILLINGWORTH (Central Murchison): Instead of sitting only one day extra per week, he would prefer to sit on Monday and Friday in addition, when business required it; but his conviction was that to increase the number of sitting days or to lengthen the sittings would not tend to good legislation, nor would it greatly expedite the business. That had been found to be the case in other colonies; for one result there was that Bills were passed through hurriedly, and had to be amended in a subsequent session. For the class of men usually elected to Parliament in this colony, three days a week were as much as they could conveniently give to the business of the country, because members necessarily had a good deal to do outside this House, besides attending to the business of the country.

MR. A. FORREST: Sit on Sunday. That would be a good day.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Sunday sittings for Parliamentary business would not suit him. He hoped the Government would bring in the Electoral Bill as soon as possible, as well as the other measures they intended to introduce.

Amendment (Mr. Hall's) put and passed, and the motion as amended agreed to.

MOTION: URGENT TELEGRAMS. PRECEDENCE.

MR. MONGER (York) moved, "That, in the opinion of this House, it is considered desirable that the Government should reintroduce the system of urgent telegrams." The system had previously been in existence in the colony, and it enabled people who were willing to pay a double rate to have their telegrams despatched prior to any ordinary messages that might be in hand. The same system obtained in South Australia, though probably that was the only other colony of the group which had adopted it. While it was in operation in this colony it seemed to work to advantage and to be a source of revenue, without in any way harming private individuals. According to certain newspaper articles, the colony's tele-

graph service was in such a condition that there was little or no need for the reintroduction of urgent telegrams; but, if that were so, why should any individual who desired to throw away his money for his country's good be debarred from doing so? Perhaps few hon. members were aware that it was possible to send urgent cablegrams to London and other parts of the world; and, when such were allowed, why should there not be urgent intercolonial messages, especially when our telegraphic communication with South Australia was so perfect? Those persons who were embittered against the system, and who maintained that it inflicted a terrible hardship upon poor people, should remember that anyone who was willing to pay for it could obtain similar services from the Railway Department. No one would be more pleased than the Commissioner of Railways to find people requiring special trains to Coolgardie or Albany every day, nor would any member of the House raise his voice against that Minister on the ground that an injustice was being done to the poor man, if such facilities were granted to those willing to pay the price named by the department. According to the *West Australian* and *Daily News*, our telegraphic service was so perfect that there was no necessity for the reintroduction of urgent telegrams; but if there were some fools about who were desirous of handing over their money to the Treasury of this country by paying double for their telegrams, why should the Government debar them from doing so?

MR. MORGANS seconded the motion.

HON. H. W. VENN (Wellington): Surely it was not to be supposed that the House would pass this motion, which was absolutely opposed to the best principles of legislation, and the principles of right and wrong. The subject had been brought up before by the member for Albany; and, after a full discussion, the House abolished the system when it was in full swing, and when its iniquity was so apparent to Parliament that it was swept away by a majority. The object of this motion was not apparent. If there was no necessity for urgent telegrams, inasmuch as no great business was done in the telegraph department, what possible object could the hon. member

have in seeking to reintroduce the system, seeing that business was so dull that no telegram could be delayed? There might have been some reason for the system in the boom time, when there was a great rush of business, for one man might get precedence over others by paying for it, though even then it was a case of might against right; but that reason had absolutely disappeared. Legislation of this class was improper and absolutely wrong. If our telegram system at present was not sufficiently remunerative, let the rates be raised; but let the telegram of Brown with one shilling in his pocket have the same importance in the eyes of the department as the telegram of Sir John or Sir James who had five shillings to spare. The hon. member referred to fools who were ready to spend their money, but surely he did not wish to legislate on behalf of fools? None who knew the hon. member would think he came here to advocate the interests of fools. For years past he (Hon. H. W. Venn) had been totally opposed to this principle, and he hoped the House would confirm its previous action by throwing out the motion.

MR. LEAKE (Albany), in opposing the motion, said he would divide the House on it, if necessary. It was decided, with emphasis, last year that the system of urgent telegrams should be abolished.

MR. MONGER: Would the hon. member show, in *Hansard*, where the emphasis came in?

MR. LEAKE: The previous discussion on this subject took place on the vote for the Post Office, and the then Minister of Education (Hon. H. B. Lefroy) said he was strongly in favour of the abolition of the system, and gave the House the assurance that the system would be abolished forth with. Ministers were then pretty well unanimous on the subject.

THE PREMIER said he had not been in favour of abolishing it, but had said something against the abolition of the system as a matter of finance.

MR. LEAKE: The continuance of the system was urged by members of the stock exchange, merely for the purpose of gambling in shares. Had it not been for that body, the question would never have been raised, and it was the stock ex-

change which was raising the question now.

MR. MONGER: Not at all. Insurance companies and others were interested in it.

MR. LEAKE: While not insinuating that the hon. member was the mouth-piece of the stock exchange, the fact remained that the stock exchange members who had waited upon the Minister asked him (Mr. Leake) to join the deputation, and he refused, telling them plainly that he would oppose any motion of the kind. If the system were in vogue now, there would not be half-a-dozen urgent telegrams in a week, because the lines were now sufficiently clear to enable all telegrams to go forward in ordinary course. In 1894-5, when there was a boom in shares and properties, no doubt the urgent system was availed of to a large extent by sharebrokers in Perth; but no complaints had lately been heard, and this motion was simply made in anticipation of what might possibly occur—an active share-market. The general trade of the community, however, had to be considered, and there was no reason why it should be penalised to suit the convenience of one particularly small section of society. The analogy of special trains being granted to those willing to pay for them hardly bore out the hon. member's argument, because no man could get a special train unless the lines were clear, nor would a special train be given which would interfere with the existing traffic; so that the analogy, if it proved anything, showed the desirability of the abolition of the urgent system in telegrams. He could tell hon. members a little more on the subject, but there was no necessity.

MR. MONGER: That was only personal.

MR. LEAKE: Yes; it was distinctly personal.

A MEMBER: A question of privilege, too.

MR. LEAKE: Yes. He was strongly opposed to the motion, and would, if necessary, divide the House on it.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): There was not much to be said about this motion, for it was evident the House was not in favour of it; though he personally had always been in favour of the urgent system, simply because it was a means of obtaining a

venue from the telegraphs. The greatest objection to the motion at the present time was that mentioned by the hon. member opposite (Mr. Leake), namely, that the lines were not fully employed; therefore the adoption of the system would not be likely to bring in much revenue, and thus the Treasurer's reasons for desiring it were robbed of their force. It must be remembered, however, there had been a greater falling off in the revenue of the telegraph department than in any other. That would seem to show there was now no difficulty in obtaining quick despatch for all telegrams lodged for transmission. If the urgent system were likely to produce a considerable revenue, some means might be devised for working it, say by giving some part of the day for such messages, so as not to unduly interfere with ordinary telegrams. There did not appear to be much in the argument that everyone should be treated alike, for that was not always done in other businesses. All men who travelled by rail were not treated alike.

MR. MITCHELL: Yes, if they paid the same.

THE PREMIER: Ah! If they paid the same—that was the point. At the present time we charged on the railways first and second-class fares, and gave greater conveniences to those who paid first-class fares than to those who paid second.

MR. VOSPER: Both first and second class passengers travelled at the same rate of speed.

THE PREMIER: But one had to pay more than the other. Some plan might be devised by which, at a certain time of the day, persons who were willing to pay more than the ordinary charge should be allowed to send urgent telegrams. It was all very well to be sentimental about this question, and desire that everyone should be equal; but the matter had to be looked at from a practical business point of view. Telegraphs were built at an immense expense to this colony, and the cost of maintaining them was very great. The question was whether they were to be a burden on the State, or should be made to pay. At the present time the telegraph service was not paying at all, there being a great falling off in the receipts; and

he would gladly welcome any plan which would have the effect of encouraging business, with a view to making the system not only self-supporting but a source of profit. Some people seemed to indulge in the idea that persons should be able to send telegrams free, to travel by rail without charge, and to obtain everything for nothing; but the principle was a bad one.

MR. VOSPER (North-East Coolgardie): In the present state of affairs no one would benefit from the system advocated, except a few stockbrokers and, possibly, a few betting men. It was all very well to talk about the loss to the country, but if the system advocated were adopted it would mean depriving the Government of money in other directions. Again, there might be very urgent cases requiring telegraphic communication in connection with people who could not afford to pay higher charges. Take, for instance, sickness and death.

THE PREMIER: Precedence was given in cases of that sort.

MR. VOSPER: Could they get precedence without extra pay?

THE PREMIER: Yes.

MR. VOSPER: Could they obtain precedence over an urgent telegram?

THE PREMIER: Yes.

MR. VOSPER: Then, in such a case, there would be a breach of contract, because the person who paid double fees was entitled to the preference. As far as he could see, the passing of this motion would mean a revenue to the country of perhaps 6s., 10s., or 20s. a week; and few persons would benefit by it, whilst the outside public would suffer.

MR. LYALL HALL (Perth): The introduction of the Stock Exchange into this matter was merely a sort of bugbear. If the hon. member for Albany (Mr. Leake) had a member of his family very ill, he would be only too pleased to be able to pay double fees to ensure the greater despatch of a telegram.

MR. LEAKE: That telegram would go now without the extra price.

MR. HALL: That was not binding. All hon. members had sent a good many telegrams in their lives, and knew very well the delay which often occurred not only in relation to the despatch of the message from the office, but through the

message boys, who crept like snails to their destination, telegrams which ought to be delivered in half an hour not being received sometimes until two or three hours had elapsed. Telegrams paid for as urgent would be treated as such, and delivered within reasonable time. As to the argument by the member for Wellington (Hon. H. W. Venn) that the man with a shilling in his pocket should have the same facility as one who was able to pay more, if that principle were adopted, the sooner we abolished first and second class fares on the railways the better. There, as the Premier had pointed out, we had first and second class, and a man who wanted to travel by the first class had to pay for the increased accommodation. The motion should be allowed to pass.

MR. MONGER (in reply): There seemed to be a general impression outside the House that the abolition of the urgent telegram system resulted from a direct motion introduced by the member for Albany (Mr. Leake). Such, however, was not the case; and, as far as he could judge, the Government could reintroduce the system without any motion of this House. At the present time, urgent cable messages could be despatched; and if it was necessary that that system should remain in operation, why should not the system of urgent telegrams be reintroduced? It was in operation in South Australia at the present time.

Motion put, and division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	...	...	...	13
Noes	...	...	...	14

Majority against ... 1

Ayes.	Noes.
Mr. Conolly	Hon. S. Burt
Sir John Forrest	Mr. Harper
Mr. A. Forrest	Mr. Higham
Mr. Hall	Mr. Holmes
Mr. Lefroy	Mr. Illingworth
Mr. Locke	Mr. Kingsmill
Mr. Monger	Mr. Leake
Mr. Morgans	Mr. Mitchell
Mr. Pennefather	Mr. Oats
Mr. Piesse	Mr. Solomon
Mr. Throssell	Mr. Venn
Mr. Wood	Mr. Vosper
Mr. Doherty	Mr. Wallace
(Teller)	Mr. Kenny

(Teller)

Motion thus negatived.

MOTION: POSTMASTER GENERAL'S TELEGRAM TO ESPERANCE.

Mr. CONOLLY (Dundas) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the message which was despatched by the Postmaster General to the mayor and council of Esperance, on the subject of the mail service between Esperance and Norseman, coming from the head of a department, was highly improper.

To bring forward a motion of this character was not a pleasing task, and he desired to do it with all proper consideration for the feelings of the Postmaster General, seeing that the motion was in its character equivalent to a censure on that high and responsible official. The mayor of Esperance, on behalf of the councillors and people of that town, wired a message to the Postmaster General a few days ago; and, having regard to the abbreviations ordinarily used in telegrams, hon members would not perceive in this message any intentional discourtesy. The message was as follows:—

Understand there will be only one mail from Esperance to Norseman per week. The council, on behalf of residents, protests against this.

The answer which the Postmaster General sent to the mayor and people of Esperance was as follows:—

Your protest received. Am pleased to say that from 31st instant one mail between Norseman and Esperance will be discontinued, and will thereby effect a saving of £1300 a year, hitherto an absolute waste of money. The weekly mail, which will be left, will cost £1000 a year. It is a question whether that could not be reduced to a fortnightly service, considering the comparatively small amount of correspondence which will now be conveyed to Esperance by it.

Hon. members in this House might well smile at the tenour of that reply, for it almost savoured of deliberate impertinence.

THE PREMIER: Where did the impertinence come in?

MR. CONOLLY: The impertinence consisted in expressing a hope and gratification that the mail service which the people of Esperance were dependent on for communication with their goldfield was to be taken away from them. The Postmaster General's reply was in the first part inconsiderate, in wishing that the people should lose one of their mail services, and that wish was expressed in a

manner which no responsible officer of the Government ought to use.

MR. KENNY: He carried out the wish of the Government.

MR. CONOLLY: But, in doing so, there was no reason why that official should make a boast of it, and taunt the people of Esperance with the fact that the Government were reducing the mail service, and showing that the Government had almost made a point of treating the people in this way.

THE PREMIER: No; it did not look like that with the mail service that was given them.

MR. CONOLLY: Reading this telegram from the Postmaster General, it was almost impossible to ignore the affront which the language implied. It might be supposed that the Postmaster General had so much business that he had not time to give a courteous reply. If there was the least possibility of putting such a construction on the reply, he (Mr. Conolly) would be ready to accept it; but it must be admitted that the reply was not like a verbal message hastily spoken, but it was deliberately written in a tone which expressed his gratification at depriving these people of one of their mail services.

THE PREMIER: No: saving money.

MR. A. FORREST: He expressed it in a bad way.

MR. CONOLLY: That would be the most charitable construction to put on it, and the only doubt was whether the message deserved to be so construed. He would be glad to put that construction on it if he fairly could do so. It could scarcely be said that the policy which the Government had adopted towards the people of Esperance during this and past sessions was calculated to induce them to put the most favourable construction on a message conveying the fact to them in so unpleasant a manner. Neither the Premier nor his colleagues could fairly consider that the people of Esperance had any reason to be thankful for or satisfied with the treatment which had been dealt out to them, more especially during this session. That telegram coming from a high and responsible official was highly improper, and should not have been sent to any town in the colony. The Postmaster General, in sending such a message, had exceeded his authority; and if this House had not been

sitting at the time, this matter might have passed over without an opportunity for members to express their opinions, by passing this motion, which no doubt would be regarded as a censure on the Postmaster General.

MR. A. FORREST (West Kimberley) seconded the motion. Those members who were personally acquainted with the Postmaster General would know that he could not have intended, in the words used, to express his desire and wish that the people of Esperance should lose one of their mail services. Still, the Postmaster General was to blame in not conveying the fact to them in a more agreeable and proper manner, for the telegram sent was certainly improper. If a place was becoming depressed, as some people supposed, it did not look well for any high official or any member of this House to cast stones at people who were so unfortunately situated. The Postmaster General might have expressed his regret that they were to lose one of their mail services, and his reluctance at being compelled to take this course. The latter part of the telegram was particularly to be regretted; and, as a personal friend of the Postmaster General, he must say that officer should not try to wound the susceptibility of people in any part of the country. No doubt the Postmaster General regretted the mistake he had made, and would be ready to express regret for it. If a railway were being constructed to connect Esperance with Dundas, the people would probably have not felt this telegram so much.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): While not wishing to defend the style of telegram sent—in fact he regretted it had been sent—still, it was rather unduly magnifying this matter to bring it before the House. If anyone were aggrieved at the conduct of a public officer, his proper course was to complain to the Minister controlling the department. The Postmaster General was a departmental officer, like others in the service, and if he did what was not considered right, the Minister, and, if need be the Governor-in-Council, could soon bring him to account. It was unusual to bring before the House a matter like this, which only meant that a public officer had not been courteous. The hon.

member could have gained his object by using lighter guns. Had the Minister been approached, he would doubtless have censured the Postmaster General for the style of telegram sent, and would have informed the municipal council that he had done so. The Government would have taken the same course. He could altogether acquit the Postmaster General of desiring to affront anyone, though the telegram was certainly capable of an offensive construction. The Postmaster General had informed him (the Premier) that what he meant to say was that he was pleased to save the country the expense of a service that was not necessary.

MR. GEORGE: The service should never have been instituted.

THE PREMIER: No one who knew the localities could question that. The Postmaster General knew that this service was unnecessary, and that the contractors were eager to get out of it because it did not pay them; and, when he received this protest from Esperance, instead of saying that such was the case, and that, owing to the little there was to do in the way of traffic, the service had to be discontinued, thus effecting a saving of over £1,300 a year, he put his view of the case in a way which was open to misconstruction.

MR. GEORGE: The complainants made a worse mistake. Why did they not complain to the Minister?

THE PREMIER: The Postmaster General knew that this service was a piece of extravagance, which should never have been instituted. How could anyone maintain that 1,200 people living at Norseman should have two mails a week from Esperance and one from Coolgardie, besides a telegraph service? Two mails a week were quite sufficient for such a community. In the middle of the week a mail went to Coolgardie, and a few days afterwards a mail went to Esperance, and the steamer service was only weekly from Albany, so that all could see the place was thoroughly well served as far as mails were concerned. He firmly believed that the only intention of the Postmaster General was to express his pleasure at effecting a saving. In conclusion, he would like to say a word, not in defence of the Postmaster General, who as

a departmental officer had no right to send anyone a message which might be considered discourteous, his duty requiring that he should be courteous to everyone, as was the duty of every public officer; but if hon. members had noticed anything, they must have noticed that while public bodies all over the colony resented the receipt of any telegram the tone of which bordered upon discourtesy, they were not very careful in what they themselves sent, for if he had time he would like to read to hon. members some telegrams he had received from public bodies throughout the colony—even from the Esperance people, and from other places where he thought he had many friends. Such words as "injustice," "unjust," "unfair" and "indignant," and words of that description were of frequent occurrence. Those people who did not mind sending discourteous and even insulting telegrams to public men who were only desirous of doing their duty, would even if a Minister forgot himself for a moment and sent back a telegram in the same style as their communication, soon have a motion made in this House, setting forth how discourteous it was for a Minister of the Crown to send such a message. Those who desired courtesy must extend courtesy, and there was plenty of room for the extension of courtesy in telegrams sent to Ministers in regard to the conduct of public business. Even when we differed from a person, there was no reason why we should use language that would give offence. It was far better to be courteous and polite on all occasions. That was what he desired to see in the public service; and no doubt, if that protest from the mayor of Esperance had gone to the Minister, it would have been dealt with in a fashion to which the hon. member (Mr. Conolly) could have taken no exception. What the effect of the motion would be, if passed, was not very clear; but the assurance of the Government that the attention of the Postmaster General would be called to it, and that they would convey to that officer their opinion that the telegram was discourteous, and that the message should not have been forwarded, ought to meet the case. He was quite willing to ask the Colonial Secretary to express to the Post-

master General his disapproval of the tone of the telegram; and that ought to be sufficient. It was not likely this discussion would do any harm, for perhaps it would teach public officers, and public bodies also, that courtesy was the right of everyone, however humble he might be.

Mr. LEAKE (Albany): While disapproving of the action of the Postmaster General, it was not his intention to vote for the motion, for it was not right that Parliament should be asked in such terms to censure a public officer. If this were done, the House would be bound to follow up the action by striking out that officer's salary from the Estimates. Certainly, he would feel bound to so act, if he voted for the motion. Having the assurance of the Premier that action would be taken in the proper quarter, and the Postmaster General informed that the sending of this telegram met with the disapproval of the House, he would urge upon the hon. member not to press the matter further, but to be satisfied with having brought it forward, and to withdraw the motion; for, as the Premier said, it was bringing to bear heavy guns upon a small matter of this kind, which was not a constitutional question, but a matter of departmental administration which should be left in charge of the responsible Minister.

Mr. WALTER JAMES (East Perth): Before the motion was disposed of, he would like to state in unqualified terms his intention to vote against it. The country had heard a little too much of late from this community of bankrupt speculators, which for the time being resided at Esperance, and which had stuck itself forward so prominently in connection with Western Australia during the last few months, that one would think we were going to spend our money and build our railways merely for its sake. In connection with the railway policy of the Government, over which that community was so excited that it appeared to have lost all self-restraint, and, so far as one could judge from the utterances of individuals, all sense of decency and self-respect, it was as well to point out to such people that we were not considering such questions with a view to their sole in-

terests. The whole question was what the goldfields desired and what the colony desired; and the sooner it was announced from this House, in a clear and emphatic manner, that in building railways we did not consider the mayor of Esperance or the community of Esperance, who went there to make money, but the interests of the whole of the goldfields and the country at large, the better it would be. We had heard too much of Esperance, too much of the goldfields, and too much of the policy involved in the construction of our railways. As most people must have realised, when reading how the Press had been worked when we had reports of meetings at Esperance, consisting of the mayor and three or four dogs, possibly three or four hundred people, sending a long telegraphic despatch to Perth, and frightening the member for Dundas (Mr. Conolly) so much that he dared not give his vote on important questions—surely the time had come when these people should be made to understand that they were simply a small part of this community, and that they had no right whatever to insult, as they had insulted by their telegrams, any public officer, even though he were a paid officer of the Government. In this case the proper tribunal for Esperance to appeal to was this House, through their member; or, if they wanted to proceed by quicker methods, there was a Minister who was responsible for the department; but, instead of adopting this course, they sent a telegram to a mere departmental officer, and one well calculated to irritate that officer; and though he (Mr. James) might stand alone in the House, he must say he would have sent exactly the same reply. If this matter went to a division, Esperance would doubtless be taught—he knew it would be a shock to them—that in these little matters the public of Esperance were not of sufficient importance to engage the attention of the House. All hon. members knew, and liked, and respected the member for Dundas; but when that hon. member came forward at the bidding of a few people at Esperance—that community of bankrupts, who were irritated at the refusal of the Government to spend money to make their speculations a success—and asked that for the first time in the history of this House,

we should pass a solemn resolution censuring a public officer, because he used some unpolite words to the mayor of Esperance, it was nearly time that the hon. member's constituents were taught that there must be due sense of proportion. He wanted the people of Esperance to recognise that, after all, they were only a small community, and that we did not care a rap about them. We were strong enough to bear the risk of indignation meetings at Esperance, headed by the mayor, so long as we did our duty to the colony; and this House would not commit itself to a policy of spending a large amount of revenue for the purpose of benefiting a small community, instead of looking after the interests of the country as a whole.

MR. KINGSMILL (Pilbarra): The member for East Perth (Mr. James) spoke about indignation meetings being held at Esperance, and of the Government policy in relation to our railways; but, as a matter of fact, the gathering referred to was not an indignation meeting, but a cool, calm, and deliberate assembly held in Perth. Other meetings were held in Kanowna and Kalgoorlie—he did not know whether there were any at Coolgardie—and in each of these places the claims of Esperance were very strongly supported. He was glad that the member for Dundas (Mr. Conolly) had brought before the House the message sent by the Postmaster General to the mayor and council of Esperance; but, at the same time, he hoped the hon. member would withdraw the motion. The member for East Perth (Mr. James) said this was the first occasion on which such a course had been taken. He (Mr. Kingsmill) might say it was also the first occasion on which such a telegram had been sent. If the Postmaster General wished to express what the Premier said he did, and had no intention of gloating over the condition of Esperance, all he (Mr. Kingsmill) could say was that he wished to condescend with that gentleman upon his extremely bad luck in the choice of language, because no doubt any unprejudiced person, reading that telegram, would come to the conclusion that it was “rubbing it in” to Esperance.

MR. GEORGE (Murray): The motion was a highly improper one. If the mayor and council of Esperance had been wronged, why did they not take the proper course of applying to the responsible Minister? Why should they send an impudent telegram to the Postmaster General, insulting their own representative by passing him by, and by afterwards calling upon him to do their dirty work in this House? It would be impossible to use language too strong in reference to the action of the mayor and council of Esperance. If any constituency wished to approach the Minister, they had the right to do so through their representative, but we did not want any more of this back-door, hole-and-corner business, which had been going on, not only in relation to Esperance, but other places also. When a question of this sort came before the Minister of the Crown, the Minister should at once say that he would neither receive any deputations nor inquire into the petitions brought forward until the representative of the district was present. A number of telegraphic lines had been put down, and post offices erected, which had not the slightest chance of being made to pay. Hundreds of miles of telegraph lines had been laid to satisfy two or three persons. It would be found that a most earnest protest had been raised against them, by this officer, at the time, but that protest had been ignored, because, for political reasons, it had been deemed advisable to placate the member for a certain district. If we had at the head of the department a man who had sufficient backbone to say: “I do not recommend that this or that be done, because it will not pay. I know the requirements of the district better than the member, and however important it may be for you to get his vote, it would be robbing the country to do what is asked for,” we ought to support him. The Postmaster General was about one of the best officials we had as far as administration was concerned, and if a motion like this were passed he would send in his resignation, and the House would go on its bended knees to ask him to return to his position, or, if it would not, it ought to be ashamed of itself. It was not the Postmaster

General who published this telegram, but the mayor of Esperance. The people of Esperance wanted a grievance, and obtained one; and now they wished for another. If, instead of bothering about things like this, they would set themselves to work like men, and try to do something that would give them hope for the future, it would be a good thing. The time of Esperance would come, but not yet. The House had no intention of giving Esperance a railway at the present time, but the people there would probably obtain one in ten or fifteen years, and those who could hold on for that time would make money. The member for Esperance had done his duty, and he would do it still more if he withdrew his motion.

At 6.30 p.m. the SPEAKER left the chair

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

MR. GEORGE (resuming): Having spoken on the motion, it was not necessary to say more than to express his earnest wish that it should be withdrawn.

MR. CONOLLY (in reply): In concurring with the wish of those members who desired that the motion should be withdrawn, he assured them that it had not been his intention to press it to a division, and that he had brought it forward as being the only means available for placing the grievance of the people of Esperance before this House. With reference to the Premier's remarks, no one more than himself regretted the tone assumed by many public bodies in communicating with the Government or its officials in reference to their claims and requirements; and sometimes the messages sent by public bodies were such as one could not but regret. Still there was no excuse in this case, for the tone of the reply of the Postmaster-General to the reasonable message sent by the municipal council of Esperance; and it would be a misfortune if officials holding a responsible position in the Government service were to take their cue or to assume a tone which might be permissible on the part of an irresponsible person. From officials in respons-

ible positions the public expected to receive courtesy and consideration, such as were proper in communications between individuals as well as between a public department and any section of the people. With reference to the remarks of the member for East Perth (Mr. James), the whole tone of that member's address was entirely uncalled for, in attempting to show any connection between this message and the railway question as it affected the people of Esperance. The message was in itself discourteous; and any observation made by the hon. member, by way of defending it, only served to show the intense bitterness with which that gentleman regarded both the interests and the claims of the people of Esperance. The people in the Dundas district could never expect to receive fair consideration from that hon. member, and especially so when it was remembered that the hon. member was more ready than any other to cry out for reason and justice when he was lecturing members of this Assembly, as he frequently did. The highest moral principles were applied by that hon. member to other persons, but when these principles ought to apply to himself, there was always an exception or some convenient "but." This was a characteristic of that hon. member. With reference to the remarks of the member for the Murray (Mr. George), he usually let off a whole collection of Chinese crackers, and that hon. member's remarks were not to be taken seriously; for although he generally assumed a lively and sometimes a bombastic tone, yet he was too much carried away by the force of his superabundant spirits, and was not always so courteous as he might be.

MR. VOSPER: The hon. member (Mr. George) had at least one merit. He was always amusing if never instructive.

MR. CONOLLY: That remark was not very kind, though he must agree with it. The hon. member was most eloquent in discoursing on the folly of wasting the time of the House in worthless debate.

MR. GEORGE: The present debate was of that character.

MR. CONOLLY: And yet no man who had spoken on this comparatively trivial question had poured out more senseless vapourings, or taken a longer time to express them, than the hon. member. It

was a pity that such members could not apply to themselves the very excellent principles which they laid down for the guidance of other members. In conclusion, his object had been fully attained by the discussion of this motion; and doubtless the gentleman who filled the responsible position of Postmaster General would not repeat the discourtesy which was undoubtedly expressed in his telegram. So far from wishing to do that gentleman any further—he would not say injury, because no one in the House would imagine he wished to do an injury—so far from wishing to inflict any further penalty on him, he would withdraw the motion, and in that way meet the wishes of the House.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

WINES, BEER, AND SPIRIT SALE AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

MOTION: WOMEN'S FRANCHISE.

Debate resumed on the motion of Mr. WALTER JAMES, "That, in the opinion of this House, the best interest of the colony justify the extension of the franchise to women."

Mr. WALLACE (Yalgoo): I had several reasons for moving the adjournment of this debate, the other evening. One was that I considered sufficient time had been taken up with this matter, and I desired to give hon. members who were advocating this cause an opportunity of reconsidering their action with a view to getting their motion disposed of in some way as quickly as possible. I was rather sorry, however, that I moved the adjournment of the debate, for I should be ashamed to be associated with the cause in question, feeling as I do a large amount of respect and admiration for women, in view of the manner in which it has been advocated in the course of this debate. There are many points I might touch upon, but I have decided to let them pass, owing to the lateness of the hour and stage in the session at which this motion has been brought forward. I hope to-night will see the last of it. The advocates of this motion evidently must have anticipated defeat from the start; therefore, I do not think

their cause is worthy of a long debate, or that it should engage any portion whatever of the time of the House. I was prepared to listen attentively to the discussion until I discovered that the mover of the motion, and his advocates and supporters, had put forward no grounds whatever on which they could reasonably ask for the consideration of hon. members. We have had nothing but what I may term abuse from them, and I am sorry that some of them should so far forget themselves as to resort to personal abuse, when they found they had no arguments to use. If we differ in opinion on this question, I fail to see why those who disagree with us should resort to the tactics which have been adopted in this debate. The hon. member for East Perth, in introducing the measure, did not, as he has done on former occasions, bring forward evidence from different parts of the world, or give us illustrations of the benefits to be derived from his proposal, but introduced it in as few words as possible, evidently showing that he did not believe in his heart that the motion would be adopted. The hon. member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans), whom up to that time I had always looked upon as a model of what was right, and good, and fair, evidently felt he had a weak case, and did not give us one iota of information, or one good point, in favour of his case. He devoted a long time, and wasted the time of the House, by heaping abuse on the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth), who had the courage to express his opinions on the matter freely and openly. My attention has been drawn to paragraphs in certain letters quoted in the debate, and, in the interests of women, I may be permitted to refer to those letters. One of those letters was signed, I think, "C. E. Clark," and the writer is, I believe, a lady of this city. She was referred to sarcastically in the debate as the "Rev. Mrs. Clark," and one hon. member, who advocated this motion, rightly enough rebuked the member who made use of that expression. I was pleased to see that the hon. member who administered the rebuke had the interests of women at heart to that extent; but the advocates of this cause are allowed to refer to other ladies in even more un-

worthy terms than were used in the case I have stated. We had some very funny remarks from the hon. member for Coolgardie with reference to the piece of poetry quoted by the member for Central Murchison. The hon. member ridiculed the authoress of the poem in somewhat strong terms; but nothing was said to him by the supporters of this cause. He was allowed to use any means he chose for placing his cause before the House; and, notwithstanding the attack he made upon members opposing this motion, and particularly on the hon. member for Central Murchison, I must say we were not one whit the wiser at the end of his remarks than we were at the beginning. I am sure that some advocates of the female suffrage who have been led to hold themselves up to public ridicule in the course of this discussion, in attempting to make themselves believe that they are faithful to the cause, will be sorry for themselves when they have had time to consider their action. I think it is a shame that the time of the House should be wasted on a matter of this sort. I do not intend to follow the lead of the Premier, who contended that this franchise had not been asked for, and had not been adopted by the mother country. If the supporters of the motion could show that the adoption of the principle would be for the benefit of women, I would be the first in the House to help them. I must perforce admit a certain amount of ignorance on the subject, because I have never met anyone who was in favour of it outside this House. I have met numerous females in this city, but never one who was desirous of this cause being successful. They all view their position as I do, and briefly it is this. Woman was created as the companion of man, having her own sphere in life, and in that sphere we all admire and respect her; but I venture to say that if women were allowed to associate freely amongst men, as is contemplated by this motion, then the high respect that is now entertained for her would be lessened very much. Woman being the weaker vessel, man, knowing his duty towards woman, uses every endeavour to protect her: and none can deny that in all instances where legislation for the benefit of

woman has been introduced in this House, we have done our best to give her what we considered her just rights. Some people may ask, what do we consider her rights? Well, the rights I consider she is entitled to are not such as have been claimed for her by the member for East Perth. It is clear that woman depends upon man to provide her with the comforts and the necessaries of life; yet here we have a proposal to try to reverse the order of nature, for we find some persons trying to place woman, not only on a level with man, but actually above him. The result would be that men would stop at home and attend to domestic duties, while women would have to go abroad and suffer all sorts of hardships in order to provide necessaries for the home. I have every reason to believe that, if this motion is carried, they will not stop at the question of having a vote, but the next step will be an attempt to get into Parliament. We have many instances of the impulsive nature of women, and I suppose that if women were sitting in this House, we should, instead of merely getting numerous interjections, have scenes of which we would not be proud, and which would not tend to maintain that degree of respect now entertained for women. It is not very long ago that an incident occurred in Melbourne, which showed how women will act on the impulse of the moment, and that they are not capable of cool and calm consideration in most cases. I do not say there are not wise women as well as wise men, but their wisdom is more requisite at home than abroad. Addressing a woman's suffrage meeting in Melbourne, a Mrs. Lowe said: "I suppose that you are all aware that the leader of the Opposition, Sir John McIntyre, called us freaks of nature the other night." Naturally, members of the audience said "hear, hear," and there was any amount of laughter. She continued, "I will only say this, that perhaps the hon. gentleman is a freak of nature that might have been originally intended for an ass." More laughter and applause followed this remark. "Only," said this lady, "I would have to apologise to Sir Jackass if I did so. It shows that when men have no case they abuse the other side." That

quotation shows the course that is being adopted by advocates of women's suffrage. They cannot put forward fair means to further their cause, so they indulge in abuse, and abuse which I consider unkind and uncalled for. I may refer to a letter signed by Mrs. Clark and mentioned a few nights ago. I think the letter has been quoted from many times, but I take strong exception to the particular paragraph which I am now about to quote. I will deal with it in as polite a way as I can. In her letter Mrs. Clark says:

The man who likes to sow his wild oats with the submerged unfortunate, and in after-life maintains for his wife the most exclusive seclusion, is quite comprehensible. When, however, his daughter turns out unfortunately, he does not accuse himself of having predestined that child's condemnation through her heredity, and she becomes one of those who are not counted with this world's angels.

I admit, and I think every hon. member will have to do so, that it is an exceptional thing to find a case in which a man does not sow his wild oats. Now, I am one of those who believe every woman to be good unless I have clear proof that she is not so. Here we have an inference by a lady that the majority of women are bad. I think that the language that has been used is most unkind, and it goes to show that instead of women being under the control of man, as alleged, and subject to abuses, illtreatment, and inhumanity at his hands, woman's inhumanity to woman is far greater than man's inhumanity to man. I believe that the ladies advocating the extension of the franchise to women are very few, there being perhaps four or five of them, and that if an opportunity of withdrawing all that has been said and published during the last few days had been afforded them they would have embraced it. In one place a woman's usefulness in cases of nursing was pointed out, reference being made to binding up the broken hearted. If these ladies would adopt the suggestion of other writers in the papers and do more and talk less, some good would accrue. Men who have always been remarkable for their tact and wisdom and their pointed speeches, have now shown to the House that they are capable of being misled, and not only of being misled, but of making perfect fools of themselves on such a question. Had they said that they did not ap-

prove of the principle set forth in this motion, and just touched upon a few little points, we would have considered we were doing a certain amount of duty towards woman; but it is idle for them to endeavour to make hon. members think that they believe in the principle that has been advocated. We have an instance of woman's unkindness to women in everyday life, and yet they accuse men. They say man desires to keep woman under glass, and all that sort of thing. I venture to assert that if a poll of the women in this city were taken, eight-tenths of them would vote against this motion. A majority of women capable of considering the matter have decided that they were created for a certain position in life, and that their task is to attend to home comforts and domestic duties. If anything would tend to introduce unhappiness into a home, it would be to give women a right to mix with men, and thereby lessen the respect at present entertained for them. I do hope that hon. members will treat the matter as briefly as possible, so that we may dispose of the question as quickly as we can. In the present position of affairs, when time is required for other important matters, it is unfair that members should have to deal with a question of this sort. I have a list of notes, but I do not intend to refer to them, for I claim that inasmuch as those who advocate this motion have really brought forward no points in its favour, there is nothing to refute.

MR. MITCHELL (Murchison): I may observe at once that there is very little left for me to say, unless it be to inform the House that I am now, and always have been, opposed to women's suffrage. Even if no other reason could be adduced for opposing it, it can be urged that the majority of women do not desire it, the few who advocate it consisting of what we may call members of the new woman type. Let the women of Perth and other places bind themselves together to see if they can do something towards reclaiming their fallen sisters—and I am told that there are a great number of them about—and warning those of tender years from falling into the snares often set for them. It would be very much better to do that than to clamour for that which is not suitable for them, and which they are not

likely to obtain. I have noticed during this debate that a great deal has been said about matters which do not exactly concern the motion before the House. For instance, we are told that there are 70,000 male adults in this colony whose names are not on the electoral rolls, as they should be. I may be pardoned if I suggest that is, perhaps, more the fault of the people themselves than the law of the country. But, though that is so, let hon. members try to give the franchise to those people before endeavouring to enter upon the dangerous track of women's suffrage. No one knows what the granting of women's suffrage would lead to. We have also been told by an hon. member in this House that one member represents 32 voters and a lot of cattle. I do not know whether he meant to imply or suggest that because an hon. member happens to represent a small number of electors, he is less capable of legislating, not only for his own particular district, but for the whole colony, than are those who represent large electorates. If the House divides upon this motion, I will vote against it.

Mr. WOOD (West Perth): So much has been said on this question that I really think I should be studying the convenience of hon. members if I refrained from saying anything; but I should not like to give a silent vote on a subject that now assumes some importance. I would, first of all, like to add my congratulations to the hon. member for East Perth (Mr. James) on the very able way in which he delivered his speech, which, I am happy to say, was much shorter than usual, but was none the less effective on that account. I would also like to congratulate the hon. member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth), because I recognise in his address one of the best speeches ever delivered by him in this Assembly, and it recalls to my memory his best fighting days, which, I believe, extended over the sessions of '94 and '95. With regard to the question itself, it does not concern me very much whether the granting of the franchise will improve the condition of women or have an opposite effect. I approach the subject without any feelings of sentiment whatever; what I ask myself being whether the general status of the women of the nineteenth century entitles

them to claim that their judgment and knowledge fit them to form a healthy public opinion upon the political questions of the day. I have considered the question in all its bearings, and have come to the conclusion that the women of the present day are fitted to do so. Having settled that in my mind, the question of sex does not trouble me at all. Again, the whole trend of modern legislation is in the direction of making woman a separate individuality. We have a Married Women's Property Act, which gives women great powers indeed, and I am sure that males very often are glad to take advantage of that Act to protect themselves against their creditors, and to derive benefit from it in other ways. Surely, if men can let women have absolute control over the whole of their estate, we can trust them with votes. I am in favour of granting women the suffrage; but I see that difficulties surround the question, though they are not of very much account. One of the principal difficulties I see is in the matter of canvassing at an election, regarding which women's votes would be, to a great extent, controlled by societies, and we should not, perhaps, be able to get a direct expression of opinion from the women themselves. It may be said that men also may have their trade unions, or societies, or religious organisations, which control their votes; but, on the other hand, you can get at a man pretty well. You may meet him in the street, or at public gatherings, and you can generally follow him up. But, supposing a candidate regarded the vote of a particular woman as doubtful, so far as he was concerned it would be a very invidious task to have to follow her up in the same way as one would a male voter.

Mr. VOSPER: Abolish canvassing altogether.

Mr. WOOD: I am willing to do that. Still, as far as I am personally concerned the canvassing would not affect me, because I should be protected by my age. Some, however, would find it a difficult matter. I am sorry that the young blue-eyed Queensland Irishman, the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) is not here, because I wished to refer to him. I think that in his case it would be very serious indeed. Another point

is that if women's suffrage is granted, a great number of votes will be added to the electoral roll, and if the women are only half as pertinacious as the men in trying to get introductions into the police force and the railways, the troubles of members will be increased 50 per cent. However, these difficulties are only very trifling, being just a couple of little worries added to one's daily life; but they would exist, and we should have to put up with them. I have made up my mind that woman "won't be satisfied till she gets it," and I think the best thing we can do is to give it to her. When we give it to her she will use it in a proper and judicious manner, and if the principle be not adopted to-night, I feel sure that it will be before the next general election.

MR. MONGER: I move that the question be now put.

SEVERAL MEMBERS expressed dissent.

THE SPEAKER: If the hon. member presses the motion, I am bound to put it. I do not know whether he desires me to do so.

THE PREMIER: There are some who wish to speak.

MR. KENNY (North Murchison): Somebody has said there is nothing new under the sun, and I certainly think there is nothing very new in regard to this important question. It has occupied this Assembly for some considerable time, but in my opinion we were never better employed than in considering it. I must congratulate the member for East Perth (Mr. James) on the introduction of this motion, and also on the nature of the opposition he has received; for I do not think it is possible that he could receive a greater guarantee that the time is not far distant when he will be able to carry his motion by an overwhelming majority, for I have listened in vain for a single argument against the motion. One hon. member made use of the hackneyed phrase, "When you have a bad case abuse the other side." Well, if there has been anything like abuse either to women or to the motion, or to the hon. member introducing it, in this debate, it has emanated from those who are opposing the motion. I congratulate the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans) on the able manner in which he spoke on be-

half of the motion, and the women of this colony ought to be proud of such an able and loyal champion. The view I take of this question, and it has been confirmed by the debate, is that selfishness is the besetting sin of man, and that it has a great deal to do with the opposition to this motion; for those who are opposing it are really afraid of the ability of women to enter into the arena claimed by men, and to compete against them in a way that men do not desire. Abuse springing from such a motive is a miserable piece of sheer selfishness. I claim for women the right to vote on the simple lines that we have educated them to thoroughly realise the great benefits of political liberty; and, having done so, we should not turn round now and refuse to give them what they are entitled to, and what we have educated them to expect. Why do we devote large sums to the higher education of women, and lead them up to that higher standard by which they are taught to yearn for that which they see the men enjoy? Why should all this be done, if we are afterwards to turn round and say that they shall not have a right to vote? I consider that crudity is too mild a term for such an attitude as that. One hon. member, who is always ready to refer to the Bible, has reminded us of a few ancient ladies who lived some thousands of years ago; but I fail to see how those ladies of so remote an age can affect this question to-day. It would be better to face the question as it appears to us now, than do it in the light of ancient history. Some members have tried to draw a "red herring" over the trail, by arguing that to give women a vote would result ultimately in their becoming members of Parliament. I am intimately acquainted with the desires and aspirations of many good women, and I have never heard any one of them express a desire to sit in Parliament as a representative; yet, so far as I am concerned, I honestly confess their presence here would be a great acquisition, and if we had them in this Assembly I am sure that social legislation and measures for the benefit of the people would receive far greater attention than they do at present.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: They would all have to sit on the Opposition side.

MR. KENNY: Is there a member who would turn round and refuse a vote to the best friend he ever had—his dear old mother? Can we think of the many kind actions and good things we have received from her, and how frequently our erring steps were brought back to the straight path of rectitude by our sisters; and, remembering these influences, would we say those women do not possess the ability to use the power we propose to give them as electors?

MR. GEORGE: They do not want it.

MR. KENNY: Is there any member who will say that in New Zealand, in Adelaide, and in those States of America where women have the franchise, or even in the dear old country, those public bodies for which a woman has the right to vote have ever in any way abused the exercise of that right? The women of England have the right to vote for the election of members of county councils, and I am in a position to produce proof that the standard of members forming that great and responsible body, the London County Council, has been raised since women were permitted to exercise the franchise. I claim also that women have the right to vote on the simple and strong lines of justice; that they are amenable to the laws of the country, and, as such, have a right to exercise a voice in the making of its laws. It is one of the strongest arguments we can put forth when we endeavour, though with very little result in many cases, to induce the Government of this colony to liberalise the electoral law by enabling every man in it to exercise the right of voting. Our argument is that it is the birthright of every man to have a voice in the formation of the laws which govern him; and inasmuch as women are subject in like manner to our laws, and are liable also as taxpayers, I say they have an equal right to have a voice in the formation of the laws which govern them. Can we shut our eyes to the fact that, notwithstanding the very high opinion we have of ourselves, women are exercising and carrying out a higher and nobler function than we can ever hope to do? It is admitted on all sides that, while men are only the progenitors of our race, the women are its saviours; and

that on the future of the Anglo-Saxon race to which we are all proud to belong, and on the future of the civilised races of the world, women are exercising a higher influence and playing a more important part and will continue to do so, than men can aspire to do. On these lines I claim the right of woman to have a vote. In conclusion, I hope that, although the hon. member who introduced this motion will not probably carry it on this occasion, he will persevere and will never weary in the attempt until he attains his end. I do not pretend to launch into lengthy quotations, like those which the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) has placed before the House; but may I say that I feel at least justified in following his good example this far, by giving a slight quotation from one of our Australian poets, and one which will be more to the point than those which he gave us. Let us assist the women in the object they are endeavouring to obtain: let us assist them as they deserve, and help them

In the cause that needs assistance
Against wrongs that lack resistance,
For the future in the distance
And the good that they may do.

MR. LYALL HALL (Perth): The hon. member who has just spoken has told us that, so far, he has heard no argument against the women's franchise. Perhaps the most weighty argument that can be adduced against the claims of women to the franchise is the fact that women themselves do not want what the hon. and learned member for East Perth has termed their rights. I say the great majority of women do not want to interfere with political matters. Why then should legislation of this kind be introduced, where there is no real demand for it, and when it is merely pandering to the fads of a few hon. members, and of a few of those who are called the new or advanced women? I am willing to admit that every member of the community has rights, in some degree; but it is desirable that different rights should be recognised by different people at different times, and as touching the different sections of the community. For instance, denial of the franchise to minors and lunatics is sufficient evidence that the good of the community is the ultimate

consideration by which the denial or the bestowal of the franchise should be determined.

MR. MORGANS: Do not classify women with lunatics.

MR. HALL: I do not; but I merely refer to that illustration in order to show that, in a wise and temperate consideration of what is best for the community as a whole, it is found desirable that women should be kept free from politics. I am aware that I am bringing down on my head the wrath of our so-called advanced sisters; but whilst I give way to no man in my admiration for women in the home and the family circle, I feel that I must draw the line where the wife and the mother enter into politics. I say again that women in this colony do not want the franchise, and that they are quite satisfied to leave the burden of statesmanship to such giants of intellect and literature as the member for East Perth. It should be remembered that the influence of a good woman upon the life and character of a man is enormous: an influence for good so widely disseminated through the civilised world, that it is absurd to say that the influence of woman is not felt in the Parliamentary arena. At elections, women possess a great and valid influence on the votes of men; and, in fact, the interests of woman are so bound up in those of man, that the man, in safeguarding and protecting his own interest, must necessarily safeguard the interests of woman also. I may be old-fashioned in my idea, but I do like the idea of woman as represented in the home circle; and I do not like the picture, on the other hand, of a wife or mother assuming political responsibility far beyond her powers, and becoming the butt of gross political jokes, and the victim of election squibs and horseplay. Take, for instance, the recent elections in a sister colony, where party feeling ran so high, and where candidates were treated with such scant courtesy, and other more solid commodities in the shape of eggs and flour. Should we care to see the women of our household mixed up in disgraceful proceedings of that kind? Few of us would say that the place for women is at election meetings, where the crowd may be amusing themselves by abusing the candidates and pelting them with rotten eggs.

It is desirable that women should devote themselves to other than political work; and there is a great sphere of work for any of those women who think they have a mission to perform, outside that of politics. It is ridiculous to say that women are not represented in our popular Assemblies, for besides being represented by men of intelligence and sympathy, men who have their interests thoroughly at heart, she can explain her views clearly; she can agitate, and does so; and many women can speak excellently on public platforms, while a large number can write fluently in the public press. Therefore, there is no fear that the aims and aspirations of women can long remain unknown. I will not say anything in reference to the stereotyped suggestion that has been made, that women are deficient in public spirit, and that their opinions on moral questions are more faddy than robust. It is scarcely necessary to go so far as to say that; but I do honestly believe that our women of the colony take a vigorous interest in political progress generally, and are a power for good behind the throne. I am with the member for East Perth in that the influence of good women is a desideratum in the political world: although I hold that it is not necessary to drag her forth into the full blaze of publicity; for, by doing so, woman thereby loses her influence, and brings ridicule on her aims and aspirations. In this view I am supported, I am sure, by the great majority of women; and I contend that they are quite content to go on as they are, and do not want the honours which are sought to be thrust on them by the member for East Perth. It is contended that as women are entrusted with the municipal franchise, they should also be entrusted with the Parliamentary vote; but I say the questions that Parliament is called upon to decide are wider than those which come before local bodies.

MR. JAMES: Why do so many city councillors get into Parliament, then?

MR. HALL: That is a question which does not need answering, and it is not a serious reflection on the weaker sex to say that the broader questions of economic policy are beyond the average intelligence of women; that their sense of justice is limited, and that their judgment is vitiated by narrow and personal considera-

tions. I repeat that the women of Western Australia, as a whole, do not want the franchise. I have talked to many of them, and I find that the good housewife, as well as the spinster who desires to come under that category, recognise the fact that they will wield more influence for good, and better retain the respect and reverence which all men have for good women, by not mixing up in politics, than by placing themselves on a level with the sterner sex in those walks of life for which women are by nature unfitted; also that they will otherwise bring down upon themselves the ridicule of their own sex, and also cause men to withhold that reverence and respect which are, and always will be, so long as they are preserved, women's greatest power. There is an old adage which says, "Modesty has more charms than beauty;" and I say it should be the aim of every man in this colony to preserve that modesty in women, which is sought by a few women of masculine proclivities to be exiled from the realms of womanhood.

MR. JAMES: Go on. What are you giving us?

MR. HALL: The ladies who won over the member for East Perth to become their champion, their modern Ivanhoe, might have been better employed in doing such work as the "Sisters of the People" are now engaged in. Had they wished for an outlet for their zeal, they might have become ministering angels to those who are afflicted and ailing. The experience we have of the average female "woman suffragist" is that she simply ministers to her own vanities, the chief of which is her love of notoriety; whilst others of those ladies assume the rôle as a matter of business.

MR. MORGANS: Be more generous.

MR. HALL: The member for East Perth has advocated that women should take to the public platform and spout politics. I once had in my employment the husband of one of those public female reformers, a man by the name of Lee, and I had an opportunity of seeing the result, when a woman, instead of attending to her household duties, runs about the country with the idea that she has a "mission." This man used constantly to arrive late at his work, in consequence of having to attend

to household duties; and I had on one occasion to visit his house, and the state of that house can be better imagined than described. That poor fellow's invariable advice to his associates was "For the Lord's sake, never marry a woman with a mission;" and this advice would be acted upon by the young men of Western Australia, should the tendency increase for woman to leave the walks of life for which she is fitted, and place herself on the plane of her natural protector, by mixing in the turmoil and strife of politics. It must not be forgotten that, if this motion is carried, women will be able to enter this House.

MR. JAMES: And put you out.

MR. HALL: I have heard certain members, who I know have expressed their intention of voting for this motion, say distinctly that if that time comes they will themselves at once resign.

MR. GEORGE: That would be a loss to the country, would it not?

MR. HALL: Well, then, I can only attribute the fact of their voting for the motion to the same principle that some members have advised me to adopt in requesting me to vote for it because they say it is a good thing to be on the side of the women.

MR. GEORGE: We are all on their side, only we differ about it.

MR. HALL: Well, there are different ways of looking at it, and I think, in advocating that women should not be given the franchise, I am on the side of the women. In conclusion I do not think the motion of the hon. member can command support on its merits. As a pretty fad, as a matter of sentiment, it may receive some attention; but, as a question of serious moment, it must fail in its appeal to those who exercise calm judgment over the matter. I will not vote for the proposition, which I may be allowed to say is, in my opinion, introduced in the heat of an enthusiastic disposition, misled by the support of popular female applause.

MR. KINGSMILL (Pilbarra): I feel sorry that I cannot support the motion of that most valiant knight-errant, the member for East Perth, who, on this occasion, appears to be rather more earnest than usual. I feel that, in speaking so

late in the debate, I have very little to add to what hon. members have already said; and I speak now because I do not wish to give a silent vote on this subject. I rather regret that hon. members who have spoken in favour of the motion seem to have lost sight of its actual wording. The question now before the House is, I take it, not so much whether the extension of the franchise to women is justifiable, or is not justifiable, but whether in the interests of this colony, it is justifiable; and I must say, taking the colony as a whole—and speaking as a member representing a remote part of it—I do not consider that it is desirable. At present it is a well-known fact to all members of this House that there is a strong tendency towards centralisation in Western Australia; and I think, speaking in the abstract, that very few members can say that in a colony of such huge extent as this is, centralisation is a good thing. As we are likely very shortly, or I should rather say eventually, to have a re-distribution of seats in this country, on a population basis, I would ask hon. members from the remoter districts whether they are not likely to be acting against their own interests, and not only their own interests, but the interests of the colony, in advocating the extension of the franchise to women, and thereby doubling the voting power of the metropolis. I say they are acting in the interests of the colony by not extending this franchise; and I would ask them to remember, that it is the outside parts of the colony, the goldfields, the mining industry, that have made Perth what it is, and brought us the boom.

MR. VOSPER: And the "bust."

MR. KINGSMILL: Brought us the depression, and will yet bring us out of the depression. I think those hon. members—and there are several in the House—who have said that women have not asked for this privilege, have truth on their side; and, therefore, I think that if the ladies and gentlemen who are advocating and pushing forward this movement so enthusiastically, had brought evidence to bear, as they might easily have done, to show that the women of West Australia as a whole have asked for it, they would have made out a much better case. Of course it is a bare assertion to say that

they are not asking for it, but such is my belief; and it is equally a matter of bare assertion to say they are asking for it. My assertion is just as good as anybody else's.

MR. JAMES: People naturally want justice. That is the point.

MR. GEORGE: So do we want justice.

MR. JAMES: But it does not consist in mending socks.

MR. GEORGE: That is a very good thing in its way, however.

MR. KINGSMILL: I think, therefore, hon. members will agree that the measure is not urgent; but it has a qualification which endears it to those ladies who push it—it has, during the last year or so, become fashionable. That is a far greater recommendation. I think the Women's Christian Temperance Union, which I believe is practically the fountain-head of this motion, might be a very useful body, and would be useful if its members eschewed politics and confined themselves to what I take their natural sphere to be, namely, the social and charitable functions. There is no doubt that in aiding the hospitals in this country, in attending to unfortunate sisters and trying to reclaim them, there is a wide field open to women; and I think they would be more usefully employed in that field than in endeavouring to mix themselves up in politics. Still, I must say, with regard to the wide question of women's franchise, looked at in an abstract manner, that I can see no strong reasons against it. (MR. JAMES: Hear, hear.) Indeed, I can see good reasons in its favour, and when the population of this colony is more equally distributed, when the outside districts have more of their due proportion of women than now, and also when I am fully satisfied that those women want, and will wisely use, the franchise, then I shall have much pleasure in supporting such a motion as this.

MR. VOSPER (North-East Coolgardie): I have listened to the whole of this rather lengthy debate, and I have several times fluctuated in my opinion as to whether or not I should inflict any matter upon the House during its progress; but I feel it incumbent upon me, as upon other hon. members, to say that I intend to give my vote this year as I did last, namely, in support of the motion. I have heard a

great deal on both sides of this question, and I would first refer to the excellent essay which was given by the hon. member for Perth (Mr. Hall). I must say his address struck me as being an eloquent literary effort, rather than an oratorical one, and I congratulate the hon. gentleman upon it: but when it comes to a question of argument, I confess I fail to see a single shadow which could, by the greatest stretch of courtesy, be termed an argument, throughout the whole of that lengthy diatribe. Of assertion there was plenty—in fact, he reiterated a series of assertions which had already been made at various stages of the debate; but the only thing in his speech that can be fastened upon in the nature of an argument was the inclusion of womankind in the category of minors and lunatics, for certain purposes, and also the point as to women having rotten eggs and flour thrown at them during an election riot. I am willing to admit that the hon. member did not intend to classify a woman as a minor or a lunatic, or as being devoid of sufficient intelligence to vote; but he was endeavouring to say that the State governed the franchise in accordance with its own interests. I agree with him at once that lunatics and minors should not be permitted to vote, because they are persons deficient in intelligence; but can it be asserted that women, as a class, are deficient in intelligence? Have we not all the evidence of literature and history to prove the contrary? When it comes to the other argument—to what might occur at an election riot, then I contend that the influence of a woman and her presence in political circles would have a tendency to diminish riots and disturbances of that kind, rather than to increase them. We frequently see, where election riots take place in crowded halls, that the whole situation is saved by appealing to the more chivalrous and more manly instincts of the crowd, by representing that there are ladies present. How frequently do we see rough men, when bad and foul language is being used, reminded that a woman is present, and it ceases. Unless I am greatly mistaken, when some time ago we were discussing whether it was advisable to exclude women from the occupation of harlots, the hon.

member himself, or some colleagues on that side of the House, maintained that the refining influence exercised by women was one of the reasons why women should be kept in the bars. According to those members, woman is fit to undertake all the disagreeable duties attaching to nursing in hospitals, to attending ambulances, to dispensing poison to people over a public-house bar, where she has to put up with the foul language to be heard in such places, and they are also fit to go on the temperance platform and work for temperance, but they must not vote for temperance. Woman must do nothing at all to give effect to her ideas; and those members who talk about the chastity, the purity, and the holiness of woman would not lift a finger to save her from some of the most horrible and degrading associations which the law permits and encourages, in which she is contaminated by rude, wicked, and corrupt men. I come now to the man who is, perhaps, "the noblest Roman of them all" amongst the opponents of this motion; that is the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth), who is a very excellent friend to have, but if he becomes opposed to one in debate, then I think any hon. member on the other side will have the satisfaction of reflecting that he has

The stern delight that warriors feel,
In foemen worthy of their steel.

The hon. member contributed one of the finest speeches to this debate; and I am glad to think we have a member of this House who is capable of dealing in such a masterly manner as he did, with the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans), after the manner in which the member I have referred to had treated the subject. I shall not attempt to wrestle with the speech, but I must say that the hon. member (Mr. Illingworth) was the only member of this House who has tried to be argumentative against the motion, and even he simply gives a *resume* of old arguments which have been dished up in this House session after session, ever since the year 1893, and which may all be found within the compass of *Hansard*. During the last session I undertook to reply to them, and I now find myself obliged to cover almost the same ground. One of the arguments used I think by the member for East Perth was the fact that, be-

cause woman was taxed, she was, therefore, entitled to a vote : but the member for Central Murchison then came in with the assertion that, as she is only indirectly taxed, she is not entitled to vote directly. The same hon. member claims to be a democrat, and I believe he is a true and sincere democrat ; but I would ask him, how would that principle work out, if he applied it to manhood suffrage ? Many and many a man pays his taxes through his grocer, his butcher, or his baker : others pay their taxes through their landlords, both in this and in other countries : and in any democratic community, would these men be satisfied to exercise their votes through the persons who pay their taxes ? I say, decidedly not ; and women are in exactly the same position. Whether they pay their taxes directly or indirectly matters not the slightest. The question is, do they pay taxation ? And if they do, they are as fully entitled to representation as any member of this House.

MR. HALL : The question is, do they want it ?

MR. VOSPER : I will come to that, later. If it be right that persons who indirectly pay taxation shall not be represented because their payment is indirect, I say, let us apply that to manhood as well as womanhood, and the result will be that we shall have a property vote, a property qualification in this colony, and we shall have everything regulated, not by the intelligence a man may possess, but by the amount of property which he happens to hold. Then another argument (an old one) was used by the hon. member, to the effect that behind social order lies physical force. I endeavoured to demonstrate before that this was an absolute fallacy. Perhaps there never was a greater fallacy argued on the floor of the House than that which pretends that social order, or in other words civilisation, depends upon physical force. History proves that progress in political reform, in political economy, and advancement in the position of the human species, has been brought about in spite of physical force. If we take those countries, for example, where civilisation and law and order depend upon physical force, what do we find ? Let us take such a country as Turkey or Russia. In neither of those countries has the

public voice any sway, and the public intelligence is not consulted, the sole arbiter of the destinies of the people being in the one case the Sultan, and in the other case the Czar. The same rule prevails almost entirely throughout Asiatic lands. Do we find them more civilised and advanced than western countries ? Western countries have progressed more than eastern ones, because the people, being of a high standard, recognise that there is something besides physical force governing them. They recognise civilisation as built up from moral force, and the standard of the civilisation of a country is its treatment of women. It is a recognised truism that the lower the status of woman in a community the lower is the standard of civilisation. We find that in western nations, where moral force is most recognised, women are most in the ascendant, and in raising the status of women we have also raised our own. [A MEMBER : Granted.] I am glad to hear the hon. member say "granted." My premises being granted, I go on to reason from them. This moral force is a force of pure intelligence, and a country which is governed by pure intelligence requires to be built very much upon the model of a pyramid, for the broader the base the better are the chances of stability, and the longer it will last. If we have a country governed by only half the intelligence it contains, it stands to reason that it is not in such a position of stable equilibrium, nor is it so well off, as it would be were all the available intelligence used in connection with political affairs. We are in that position at the present time. We have not been raised to our highest position, having used only half our intelligence. To determine to use only half our intelligence in connection with political affairs would be the same as if a man said : "I am a fairly intelligent person, and propose to use only one sphere of my brain, and allow the other to die out. The State that would grant suffrage to man, and refuses it to woman, is in the same position as a man who would adopt such a process as that with regard to his own intelligence. We have been treated with references to a very large number of authorities ; Professor Goldwin Smith, Ouida, and a number of other ladies and gentlemen of more or less repute having

been referred to. The member for East Perth (Mr. James) handed me an old copy of *Hansard*—I forget how old it was, but I know it was of considerable antiquity—in which he showed that the arguments raised against granting the suffrage on the present occasion have been brought forward before, and have been combated over and over again in this very House. He pointed out that in *Hansard* there are quotations showing reasons quite as cogent, quite as much to the purpose, and quite as valuable as anything urged by the hon. member for Central Murchison (Mr. Jillingworth). The principal quotations from women writers was from the novelist, Ouida. I do not like to say anything harsh respecting a lady, for it is a matter of some delicacy to venture to criticise a woman in severe terms; but I do say this—and I think that every intelligent student of modern literature will agree with me—that one of the worst forms of female monstrosities who ever committed pen to paper is Ouida. She is a female cynic, and above all others is not a fit person to be regarded as an authority on a subject of this kind.

AN HON. MEMBER: Yet, you would give her a vote.

MR. VOSPER: In the sure and certain hope that her vote would be swamped by those of her sex who are more intelligent. The fact remains, as the hon. member will discover if he studies her books—and they are well worth studying, if only for psychological purposes. There is no one more bitter and harsh towards her own sex than Ouida, and exactly in the proportion that she degrades her own sex she elevates the male sex. I dare say it can be accounted for psychologically, and that there are authors who could fully explain why Ouida argues as she does, but I do not wish to inflict a psychological disquisition upon this House. For the hon. member to refer to Ouida in support of his arguments against granting the suffrage to women is a perfect fallacy, and it only lands him in a quagmire, from which it will be difficult for him to extricate himself. What about such persons as Harriet Martineau, George Eliot, and some hundreds of others who have done a great work for humanity, and have ex-

pressed themselves in most emphatic terms in favour of the franchise being granted to women?

MR. JAMES: John Stuart Mill.

MR. VOSPER: John Stuart Mill is well worth consideration, and if his principles had been more studied and acted upon in colonial politics, the colonies would be in a better position than they are now. Exception was taken by an hon. member—and I regret to say it was repeated in strong and gross terms subsequently—to a letter in the public press. One hon. member went so far as to say, because he read that letter, of which he disapproved, that although he voted for women's suffrage before, he would declare against it now. I am sorry that hon. members in the House can be so easily influenced in their ideas of what is right or wrong. Exception was taken to one particular phrase, having reference to the effects of hereditary instincts on offspring. I do not take any exception to that phrase at all. I think it is a matter for congratulation that we have women in our midst who are sufficiently intelligent and whose minds are sufficiently analytical to understand that there is something more than dogma. In my opinion, it is a scientific advantage that we have women of that kind amongst us, and it speaks volumes for the advancing intelligence of the women who are helping on the movement. Only a little while ago a woman was speaking on the question of prostitution, which was a subject which most would not have dealt with. If they had come near one of those unfortunate women in the streets, they would have felt bound to avoid her for fear of contamination: but I am glad to say that they are now taking an interest in the subject with a view to effecting an improvement. It is a distinct advantage to civilisation, and especially to the science of sociology, that women are beginning to see that an evil exists; and that they are exercising a distinct influence in order to remedy it: instead of acting in the pharisaical way they formerly did, and looking down upon women less fortunate than themselves as monsters of vice, they are investigating cases, which has had the effect of making members of their sex a great deal more charitable to-

wards one another than they were before. I do not know that the author of this letter was perfectly right in what she said, because we know, in regard to the question of heredity, that there may be traces of millions of ancestors, and it depends very largely upon the surrounding circumstances which of those traces shall prevail. I do not think that the child of a vicious father will necessarily be vicious, unless there is a long continuation of such influence; but we are not to say that because the writer is not acquainted with this fact, she is to be treated as guilty of a crime on account of what she asserts. I think it shows a larger amount of charity than women were formerly credited with, and I hail the letter written as a sign of satisfaction that women are beginning to discuss social questions in an intelligent manner. I know that something was said by the hon. member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) about scriptural authority, but whether it was on the present occasion, or in a former speech, I cannot tell. As the matter has been mentioned, I would like to say to the hon. member it is about time he got rid of this bogey or fetish of scriptural authority. The scriptures are all very well in their place, but I think they should be left behind when we are considering a question of this kind. Someone writing on the history of criminal law has referred to the great jurist, Sir Matthew Hale, and he twits him on the subject of his pronounced ideas of witchcraft. On one occasion, Sir Matthew, in summing up at a trial, quoted scripture, giving chapter and verse: the writer said it was a great pity that Sir Matthew did not look up later authorities. I take the same view on this women's suffrage question. You have only to observe what harsh, shameful, and disgraceful things were recognised in the Levitical law, to see how utterly out of place the consideration of scripture is in a matter of this kind. We are a civilised people, and should try to have civilised authorities to guide us. Reference has been made to women's work. Women may attend a temperance meeting and go on the platform and speak; they may visit the vilest slums and the lowest huts; they may expose themselves to all kinds of risks, morally and physically, in pursuit of their hobby, temperance;

but the idea that they may go to the polling booth and vote for it, is opposed to the view of my hon. friend. If a woman is entitled to go to a meeting to hear an orator like John B. Gough, or to hear the hon. member himself, in respect of temperance, surely she is just as well qualified to go to a polling booth. If we had ladies going to the poll, every candidate who wished them to vote would show the greatest possible amount of chivalry, making the process as easy as possible. We may trust the candidate and the candidate's agent in the future to make it as smooth and comfortable to go to the poll as to go to a ballroom. Now I come to the speech made by the Premier, who asserted—and it was a bare assertion—that there was no demand on the part of women for the suffrage. Whence comes the demand before the House at the present time? Does it not come from the women? Of course we know the motion before us was introduced by the hon. member for East Perth; but we believe him to be a moderately intelligent man, even if we do not think him a genius, and is it likely that he is going to struggle year after year in this House for the mere pursuit of a fad? I do not think so, because hon. members as a rule have other things to do. Many other fads might be taken up, which would bring more kudos to him than this subject. A man does not gain any votes or any particular glory by advocating women's suffrage. No *éclat* is derived from it, but a great amount of ridicule and abuse. I think the fact that the hon. member advocates it year after year is pretty good proof that he is sincere, and that behind him and those who advocate this principle there exists a real demand. But there is one thing I invite hon. members to be careful about in any argument of this kind. There has never yet been an extension of the franchise, where the same objection has not been raised. When they reduced the property qualification in the old time, bringing the amount down to £10; when it was proposed to confer the franchise on the agricultural labourer, we were told—as we shall be told to all eternity—that there was no demand for a change. Why? Because those demanding the alteration had no means of articulating their desires,

as they had no votes. It is all very well to gag a man and then say "You do not want these things, because you do not give expression to such a wish." Then the hon. gentleman went on to deal with chivalry, and he seemed to be thinking of the mediæval style of chivalry; but I think the world is to be congratulated on the fact that all that sort of thing has been exploded. In the time of Cervantes and others, woman was spoken of by troubadours and poets as being the perfection of graces, and men were willing to commit manslaughter upon one another in the name of the lady whom they adored. She was put in a ridiculous position; but when we come to deal with her as a social unit, we find that she was a chattel, a thing to be bought and sold, and often, in some circles of society, a woman was killed, when her lord and master chose. Are we going to have a continuation of chivalry of that kind? When the Premier was speaking I felt that there was a remnant of that chivalry left. The Premier says he puts women on a pedestal far above man. He says "You are a goddess; you are not a little lower than the angels, but a little higher: but although I esteem and admire and worship you, yet you are not fit to occupy the same position and have the same rights as myself; you are not fit to take care of yourself, because you are so angelic, and you must remain where you are." I say that if an angel from heaven were to come here, she would take care of herself even in this Assembly; and I believe that if woman were to descend from her high perch in the gallery above us and come down to the floor of this House, she would not be contaminated here, though some men would have us to believe she would be degraded in this Assembly.

MR. GEORGE: Then, men are not so bad, after all.

MR. VOSPER: No, that is so. One argument was that the granting of the franchise to women would do away with the natural inequality of the sexes; but I say we know there cannot be such a thing as equality, for no intelligent democrat dreams of equality even amongst men, and why should equality be advocated as between the sexes? We who advocate the granting of the franchise to women say they have got separate in-

terests, and those interests require separate votes; and it is because we recognise that we men possess all the physical force, that therefore we should not deprive women of the moral force we know they possess.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Why not give women a separate Parliament?

MR. VOSPER: Yes, why not? They might have a separate Parliament, if necessary; but a female Parliament might be derided as a collection of old women, and we know that old women are not always deserving of reverence. Unfortunately, we have too many of that class mixed up with politics already. It has been said that woman cannot play her part in time of war, as a man can do. We do not expect a woman to fire a big gun or shoulder a rifle; but every soldier who goes into battle is born of woman, and every man who has been sacrificed in war has caused tears and suffering to some woman. I say, woman's sacrifice in time of war is equal to, if not greater than, that of man; and some of the noblest deeds of women in time of war have been greater than those of men. Take the case of the Maid of Orleans, who aroused the valour of the French when they were hard pressed; or take the case of the Maid of Saragossa, whose heroism showed her countrymen that a woman could go into the field and inspire men to "seek the bubble reputation even at the cannon's mouth."

MR. GEORGE: We do not want them to do that.

MR. VOSPER: Do you mean to tell me that if a woman like Florence Nightingale, who performed heroic service in succouring the sick and wounded in the Crimean war, would have been silent and useless as a member of the House of Commons, and would have done no good while those British soldiers were suffering privation and absolute starvation through neglect in the supply of clothing and provisions; or that a woman like Agnes Weston, who has established sailors' homes throughout Great Britain, would be of no practical use in politics? When considering the influence of woman in war, let us also consider the influence of woman in peace: for while we know that war is the greatest and most devastating

scourge to humanity, we also know that war is caused by the impulse of nations or of individuals, and we may consider what influence women would have in checking such impulses. Taking the latest instance of a war, we know that the American Government and people stood by in the case of Cuba, and did practically nothing during many years, but that immediately the United States warship "Maine" was blown up, the American people and their Government were roused to furious activity. War being made by impulse, I say the influence of woman would be on the side of peace; and with woman's influence making for peace, I do think that if there were the women's franchise all over the world, it would be impossible for nations to keep up those vast military establishments, such as exist in France and Germany at the present time, for we should all see at once the uselessness of keeping huge masses of armed men to slaughter one another. Therefore, that peace which all good men pray for, and which all politicians who are not contaminated with a thirst for blood desire, would be secured by the influence of women in politics. We want woman to have a vote, so that she may prevent fighting; not that she may go out to fight. As to the objection against women sitting in Parliament and taking part in legislation with men, I do not think Parliament would be degraded by the presence of women, nor is it possible for women to degrade Parliament. Women have vices peculiar to themselves; they have also virtues peculiar to themselves; and if the conscientiousness and the intelligence which women exhibit in the ordinary affairs of daily life were exhibited in Parliament, I say this country would be saved from many deplorable mistakes such as have been committed in the past by a Parliament of men. The presence of women in a House like this would have a tendency to refine debate; and even though some members here do not allow the presence of women in that gallery above us to refine their style, yet if women were on the floor of this House as legislators along with us, and if any male legislator were to speak against the other sex and against decency in the way I have heard some members speak during this

debate, depend upon it those members would, in the next election, have to suffer. [Interjections by several members.] Hon members seem anxious to fit the cap somewhere.

MR. GEORGE: I have not said a single thing which I would not say before my wife or my mother.

MR. VOSPER: It is not our position to inquire whether women will look well in Parliament or look well out of it. We have but to consider that women are entitled to the suffrage on the broad basis of right; and we should do justice even if harm does accrue, and we should be prepared to put up with it. I will not say anything further on the subject of that social revolution which the Premier anticipates; for, after all, society is always in a state of revolution, and society's revolutions are like the daily revolution of the earth on its axis, an imperceptible change, and I do not think this additional revolution of admitting women to the franchise will have any different effect. The granting of the franchise elsewhere has not had the effect of wrecking the established order of things in Adelaide or New Zealand. Hon. members of this House holding the fossilised ideas which have been expressed by the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth), and the member for the Murray (Mr. George) will, in course of time, become as extinct as the dodo; and, if we want to preserve them, we shall have to put them in a glass case for the admiration of future generations.

MR. GEORGE: You would make a nice specimen in a glass case, would you not?

MR. VOSPER: Yes; I think I should look pretty well.

MR. GEORGE: They would not know which sex you belonged to, and might have some trouble in finding out.

MR. VOSPER: I was going to say, this question about the presence of women is unnecessary, because if we are determined that woman is not to have a vote, and that she shall not sit in Parliament, then, to be consistent, we should re-enact the old Salic law which prohibits a woman from having any share in the government of a country, and even if she is heir to the throne she is by that law set aside in favour of a male heir. If we are going to say that woman is not

fit to occupy the position of a legislator, then we should apply the Salic law in its entirety, and say that woman should be precluded from occupying the highest position in the British empire; that position held by the one woman whom every Englishman treats with the highest respect and admiration, and that is the sovereign Queen of England. The vote she exercises as sovereign is greater and more responsible than that of any legislator, for every Bill we pass here requires her Majesty's signature to be at the bottom of it in order to make it operative, and until her signature is there, that Bill is waste paper. I say that is the highest form of vote which any person can have, and that vote is exercised by a woman. She is the creature of Parliament, for Parliament makes the sovereign, and all the hundreds of millions of people in the British empire respect her as a Sovereign. I say the effect of carrying this objection to woman's suffrage to its logical conclusion would be to deprive Victoria of her throne.

MR. GEORGE: She is an exception.

MR. VOSPER: But if we find only one such exception, I contend that it proves the fitness of woman to perform the highest political duties of the State. The selfish argument which was raised by one representative of the goldfields, that the effect of giving the vote to women in the coastal districts would operate against the voting power and representation on the goldfields, is one which ought not have been advanced in this House. I say, on the contrary, that if the giving of the female franchise to this colony will double or treble the voting power of the population in the coastal districts as against the voting power of the goldfields, that I, as a goldfields representative, do not object to it as a matter of right. If men on the goldfields have not their wives and families with them now, they will have them living on the goldfields in future to a much greater extent than in the present; and even if I were sure that the interests of the goldfields would be affected in that way for a lengthened period, I would still vote for giving the franchise to women, as an act of justice. I think that selfish argument advanced by a goldfields member is un-

worthy of the principles of this House. The member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) has referred to the risk of women taking part in election meetings where rotten eggs are being thrown. I ask, what appreciable influence have such incidents on the course of politics in a country? The man who howls most is not he who does the real work of building up a nation or its institutions, but it is the man who does good work calmly. We know that for 500 years women have been canvassing in the old country at elections, and we have not heard that women have suffered by the part they took in politics. We know, for instance, that a famous Duchess of Devonshire went so far as to kiss a butcher in order to get his vote, and her family has not been degraded by that action. We know that the Conservative party in England do not hesitate to make use of the services of women at elections, and we know that they have formed the Primrose League, composed chiefly of ladies who make political canvassing their special business. The Primrose League comprises among its members most of the principal ladies of England; and why should we be afraid that what has not happened to English women is going to happen to colonial women? I think that this anticipation of evil through the action of women at elections is a most unreasonable assumption. It is an undisputable fact that the men who promoted the Primrose League in England are supporters of women's suffrage; and in this connection I will mention the Marquis of Salisbury, the Prime Minister of England, also Mr. Balfour, the leader of the House of Commons; and why they have become supporters of the claims of women to the franchise is because they have seen the influence that women have exercised through the Primrose League in England, and seeing the good work done by women, these leading statesmen have been willing to give the franchise to women. I say, that argument is worthy of consideration at our hands; and, while I know, as a democrat, that women will probably exercise a conservative vote in politics, and that we democrats may receive scant consideration at their hands, yet I say our duty is to do that which it is right and politic to do; and, if so, we ought

to do it. I contend that it is politic for the reasons I have given; and that it is absolutely just, no one can deny. There is nothing more to refer to in connection with this debate. The member for Yal-goo (Mr. Wallace) quoted the case of Mrs. Lowe, of Melbourne, who made certain remarks on a platform in Melbourne; and the hon. member said that when the lady rose in her place to reply to something disrespectful which had been said in Parliament about women, she was not afraid of calling the gentleman by the name of a certain domestic animal. That incident shows that we cannot expect humour from gentlemen who have such names as McIntyre and Wallace. Since last year I have given some degree of study to this question, as I do to almost every question that is likely to come before this House; and I see no reason to change my views or alter my position. A challenge has been thrown out in this House, and I want to take up that challenge by moving an amendment on the present motion, in such a form as will be an acceptance of the challenge. It has been said that women do not want the franchise. I am going to ask this House, are members prepared to put the question to the test? The opponents of the motion have said they have thrown down the gauntlet; I am here prepared to take it up, and I move, as an amendment to this motion, to strike out all the words after "justify," and insert thereafter the words, "the taking of a plebiscitum of the women of the colony, with a view of ascertaining their opinions on the extension of the franchise to their sex." Let us see whether those members who are so forward in asserting that women do not believe in the franchise, and would not vote for it, will vote for my amendment. I will undertake to say that only a very small proportion of them will do so. I do not bring this forward as a hindrance to the original motion; and, if the mover of the motion requests me to withdraw it, I shall do so with the permission of the House. But we who support this motion are willing to go to the women themselves, to the very persons who are said not to want this reform; and we challenge our opponents to go out with us to the polling-booth, and we will then see whether they are right. They have

made the challenge, and they should be prepared to take the consequences of it, and say, "We maintain that women do not want the franchise, and you say they do; now we will pit our strength against yours at the polls." If they are willing to do this, I shall be perfectly satisfied with the result of this debate; but my opinion is that they will no more pass this amendment than they will pass the motion. Of course I am ready to withdraw it, if required by the mover of the motion.

MR. GEORGE: Oh, stick to the amendment, by all means.

MR. VOSPER: Of course, if the amendment is put, I shall vote for it, because I believe in it. If this thing is to be threshed out, it can best be done at the polling booth; but if the motion is stripped of its amendment, and put to the House, I shall certainly carry out my original intention and vote for the motion, because I see no reason to change my opinion as expressed last year.

Amendment not seconded.

Motion put, and division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	...	...	...	11
Noes	...	...	...	18

Majority against ... 7

Ayes.	Noes.
Mr. Ewing	Hon. S. Burt
Mr. Higham	Mr. Conolly
Mr. James	Sir John Forrest
Mr. Kenny	Mr. A. Forrest
Mr. Leake	Mr. George
Mr. Morgans	Mr. Hall
Mr. Solomon	Mr. Hubble
Mr. Throssell	Mr. Illingworth
Mr. Vosper	Mr. Kingsmill
Mr. Wood	Mr. Lefroy
Mr. Quinlan	Mr. Locke
(Teller)	Mr. Mitchell
	Mr. Monger
	Mr. Pennefather
	Mr. Piesse
	Hon. H. W. Venn
	Mr. Wallace
	Mr. Hooley
	(Teller)

Motion thus negatived.

PREVENTION OF CRIMES BILL.

SECOND READING.

Debate resumed on the motion for the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. VOSPER (North-East Coolgardie): This Bill is a very short measure, but contains some provisions which should make this House extremely cautious in proceeding to their discussion. The Bill is comprised in three clauses; and, briefly speaking, provides that, after a second conviction for crime and after suffering the second term of imprisonment, whether in this colony or outside of it, as far as can be discovered from the Bill itself, a person may be sentenced to twelve months or a longer period of police supervision, and must report himself from time to time to the nearest police office, and go through a series of formalities as set forth in the Bill. I can appreciate the intentions which have actuated the framers of this Bill, and admit that, in certain cases, it may possibly be beneficial to the community; but I would point out that there is an element of danger about it. The Hon. J. W. Hackett, speaking of it in another place, went so far as to say he considered the Bill was very severe; and I think there is every justification for that statement. I doubt very much whether it is in accordance with the dictates of criminological science, or whether any Legislature can prevent crime by such means. They have had an Act of precisely the same tenour in force in the old country for some years past; and the result of it has been, not to mitigate or minimise crime, but, on the contrary, to leave crime just about where it was before, while it has subjected a great number of persons to hardships, so many and so great that a strong protest has arisen from great numbers of people, and organisations are now being formed to secure the repeal of the Act. The agitation has gone so far as to induce the present Home Secretary to frame an amending Bill, which he thinks will have the effect of mitigating the worst features of the Act in question. I have here a lengthy letter dealing with the effects of this Act in England, with which I do not propose to trouble the House in its entirety, but I will quote from it one statement that is made. It appeared in an English weekly newspaper, and the report in question is headed: "Hounded out of employment; serious charge against

the police." The paper is dated 3rd December last, and it says:—

On Monday (November 29th), a man, giving the name of Donald McDonald, was charged at the Clerkenwell police court with failing to notify his change of address, and make his monthly report to the police, he being a person subject to the provisions of the Prevention of Crimes Act.

This is the same title, it will be observed, as the Bill now before us.

On being asked by the magistrate why he did not report himself, he said: "When I came out of prison Mr. Wheatley obtained for me a position as a French and Spanish correspondent in North Woolwich."

I may explain that Mr. Wheatley is a prison missionary.

During my residence there I was subject to the most illegal and unjust harassing by the police. On one particular Sunday night I was called out of bed at half-past ten by a detective, and questioned in a manner calculated to excite the deepest suspicion throughout the house. I was even visited by an inspector of the North Woolwich police, who was dressed in plain clothes. Enquiries were also made at my lodgings during my absence at work. Everyone knew what I was, after those visits. I protested, but protests were useless, and I had to throw up my employment, and tried to get labouring work. At the same time I determined not to report myself, as a protest against the system.

That is a case in which it appears that under practically the same law, a man was unduly harassed by the police and prevented from obtaining employment, or, when he had obtained employment through one of the discharged prisoners' aid societies, he was deprived of it by the pertinacious inquiries after him made by the police. There is another feature of this Bill which is worth considering. Unfortunately, we know we cannot always get the very best class of men in the police force in this or in other countries; and I have it on the authority of persons who are in a position to know that there is a certain proportion of policemen and detectives in almost every police force who live to a great extent on the proceeds of crime, by a system of corruption and blackmail. I do not say such practices are very extensive in Perth or in the colony of Western Australia generally; but I am taking the world right through. If this Bill is passed as it stands, what does it mean? It means that policemen may discover that a certain person who ought to comply with the Act is not doing

so; or if, on the other hand, he is complying with it, it is still possible for the police officer to blackmail him by making undue use of his authority, by calling upon that man in the presence of his employer and asking him for an account of himself, or doing any one of the things which he is authorised to do. I do not think this is the kind of thing to prevent crime; on the contrary I think it means this, that a man who had been a criminal once would be a criminal always. Of course this provision of the Bill refers to persons who have been convicted a second time; but we must consider that the first offence may have been drunkenness, or assault, or some trivial peccadillo, followed by a more serious crime on the second occasion. We are about to place a tremendous power in the hands of our police which will certainly give them the opportunity of blackmailing and terrorising the persons to whom the Bill refers; and I think the object of our penal system generally should be to reform and make good citizens out of persons who have lapsed into crime, but this will have the opposite effect. Our present penal system is not of a reformatory character; and I ask hon. members to be agree with me that, if we want to reform criminals, we must commence with them in prison. All attempts to do so after they are released will do more harm than good, and it would be a serious thing to place in the hands of the police more power in this direction than they at present possess. I do not care to put myself in absolute opposition to the member for Albany (Mr. Leake), but, in the circumstances, I feel so strongly about this Bill that I consider I should be justified in closing my remarks by moving that it be read this day six months.

MR. LEAKE: It does not matter. This is not a party question.

MR. WALLACE (Yalgoo): I have pleasure in seconding the motion of the hon. member. I recollect that the member for Albany, speaking on this Bill, made a remark to the effect that a man would rather remain in prison than undergo police supervision. That goes to show that the supervision is too severe. I do not think it is the desire of the member for Albany to revert to the old system of

ticket-of-leave, of which no Western Australian can be proud. I remember, years ago, a respectable man who walked through Guildford to Geraldton, and who, on passing a police station, was accosted by a policeman who believed him to be a ticket-of-leave man. That man was detained pending inquiry, and it turned out that he was a free man who had just come over from South Australia; and he suffered great inconvenience through his detention. I know of other instances where officious constables have persecuted ticket-of-leave men who have been good men in other respects, but who have committed breaches of the regulations made in respect of them by staying out late at night, for instance, and I think this would give too much power to indiscreet policemen.

MR. LEAKE: What power have such policemen got under this Bill?

MR. WALLACE: Under the old Act, I understand the police have power to see that every ticket-of-leave man is in his quarters by a certain hour.

MR. LEAKE: There is no such provision in this Bill.

MR. WALLACE: I fear it has the same tendency; and that is the only fear I have, that we may revert to the system of ticket-of-leave, which we are all glad to see is fast disappearing from this colony. None of us desires to see those old days, or memories of those old days, brought back. I think that many a man would rather go to prison than be shadowed by the police, and in my opinion if this Bill were carried out it would not tend to drive out of the colony the class of men it is desired to get rid of. I second the amendment.

MR. LEAKE: As far as I am personally concerned, I do not much care whether this Bill passes or not, but it strikes me that it is a good one, and that the hon. member who moved the amendment and also the hon. member who seconded it, failed to appreciate the operation of the measure. The Bill does not aim at a supposed criminal, but at a proved criminal.

MR. VOSPER: It makes him a victim of the police.

MR. LEAKE: I have not such a great faith in the reform of the criminal classes as other people have. My opinion of

them is that there is not much chance of reformation, and that they are more likely to repeat their offences than repent. I may be wrong. This Bill really gives the criminal an opportunity of repentance, and he can repent at his leisure outside the prison instead of inside. Remember, moreover, that what is proposed would only operate in a case of a man who has been convicted.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: A second time.

MR. LEAKE: In my opinion the Bill does not go far enough, and I would give magistrates the power to exercise summary jurisdiction, so that they may place a man under supervision instead of sending him to gaol. Surely a man's hopes of reformation are greater outside than inside the prison. It is better for the man, and perhaps better for the community, that he should be under police supervision rather than be kept at the public expense. What harm can it do to impose upon a convicted person the obligation to report himself from time to time to the police authorities of the district in which he resides? If he elects to pass from one district to another, then the district which has lost him should have the benefit of knowing it, and warning of his existence in a new district should also be given to the police. We do not want to treat these people as if they were the highest moralists that we know, but we need to keep a firm hand over them; and who can say that the honest members of the community are really not in certain peril at the present time through the existence of people who cannot be traced?

MR. VOSPER: You would still be in peril, because the police would administer the Act as they liked.

MR. LEAKE: The hon. member does not fully understand the position. It is not a question of police supervision at all. So far as the quotation made use of by the hon. member just now is concerned, its value may be fairly estimated from the fact that it was the statement of the criminal himself. We are not legislating for the criminal class, but against them. I do not see how any policeman can blackmail, nor how he can be bribed. What is there to be gained by the police? All the obligation cast upon the offending person

is that of reporting himself from time to time to the police constable in the district. If there is harm in this Bill, still further action should be taken, and we should repeal the ticket-of-leave regulations—which I believe still prevail in the colony—whereby a person is let out of prison before the full term of his sentence has expired, and he practically serves the unexpired portion outside the gaol, subject to a particular form of supervision. The Bill suggests that instead of a man being thrust into prison he shall be allowed to be free, subject, as I say, to police supervision by which the police shall have the advantage of knowing where he can be found at any moment. The supervision imposed would not prevent a man from earning an honest livelihood, going where he chose, and doing what he liked. I see no objection to it. Indeed the measure seems to me to be an excellent one, calculated to reform far more readily than the system at present in existence. If there is any point I have not made myself clear upon I shall be very glad to explain it in Committee to the best of my ability; but it seems to me to be a Bill containing provisions which can certainly do no harm and may possibly accomplish a great deal of good for the honest portion of the community; and if it does harass the criminal classes I shall not regret it.

HON. H. W. VENN (Wellington): I hope the hon. member will not press his amendment. In my opinion, the member for Albany (Mr. Leake) has expressed the intention of the Bill fully and well, and it leaves little to be said. I can hardly realise the hon. member who moved the amendment taking the exceptional course he has done in this matter. We all bow to his great knowledge of criminology, and his desire to alleviate the position of such men as those referred to when they are harshly or improperly treated; but the method of dealing with them proposed in this Bill strikes me as rather a humane one. Do you mean to say it is better to put a man in prison and keep him there the whole time, rather than let him out and be subject to police supervision? The only obligation laid down is that he shall notify to the police his change of residence if he does make a change, and that if he leaves one district

for another he shall give notice of it. We are dealing only with criminals, the Bill relating to any persons convicted on indictment of a crime and against whom there is a previous conviction.

MR. VOSPER: It is additional to his punishment.

HON. H. W. VENN: I do not gather it is additional. The person affected will have been guilty of crime on two occasions, and he may have been half a dozen times. You may be quite certain that this clause will not be enforced except in the case of criminals whom it is necessary to have under police supervision. Surely the hon. member does not say it is not proper that the respectable portion of the community should be in some way protected. What is proposed is very reasonable and humane, and would not be harassing a man in any way whatever. Perhaps the hon. member who has moved the amendment will see fit to withdraw it.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: I wish to say just two words. This Bill is really in one sense intended to benefit the criminal. A man to whom it would apply would not be one merely guilty of a summary offence, but one convicted of crime, on a second occasion, and it would be for the judge to determine whether he should be sentenced to a long term of imprisonment without subsequent police supervision, or whether it would be in the interests of the prisoner to inflict a shorter term of imprisonment, and then let him out of gaol, subject to supervision for a period not exceeding two years, that being the limit. Would it not be far better for a prisoner if he desired to reform, to be subjected to a short term of imprisonment, and then liberated, the only obligation imposed upon him being that of giving notice to the police of his change of residence? I fail to understand anyone who has at heart the welfare of the community, opposing the Bill. I hope the hon. member will withdraw his amendment.

MR. KENNY (North Murchison): In experience in my native land, I as a youth served about two years as a police constable under the old criminal law, therefore, I think that I may with a very good grace say that I can speak with experience in regard to the carrying out of a

similar measure. The fact that a discharged criminal, or ticket-of-leave man was compelled to report his whereabouts at the police station of the district was undoubtedly of great advantage to the police, and they knew exactly where he was, and if any particular crime this man had been guilty of once or twice before was committed in that district they very frequently knew where to find the offender. I have seen so many cases brought home to men through the facilities afforded by such a measure as that now before the House, that I certainly feel disposed to support the Bill. I have no desire to in any way return to the old imperial method; but circumstances alter cases, and our population has been increased during the last few years by a very large number of criminals from the other colonies—a most undesirable class. The police have great difficulty in tracing their whereabouts; and if we read the reports of the criminal courts we find that a man of this kind, after being out of gaol a short time and having had perhaps a short imprisonment, is frequently brought up again for some further crime, and receives a longer sentence. If it is only to keep men of this kind in view and enable the police to lay hands on them when occasion requires, or to be able to trace some particular man when a crime of a certain kind is committed, this Bill will serve a good purpose.

MR. VOSPER: After what has been said, I ask leave to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILLS OF SALE BILL.

SECOND READING.

Debate resumed on the motion of MR. JAMES for the second reading of the Bill.

MR. LEAKE (Albany): It is my intention to support the second reading, and inasmuch as there is very little that is new in the Bill, it being a consolidating measure, there is no necessity for further explanation or a lengthy speech. The member in charge of the Bill (Mr. James) has explained that there is very little new in it, but that one of the principal features

in the new provisions is that notice must be given by advertisement of intention to make a bill of sale. I do not approve of that provision. Where the hon. member aims at the systematic registration of bills of sale, I think he is doing good so long as the registration is effected in the ordinary manner at the Record office, where any person may search and ascertain for himself whether a bill of sale exists in a particular case. It is all-important for the trading community that they should know whether a person with whom they are dealing has any incumbrance on his goods, and it is sometimes disastrous for a wholesale dealer to suddenly find that he has been trading with a man who has no estate, or that what he has is under the control of another party. I think that provision can be improved in Committee; it has its merits and its drawbacks. Without pledging myself to support the Bill entirely, I may remark that the principle is good that no bill of sale should be given to secure a sum under £30. It is fair and reasonable also that the grantor should not have the right of seizing and selling a debtor's furniture, particularly such articles as bedding and other things, the removal of which might cause great distress to a family where there are children. That provision has the merit of humanity about it, and a provision like that is sufficient in itself to justify the second reading of the Bill. The member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest) intimated his intention of opposing the second reading; but I ask him to pause before doing so, because I believe his objection can be met by reasonable amendments in Committee. My views are a good deal in sympathy with his, for I am not prepared to support the Bill absolutely as it stands, and I dare say that the member in charge of the Bill is not so wedded to its clauses that he will refuse to make reasonable concessions. We should discourage the giving of a bill of sale for anything but actual cash advances; and in a case where an actual cash advance is made, there is no good reason why that security should not be as good as if given for a substantial advance on a block of land. We want to guard against secret securities being given, and against secret arrange-

ments for defeating creditors or securing past debts, and possibly to cover bogus claims. I speak from a professional standpoint as well as from that of a citizen, and I think the Bill has much in it to recommend it to this House. I hope the member for the Ashburton (Hon. S. Burt), if he intends to support the Bill, will say so.

HON. S. BURT (Ashburton): I intend to support the second reading of the Bill. This is a measure that was passed in this House two or three years ago, and was also introduced last session. I do not think it was thrown out by the Council, but that time did not permit of its being carried through. This measure consolidates five statutes, and being in the main a consolidation Bill there is little new in it. Anything that is new we shall have an opportunity of discussing in Committee, and no doubt some of the clauses will not pass in their present form. I refer particularly to one clause which the member for Albany (Mr. Leake) says exists in the Bill, although I have not been able to find it.

A MEMBER: Clause 12.

HON. S. BURT: That clause refers to the necessity for advertising in the newspapers a certain period before a bill of sale is given; but that is almost impracticable in this country, because in the case of the mortgage of a large sheep station, for instance, it may have to be put through at very short notice, and I do not agree with the provision which requires this period of advertising. The only other new provision is that which limits the period during which a landlord may exercise his right to distrain on a tenant's effects. I agree with that in a large degree; but whether the Bill as drawn gives enough time to the landlord for executing his distress I am not prepared to say. We shall be acting rightly if we cut down the power of distraint as it stands, and that will be in the interests of the landlord too; because, if he has time to distrain for rent, in respect of which he has priority over the holder of a bill of sale, and if his time is limited to something less than six months, he will be more attentive to his interests by seeing that the rent is paid, instead of allowing the tenant to run into arrear a long time. Therefore we shall be putting

the landlord into a better position than if he continued to allow the rent to go on, knowing he had the right to distrain at any time, and would therefore be safe in allowing it to run on for six years. Under this measure, the holder of a bill of sale cannot be met with a stale demand for rent extending six years back. I shall vote for the second reading, and any necessary amendments can be made in Committee.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. W. Pennefather): This is the same Bill as that which was introduced at the close of last session. Clause 12, which refers to the advertising in the newspapers of intention to make a bill of sale, is a new provision, and I do think it will defeat the very object of the Bill by expecting too much; for it is unreasonable to suppose that a party who desires to make a bill of sale will advertise in the newspapers the fact that he wants financial assistance. There is a proper way for any person who chooses to obtain information as to the registration of a bill of sale, by going to the proper office and making search, without subjecting the person concerned to the humiliation of publicity. I think with the hon. members who have spoken on the Bill this evening, that this is a provision which ought to be excised. Another point is the provision dealing with the renewal of registration, and I think the time fixed within which a bill of sale may be registered is too long. The period is limited to five years at present, and the Bill proposes to shorten it. I know there is a similar provision in Victoria.

MR. JAMES: It is five years by the existing law, and three years by this Bill.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: I think that is too long a period. In Victoria. I am almost certain the bill of sale must be re-registered after twelve months; and I think the reason is that the conditions of people are so rapidly changing in these new colonies that a person may be almost bankrupt one day, and, in ten or twelve months after may be comparatively independent; therefore the object is not to allow these bills of sale to remain as a protection to persons after the occasion which brought them into existence has passed away. This is a measure which will be hailed by the mercantile com-

munity with entire satisfaction, and I have very much pleasure in supporting the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

EARLY CLOSING BILL.

SECOND READING (MOVED).

MR. WALTER JAMES (East Perth):

The Bill of which I now have the honour of moving the second reading is in substance the same as the Bill introduced in this House last year and passed through all its stages; but with this exception, that the Bill as now drawn is not so far-reaching as that which came before the House last session. During the course of the former Bill's progress through the House last year, and also in the progress of the present Bill through another place this year, public attention has been directed to the matter; and I feel certain that every hon. member has had his attention called to it, and must have considered the question during the long period afforded for so doing. Therefore it is not necessary for me to refer in detail to its provisions. I would put it to members in this way, that the principle of the Bill is that provision should be made for some limitation to the hours of labour now imposed upon those employed in shops. That is the principle; and the reason why it is desired to obtain legislative sanction to that principle is, because it is found that, however strongly the majority of the people may combine in any district, there will always be a minority who think that, by dissenting from and acting in opposition to the majority, they can avail themselves of an opportunity of making a profit. In fact, the very combination of the majority, who close their shops, adds a temptation to the minority to break away from the rule which the majority accept. When last I introduced this Bill, I had the pleasure of pointing out that it came before the House with the support, not only of those whom it was directly intended to help and benefit, those employed in shops, but with the support and approval of a majority of the employers; therefore I think it came before us with a very strong support, being approved by both sides, as it were. I now have much pleasure in moving the

second reading, believing, as I do, that this House, being committed to the principles of the Bill last session, will again accept its provisions, and pass it through all its stages.

On the motion of the ATTORNEY GENERAL, the debate was adjourned.

LOCAL COURTS EVIDENCE BILL.

SECOND READING.

MR. WALTER JAMES (East Perth): I beg to move the second reading of this Bill, which becomes necessary because of the enormous territorial extent of this colony, in which persons who are carrying on business in large centres of population have business communications with, and become creditors of, persons residing hundreds of miles from the place where such creditors are resident. At the present time, a man with a business in Fremantle may have a claim against a debtor at Roebourne; and in respect of that claim, it may be necessary for him to institute proceedings in the Roebourne local court. To establish his claim, he would have to go to Roebourne for the purpose of giving evidence, either in person or by some clerk or other employee who had a knowledge of the facts and could prove the case. In Supreme Court proceedings, where a witness is outside the jurisdiction of that court—that is, outside the colony—the litigant is entitled to have a commission appointed for the purpose of taking the evidence of such witness in the country where the witness is for the time being. It is not necessary to produce that witness at the trial here in Western Australia, and have his evidence given *viva voce* in open court; but the party desiring such evidence can avail himself of the procedure which enables him to sue out a commission for taking the evidence in the place where the witness happens to be, which evidence is admissible in the Supreme Court here. But, where a person resides outside the jurisdiction of a local court, there is no such provision to enable his evidence to be taken; and the litigant has to produce the whole of his witnesses in person. That, I think, works a very great hardship, which has certainly been mitigated owing to the fact that within the last few years a provision was made which gives

to local courts a wider jurisdiction than they formerly had, by enabling them to examine witnesses if any part of the cause of action arose within their jurisdiction, whereas before it was necessary to prove that the whole of the action was within the jurisdiction of such court. But I think hon. members will realise that there should be some legislation of this sort, when we bear in mind the enormous distance that often separates a business man in Perth or Fremantle from his customer in a country district, who may be located in the far north-west of the colony. In dealing with a comparatively small country like England, where, by reason of easy railway communication, the parties are separated by not more than a day's journey, there is no need for a provision of this sort; but in this colony where one may have to bring a man some hundreds of miles to get his evidence, it does seem to me that some new procedure should be adopted, to incorporate in our local courts a similar provision to that which is available in Supreme Court procedure. With that object the Bill is introduced; and I have much pleasure in moving its second reading.

HON. S. BURT (Ashburton): I have to move, as an amendment, that the Bill be read this day six months. These proposals have come under my notice during several years past, and I have always resisted their being placed on the statute book, because I think they are not required, and that, if applied to the local courts, they would lead to far too much expense. In the first place, I do not think the necessity has arisen for any legislation of this sort, because, the generality of actions tried in the local courts are between people who usually reside in the same place, within easy distance of one another: and I think, under the present Local Courts Act, leave can generally be obtained from a magistrate to issue a summons, either where the defendant may reside or in the district where the cause of action arises. Consequently, there is less occasion for the measure now than there was some time ago. In a case where Supreme Court writs are issued from time to time to examine witnesses out of their jurisdiction, you are not called upon to bring men, necessarily, from another colony or from London to give evi-

dence here. You can take evidence on commission. But the mere fact of the action being in the Supreme Court shows that a matter of some importance is involved. There may be some large amount hanging upon it, or a right of great importance to the parties may have to be dealt with, and the expense of employing legal assistance, if it is beyond the jurisdiction, can be more readily borne in the Supreme Court. I think that under this Bill advantage would be taken of the provisions by a defendant giving notice that he wanted the examination of a witness in a district outside that in which the proceedings were taken, and the plaintiff would be forced to take a trip up the country in order to cross-examine that witness. Under section 4 of the Act when the evidence was taken by the magistrate, the parties could appear and cross-examine the witness. Does any one think for a moment, looking at the generality of cases tried in our local courts, that a plaintiff would go to Geraldton or elsewhere for the purpose of examining a witness whom the defendant said he required, the plaintiff himself not knowing what the defendant wanted such witness for? If he went it would be at his own expense, and there would be the loss of time. Now there are railways a witness can travel at a very small expense, and why should a plaintiff, or defendant and a solicitor go up country after one witness? Why not let a person come to the place where the action is commenced? I do not see the necessity of the Bill. I think it would be unworkable and most expensive, and on these grounds I beg to move that it be read this day six months.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. W. Pennefather): I second the amendment. I do not know that a provision such as this obtains in any other of the Australian colonies. I feel certain that it does not exist in New South Wales or Victoria, and I do not think it exists in either Queensland or South Australia.

MR. JAMES: In New Zealand.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The hon. member tells me it exists in New Zealand. The position is that a man has a cause of action, say, in Perth, against another man, and it is tried in another court; and he needs one witness, residing say, at Northam, which is connected with

Perth by railway. Thus either party could put the other to the expense of examining that witness at Northam; the magistrate going through the regular form of taking the evidence in writing in open court, then transmitting to the court in Perth, and the evidence being formally read out to those in Court at the trial. This procedure means that either of the litigants in Perth would have to get a professional man to represent him at Northam; the witness being there examined by the person who calls him, and cross-examined by the solicitor representing the other side. There would thus, practically, be two trials instead of one. Without making any undue reflection on New Zealand, I say that this measure illustrates some of the legislation which has been passed in that colony. We are much indebted to that colony for experiments, because it has gone further than the other colonies, and we may stand by and see how the system works. If it works well, we may adopt it here; but at this early stage the introduction of this kind of procedure here is not wise. I know that the bulk of hon. members particularly on this (the Ministerial) side of the House—are always desirous of reducing costs; but this measure would, if I may be permitted to say so, increase them. I have much pleasure in supporting the amendment.

MR. LEAKE (Albany): I think the fate of this Bill may fairly be determined on the proposal to read it a second time. It is my intention to support the amendment, and I wish to give my reasons. The first objection I take is, that if it is to apply at all, the 50 mile limit is too small. If it were 500 miles there might be something in it. But then we have to consider, if we are to give way on that point, as to whether there is any practicability about the Bill, how far advantage will be taken of it; and I submit, really, the only effect of it would be to give the defendant advantages for placing obstacles in the way of the plaintiff securing his just claims speedily. He might harass the plaintiff by putting him to considerable expense. This proposal applies only to the Local Courts Act, or what is better known as the Small Debts Court, for small debts not exceeding £100, and my experience of small debts ordinances is that a very high

per centage indeed of the cases brought are for the recovery of debts of little sums of money, which can be adjudicated upon speedily, and, perhaps, without the necessity of calling witnesses at all. A plaintiff who gives a summons under this Act to a debtor, resident 50 or 500 miles away, must always be influenced by the fact that, if he is successful, he will have to pay the expenses of that man to the place where the trial is to be held, and he would not sue him unless his claim was absolutely unanswerable. If the claim is unanswerable, there is no necessity for witnesses. If the claimant takes the risk of summoning a man when he has not got a really sound and good claim, he has to run the risk of paying the defendant's expenses; and if he has a doubt about a man who lives at a distance, the chances are that he will let judgment go by default. I am astonished that more interest is not shown by hon. members representing the trading community of this House, for this is a measure that will affect plaintiffs more than defendants, and in the majority of cases in the local court any increase of costs in litigation will affect plaintiffs particularly, and the majority of such complaints are brought by traders, who will have to pay the costs under this Bill. It is the man who claims the money and not the debtor or wrong-doer who puts the law in motion, and he is not likely to incur the risk of paying for bringing a man down a long distance from the country unless he has a really good claim. This measure, if passed, will seldom be made use of, and it seems to be an unnecessary piece of legislation.

Mr. WALTER JAMES (in charge of the Bill): The member for the Ashburton and the member for Albany overlook the fact that, under our present local court procedure, very great injustice is inflicted on the man who is compelled to travel a long distance in a claim for debt; and, after all, the question of distance is a detail, and it may be 100 miles as a limit, if that will suit hon. members. If a man living far away from a railway is called upon to attend the local court in Perth, to answer an action which may involve only a small claim of perhaps five or ten pounds, and if he attends at the trial and is successful, he will rarely

get the full costs which he will have been put to, because the scale of costs in such cases is not sufficient. A defendant living at a long distance will probably prefer to pay the five or ten pounds which were claimed rather than travel to a distant centre where the court is held, and attend with his witnesses to prove that he does not owe the debt; because by attending at the court with his witnesses he may suffer a greater loss in time and expense than is involved in the amount of the claim. Under the scale of costs in the local court neither party gets full compensation for his loss of time and expenses. The principle of this Bill has been in operation in New Zealand for some years, and I think it would be still more useful here, because of our larger territorial area and the great distance of the metropolis from some of the places with which Perth traders do business. The Bill will be beneficial in its operation; and though it may lead to expense, yet in a majority of instances the men who have a *bona fide* defence will be enabled to appear and defend themselves, instead of having, as they often do now, to submit to claims which are neither *bona fide* nor just.

Amendment—that the Bill be read a second time this day six months—put and passed, and the Bill thus arrested.

ADJOURNMENT.

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