

member of another place on whose behalf I bring it under the notice of hon. members. The object of it is to provide for the adoption of children, and to see that when they are adopted they cannot be taken away from those who have adopted them when, perhaps, they are becoming useful. Clause 2 defines what a child is. Clauses 3 and 4 state by whom children may be adopted and what the ages of the persons adopting them must be. Clause 5 states that evidence must be given before a judge as to a child being under the age of 15, and that the person proposing to adopt it is a fit and proper person to have the custody of it. When a child is adopted it takes the legal status of a child born in wedlock, but there is a provision by which such a child shall not acquire any interests which would legally devolve on the child of the adopting parent. Clause 8 gives the adopting parent the legal status over a child such as the natural parent would have. The remaining clauses are purely formal and enable orders which have been made to be reversed or varied, and gives power to the Governor to make rules for carrying out the Act. I now move that the Bill be read a second time.

THE HON. S. J. HAYNES: I think this is a useful Bill. It gives to those who are charitable enough to adopt a child some security and control over it. There are instances where children have been adopted and cared for and then when they have become useful they have been taken away. I shall have pleasure in supporting this Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House at 6:30 o'clock, p.m., adjourned until Thursday, 13th August, 1896, at 4:30 o'clock, p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 12th August, 1896.

Question: Reported Engagement of Mr. Speight—Judges' Pension Bill: first reading—Public Works Bill: first reading—Coolgardie Goldfields Water Supply Loan Bill: third reading—Motion: To recognise Female Suffrage—Purchase of Perth Waterworks: the Governor's Message; in committee—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the chair at 4:30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

QUESTION—REPORTED ENGAGEMENT OF MR. SPEIGHT.

MR. SOLOMON, in accordance with notice, asked the Commissioner of Railways, Whether any negotiations have taken place with Mr. Speight, the ex-Commissioner of Railways in Victoria, with reference to his holding a position in the public railways of this colony.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. F. H. Piesse) replied:—None whatever.

JUDGES' PENSION BILL.

Introduced by the ATTORNEY GENERAL, and read a first time.

PUBLIC WORKS BILL.

Introduced by the ATTORNEY GENERAL, and read a first time.

COOLGARDIE GOLDFIELDS WATER SUPPLY LOAN BILL.

THIRD READING.

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

MOTION—TO RECOGNISE FEMALE SUFFRAGE.

MR. COOKWORTHY, in accordance with notice, moved "That, in the opinion of this House, it is desirable, in the best interests of the country, that the principle of female suffrage should be recognised in the Constitution." He said: On a previous occasion, in this House, I had the pleasure of moving a motion something similar to this one, and I was rather surprised at the support I then got—[The PREMIER: Hear, hear]—but it was thought by many that to adopt

female suffrage in this colony would be a leap in the dark, and the motion was not acceded to. Since then, however, the world has progressed; New Zealand and South Australia have admitted women to the suffrage; in England the county council, the municipalities, and the school boards have admitted women to the suffrage; and even in our colony the municipalities admit them to the suffrage. Such men as Lord Salisbury, Mr. John Morley, and Mr. A. Balfour are in accordance with the proposal, as also are other men of light and leading. But it is not on these instances I take my stand. I take my stand on right and justice. Women have to obey the law—that law which they have no voice in sending members to this House to make; women have to pay the taxes, and have no voice in sending members who impose those taxes; and it has always been maintained that with taxation should go representation. Yet, as I said, women have to pay the taxes, but have no voice in electing those who impose those taxes. That, I think, is not according to common sense, nor according to right and justice. There are also many women in this colony who direct the labours of men, who pay men and feed them; such as their shepherd, their gardener, or their coachman; and yet the women who pay these workers have no vote in the politics of the country, while their shepherd, or gardener, or coachman has a vote. Even the hon. member for Nannine says women have as much intelligence as men; and surely what more do we want than intelligence to direct the vote? If a person has to obey the law, and has to pay taxes, and has intelligence to choose a representative, surely these qualifications ought to be sufficient. Although I have frequently thought over this question, I have not yet heard anything approaching to an argument for showing why women should not have votes. I have heard the proposal criticised as “bosh” and “rubbish”; but this is no argument why women should not have votes, and I should only like to have some good reason why they should not be admitted to the franchise.

MR. JAMES: You will never get that reason.

MR. COOKWORTHY: No, that is impossible, because they have got no such reason to adduce; and the great majority

of men are like the lawyers, for when they have no case they abuse their opponents by decrying a just principle as “rubbish” or “bosh.” I may mention that at the Chicago Exhibition there were four figures in wax—a raving lunatic, an idiot, a criminal, and a woman—and these were the individuals who are not represented in the constitution. Will members of this House put their wives, and their sisters, and their daughters in the same category as the idiot, the lunatic, and the criminal? [MR. MORAN: Or a member of Parliament.] Yes, or some members of Parliament. That is not a category in which you would class your wives, your sisters, or your daughters. Are they not as well able to form an opinion on most subjects as men are? I will allow that women are creatures of impulse; but I should like to know are not men the same? And is it not a fact that the impulse of a woman, as a rule, is far purer and higher than that of a man? I only trust that this House will be actuated by a spirit of common sense, of right and justice, in acceding to the motion which is now before them.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): When this subject was discussed some two years ago, on a proposal made by the hon. member for Sussex—[THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: It was the *femme sole* then]—I opposed the motion. I do not exactly remember what I said then, and have not looked up the record; but I know I opposed that motion not in the abstract, but I think the argument I then used was that it was not desirable for us to embark on legislation which had been so rarely undertaken by any other legislature in Australasia. I advised the House then to wait a bit, and not be in a hurry in regard to a measure of this sort; and that every day we would be gaining experience of the working of the principle elsewhere. I also said I did not see any necessity for it—that there was no demand from the women of this colony for the franchise. I have no doubt that those hon. members who follow me now will be able to answer these objections in their own way, and perhaps to their own satisfaction. Now, giving a vote to women carries with it that you must admit women to Parliament. [MR. SIMPSON: Prove it.] Well, I will prove

it. So soon as the vote becomes anything like equal in a country, and there is a demand for women to be represented in the Parliament, it will be impossible to refuse that demand. Can anyone say for a moment it will be possible in South Australia, where the female franchise has been given, to refuse the admission of women to Parliament in a colony where the women number almost as many as the men in voting power? That being so, if the women desire to get into Parliament in South Australia, there is not the slightest reason why they should not do so—in fact, I believe that in South Australia provision has been made that, if women desire to be elected to Parliament, they shall have the right to sit as members. As I said two years ago, if this is such a very good measure as the hon. member for Sussex argues that it is, and if it is a question of common sense, how is it that in all the British dominions, in the mother-country and in all her possessions, at the present time there are only two colonies that have adopted female suffrage? I do not suppose we concentrate all the wisdom of the world in this legislature, and it does seem to me an argument we should seriously weigh, in a matter like this—which must have come under the notice and been thought of by all the legislatures in the British dominions—that only the colonies of New Zealand and South Australia have, up to the present, adopted female suffrage. Why should we in Western Australia adopt it, seeing it has had such a small trial in other parts of the British dominions? I can understand that if there were any great demand for this franchise, and if women were taking an active interest in this matter, the question would become a pressing one in this House, and we might then fairly and reasonably consider it; but since we have had responsible government in this colony, there has never been a single representation from the women of the colony made to the Government or to Parliament, in regard to this matter. That being so, why should we take it up? Who is forcing it along? Is it some fancy or some idea of the hon. member for Sussex, or of other hon. members who are supporting him? Is it an idea that they have conceived to be a good thing? Many ideas of that

sort occur to us, but there is no necessity for forcing them into legislation when we know that no one requires them, and no one has asked for them. Why should we move in this matter, especially when no other legislature, with the exception of two in Australasia, has adopted it. Of course the hon. member makes some capital out of the fact of women not being represented. That is a very old and long cry; but I think we have evidence that women have a great influence in the old country, and perhaps in this also, upon politics. To say they are not represented is hardly the fact, for though they may not be represented personally in this House, yet to say they have no influence on what is going on in the country is not quite a fact. I am now going to use an argument which I do not believe in, but still I want to use it because it has been used so often by other hon. members here; and that is, that this House does not represent the country. [General laughter.] We have been told this session by several hon. members that this is a moribund Parliament, and does not represent the country. Well, if it does not represent the country in the case in which that argument has been used, how can it be said to represent the country on this occasion? Because this is a very vital matter, that of changing the constitution of the country; and I might argue that the people of the country should have a voice in making such an important change in the constitution. I think the women of the country should have something to say about it. Do they want it? [MR. COOKWORTHY: I think they do.] I think they do not want it. [MR. JAMES: They know your views.] Perhaps I might retaliate upon the hon. member (Mr. James) by making the same remark. It seems to me, in a matter like this, we should not be too much in a hurry; and therefore I would beg the hon. member for Sussex not to press his motion at this time. Let us have the whole of the country active on this subject, before attempting to deal with it; let us see the women of the country coming forward, demanding and desiring the franchise; let us see some agitation on the subject; let us be sure we are acting in the interests of the women themselves; and,

if a large number desire to have the franchise, and bring that desire before this House by representations, it will then be a matter we should fully consider. We need not be in too much of a hurry in this colony, in taking up such questions; for we have got a great deal to do in advancing our material progress; and I do not know that the time has arrived when we should embark in speculative legislation of this sort. I think we might wait awhile, and I hope, therefore, the hon. member will not press his motion.

MR. JAMES: I desire to tender my warmest congratulations to the hon. member for Sussex, and to express the hope that he will not be so false to the cause he is fighting for as to withdraw from the position he has taken up on this occasion. I hope the hon. member will divide, and, if it rests with me, I will certainly see there is a division on this most important question. It seems to me somewhat strange in these days, when we hear so many complaints from the good old fashioned Conservatives about the decadence of chivalry, that it remains for those fighting under a progressive banner to show their chivalry, whilst those Conservatives who issue these jeremiads about the decadence of chivalry decline themselves to exercise it. We are fighting for a good principle. Our opponents have this gratification, however, that the position they take up is the position occupied by thousands of other good people, who are always opposing any improvement or advance, and who, whenever this question has been brought before any legislature in the world, have always opposed it by arguments such as we have heard from the Premier, and which we have heard on a previous occasion in this House. Men say, where is the demand, clamour, or agitation for it? But I have said before, and I say it again, it is one of my articles of faith that we should be doing wrong to let a just principle stand over because not clamoured for. If you have agitation, you have passion and prejudice; and that is not the time to consider a question such as this, which is of the utmost importance all over the world. If the principle is good, let us adopt it without fear of consequences. When we consider the rights

of women, let us have some of the courage we have in spending two millions and a half of money. We had no precedent, or agitation, or demand for that expenditure; but it was submitted to the House, and the House approved of it—I personally approved of it—and it was adopted. Why should we not exercise the same strength of mind in connection with this matter? We have this added argument, that the experience elsewhere, if not here, has shown this principle is not only a just but a thoroughly workable principle. The fact is, it comes to this, that those who support this principle believe in womanly worth and virtue, while those who oppose us laugh and scoff at it. There are men, and there are members, who meet the discussion of a principle like this with idle and contemptible sneers; but it is far too important a question to sneer and laugh at. We say, without fear of contradiction, that you talk about chivalry, but do not act it; you talk about the enlightenment of women, but will not exercise your vote to enable them to enlighten this House. Though some like nothing better than to sneer at this question, it is a matter to be argued dispassionately and seriously. It is the misfortune of some men not to have had the happiest experiences with some women, and to be soured accordingly. I do not say that no others have had the pleasure I have had in coming in contact with good women, but I have come under the influence of an exceptionally good mother and a good wife, whom I love, and to whom I owe all that I have; and I pity those who have not come under such influences. When I deal with a question affecting such women, I ask why should I refuse to give them the right to vote, when I have found, on so many occasions, their judgment correct, and their feeling right? We give the vote to drunkards and spiclers all over the colony; and we who support this principle ask you to place at any rate equal confidence in the sex that has produced your mothers. I know there are some men who, I regret to say, look on women as chattels, but I am glad to feel that the majority in this colony, and in this House, do not look on them in that way; and if we bear in mind the obligations we owe to the sex, the least we can

do is to approach this matter in a sympathetic spirit. What is it that prevents a woman from exercising her right? Is it anything but the difference of sex, and sex alone? You might just as well pass an Act to say no man should sit here who did not cut his whiskers in a particular way, or no man should sit here unless his hair was red, or grey, or some other colour. Sex has no more to do with the question than the cut of a man's moustache or the colour of his hair. It is passing strange that towards the close of the 19th century, when we proclaim from the housetops that we believe in equality, that we allow this unjust distinction and say women shall not exercise any direct influence on the legislature of this colony. No one in this House dare get up and say that women do not keep alight the torch of purity; and why should we be acting against an influence like that? We desire to bring into this House the best possible men, elected by the best possible constituency, and yet the only fact which prevents woman from exercising her vote is that of sex. What is it due to? It is due to this reason: that in days gone by women were looked upon as being a very secondary consideration, and were considered more or less as chattels. It was thought they had no moral or political rights at all, and it is simply a perpetuation of that principle that lands us in our position to-day. If women had the physical strength men have they would have this vote in a very short time, because men would be compelled to give it to them; and why should we trespass on their physical weakness?

MR. MORAN: That is the secret of the support we are getting.

MR. JAMES: If we satisfy ourselves it is a good principle, we should not wait for a demand, because I find that where you have popular clamour for a particular thing, those having the power to give it say those agitating are unreasonable, and go to excess in the demands they are making, and urge these facts as reasons for refusing the demand. You cannot ask a man to swim unless he gets into the water--to do so would be a fool's idea; nor can you educate women to vote unless they have the power of voting, the chance of learning. You have to give

the women the power of exercising the franchise, and you may then be certain they will do so. I do not say it is a question of what women demand--far from it, as I say the interests of the State demand that we should have the best services of the State's children, whether those children be men or women. I can adopt, as my own idea, the words of Disraeli before he became Lord Beaconsfield, when he said:—"What we desire to do is to give, "to every one who is worthy of it, a fair "share in the government of the country, "by means of the elective franchise." The State itself demands that we should have some benefit from the influence and votes of the women, who are certainly worthy of it, and who supply something the men do not supply. Apart from all this, it is a fact recognised by men who have studied the question much more than we have, and who have studied the various civilisations of the world, that the standard of civilisation of any community is gauged by the position that the women for the time being occupy. I do not wish to give my own words for that, but will quote from Mr. S. Laing on "Human Origins." He says:—"The "position of women is one of the surest "tests of an advanced civilisation; for "in rude times, and among savage races, "force reigns supreme, and the weaker "sex is always the slave or drudge of the "stronger one. It is only when in- "tellectual and moral considerations are "firmly established, that the claims of "women to an equality begin to be "recognised." Gentlemen, is it not time we began to recognise their claims to equality?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member must address himself to me, and not to members of the House.

MR. JAMES: Mr. Speaker, I say it is time, when we boast so much about progress, we should recognise that women have some claim on us; and, until we do so, we cannot say we occupy a worthy position, either socially or politically. Not only ought the State to do it because women exert a good moral influence, and because the social position of women is a test of our civilisation, but they have a right, as taxpayers, and as subjects under the law, to be represented. The laws affect them in every way. If women are

good or bad enough to go to gaol or be hanged, why should they not have the right to express their views on the laws which put them into gaol or hang them? We all say woman's place is preeminently the home; but every law we make, and it is becoming more and more so with the increase of social legislation, affects them in that home; so that on that ground alone they have a right to make their voices heard. Look at the legislation of our present session. We have an Act dealing with the adoption of children. Surely that is a question wherein women have a right to be heard. Again, ought it not to be a cause of shame to us, when we bear in mind the position women occupy now in this colony in connection with the control and guardianship of children? The injustices and anomalies in England were altered some five years ago, but not so here, and the position here is that the father is the legal guardian of his children, and on his death can make anyone their legal guardian, and can take away the legal guardianship from the mother of the children. We have already, this session, had before this House an Act dealing with the desertion of wives. Surely that is a question again wherein women have a right to be heard, as it affects them most materially. Take the question of divorce: is it not scandalous and a crying shame that a man has extra rights under the divorce Acts? A husband, if a woman commit one sin, can get a divorce, but a man has to commit one sin *plus* another sin before he can be divorced by his wife; but would these laws remain so if women had a vote? The fact is that men do not and cannot represent women, and do not and cannot protect them properly in legislation. Mr. Gladstone, speaking with an experience extending over a great number of years, and an experience greater than any member of this House, said on this question:—"Men have often been the most unfaithful guardians of women's rights to social and moral equality." Thus Mr. Gladstone, speaking from his experience, says men have often been the most unfaithful guardians of women's rights; and, I ask, is it to men, who have been so unfaithful to their trust, that the sole power should be continued for ever? Surely this should be rectified, and those affected so closely by our laws should have some

right to speak as to passing them. Now gentlemen,—Mr. Speaker, I mean—

THE PREMIER: You are not on the hustings.

MR. MORAN: "Gentlemen of the jury."

MR. JAMES: I want to make this position clear, that women would exercise a useful influence on legislation. Smiles may get rid of the question, but I should like to hear arguments, if members can offer them. I want to quote the opinions of men who are, I think, entitled to respect. Prince Bismarck is not generally reckoned a great liberal, but he says:—"My trust in man, my trust in the future, rests in the attitude of German women. The conviction of a woman is not so changeable; it forms slowly and not easily, but once formed it is less easy to shake." I hope we are not going to have less faith and confidence in our English and colonial women than Bismarck has in his German women. As opposed to Bismarck, let us take the views of a man like Kingsley, a man of extremely warm heart, if he had not the cold blood and hard head of Prince Bismarck. Charles Kingsley says:—

"One principal cause of the failure of so many magnificent schemes—social, political, religious—which have followed each other age after age, has been this, that in almost every case they have ignored the rights and powers of one-half the human race, namely, women. I believe that politics will not go right, that society will not go right, that religion will not go right, that nothing human will ever go right, except in so far as woman goes right, and to make woman go right she must be put in her place, and she must have her rights."

That is an opinion which should have weight, and it should be noted that Kingsley points out that a great number of the failures of magnificent schemes are attributable to the fact that those in authority have ignored the rights of half the human race. Let us take another authority, which should carry still greater weight. John Stuart Mill wrote as to the difference of sex:—"I consider it to be as entirely irrelevant as to political rights as difference in the height or the colour of the hair. All human beings have the same interest in good government, the welfare of all alike

"is affected by it, and they have equal need of a voice in it to secure their share of its benefits. If there be any difference, women require it more than men, since, being physically weaker, they are more dependent on law and society for protection. . . . That before the lapse of another generation the accident of sex no more than the accident of skin will be deemed a sufficient justification for depriving its possessors of the equal protection and just privileges of a citizen."

I regret Mill's prophecy was not altogether correct, as we have not yet seen that principle adopted which he says himself is the fruit of common justice. These authorities, and our own knowledge of women, who form the "moral storehouse of the world," show that woman's influence is a valuable and much wanted one. I do not think it is good argument, in opposition to this fact, to say women have not demanded it, but even if it were so, who are we to judge of what they demand? We should be sorry to see women forced by our apathy and injustice to go almost outside the natural feelings of their sex, and go on public platforms, and indulge in torchlight processions and other expedients of political warfare; but if it comes to that, men who refuse to recognise the principle will be responsible for what they will then deplore. But unless women are compelled to do it they won't do it, and I hope, in considering this question, we will bear in mind woman's objection to unwomanly tactics and loud agitation. The question that the suffrage should be extended to women is not a new one. It is almost as old as the world. When I say "as old as the world" I mean as old as when our political constitution came to a vigorous growth. How, then, has this question been treated by women? I suppose women are the same all over the world, just as men are, and I will again quote from Mill, who says:—"Several of the most eminent philosophers and many of the noblest women for ages have advocated the enfranchisement of women." I go further and take Mrs. Fawcett, herself a notable instance. She says in her articles on the women's suffrage movement:—"At first and from the first it was supported without exception by every woman who has earned a name for

herself by intellectual distinction, or by the achievement of excellence in any department of art, literature, philanthropy. Among the distinguished women who have been from the outset with this movement may be mentioned Mrs. Somerville, Harriet Martineau, Florence Nightingale, Mrs. Browning, Miss Anna Swanwick, Miss Cobb, Mrs. Grote, Mrs. Ritchie (Miss Thackeray), Miss Mary Carpenter, Mrs. Jameson."

I quote these opinions to show that this movement has been supported by women who have the right to speak on behalf of their sex. If we want to know the opinion of mankind, we should go to the leading men, and not to the crowd, and so in connection with this question we should go to the leading women, who have, without exception, spoken in support of this great reform. But facts speak louder than words. Exactly the same argument, that women did not want the franchise and would not use it, was used when the matter came before the House in South Australia. They endeavoured to get up an agitation against it in South Australia, but after the greatest effort they could only get 2,000 names on the petition opposing the reform, though I understand there are 60,000 on the roll at the present time. I hoped to be in a position to tell hon. members how many registered and what per cent. voted in South Australia, but I have not been able to get a reply. I have information, however, in connection with New Zealand, where the same argument was used. They had a population of female adults of 139,950, and out of that 109,000 registered inside of twelve months, or 78 per cent. Is it not peculiar, if they did not want it, that they registered in such great numbers? How have they exercised the vote? Some 90,000 voted, or 85 per cent. of those on the roll; and yet the sex was supposed not to want the vote which they so eagerly used. With facts like these in South Australia and New Zealand, how can members contend it is not wanted? To shortly restate my contentions, I say that equal justice demands that half of the State should not be cut off from their right to exercise their vote, and should not be subject to laws in the making of which they have absolutely no voice; that the State requires the services

of its best children, and while you prevent women from influencing in a direct manner, by their votes, the character of the men who come here, you cut off the influence of what most admit to be the great moral storehouse of the community; and that the facts show that women desire it. If this be so, why, in the name of goodness, is it to be refused when experience also justifies it? We have experience as to the exercise of the franchise in America, where, it has been said, the system is on its last legs. That statement was, I believe, made by Professor Goldwin Smith. I should be sorry to hear any hon. member put forward the ravings of that political dyspeptic who, in 1848, was full of gloomy forebodings as to the effect of reforms which were introduced in England, and who has since been running all over America and Canada pouring out lamentations, like the prophet Jeremiah, about the annexation movement in Canada. The right of women to vote has been in force in Wyoming for about 25 years, and there are men who know all about it better than Professor Goldwin Smith. What do these men of the greatest experience say about it? What does the Speaker of the House of Representatives in Wyoming say about it? He writes:—

"I can now say that, the more I have seen of the results of women suffrage, the less have my objections been realised, and the more has the thing commended itself to my judgment and good opinion; and I now frankly acknowledge, after all my distrust, that it has worked well and been productive of much good to the territory, and no evil that I have been able to discern. Women are more interested than men in good government and its moral influence upon their future sons and daughters. They look above and beyond mere party questions or influences in deciding their vote."

That surely is strong, very strong. [THE PREMIER: What is the date of it?] I have not got the exact date. I believe it was written some years ago. As hon. members are no doubt aware, Professor Goldwin Smith's statements excited a great deal of feeling among women in England, and they took some steps to see whether

he was right. The result is that there have been published the opinions of a number of men in reply to the professor. Take the Governor of Colorado, where the election that Professor Smith based his statement upon took place. The Governor says:—

"So far, the objections made to equal suffrage during the campaign preceding the election at which the ballot was given to women have not been sustained by the facts. The women do take an interest in the questions under discussion, and do take the trouble to vote. The only danger anticipated, and not yet proven not to exist, is that they may be deceived by those having ulterior motives, but professing righteous and disinterested purposes. But they are realising that it is necessary for them to investigate the facts for themselves, and not to believe all that they are told, especially keeping in mind that in politics, as in other matters, the source must be considered. The correctness of their purpose tends to counteract their inexperience. There are 80,000 women eligible to vote in Colorado, and about 65,000 voted at the last election."

The governor said that in Colorado the women did take the trouble to vote, and that is also proved in Australasia by the experience of New Zealand and South Australia. The statement I have read shows that the women will vote just as well as the men, and that they value the franchise when it is given to them. There is another writer who says:—

"Equal suffrage has been the law in Colorado for nearly three years now, and nothing could induce the intelligent people of this State to revoke that act if they had the power. Women appear to show as much intelligence and take as deep an interest in political affairs, especially those that affect the general welfare, as men, and their influence is almost entirely cast for right and decency and good government. In all the elections held since the change was made, women have cast more than 40 per cent. of the total vote, and everybody admits that their presence in politics and at the polls has a purifying and elevating effect on our political methods, and has compelled the nomination and election of a better class of

"officials than male suffrage ever gave us. "No evil effects, either to the women themselves or to our public affairs, are discernible, while the benefits of the "equal suffrage law are innumerable." I want to quote these words as the opinion of a man who has watched this movement in America, and who says it is distinctly beneficial in its effects, and that in practice it has the good results which are theoretically deducible from the principle that women should be equal to men in voting power and in the making of the law under which they live.

THE PREMIER: Your quotations are all on the one side.

MR. JAMES: There is only one side, and the women have the right side.

MR. SIMPSON: You (the Premier) had your turn. Why didn't you quote?

MR. JAMES: Another authority speaks in this way:—

"The result of women suffrage in "Colorado is quite up to the expectations "of its Conservative friends. In Denver "and most other cities of the State "women have generally voted—it is believed more generally even than the "men. They mingle in the caucus and "at the primaries with men, and it is "noticed that since their advent these "political functions have been far more "honest and orderly than of yore. The "fact that they have the ballot has secured in Denver a far more rigorous "execution of the laws against gambling "and other like public delinquencies than "was ever before known. On the whole, "in my opinion, women suffrage in Colorado has had a healthful and elevating "influence upon the public service and "municipal morals generally. Don't "understand me that it has cured all the "ills afflicting the body politic. It has "cured some serious ones, and is rapidly "exterminating others."

This is the experience of men who have seen the principle at work. A recent amendment in the constitution of California was made for the purpose of extending women's franchise in that State, and I have no doubt that, in a few years, we shall see it in active operation there. In all the instances which I have quoted we have the experience of men who have watched the movement, and who recognise the moral influence women have in the direction of public affairs, while

against them we have some forebodings of Professor Goldwin Smith. Herbert Spencer, not a man of fanciful fads, also supports the claim of women to vote, by saying:—

"However much the giving of political "power to women may disagree with our "notions of propriety, we conclude that, "being required by the first prerequisite "to greater happiness, the law of equal "freedom, such a concession is unquestionably right and good."

Against the utterances of Professor Goldwin Smith, we have men like Herbert Spencer, who himself is somewhat inclined to be pessimistic; we have also John Stuart Mill, Professor Fawcett, Abraham Lincoln, and other men who have lived in America, where the people are supposed to be progressive—men whose opinions are entitled to respect in every part of the English-speaking world. After all, the opposition to the enfranchisement of women is due to prejudice rather than to anything else, and the superstition that they should not exercise the vote takes a long time to die. I only hope that in Western Australia we shall be in the van of progress, and that our example in giving the franchise to women will arouse other parts of the world to carry out this great principle. Every year women are taking a larger share in the work of the world; every year tens of thousands of women have to make their own living; and the law in which they should have a voice presses upon them more and more. If men like Abraham Lincoln and Lord Beaconsfield, who were so far apart in their political creeds, were in favour of giving the vote to women; if Kingsley could, and did, support it; and when we find Salisbury and Balfour on one side of politics, and Morley on the other, also in favour of it; why should we hesitate in adopting a principle that is just, which the interests of the State demand; which is advocated by the experience of hundreds of able men and women, and which women would value and are entitled to? I have referred to the evidence of several men, because I suppose the opinions of women would not carry much weight in this House; but I would like, in concluding my remarks, to give one extract, in which Miss Francis Power Cobb sums up the case wisely and pithily in these words:—

"The man is not to be envied who can view the struggle of women for political rights with contempt and indifference. That those struggles may not always have been guided by infallible taste and wisdom, and that they also have been met (for lack of sensible argument) with silly derision, need not blind us to the fact that they constitute one of the bravest battles, one of the most pathetic movements the world has ever seen. Never was there a case of such pure and simple moral pressure, of an appeal to justice, to reason, to men's sense of what is due and right and expedient for all. When the time comes to look back on the slow universal awakening of women all over the globe, on their gradual admission into one privileged profession after another, on the attainment by them of rights of person and property, and at last on their admission to the full privilege of citizenship, which is the key to the position they have already gained, it will be acknowledged that, of all the 'decisive battles of history,' this has been the most interesting, even as it will be the one followed by the happiest peace which the world has ever seen."

If these words be true, and I firmly believe they are, I trust that Western Australia will not lag behind, but that the colony will be the third in the British dominions to do justice to women in this matter. Let us adopt this principle of giving women the right to vote. It is a good and a wise principle. I really believe it has the moral support of every member here. I only ask that every member will have the moral courage to place his vote where his sympathies are.

MR. RANDELL: I have thought a great deal over this question, at one time and another, since it was first introduced into this House by the hon. member for Sussex, and I confess that, at all times, there have been elements of difficulty in the case which have a great deal of force, and which have made me pause before I committed myself one way or the other; but after fully considering every aspect of the question, I come to the conclusion that there is such a strength of argument on the side of right and justice in favour of conceding the franchise to women, that the smaller evils which I thought did exist, and which do exist, should not be

taken into consideration. [MR. SIMPSON: Hear, hear.] I believe we shall find some women who, in using the franchise, will hardly be able to distinguish the right and the wrong side of some of the political questions which will come up; but are there any hon. members of this House who will say there are not a number of men in this colony who are in the same position? I believe that, in the main, the effect of admitting women to the franchise will be that they will exercise it on the side that makes for the best interests of the country. It is not necessary for me to labour the question. The hon. member for East Perth has gone very fully into it, in giving us the opinions of prominent men, and has collated a strong expression of opinion. I do not think it is any argument to say that in this colony there has been no great attempt on the part of women themselves to obtain the franchise. We must have noticed that in the papers, from time to time, letters are written—some of them very able and interesting letters—advocating the right of women to vote. I think the statement put forward in those letters for the recognition of this principle cannot be gainsaid by any one who reads those letters as they appear in the daily Press. I have no doubt there is a very wide-spread feeling among the women of the colony that they should have the right to vote. As the hon. member for East Perth says, they have as much intelligence as men, and a larger interest, I think, than men in the good government of the country; and, as I said before, there is little doubt they would exercise their right in that direction. I need not instance the part they took in the recent general election in South Australia; but I am sure that, as a whole, the franchise of women in South Australia has been given in a right and proper direction. No doubt they were influenced very much by the fact that the Ministry of the day had given them the franchise, and they desired to show their gratitude towards that Government. We need not enter into other motives which influenced them to vote as they did. I have also the testimony of the hon. member for East Perth as to the excellent results which have followed in some places in America, from giving electoral privileges which had hitherto been held solely by men. I

think if hon. members will only look at the question dispassionately, and remember that we have adopted manhood suffrage in this colony, it seems to me the natural consequence of that is that we must, as soon as possible, give the franchise to women. I do not think it is a good argument at all to say there has been no great effort made in other places to enable women to obtain the franchise. I do not think this is a sufficient answer to the claim that is put forward on their behalf by the hon. member for Sussex. We should arrive at our conclusions on this matter by deciding the question whether it is right and just that this amendment should be made in our electoral law—in other words, whether women should be disqualified from the franchise—as there are many arguments which go to show that women are eminently fitted to exercise the franchise. If we can satisfy ourselves upon this point, I do not think that we should accept the argument that we should deny them this right on the ground that no demand has been made on their part for this privilege. If we feel that they have right and justice on their side, and that they will exercise the franchise in a right way, I think we should be willing to take the course that is advocated by the hon. member for Sussex as soon as possible, and admit woman to equal rights and privileges with men. I am quite sure that, as the hon. member for East Perth points out, wherever women have been admitted to the franchise they have exercised it in a larger ratio than men have done. I should like to ask, what do the returns of the last general election in this colony show? Why, that in some of the large electorates only fifty per cent. of the electors went to the poll, although there were special reasons in many cases why the men should have exercised the right of voting. I have looked at this question all round, and at the argument that has been used from time to time that the power to vote would unsex women and take them from their proper province, home; and I do not think the privilege would have that disastrous effect upon them. I have looked at the questions raised from time to time, and have satisfied myself from what I have read, and from what has been laid before us by the hon. member for East Perth,

also by the result of the election in South Australia and in other ways, that no ill result will follow from the adoption of this motion. I have satisfied myself that the influence women would exercise in the making of the laws would be a most healthy influence. Their votes would have a good influence upon the electors and the members of Parliament in this colony; and I shall support the proposal before the House.

MR. WOOD: I should like to say a few words upon this question—a very few indeed. In my opinion, the time has come when we should give this matter our most serious consideration. I look round and see that the women of this colony and of other parts of the world are coming up abreast of the men in practical commercial life and in the professions. It is quite time we gave the matter of enfranchising women our serious consideration. Two years ago I was opposed to the granting of the franchise to women. Since then, my parliamentary education has committed me to the conviction that the time has come when we should constitute women the electoral equal of men. They are already his equal in intelligence and intellectual power, and in some cases more than his equal. I intend to support the motion of the hon. member for Sussex. It does not require very many reasons from me why I am going to vote for it. I am simply going to vote for it because I think it is a step in the right direction.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: At the risk of having very grave and serious epithets thrown at me by the hon. member for East Perth; at the risk of being termed lacking in chivalry in regard to what I would admit to be far and away the better half of humanity, in every sense of the expression; I am determinedly opposed to women's suffrage; and I may say that after very grave and serious consideration, and after an examination in full of all the arguments which have been dwelt upon by the hon. member for East Perth in order to advance this particular cause, I am opposed to him. The argument which is presented first of all is that all women have to obey the law, and to contribute their share of taxation, that therefore women should have a right to vote, and that women should take their part side by side with men in the legislation of the world. First of all, I ask this House to

consider whether it is a true statement that women pay their share of the taxation of the country. Do not hon. members know quite well that, in the main, women do not pay taxation? and if the argument is worth anything, you must extend it a little further, and give votes not only to women, but also to children, if you are going to count heads on this question and make it the basis of legislation. I would point out that hitherto the principle has been that representation and taxation go together; and if you count women on the basis of taxation you must, by the same rule, count the children. The men are the bread-winners of the race, and exceptions have never been accepted as other than proving the rule. I am perfectly aware that women are taking their places side by side with the men as bread-winners, to the disgrace and the lasting dishonour of the men. It is the duty of men to support the women—to support the wives and daughters and mothers. The first principle of human life in all ages, and the first test of a man's quality, has always been his respect for woman and his willingness to support and protect her. The dishonour of this age into which we are entering is that men are becoming so completely selfish that they are casting the responsibilities which belong to themselves upon the weaker sex. But, notwithstanding the fact that there are some bread-winners amongst women—and I am sorry to say, a daily increasing number—those who know anything about social questions know that one of the evil factors in connection with the legislation that deals with this question of wage-earning is the introduction of cheap labour into the region of production. The members who are appealing, with all their strength and energy, for the giving to women this right, are the very men who stand alongside me when I say I am opposed to cheap labour in the shape of Chinese or Asiatic labour; and what is remarkable is this, that the very principle which they lay down, of introducing women into the region of politics, is one of the very first steps which will throw upon her the responsibility of her own support, and compel her to come into the competitive arena of production and labour. Now I say it is a known fact of political economy that this factor, the intro-

duction of cheap labour, has done more to reduce the wages of men than anything else. And what does this phase of the labour question come to? It comes to this, that it becomes necessary for the man to work himself, for his wife to work, and for his children to work, before the family can be kept. The very first effort which was made to liberate women was the passing of the Factories Act in the old country, which had the effect of crushing out of the factories the labour of children, of girls, and of women, and thus enabling men to get a fair and equitable price for their toil. I say, the principle on which this world is built, the principle upon which the Creator has given us a heritage in this world, is that a man shall toil for those that are dependent upon him; that the woman has, by the wise Creator himself, been placed in a position of dependence; and that a point of honour has been made in all ages that the man shall bravely and generously and chivalrously take up the duty laid upon him by the Creator, and work for the woman and work for his children. I say that to rid the world of this element of dependence and this element of responsibility is a direct interference with the very relations which have always existed between man and woman. Hon. members need not go far to find, in their own experience, that the first injury that comes into the home is the weakening influences of an attempt to produce a man with a man's capabilities out of a woman's form. She is unfitted, by the very process of education which she is compelled to undergo, for the duty she was created to perform; and a vast amount of the deterioration that is going on at a great rate at the present time comes out of this very thing. There is a distinct connection between the attitude of man to woman, and the relations of father and mother, which constitute the differences between nations. An eastern monarch is reported to have said, on visiting Great Britain: "Great Britain is the paradise of women." I rejoice that it is so, and I rejoice also that in every part of what we call the British dominion the honourable position and the state to which it is the pride of the British race to lift its women has tended, more than any other thing, to make the British Empire what it is to-day. In passing away for the moment from the phase of human

responsibility and from the necessary deterioration, if women are compelled to enter the arena of labour, I come to this other question: Should she enter the arena of legislation? It is stated that woman should vote because she is compelled to obey the law. Legislation is built up on this basis, that society shall say the things that shall be done, and that are wise to be done, and that society shall constitute itself into such an association that it shall not only make laws but enforce them. Arising out of this has come the occupation of the soldier. Are we prepared to say that woman is to come into the arena of legislation and, although a taxpayer, she is not to be required to stand side by side with man in the protection of the nation? The laws have to do with these two things: the raising and expenditure of money for public work, and the raising and expenditure of money for the public protection. I say that woman, as constituted to-day, is not a taxpayer, and woman as she stands to-day is not in a position to take her place in the protection of the nation. Then, again, I say that woman's influence is the grandest element in our national life, and that for this precise reason it ought to be treasured. Because it is valuable, it is our duty to see that it is not corrupted. There are, in electricity, what are known as the positive and the negative. In society there are just these two things: the man is the positive and the woman the negative. Now you destroy electricity if you separate the influences of these two things; and you destroy the very elements of goodness, if you mix them in such a way that the influence of the woman is placed in such a position that it is not a combined and concentrated force to influence man. Now the battle of life is not a light one; at any rate it has not been so with me; and I do say this, though my experience and my observation may be as nothing, that men in order to do their duty faithfully in life want at least some resting place, and that resting place has never, in any nation, been so pure as it is in the British nation, and in that British nation it is to be found in the home. If you bring into your home the debate, the contest, the phases of thought and feeling which political questions necessarily awaken, you bring

into it influences which are absolutely destructive of the very first principles of a peaceful home. I have made some little observation in life, and seen a few places and a few people, but I would not dare to suggest that my experience is any guide on a question of this kind. We have to deal with the great principles by which our national life is influenced. I would suggest another point. Is it not a fact that we have had women's suffrage in the past? Have we not had at least one strong manifestation of women's suffrage? Have we not heard of the French Revolution? Was there ever any influence more destructive of society, more deteriorating to both men and women, than the influence of the French Revolution? And behind that Revolution, in its worst form, was the wild and unbounded emotion moving the men and coming from the women. We have had emotional legislation in the world from men. There have been times, over and over again, where emotional feeling has ruled nations and peoples, and has it ruled them rightly? Have you found, at any time in the world's history, that good government has ever come out of wild emotionalism? We need not go far for a sample of such legislation. Who was it that cried "Crucify Him?" Was it the thought of a nation, or was it the emotion of the people which produced that cry? Let us leave women out of the question altogether for a moment, and ask ourselves: has good legislation ever come out of voting that came from emotion and not from the head? Will any one say that the votes of women will not be, even at their best, the judgment of the heart and not the judgment of the head? The hon. member for East Perth, who is notorious for making speeches himself and then retiring in order that no other member shall have an opportunity of replying to him, has been pleased to quote the case of Colorado and also other places in America. I regret that I have not been able to get the paper, but I have the facts in my memory of a very able paper published in the *Economist* recently, and dealing with this subject. Hon. members know that the *Economist* is not a paper that will publish any trash that is sent to it, and it is one of the standard papers of the day.

Well, in an able article on this subject, the writer dealing with this point, and quoting those very places which have been quoted this evening in this House, said the effect of women voting has been to deteriorate the moral condition, and that vice and drunkenness have increased in every State in which it has been in force to a marvellous extent. Take another case. No one in this House will doubt the word of such a man as Mr. Stead, the editor of the *Review of Reviews*. Mr. Stead is not an enthusiast on this question: he is an absolute enthusiast upon it; and yet in a very recent paper, from his own pen, he has gone back to the position which I have held for some time, and which I have spoken on occasionally. It is this, that if ever woman franchise is given, it should be given for a Woman's House, elected by women—women voting to elect women—a Woman's House to deal with those questions which particularly appertain to women's social life; and that we should thus obtain from a Woman's House the best judgment of women, in its best form. I admit that since some of the great conventions that have been held in America, the great Total Abstinence Convention in particular, we have had these questions dealt with in a masterly way. I think some of these conventions would do credit to any body of men, and I do distinctly wish to be understood that it is not because I consider women as less capable or less intelligent than men that I take up my stand as an opponent of this motion. If intelligence only was required, if a simple earnest vote was required, that would not be the stand on which I should approach this question. My opposition to-day is wholly on behalf of women themselves; and I say that to bring them into the arena of legislation is a step in the degradation of the best half of the race that has been going on silently, and that, in the name of raising women, women have been and are being degraded. I admit there are some cases in which women make themselves independent, but it is a kind of independence that is destructive of the best principles of home life. I say we are setting out in a direction which will be calculated to bring emotional legislation into the arena of politics instead of sound and calm judgment. Then I take the question of

experience. Have women had the experience that would enable them to deal with the laws? Have they the experience which is necessary, or are they likely ever to have the kind of experience which is necessary for anyone to form correct judgments of these questions. If we were to deal simply with social questions in Parliament, the women voters might give some assistance; but Parliaments do not exist simply to deal with social questions, though they might deal with those questions more effectually than at the present time. But Parliament exists for other reasons and for other legislation than the social. Woman's influence is always felt, and I do not think any man in this House, or any other House, is free from it; and I, for one, have no desire to be free from it. I say that woman's influence is best exercised in her own sphere upon man, and that men should voice the feeling that man should be purified by the influence, and that man should be guided by the judgment and the tender feelings which are to be found in mother and in wife, in sister and in friend. Now I come to another question, which I touched when this subject was up before for discussion, and this touches the absolutely democratic position which I occupy. I say that to give this vote to woman is to give two votes to the man; and that, therefore, it is a dual vote. Is it worth while degrading woman to produce exactly the same result, by simply allowing man to have two votes instead of one? Is it worth while, simply to bring woman into the arena of politics, to bring her into the outward daily contact with those questions which have to be dealt with in Parliament, at the cost and expense of the sacrifice of the existence of your own home? I am not going to say the woman should always be at home; but I do say that her greatest power should be there, and I say that if she throws herself outside that home, in the way that some hon. members desire, it must be to the destruction of her home. There are principles lying behind this which I cannot touch upon; but experience of the best men in those States of America where there has been long experience of woman suffrage, all tends in this direction, and that is that the best women do not vote and the worst of the women do. If you give woman franchise,

St. George's Terrace will not vote and Murray Street will. It may be said that things always right themselves—that when things get to the worst they mend. The time is coming when the effect of this movement, which is said to be in the interest of women, will simply be so overwhelming that it will crush woman down to the very position from which the last hundred years has raised her. It is solely in the interest of woman that I speak. It is from my conviction that nothing but evil can come to our women, can come to the best element of our society, and that the corruptions of daily life will be let into the fountain of purity that ought to be undefiled, that I take my stand against any proposal to put woman where man ought to be. It is to me a source of sadness to see, day after day, women at the counter, women at the bar, women in the store. These are not the places for women, and if the men were doing their duty there would be no necessity for women to be there. It is simply because men are failing in their duty and their responsibility that women are compelled, for their own sake and for the purpose of earning a living, to take these positions. I do not wish to occupy the time of the House further on this subject, and what may be the result of this vote I cannot say; but I do say this, that if the vote is in favour of woman franchise, it is one of the first of the downward steps taken in this country. I think I have not been associated with steps of a downward character, and certainly I have not been associated with motions of a pessimistic character, while generally I have been on the side of those questions which had in view the raising of humanity. I have thought this question carefully out; I have thought of it for years, examined the evidence, endeavoured to get what information I could; and my calm judgment, after careful thought on all sides of the question, is that it would be a degradation to woman, and a degradation to the State, to admit women to the franchise.

At 6:30 p.m. the SPEAKER left the chair.

At 7:30 p.m. the SPEAKER resumed the chair.

MR. SIMPSON: I do hope that, in considering the question before this House, the Government will not deal with it as a party question. I cannot imagine for a moment any necessity for doing so, in discussing a broad, general question like this. There seems, to my mind—and I have endeavoured to carefully follow the remarks of all the speakers—a fairly general conclusion that these people to whom we propose to grant the franchise are intellectually capable of exercising it. I have not heard any member disputing that position. It is difficult to me to find objections to the proposal. It is held on all sides that woman's influence is good; and I must say, having heard the remarks of the hon. member for Nannine in stating his deep seated conviction, the growth of years, that I do not remember an instance in this House in which he so signally failed to furnish reasons for his deep-seated conviction. I have listened with pleasure, and so have other members of this House, to many remarks that have fallen from the hon. member; but when I heard that great and sacred occasion alluded to by the hon. member as having been the result of a women's rabble—when I heard that great episode, the French Revolution, alluded to as one of the terrible things of the world, and when we know that from the results of that Revolution have sprung some of the greatest triumphs of human freedom; when we know that some of these results are stamped on the legislation of our Empire year after year, manifestly for the good of the public, and the amelioration of the condition of the poor; I must say I was astounded to realize the deep-seated conviction which had come to the hon. member for Nannine, with regard to the French Revolution having been another result of a women's rabble that had worked harm to the human race. The means employed at the time, like some of the means employed at other times, as in the case of war, we do not condone. The huge power that came into the hands of people who were not used to it was, at the time, no doubt unwisely used; but at the same time there is no getting away from the fact that the results to the human race have been immense. I am glad that, in discussing this question, the House has

assumed a more serious tone. The flippant sneers with which such a motion was first received seem to have disappeared; the scoffing, jeering tone has also disappeared; and happily, very happily, we have the assurance of the Premier that he is not opposed to the principle, and we have, in "Hansard," the statement of the Attorney General that, personally, he is not opposed to it. If these hon. gentlemen, who seemed to-night to be taking the attitude of extreme opponents of this proposal, which we consider to be in the interest of pure and sound legislation, have no personal opposition to it, what opposition have they? Is it political opposition; or are they opposed to the thing as inexpedient? Is it a question of expediency that deters the occupants of the Treasury benches? If it is so, I am sure the supporters of this proposal will be prepared to reason with them on that ground, and to suggest to them the sweet reasonableness of the proposal. We speak on behalf of what has been admitted, on all sides of the House, to be the best influence on earth for good—women's influence. That is granted from all sections of the Chamber. If that is so, as practical men, having the opportunity of legislating, why should we not endeavour to give that influence its adequate avenue for good, on the statue-book of the country? To-night we have had reasons suggested by the hon. member for Nannine; and the hon. member for West Perth admits that, after additional thought, the growth of public opinion has convinced him that it is a wise and expedient thing to adopt this principle. I think I heard the hon. member for West Kimberley ask us to give local authorities in connection with this matter; and it was pointed out, or suggested, that there had been no demand by the women for this legislation. May I ask, was there ever any demand by the slaves of America for the abolition of slavery? Did the demand for that abolition come from the slaves, or did it come from the leaders of thought—the people whose hearts and instincts were full of ideas, full of enthusiasm; that enthusiasm which, I am glad to say, found vent? Therefore I join issue with the hon. member for Nannine, for I say that the most beneficial enactments on behalf of the

human race have been distinctly the result of enthusiasm. The member for East Perth quoted from John Stuart Mill, and I am sure that in this House the words of that authority will carry great weight as one of the benefactors of the human race during our century. But there was one passage which the hon. member omitted, which says: "The principle that regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes, the legal subordination of one sex to another, is wrong in itself, and is one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting of no power or privilege on the one side, or disability on the other." Weighty words, these, from one of the greatest thinkers of our time; words which, as a rule, carry conviction. It has been suggested that, by opening the avenue to a more active part in politics, the women will be liable to be degraded; but why? It has been suggested that the turmoil and the hurly-burly of elections in the political arena will degrade and disgrace women's influence for good? Is it suggested that we, sitting here as a deliberative Assembly, contemplate that for all time our elections are to be the arena for turmoil and disgraceful proceedings that will not admit of women's presence—is that to continue? Is that to be said of men and women going to exercise one of the most sacred functions of the State? for I look to the exercise of the franchise as the most sacred thing we entrust to our constituents. Are we to contemplate that, for all time, our elections shall be a scene of riot and confusion? Or, knowing that these things exist now, will we not endeavour to permit woman to exercise her influence to purify these matters in our election proceedings, as well as subsequently the proceedings of Parliament? The next objection, which you may say is reasonable, is that a woman, rushing in amongst the hurly-burly of elections, will be out of her place, and liable to have the beautiful delicacy and refinement which are natural to her possibly contaminated. I see no danger of it. The member for Nannine suggested that perhaps a baser element might exercise an influence, if an opportunity were granted, which would overcome that power for good. I cannot

think that suggestion will carry weight with members in this House for long. The hon. member seemed to me rather pessimistic in his ideas for the advancement of the human race. So far as I have read the history of the legislation of this century, it is distinctly in the direction of what I may call the emancipation and the more chivalrous respect for the rights of women. The dual vote, as has been suggested, surely cannot carry much weight. Surely if it is a dual vote, it simply acts on either side, and has no influence. If the wife can vote with the husband, and the husband votes with the wife on one side or the other, it leaves the proportion the same as before; and your argument disappears at once. Then it leaves only the spinster and the widow as persons whose influence in elections may be distinctly felt. I do not know that it is necessary to quote as authorities the great movers in connection with this matter. It has been suggested that the effects of the introduction of women to the franchise in the other colonies up to the present are bad; in fact, I had it suggested to me to-day, by a gentleman who has recently seen the effects of women suffrage, that before seeing those effects he was a believer in women's franchise; but, I ask, is it reasonable or fair to say that this great matter has, as yet, had a trial? Are we in this colony—which, I suppose, so far as industrial development is concerned, stands pretty well in the van of Australian progress to-day, in the sense of opening up our resources and coming to the front—are we still to follow that wretched old policy of dragging along at the tail of the cart, a policy which, I am afraid, has not led some persons into a particularly happy position? Are we not to learn, from the disasters of other places, to accept the mature thought and observation that come from them, and to stamp on our statute book legislation which is the result of observation, experience, and careful conclusion of what to avoid? Can anyone in this House deny the enormous effect for good that women's vote would have, in dealing with the great liquor question? Can any man in this House—I am not a rabid teetotalter; I am a man who respects the principle of those who endeavour to secure the temperate and reasonable use

of the good things the gods provide, and I shall always endeavour to support them whenever I can—[THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: That is cheap]—can any man in this House estimate the influence of the women's vote for good, in connection with the liquor traffic? I suppose there is not a man in this House but will admit that a big menace to our civilization to-day is the question of the liquor traffic—the greatest social cancer in our British community. I am not going to say that the liquor traffic should be prohibited—I hope I shall never go to that extreme—but that the dealing with it and the use of it should be regulated, I have little doubt. Then, in social legislation, take the matter of hospitals. I suppose if there is one great, prominent question that appeals to us in this country, especially in its more arid and remote districts, it is the question of hospitals; and to what wiser or more careful authorities can we turn than to those trained in nursing the sick in our hospitals, the nurses on our goldfields, the Sisters of the People, and kindred workers—workers who are opening out entirely new avenues of thought and effort for women in the amelioration of the condition of the poor; and from whom can we seek wiser information than from those immediately concerned in connection with this matter? They would give us their good influence at the ballot box, and the result of their experience and observation would eventually find its way into our statute book. Then, again, the great questions of education, of reformatories, and other matters closely allied with them throughout the world are all women's efforts—you cannot dissociate them, do what you may. Women are side by side with men in our schools, teaching and educating the young in this colony, and in the universities in other parts of our empire; in our workshops, in our factories, in our offices, we all realise that the woman of to-day has stepped into a position different from that occupied in previous periods, when the poor creature had to wait until some man came along to marry her, or had to stay at home until she became an encumbrance. Now she has opportunities of learning a way for herself to become independent—that is one of the developments of our time; and surely we can trust women, as voters, to

select a man to administer the laws of the land, and to compile our statute book. The question of intellect, I suppose, will not weigh. The only question, as suggested by the hon. member for East Perth, is that of sex—perhaps physical inferiority—and, as relates to the mere question of physical inferiority or superiority, is it that which writes wisdom in these statute books—the mere question of physical brute force? Allusion was made by the member for Nannine to the fact that women are unable to defend our empire—that they could not be soldiers. We admit that. But did he face the other aspect of the question, and say that if good women in the world had their way there would be no war—that curse of the earth would disappear? Who is it that suffers most in time of war? The women and children. Then we come to the industrial aspect of the question. Do you mean to tell me that those great strikes would not gradually disappear, if these women's influence were brought to bear? Who are the greatest sufferers by strikes? The women and children.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Women are the greatest agitators.

MR. SIMPSON: I do not know that they are, and I am not prepared to accept the dictum of the hon. members for Nannine or West Kimberley on that matter; but even if women are agitators in the matter of strikes, I say it is our duty now to open up wider spheres and wider opportunities for them; and I challenge any member to produce a single instance since 1832, in which the extension of the franchise has not worked good for mankind. So far, practical reasons against this matter are absent—solid tangible reasons against admitting the purest, the noblest influence on earth to exercise the power of appointing members to this House, and in helping us to compile the statute books, are entirely absent. Then we have only to deal with the question of expediency. But the Premier says, let us wait. If it is good and true, as you all admit it is, why not welcome it at once and let it become part of our constitution immediately? If you can demonstrate reasons against it to prove it is not a good thing, let us have nothing to do with it; but if its influence is, what all admit, for good, why not see it is placed on our statute

books at once? It seems to me that the idea of the Treasury benches in connection with this matter is one of fear; but they make a mistake, as, if they admit a fear, they should show grounds for the fear. They all admit woman's influence in the world is good, and the more paramount we make it the better for the world: social injustices will be removed, and life become better all round. The hon. member for Nannine made reference to Murray Street, but is that the idea of the hon. member of the world progressing? Is it the idea of a man whose name is usually associated with movements for doing good and improving mankind, that all the results that have accrued to our civilisation are that Murray Street will control St. George's Terrace. I think it must have slipped from the hon. member unaware. The question of expediency must disappear, if this influence is for good. I cannot imagine the most conservative man in this House opposing this measure, for I have just been reading the opinions of an old friend of the Premier, and a man whom he respects and who is respected everywhere—Sir John Hall.

THE PREMIER: I wonder what he would say now. He has changed his views since, I believe.

MR. SIMPSON: The Premier has only belief, but I have the written words of Sir John Hall.

THE PREMIER: Have you got his opinion now?

MR. SIMPSON: Yes, as it appears in the statute book of New Zealand.

THE PREMIER: He has changed his opinion.

MR. SIMPSON: I know men who work year after year to accomplish a purpose do not change their convictions in 20 minutes. In New Zealand they have established it and had one election under it; in South Australia they have established it and had one election under it. [THE PREMIER: Nowhere else in the British colonies.] The Premier is out of the Engineer-in-Chief's office, in this matter—he has not before him certain facts and problems in algebra. He has stepped away from borrowing money and spending it, to step into an atmosphere of social legislation, where he is invariably lost. I never heard any utterance from the Premier apart from great municipal matters, such as the con-

struction of roads, railways, and bridges, or a single expression from his lips in touch with the thought of to-day with regard to social legislation. This motion, I hope, will be carried. I cannot imagine any possible harm, and I would ask the House to suggest where danger or harm can accrue to the country. It is admitted woman's influence is good, and that if given a vote she will select, if possible, a pure, good, and true man. It is not suggested that she won't also select men of ability, and in connection with these matters it is just as well to say there are four or five propositions that could be dealt with, speaking of it purely as a political, and apart from the sentimental or emotional, question. First of all comes this. It is the foundation of all political liberty that those who obey the laws should be able to have a voice in choosing those who make the laws. I suppose no one will dissent from the proposition that those who obey the law should be able to have a voice in choosing those who make the law, because Parliament should be the reflection of the wish of the people; because Parliament cannot fully reflect the wish of the people when the wishes of women are without any direct representation; also because government of the people by the people, and for the people, should mean all the people, and not one-half, and because most laws affect women as much as men. These are propositions that require to be answered. I say the supporters of this motion have proved, and it is admitted, that woman's influence in all matters of the State is for good. That is admitted by all sections of the House. This political position has to be faced: Why should they not, with their influence for good, have opportunities of stamping their good instincts and influences on the statute book? I do not wish to make any appeal to members beyond what is reasonable. I suppose we sit here as men who have held our own in the battle of life up to now—fought our battle and sit where we do as a result of effort. I don't suppose any of us are satisfied. I hope not, as I think when a man is satisfied with himself the sooner he goes aloft and gets wings the better; but I would suggest to every hon. member, thinking quietly over the matter, to go back to his childhood's

days, and remember the influences brought to bear in the moulding of his character, and the influence of endeavours to secure results which he realises are good to-day. I would appeal to every good instinct in every member of this House to-night, and ask him if it is not the result of woman's influence from his cradle to now? And I ask you, would you blot out of the statute book the influence that moulded your life? Will you not give it an opportunity of stamping itself on the statute book of the country, by the selection of representatives to make the laws of the land? Chivalry is not dead. They used to ride out in armour, the gauntlet was thrown, and they used to tilt in honour of the ladies they adored; but perhaps in these later days we have got away from the romance of the thing, and have come to deal with the sordid facts in the world to-day. We know woman's position to-day is enormously different from what it was years ago. We know that influence is good, and avenues are opening up now that never occurred years ago, in which woman's influence and industry is being felt. I ask this House to deal with it enthusiastically, guided by a wise, careful and good enthusiasm, the result of their own personal experience, and write on the statute book of the country, indelibly, the impress of that influence which has proved good in their own lives, and which will, if given an opportunity, prove good in the legislation of this country.

MR. MORAN: There is one phase of this question the advocates of woman's suffrage have not touched on, and I rather expected to hear the member for Geraldton mention the matter, because he has made about the best case possible for this question, and in presenting his calm and reasonable ideas has given as good a view of this question as we can expect to get. I expected him to carry his arguments to their logical conclusion. He says rightly that no member of this House denies that women are intellectually fitted and capable of exercising an intelligent vote, and that therefore they should be given an opportunity of using that intellect in a way to the good of the State. None of the advocates of this principle have carried it out to its logical conclusion, and mentioned that women are also capable of being judges. If women have the discernment to judge and give

their vote with intelligence, then surely some are capable of taking the position themselves? This has not been touched upon. I say most decidedly, following that line of argument up, they should have mentioned this side of the question--that it is possible and probable that, given a country where females have the franchise, you will see half the members of this Assembly composed of females. There is nothing more logical than that. There is another step in the argument, and that is, if they are competent and fit persons to legislate, then, from their number, there must be some who could and would be called upon to become Ministers of the Crown. Following this question out to its logical issue, you will find that the Minister of Mines (Mrs. Jones) received a deputation, headed by the hon. member for Yilgarn, on the sanitary state of Bulong.

MR. SIMPSON : She declined to receive that deputation.

MR. MORAN : You would also find it had been decided that the Minister of Mines should take a tour through the electorate represented by my friend the hon. member for Nannine. Whether she would take her progeny, numerous or otherwise, with her would be a question for the State to decide; whether the State would set aside a sum to defray the cost of wet-nurses during her absences would also be a question to decide. I say there can be no gainsaying the fact that, if that line of argument is taken up, women must have the power of becoming members of Parliament. Why do not these gentlemen say they do not wish to give this power to women? There must be some reason why they will not "go the whole hog;" but those reasons I will leave to hon. members to suggest themselves. As is usual with the member for East Perth, he came in as special pleader on this question. His address was not to the Speaker of the House, but it was "Now, gentlemen." He was a special pleader, and had been working his mind up into a tremendous state of excitement; but, with his usual intemperateness, he could not help saying that it was a fortunate thing for him that, as far as he was concerned, he had come under the influence of a good mother and a good wife, and that he pitied those who had not come under such influences themselves. I have

met a few ladies, both here and in other places, and I would say I was in South Australia a year ago when this question was at its height; we have all heard of Mary Lee, the leader of the Woman's League there. I saw her caricatured in all sorts of ways, and I took the trouble to learn from many ladies what they thought on the question; and my impression was that, although the ladies had made use of it, it was not because they believed in the thing, but because it was carried. The member for East Perth said those opposed to this principle had not the same tender appreciation of the influence of a mother and wife as those in favour of it; but we may be allowed to differ from him, as we may say our mothers and sisters and wives, though not in favour of it, may be equally able to exercise an influence on us; and so I think that phase might have been left out. If women have such a moral influence, surely that influence must be felt, even if they are not entitled every three or four years to vote for some man. If a man has a mother, sister, wife, or dear female friend, certainly he is amenable to their influence. I would be very sorry to say I was not, with regard to the lessons from my mother, or that I did not respect the wishes of wife or sister. I hope no public act of mine will cause a blush of shame to them, be they ever so modest or womanly. I say decidedly, looking back at the opinions of ladies of my own acquaintance, as a body they are rather ashamed of being accused of wishing to have anything to do with the questionable game of politics. I wish to point out that we should lead the public on this question. It is admitted all round that, as far as West Australia is concerned, no Mary Lee has sprung into existence. [**AN HON. MEMBER :** Who is she?] The hon. member cannot know much about South Australia. Mary Lee, I may inform the hon. gentleman, is leader of the Women's League, and though, doubtless, most estimable, not one I should care to have to do with as wife or mother, nor is she a lady who would be likely to lead a man astray from the paths of virtue. [**MR. JAMES :** And these are arguments!] The member for East Perth says we should lead public thought; but, before we do this, some reason should be assigned. If we hear women cry out in connection

with any grievance, we are prepared to do the fullest justice to those we love and respect, just as if half the House were composed of ladies. Perhaps, if there were ladies in this Assembly, we might be more disinclined to take notice of what they say, as experience shows when they go into public gatherings and legislatures they do not increase their influence over men. I wish to appeal more particularly to the member for East Perth, who says, why not give these intellectual beings, who are our best half, the right to vote, as they would vote so as to impress their influence on the statue book? If they are competent to elect representatives to make laws, and competent to become members and Ministers, why not competent to become Judges of the Supreme Court? Is it not a truism that, if competent to elect members of Parliament and become members of Parliament and Ministers, they are competent to become very able barristers, and ultimately judges?

MR. SIMPSON: One is senior wrangler now.

MR. MORAN: I think you are senior wrangler now. I would ask hon. members of this House, if they would care to see their own wife a judge of the Supreme Court, in many cases that might be tried.

MR. SIMPSON: It might be very handy sometimes.

MR. MORAN: The hon. member for East Perth says the only argument against not giving female suffrage is because they have not the physical strength. But he goes on to say, if females were equally strong as men, perhaps we should see hon. members of this Chamber inclined to give them the vote. The only conclusion we can draw is, that perhaps he is under the influence of some lady who can exercise her strength. We are led to that conclusion, because he has spoken feelingly on the question. The hon. member for Geraldton placed the matter in a very clear way, and with eloquence and a certain amount of calm reasoning he did present a pretty clear case; and the ladies should inscribe a medal and present it to him. But it is not woman's province to enter the political arena; and though one or two ladies in South Australia may have been at the head, we know the movement was fostered by a political party. I firmly believe the member

for East Perth wishes to keep himself before the public as being a thorough liberal and a believer in social reforms, and does not believe in half the wickedness said to be inflicted on females. We are willing to give females every protection we wish for ourselves. We have never heard that any British legislature ever refused to consider the higher, nobler qualities we are told woman possesses, and which we know she possesses. It is sentiment, pure and simple, and, apart from that, a political cry. I do not know that the women have any private wrongs, and under their breath are muttering against the Legislature of Western Australia for some legislation they are seeking. There is no great end to be achieved by an alteration of the Constitution Act, nor do we find that members are losing their chivalrous feelings. We are prepared to act fairly and justly to females, but are not prepared to say they should, to a certain extent, be unsexed and dragged into the very questionable game of politics. I intend to oppose the motion, but hope it will not be considered for a moment that I do not recognise all that is noble in women, the same as those supporting the motion.

MR. LEPROY: I voted against this question when it was previously brought forward, and I have seen no reason to alter my opinions. A great deal has been said about the influence of women in the home, and there is no one prepared to deny that woman's influence is all in all; and it is for that reason that many members are not prepared to vote for the extension of the franchise to women. The hon. member for East Perth quoted Gladstone as an advocate of the extension of the franchise to women. The hon. member for East Perth is generally correct in his statements and quotations on subjects like this, but the hon. gentleman was wrong on this occasion. In 1893 Sir A. E. Rollit introduced a measure into the House of Commons for the extension of the franchise, but the chief means of wrecking it was a pamphlet written by Mr. Gladstone, criticising the measure. I don't like, as a rule, to quote, but, on this occasion, I may be excused for bringing this quotation forward:—

“Mr. Gladstone made much of the fact “that the Bill excluded from its opera-

"tion the entire body of married women, "and appealed for the fullest consideration before so profound a change was "determined on. He further asserted "that there was widespread indifference "on the part of women about receiving "the franchise, while many were strongly "opposed to it; and pointed out that the "bestowal of the franchise would involve "the right of women to sit in the House "and to fill every office in the State. "Moreover, 'a permanent and vast difference of type had been impressed upon "women and men respectively by the "Maker of both.' Mr. Gladstone proceeded: — 'I have no fear lest the woman "should encroach upon the power of the "man: the fear I have is lest we should "invite her unwittingly to trespass upon "the delicacy, the purity, the refinement, "the elevation of her own nature, which "are the present sources of its power;' "and concluded thus: 'My disposition "is to do all for her which is free from "that danger and reproach, but to take "no step in advance until I am convinced "of its safety.'"

I feel very much that is the condition of my mind at the present moment. I do not think there is the safety some members maintain there is in extending the franchise to women. Much has been said about the influence of women in the home, but little about the influence of women in politics in the past. I think if we take up dust-covered histories, we find the influence of women who took a paramount interest in politics has not been altogether good. In France we find that women who have had the greatest influence years ago have not used that influence for good on many occasions.

MR. SIMPSON: No responsible Government there, then.

MR. LEFROY: Are we quite sure we will get always the very best of women to take an interest in politics, or women with the purest motives? Hon. members would try to maintain that all the motives of women are of the purest description, but that the motives of men are not so. I maintain there are men in the world who have pure motives as well as women, and there are many women in the world who have not the purest motives, and that is the reason we admire the predominance of pure influences women have. I am afraid

it is those women without the purest motives who would take an interest in politics, while their sisters who have the best influence would not take such great interest in party politics.

MR. JAMES: 75 per cent. voted in South Australia.

MR. LEFROY: I do not think, as far as we have gone in legislation of this kind, that there is sufficient to warrant me in altering the opinions I have had for some time on the subject. Do not Parliaments now all over the world try, while alleviating the condition of men, to alleviate the condition of women also? Everywhere they are trying to do so, and everything is being done to improve the condition of women. It has been said that the days of chivalry are over, but I do not think it necessary to take up a serious matter like this in that way. I have not heard the desire expressed by women for the extension of the franchise. When I have talked to women on subjects of this kind, they nearly all tell you they prefer to leave that sort of thing to men.

MR. JAMES: You have had a different experience from mine.

MR. LEFROY: Sometimes women themselves have not the highest opinions of the influence women have had in the past, and I have a little extract showing how a woman regards the influence women have had in the past. A woman, writing in the *Forum*, says: —

"An extremely brilliant New Woman "rarely makes a speech without saying: " 'Women will enter every place on the " 'round earth, and they will purify every " 'place they enter.' With these statements in mind, by all means let the " 'dust-covered histories' be opened, so "that we may see the 'bricks without " 'straw' which the women 'without " 'power' have made, and the manner in "which they have purified every place "they have entered. There are women "whose advancement to high positions "would only increase evil influences, and "and there are many such who would "quickly seize the enlarged opportunities "of suffrage, while many good women, "engrossed with home cares, would be "indifferent to the ballot."

That is the opinion of a woman, which I dare say is worthy of some consideration. I do not think for one moment that all

women are in favour of it. In fact, if I thought they were, I would certainly be inclined to vote for it. I do not feel they desire it, and consequently I am not prepared to support it.

MR. GEORGE: I am sorry there has been a tone in this debate implying that those opposed to the proposal have not the same feeling towards women as those supporting it. The feeling apparently has been that we, who are going to oppose this motion, have not the respect for women that those supporting it have. If this is to be approached in a proper spirit, it should not be in the way of throwing reflections on any member of the Assembly. I do not think there can be one man who forgets the lessons he learnt at his mother's knee. I hope there is not a man who forgets them or sneers at them, but at the same time he may have an opinion against granting the suffrage to woman. Comparison has been made between Murray Street and St. George's Terrace. I don't understand the allusion. I believe the aristocrats live in St. George's Terrace and the democrats in Murray Street. If there is a class living in Murray Street of whom we speak in whispers, and who might exercise a vote, we should not bring that argument in, as perhaps those men who caused them to live there, and be what they are, may be in this House. I differ from the gentlemen who say enthusiasm has never righted anything. I have seen a great deal of agitation in the course of my life, and never yet have seen reforms effected without enthusiasm. I have seen very little enthusiasm over this matter. It is just possible that what is called the new woman, of whom we read in books, requires this; but I like the good old-fashioned woman, and I hope to God she will never cease to exist. She is quite good enough for me, and the new woman can go to those who like her. I will tell you what the old-fashioned woman, whom we all revere, has done. It is the old-fashioned woman—our mothers—who have moulded our lives. I will tell you what the old-fashioned woman would do, if you came to the question of the liquor traffic. She would clear the liquor right out, and I hope she will, as I am certain the root of all evil is intemperance; and if that could be done I would be inclined to vote for it, though

I am not a teetotaler. Protect women against drunken husbands, or an old mother being left by a drunken son. Bring in laws to do that, and I for one will support them. [AN HON. MEMBER: They are in existence.] If they are in existence, they are bad laws, because they do not protect women. If you ask a woman where she will go, to get the most justice, she will say she will go to an assemblage of men. Now that women are striking out in obtaining employment, I am very glad the old social tradition is being exploded, that the only purpose of a woman's life is to find a husband and get married. I say such a theory as that is a disgrace. I am pleased to see that so many women are qualifying to live independently by their own exertions. At the same time, I say this proposal to give women the right to vote should not take precedence of real practical questions with which we should deal in this country. We have plenty of real work to do, without dealing with these mosquito things which occupy the minds of mere theorists. An hon. member has asked, what would happen if the country went to war? Women could not go and fight, and we do not want them to do so; but I believe that, although if women had the vote they would be opposed to war, there are some cases in which war is the only legitimate arbiter; and I hope the fighting spirit will never die out of the British nation, that in a just cause the Empire will always be ready for war, and that Englishmen will always be prepared to do their duty in combat. If we are going to have legislation to take away the fighting spirit of Britons, I am not going to vote for it in any shape or form.

MR. A. FORREST: I hardly think it is necessary to say much more than has already been said by various speakers on this very important question, which affects not only this colony, but other colonies which have seen their way to go to the extent that my friend the member for Sussex wishes us to go; but I hope the hon. member will not carry his motion. The debate has gone round all sides of the House, and it has come back to what I may say is the practical question—do women of this country require a vote? If they do require a vote, are we prepared to give it to them? I say, in the first place, that the women of this country do

not require it, and that it would do them no good at all. In the second place, if they want a vote, I say the majority of this House is not prepared to give it to them; and I say this, not because I am not a believer in the good qualities of the fair sex, because no one will uphold them more than I do in every way. I should be sorry to have it said that, because I do not give them this vote, I am not one to hold them in the highest esteem. Of course we know there is a general election near at hand, and that there is a desire growing up among hon. members to bring this matter up on the hustings, so that they will be able to say they pressed the matter forward; and we know that when hon. gentlemen are canvassing, especially in the suburbs, the wife who generally has great influence over her husband may be persuaded by the hon. member for Geraldton, for example, that she would like to have a vote. I do not think the women of the colony require this vote; and if they do require it, I say they are justly entitled to become members of this House, and no one can refuse them, for the reason that women will be in the majority, or at least I hope they will be before many years go by. You may be assured that if the women have the vote, and if they are in the majority, they will put members of their own sex into Parliament. I have not the slightest objection to a lady sitting alongside of me in this House. I would rather like it. I do not know whether hon. members mean this vote to go to that extent. We find, from the papers this morning, that a Bill has been passed in New Zealand to enable women to sit in Parliament in that colony. [MR. SIMPSON: It has not been passed yet.] At any rate, the Bill has been introduced, and no doubt it will pass where 87 per cent. of the women go to the polls; and when they get seats in the House there, the ladies will become Ministers, and they, as a matter of course, in the performance of their official duties, will have to go travelling over the country. Whom will they have for their secretaries—men or women? I have no doubt these changes will have very important effects upon the country. The Attorney General will defend a lady taking his place as the legal adviser of the Crown. I was not brought up to look forward to these changes. I,

like the hon. member for the Murray, was brought up, and generation after generation of my family have been brought up, to believe that the man must be the most prominent when he is the bread winner. I am sure the women of the country do not wish to become men. In some districts, like that of Sussex, which my hon. friend represents, we know the ladies take a most prominent part there. [AN HON. MEMBER: I thought so.] In many cases they have to do a man's work, and therefore it is no wonder they think they are entitled to a man's vote. But that does not go to show that the women of the whole world are of the same opinion as the fair sex of the district of Sussex; and yet I can hardly think that the hon. member for Sussex, who has introduced this motion to the House, is serious, and I trust the hon. member will feel justified in withdrawing the proposal, for it would be of no benefit if it were passed. Supposing the motion were carried, the Attorney General would have to introduce an amendment of the Constitution Act to give women the right to vote, and if we got that far we should get no farther. I do not think the amendment would be carried in this House; but, even if it were, I am sure the good sense of the other House would never entertain it, and that it would be thrown out. I am sure that the Legislative Council would be justified in throwing out the Bill, in the interests of the country. The hon. member for Geraldton, a few evenings ago, during the discussion on a very important question, said this Parliament was not competent to deal with important questions because we are on the eve of a general election. I think this question of woman suffrage is a very good case to go to the country upon, and ask the electors to decide it; and if, as the result of the appeal to the country, a majority of members should be returned who are in favour of giving the right to vote to women, let that alteration of the Constitution Act be passed into law, but not otherwise. We have no right to interfere with legislation of this kind in this House, before we go to our constituents and ask their approval of our acts during the past three years. I say this is a most important question, and one that cannot be equitably dealt with until there has been a general election.

If the electors say they desire women to go to the polls, then the hon. members for Geraldton and East Perth will come back with their majority, armed with the power to carry out this mandate; and if, on the other hand, the country should decide against the proposal, it will be well that the step has not been taken against the public opinion of the country. I do not think any hon. member of this House has been asked by his constituents for this doubtful alteration of our Constitution Act in the direction proposed; and I shall certainly oppose the motion of the hon. member for Sussex.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: The hon. member who has just sat down says this question of woman's suffrage should be referred to the constituencies. If the Government of which the hon. member is a supporter had always adopted that line of argument, that great questions should be referred this session to the voice of the country at a general election, the argument might carry some weight. But we find the hon. member did everything in his power to assist the Government to vote a large sum of money for expensive public works, notwithstanding that it was urged by hon. members on this side of the House that the works should stand over until they had been submitted to the country. In spite of this argument, the expenditure to which I refer was carried by a very large majority; and now we see, from the papers laid before the House, that Ministers propose to increase their salaries in the last session of an expiring Parliament. I should say that is a question which should be left to the Parliament which will control the Ministry of the day, after the impending general election has taken place. [THE PREMIER: That is a detail.] It may be a detail, but it is a very important principle. In dealing with the question before the House, there have been many plausible speeches delivered against the motion, but there has been no logical argument used against extending the franchise to women. If there is one thing that should cause the Government to think they are on the wrong track in this matter, it is that the hon. member for Nannine is supporting them. I think the mere fact that the member for Nannine is supporting the measure ought to convince them that they

are in the wrong. Many arguments that are logical and conclusive have been used in favour of extending the franchise to women. Women have to bear the taxation as well as the men, and I think that it is generally acknowledged that those who bear the taxation should have the right to vote, and that those who have to obey the laws should have a say in the election of representatives and the making of the laws. My opinion and my experience are that women are equally intelligent with men; they are as active and as energetic, and I think they are more thorough than men. They are not as strong; they cannot make soldiers. Some member used the argument that they depend upon us to protect them. That is the only direction, that of brute strength, in which man is superior to woman, and I think that woman is superior to man in every other respect. The woman who is supporting her family by her own energy and intelligence is surely entitled to the franchise. The members for Nannine and Geraldton, the other evening, wished to extend the franchise to the miners on their miners' rights. A miner, therefore, may have been kicked out of one goldfield after another, yet he would, according to the members for Nannine and Geraldton, be able to exercise his vote on the goldfield where he happened to be at an election. [MR. ILLINGWORTH: No, no.] The hon. member said a person holding a miner's right should be entitled to vote, not only for any constituency if he were registered for that constituency, but also that he should be registered for the constituency in which he lived. [MR. ILLINGWORTH: No.] That is the impression that I gathered from the remarks of the hon. member. Many of the miners and other people who have registered have not exercised their votes. The argument has been used that women do not desire to have the franchise; but if even only half a dozen of the women who pay taxes and obey the laws desire to register their names on the rolls, surely they should be allowed that right. As to the argument of the member for Kimberley, that if they had votes we should find them in this House and on the Ministerial benches; if they did take their seats on the Ministerial benches, the member for Kimberley would be one of their followers, for the reason that he would know that

they were in the right and that they were giving good government, and that the country's business would be managed by them in a proper manner. I think that the fact that women do not noisily agitate for the franchise is a reason in favour of granting them the franchise. If a few of these ladies were to meet the Premier at his gate some morning and salute him with a few rotten eggs and a dead cat or two, we should hear more of their rights. It is because they do not make a noise that they do not get the franchise. If they had the assistance of some of the goldfield agitators, who get what they are not entitled to, they would soon have the franchise extended to them. They do not make enough noise. They know they are entitled to the franchise, but they do not agitate and make their views heard in a noisy manner; and if they did that, I am perfectly sure the present Government would concede what they are now opposing. We have had an instance of that in the tariff. Last session we, who are in the minority, tried to get an extension of the reductions in the tariff, and now we are told that the Government intend to do this session what the minority wished to have done last session. It only shows that a little clamour will cause the Government to do what they would not otherwise do. They do not look at the justice of the cause, but at the agitation. If they looked at the justice of a question they would grant the franchise to women. I was opposed to manhood suffrage.

THE PREMIER: You are opposed to everything.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: I am not like some of the gentlemen sitting on the other side of the House—I do not oppose everything, for I sometimes vote with the Government; but the fact that I do sometimes support them only shows that I have an opinion of my own, which is more than I can say for those on the other side of the House. One hon. member spoke in favour of the motion, but he is not now in his place when it comes to the vote. I will stay in the House and I will vote for the motion. This is the first time that I have been in the House this session, and I am sorry that the first vote I will give will be against the Government. They will, however, grant this claim of the franchise for women when

there has been a little more agitation. I feel quite satisfied that the Premier and the members of his Government will concede this privilege to the women of the colony. It has been said that in New Zealand and South Australia the vote has been exercised by the women in a way that has not met with the approval of some hon. members; but considering the way in which they exercised their vote, I think it shows they do take a little interest in politics. Whether they selected the best men is a matter on which there will be difference of opinion. Of the women voters in New Zealand, 78 per cent. voted, and I think that is a very good percentage. I do not think that 78 per cent. of the goldfields electors voted at the last election. I do not believe that 75 per cent. of the male population care very much whether they vote or whether they do not. There are those who say the women voters did not make a very wise selection at the last general election in South Australia; but it was only natural that they should vote for the Government which had given them the franchise. I think that they would have shown a certain amount of ingratitude if they had voted against the Government that gave them the franchise. I have seen many cases in this country where the breadwinner has been taken away, and the wife has supported the family and carried on the business and employed a number of men, and those men have had the franchise and she has not had it, though carrying on her business with credit to herself and bringing up her family respectably. If such a woman does not wish to be bothered with politics, she will not trouble to exercise her right to vote; but let those women who wish to vote do so. If they will only abuse the Government, the Premier in particular, in less than twelve months the franchise will have been conceded. When we find the members for the goldfields advocating the claims for registration of miners on their rights, and the transfer of votes from one district to another, I do not think we should deprive women of this colony, who may hold thousands of pounds' worth of interests in property and employ dozens of men, of their right to vote. I may say that I am very earnest in this matter, and but for this question being under consideration, I should not have

been here to-night. I came down to support the resolution. I do not suppose it will be carried, but I am not going to do as one of the members, who is a strong supporter of the motion and who spoke in favour of it, has done, and that is, run away from the vote.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) : The Premier just now remarked to me that, looking at the members who have spoken on this subject, the Government must be on the right side, after all ; for, said he, "The hon. member for the Gascoyne is on the other side." We look through "Hansard," and we find that he is always on the wrong side. I regret myself that the time of the House should be wasted in such debates as these. I consider that this evening has been absolutely wasted, for all the benefit we are likely to derive from the discussion that has taken place. When we listen to this debate we might imagine that the world is not 2,000 years old. We have arrived at the present age through many vicissitudes of fortune. Country after country has arisen, and many great and noble minds have been produced in different parts of the world, and it has remained for this modern period of the last 25 years to start this doctrine that it is right to give the better half of man the right to vote. Is that the way to raise the character of woman, or to do her material good in any sense, to give her the right to vote ? I do not believe that woman has asked for it or ever will ask for it. We have reached this length of time, and political thinkers in all parts of the world have been exhausting their minds for centuries to find topics for the exercise of their activity, and to find topics for discussion and dissension ; and it has remained for the close of the present century for faddists to raise this cry : "Give women the franchise." The member for Nannine gave the House the benefit of his deep thought and conviction on this subject, and brought forward many views on this question with which we are all thoroughly in accord. It is strange perhaps to see the member for Geraldton disagreeing with the member for Nannine, but perhaps it is just as strange for the member for Nannine to be in accord with the Government on the subject before the

House. There are always faddists in the world ready to support anything new, and to help an agitation for the sake of the notoriety it gives. We have seen a member in the House of Commons devoting his life to the persistent pushing of some topic of a Utopian character, and as time rolls on and opinions change, these topics which were originally supported solely for the purpose of notoriety come within the range of practical politics. I wondered whether the member for East Perth was going to address the arguments on the subject that he used here to-night, but prepared for the platform, to the Speaker of this House, and it was only with great difficulty we could get him to do so. He would inform those members, whose votes the member for East Perth was seeking, that this was one of the topics which was supported merely for political purposes. As to the hon. member who introduced this subject to us, he, I think, holds a mistaken impression as to the probable result of this measure. I am certain that he is wrong if he thinks that a Bill for the extension of the franchise to women is a conservative measure. He has only to look to New Zealand and South Australia for facts that will counterbalance any information he has on the other side. What has been the result of those two experiments in South Australia and New Zealand ? I am convinced that those experiments show that the final result will be that woman suffrage will be thrown out of the statute book, and that a return will be made to the point whence the start was made. In New Zealand a measure is going through Parliament for the purpose of enabling women to sit in the Assembly. My reading of history convinces me that the extension of the franchise to women in America has not had the result that was anticipated. At the outset, the women went to the poll because it was a novel thing ; but now they know all about it, they abstain from voting. The member for Geraldton quoted something from John Stuart Mill, but he failed to see the drift of Mill's opinion. He said that women should not be subordinated to man legally in any respect. The principle of perfect equality is the notion of Mill, but what does as great a thinker as Mill say on the other hand ? Mr. Glad-

stone, the great man to whom I refer, says that if you admit woman to the franchise you must put her on an equality with man, and what does that come to? It comes to this, that you open an avenue to every office of the State for women. The members for Yilgarn and Geraldton said a great deal about the true, noble character of woman, and asked us if we were afraid to come into touch with women in this House. Will any man forget the teaching he received on his mother's knee? Can he forget those better feelings and the mould in which his character has been cast by the example and teaching of mothers and sisters? I say that the position comes to this, that we should ask ourselves whether there is any chance of our, in any way, affecting the good in mother and sister by granting them the franchise. It is the fear that we shall destroy that influence for good in the lives of men that we hesitate to bring that influence and that ennobling character into this Assembly—into the dirt and nastiness of political life. For my part, I shall never agree to drag woman from her present high position, down to active participation in politics. I will not drag her from that elevated position in which she is at present, and I shall vote against this motion to-night. I put the case on this one argument, and this argument I think is sufficient. If you extend the franchise to women, you must also extend to them the privilege of sitting in this House. You cannot get beyond that position. Any elector of this colony is capable of representing a constituency in this House; and I strongly defended this principle when the Constitution Bill was before us in 1889, that whoever we gave a vote to should be qualified to sit in this House. If you extend the franchise, I do not care whom to, that person, male or female, must have the corresponding privilege of being elected a member. Will anyone consider that it is possible for a woman to be brought into this Assembly? It was never intended to be so by the Creator of woman and man, and it is the merest fad and nonsense to think of it. Will hon. members contemplate seeing their wives or daughters or sisters sitting in this Assembly, some in opposition, some behind the Ministry or in the Ministry, and

both men and women members meeting together in the refreshment room? The character of men, I hope, will change; and if it does not, you will be dragging women down by letting them enter politics. I say it with regret, but it is a fact that woman could not mix with men in the world of politics without having her character affected and tainted for the worse. We shall not be improving, but lowering her, by admitting her into Parliament; and for that reason mainly I disagree with the motion submitted by the member for Sussex. The mover of the motion reckons that women would have an influence in politics that would tend to counteract something that he does not like. The precedents do not support his view. New Zealand, as I have said, is going to admit women into the Assembly; and what was the anticipation of a good many of the people in this colony when they heard of the experiment in South Australia? They expected that the votes of the women would drive certain elements out of political life—would, in fact, remove men of a certain character from the House. What was the result? These very men were reinstated, not cast out, by the votes of the women. What is the excuse given for this turn of events, by those who supported the measure? They say that it is not fair to pass judgment on the women for that, because she was grateful to those who gave her the vote. An excuse of that sort is a fallacy, because it simply shows that the votes of the women were not cast with that judgment and calm deliberation and intelligence we were led to look for, but they were cast from a motive of gratitude merely, which overbore all other sentiments of a moral character. On that occasion she did wrong; did that which she was pledged not to do. She was tempted and did wrong, because an instinct made her grateful. Therefore, we find that on the first occasion in these colonies in which the franchise has been given, it was exercised in a certain direction, not because it was the right way to exercise it, but because she had a debt of gratitude to pay. She misunderstood her duty; and the calm judgment we expected to find in her was not shown. I, therefore, think it my duty on this occasion to oppose the motion submitted by the member for Sussex.

MR. THROSSELL : It is only right that taxpayers should have a voice in the laws which they have to obey ; and it is for that reason I support the motion of the member for Sussex. I venture to say that the proposal we are debating will soon become law, not only in Australia and New Zealand, but among every other English-speaking people in the world. I hope to live to see the day when our respected Premier will acknowledge his error in this matter, and bring in a measure for giving the franchise to all the taxpayers of the colony of both sexes. I sincerely hope this reform will come from the Premier, and that he will admit the extension of the franchise to women is a wise course to take. I had the pleasure of being in South Australia a few months ago, when the general election was proceeding, and when the whole of Australia was watching, with great anxiety, the way in which the women would vote. I think I may say the result has not been disappointing to those who have observed it. We know, of course, there may have been mistakes ; but we know that the exercise of new-found power is liable to abuse. I venture to say that, in the future elections of South Australia, were women now have the franchise, and in other places where the franchise has been conferred upon them, we shall not have to regret the use which women make of the power given to them. I deeply regret there are members here—whom I respect—who have seen fit to reject this motion ; but the day will come when the tables will be turned, and we, who are now supporting the motion, will be in a glorious majority.

MR. HARPER : The hon. member for Nannine used an argument against the motion to the effect that women should not be given power when they have not the physical force to carry out that power ; but the hon. member quite overlooked the fact that there are two kinds of power given to the human race, one being physical, the other moral. Those who recognise the present course of life in the world must be convinced that the predominance of physical force is approaching its end. All the nations are now finding that, although they would perhaps like to go to war, it is impossible to do so against the moral forces that are opposed to war. Moral force is becoming

more dominant every day. It has now become so much a practical question that two of the greatest nations on earth are at the present time considering how to settle differences by moral suasion, and not by physical force. Therefore, from that we may argue that we should do all we can to encourage and develop moral force. Surely we have in women a great reserve of force, which we have drawn upon very little up to the present. There have been many airy flights of imagination, in the course of this debate, as to what will be the result of the franchise if given to women. I think the touchstone of all, so far as my view is concerned, is this : Is it right, or is it wrong ? Is it just, or is it unjust ? If you say it is just, then you may leave the future to take care of itself.

MR. SOLOMON : On the last occasion when this matter was brought forward I voted against the motion of the hon. member for Sussex ; but since then there has been a general election, and in my candidature I placed the matter before my constituents, and to a certain extent they left it in my hands. In very many instances, however, they approve of the principle of women's suffrage, and I am going to vote in favour of it to-night. I do not think it is necessary to say anything to the arguments that have been used, because in other directions where the votes of women have been used in Western Australia they have been of great advantage. I would have liked to ask the hon. member for West Kimberley if he would refuse to take the votes of the women who helped to place him in the highest civic position in the country—that of Mayor of Perth. If, in a case of that kind, the influence of women voters was good, I feel sure that in other directions the influence of the female vote will not be less good. In fact, I have seen in many cases that, where a family has been going almost "to the dogs" in consequence of the actions of the father, the mother has taken the affairs into her own hands, and placed them in such a position that the family has been saved from ruin. It is not in one case only, but I have seen it in several cases in Western Australia, that such a result has been brought about by the good actions of a woman ; and no

doubt other hon. members have seen it in other directions. I feel sure the influence that will be given by the votes of women in this instance will be for the general good.

MR. COOKWORTHY (in reply): I wish to acquaint hon. members that I do not suppose those who differ from me and those who support me in this motion have less regard for women than I have. It is a difference of opinion, and, of course, we all have our differences of opinion. I think the Government have made a great mistake in opposing this motion, for I believe it is a great conservative measure, and, if adopted, would tend to keep the Premier for many years in his honoured position, which, however, I hope he will be able to keep without it. The great dread of this measure seems to be that women should enter Parliament; but there is nothing in this motion about entering Parliament.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: You cannot keep them out if you adopt the principle.

MR. COOKWORTHY: In the London County Council, which has a larger income and wider influence than any public body here, women are allowed to vote and sit as members. From all I have observed from that Council's proceedings, through the Press, I have not noticed any objection to the admission of women as members of that Council, or to the way in which women assist in administering its affairs.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: They are elected by ratepayers.

MR. JAMES: What is the difference?

MR. COOKWORTHY: Yes; they are elected by ratepayers, and the ratepayers in London are a very large number of people—much larger than the whole population in this colony. We will say those members are elected by the ratepayers in London, and they hold honourable positions in that Council. From all I have read in the home papers, I have never observed anything to the prejudice of those women who are members of the London County Council, but I have observed a good deal to their honour. Why there should be such a dread of women getting into Parliament in this colony I cannot understand. Are hon. members afraid of the influence of women? Why, if woman is worthy to be elected, she would be the pick of the electors; and

what objection could there be to her sitting alongside of us? If this House, or any other House elected under that franchise, chose to elect a woman as a Minister, why not? It would be simply because members thought she was fitted for the post, and there could be no objection that I can see to it. Not that I think it would be at all likely, and no provision need be made for their entering this House; but that is beside the point. As the hon. member for Beverley put it, the question is: is it right and is it just? I consider it is both right and just; and, believing it will be a conservative measure, and that it will strongly support the Forrest Ministry, that is the reason why I have introduced it.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: A very good reason, on your side.

Question put, and declared by the Speaker to be carried on the voices.

Division called for, and taken with the following result:—

Ayes	12
Noes	14

Majority against ... 2

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Cookworthy	Mr. Burt
Mr. Harper	Sir John Forrest
Mr. Higham	Mr. A. Forrest
Mr. James	Mr. George
Mr. Moss	Mr. Hooley
Mr. Randell	Mr. Lefroy
Mr. R. P. Sholl	Mr. Loton
Mr. H. W. Sholl	Mr. Monger
Mr. Solomon	Mr. Moran
Mr. Throssell	Mr. Phillips
Mr. Traylen	Mr. Piessie
Mr. Simpson (Teller).	Mr. Richardson
	Mr. Venn
	Mr. Illingworth (Teller).

Motion negatived.

PROPOSED PURCHASE OF PERTH WATER WORKS.

MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR.

The following Message from His Excellency the Governor, which had been presented by the Premier on the previous day, was now taken into consideration:—

"In accordance with the provisions of "Section 67 of the Constitution Act, 1889, "the Governor recommends to the Legislative Assembly that an appropriation be "made out of the Consolidated Revenue "Fund, for the purpose of an Act to "provide for the purchase of the Perth "Water Works; and also for making "provision for their control and management, the payment of interest and sink-

"ing fund, and for providing additional funds to add to, extend, and improve the present works.

"Government House, Perth, 11th August, 1896."

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) moved that the House go into committee for the consideration of His Excellency's Message.

MR. R. F. SHOLL said this was a matter which should be referred to a select committee, as it meant the expenditure of a large sum of money; and he asked whether this was the proper time to move for that purpose.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said the hon. member had better wait to hear what he had to say in reference to the matter, before making a motion.

THE SPEAKER said the proper time for moving to refer the matter to a select committee would be when a Bill was brought in.

Question put and passed.

IN COMMITTEE.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) : I beg to move that this committee approves of the purchase, by the Government, of the Perth Water Works for a sum of £220,000. In moving this motion I have for my object the expediting of the purchase of these works. Under ordinary circumstances, no doubt it would have been quite as regular, if not more so, to have introduced a Bill to the House; but, seeing that the purchase is to be completed at once, I adopt this method of informing the Government as to the wish of the House in regard to this matter. If the House approves of this motion enabling the Government to conclude the purchase, I will then bring down a Bill dealing, not only with the purchase, but also with the control and management of the works. The Bill will not only authorise the purchase by the Government, but it will also go very much further, and deal with the control and management of the works; so that hon. members, in voting for this motion, must clearly understand that, if it is carried by this House—and it will probably also be referred to the opinion of the Legislative Council—then the Government will purchase the works, and all we will have to do, when the Bill comes before us, will be to decide as to the best means of placing

these works under proper management and control, and also provide for the rating, for the payment of interest and sinking fund, and for many other matters connected with their control and management. As hon. members are aware, it has been currently stated, in the Press and otherwise, that the Government have been asked by the Perth City Council to purchase these works. For a long time past there have been difficulties between the City Council and the contracting company in regard to the supply of water; but I do not know that it is necessary for me to-night to go into the details of the agreement between the contracting company and the City Council, as no doubt most hon. members are aware of that agreement; but under it the City Council have a right to purchase the water works, in a little over three years from the present date, at a fixed sum. That sum is £200,000, *plus* what the company may have since spent on the works, and *plus* one-third more, but less a sum of £4,000, which has, I believe, already been expended upon further works. The Mayor of Perth informs me that, if the City Council had been able to purchase the works at the present date, the price to be paid would be between £215,000 and £220,000, or something like that. It is easy to arrive at the amount, because, £200,000 being the fixed price, all they would have to add is the cost of the works that have been constructed since the agreement was made, *plus* one-third. Hon. members, of course, know that the City Council have no right to purchase until some three years from the present time. The Government have for a long time past had this matter under consideration. We have been approached on several occasions by the City Council, but we have shown a reluctance to deal with the question. But at the present time being, as the hon. member for the Gascoyne has told you, liable to pressure, and continually being pressed to deal with the question, we have at last agreed to come to the assistance of the City Council, and the City Council have handed over to the Government the whole of their rights under the contract with the Water Supply Company—all their rights, title, and interest in the agreement, and have left the whole matter to

the decision of Parliament. They have agreed, in writing, to leave the whole question connected with these works to the House, and have agreed to the purchase being made for this amount of £220,000. They have agreed to hand over to the Government, and to abide by the decision of Parliament, all their interests in the agreement and in the water works, and in every way leaving to Parliament the decision in regard to the manner in which these works should be controlled and carried on. The Perth Water Supply Company have, on their part, agreed to sell to the Government the whole of their interests in these works, and in the agreement with the City Council, for the sum of £220,000, which will include all their property, freehold land, pipe-tracks, dams, and everything they have got, with the exception of new material and new stock in hand, which latter are worth about £1,000. These are to be bought over at cost price, *plus* 10 per cent., making the purchase price about £1,000, or something more than £1,000, for what is really outside the agreement. I may say the Government have made no agreement with either the City Council or with the company. We come to this House in order that the House may decide whether the Government shall enter into this business or not. We recommend the House to agree to the proposals of the City Council, and also the proposals of the company. Now it might be contended by some people, with some force and right on their side, that £220,000 is a price more than the works would cost to construct. I am prepared to admit that. I am prepared to admit that it would not, in the opinion of the Government, cost as much as £220,000 to place the works in the position they are in to-day. But we are not able to look at the matter from that point of view. We have to look at it from the point of view of the agreement existing between the City Council and the company, and also the value of the works as a going concern, taking into account the revenue received from the works at the present time, and the amount which is likely to be received from them very soon. At any rate, we are in this position, that we either have to accept these works for this

amount, or have to leave them alone; and hon. members will be able to judge and decide for themselves whether they will follow the Government in the recommendation now made, or whether they will vote otherwise. We have been careful to place ourselves in the position of not being in any way bound, and, therefore, we are perfectly free to deal with this question in any way. The only thing that we do is to recommend to the House that the purchase should be completed. I would like to tell hon. members what we propose to do, if this motion is adopted. First of all we propose, if we purchase the works, to introduce a Bill providing for the control and management of the works; and we shall propose to place these works under a board. Hon. members will have an opportunity of deciding the number of members to be upon that board, when the Bill is introduced. It is intended that there shall be no profit whatever accruing to the Government over the transaction. I may mention this, as it seems to be the impression of some persons that the Government wish to make a profit out of the works for the Consolidated Revenue. We have no such idea as that. Our only object is to assist the city of Perth and the surrounding suburbs, by giving them a better and larger supply of water than they have at the present time, and to place the whole matter of water supply on a more satisfactory basis for the citizens. The Government have no other object in view than that; and we do not intend that one single penny of revenue received from the works shall go into the public exchequer, but that it shall be expended for the improvement of the works and the benefit of the citizens. The works, however, will be required to pay their way, and to do everything necessary at their own cost. The Government do not propose that one single penny from the public exchequer shall be expended on these works. The works will have to stand on their own ground, and be made to pay; but when they pay more than is necessary for providing sinking fund, interest, and maintenance, then the board of control will have the power, with the approval of the Government, to reduce the water rates. The Government will provide the money for the purchase of the works, and also for extending and adding to the works,

and will charge the outlay against the sinking fund. The sinking fund is a matter which hon. members will have to express an opinion upon, but I think it should be certainly 1 per cent., if not 2 per cent. I think that probably, considering all things, it will be wise to place the sinking fund at 2 per cent., although this detail has not yet been fully worked out by the Government. I have given instructions myself to the Parliamentary draftsman to prepare a Bill, and it will show hon. members the plan I propose to adopt in regard to providing the purchase money for the works, and also for the payment of interest and forming a sinking fund. It is proposed that the whole of these matters shall be authorised by the board which will be appointed by the Government, and that the City Council may be represented on it in some way. I do not think the board will be a very large body. Probably, of the City Council, not more than the Mayor of Perth will have a seat on it. At any rate, that is a matter we can talk about hereafter. Parliament will be asked to authorise the board to borrow the purchase money—probably not less than £300,000—from the Government; and the board will be authorised to give negotiable bonds to the Government for the amount. The bonds will be secured on the water rates; the Government will buy these bonds from the board at par with Savings Bank funds; and the board will have to pay the interest and the sinking fund upon the money. It may occur to some people that it is not a very good thing for the Savings Bank funds to be invested in these water works. I do not agree with that, for I think it is an excellent investment for those funds. There can be no risk to the Savings Bank whatever, because the funds of the bank are secured on the Consolidated Revenue of the colony. I may say that, looked at from the point of view of the Savings Bank, it will be an excellent thing for that bank to be able to invest a considerable amount of money in this way. We have at the present time a very large sum of money in the Savings Bank—about £380,000—uninvested, or, rather, I will not say uninvested, because it is lodged at a bank of deposit, where we are getting interest. I may tell hon. members that the interest we are getting

is at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on £50,000, and for the balance we are getting 2 per cent. Money is accumulating in the Savings Bank, and the purchase of the Perth Water Works would be an excellent opportunity to invest the £300,000 that will be named in the Bill. I may state that, owing to the large amount of money we had in the Savings Bank last year, accruing through the increased amounts which depositors are able to pay in, the Savings Bank did not, in fact, pay its way last year. The interest was fixed at $3\frac{1}{4}$ per cent., and we could not then invest such a large amount, because we are restricted to lending not more than one-third of the Savings Bank funds upon freehold property, and we were not able to invest at a payable rate so much money as the bank had at the time. As I learned from the Under Treasurer, the transactions of the Savings Bank last year landed the colony in a loss. That will not be the case next year if we invest this money in the way now proposed, as the rate of interest now paid to the investor is 3 per cent. Therefore such investment would be a good thing for the bank, and, at the same time, a good thing for the State. In looking at this purchase of the water works from a commercial point of view, as to whether it will pay and as to whether it is likely to pay, I can inform hon. members that the revenue received from the water works for the year 1894-95—and I may mention that their year commences in November and ends in October—was £7,382, and the amount received for the eight months of this year has been £6,937; therefore, the income which the company will receive for the financial year ending October in this year will be somewhere about £10,000. Hon. members know as much as I do about the income from the water works, and about the income that is likely to come from this supply in the future; but the Government are quite sure of this, that the income from the water works this year will be something like £10,000, and it is likely to be much greater next year, especially if we can, in the interval, lay a larger pipe some portion of the way, so as to increase the supply of water during the summer months. There is no doubt, I think, that in the early days of the new board of management there will be a

great deal of expense required for the improvement of the works. Therefore the board of management will have to be very careful, because the interest on £300,000—which total is made up of £220,000 for the purchase of the works and £80,000 for improvements—will be at 4 per cent. interest and 2 per cent. sinking fund, amounting together to £18,000 a year; therefore, as I have said, the board, for the first year or so, will have to be very careful to make ends meet; but in a short time the water works will be reproductive and be a paying concern. I hope that hon. members will agree with the Government that the board should be given power to extend the water works, so as not only to adequately supply the city of Perth, but also the suburban areas surrounding the city. And, as I have said, there will also be power given in the Bill, subject to certain contingencies (that is, when they get more cash in hand than the board require), to reduce the water rates, with the approval of the Government; but I cannot hold out any hope to the citizens of Perth that there will be a reduction immediately. It seems to me there is a general wish that these water works shall be made sufficient for the demands of the city and suburbs, and I do not think the people will desire that there shall be any reduction in the rates for some time to come. At any rate, we desire that they shall get a good and sufficient supply of water. I have already said that the Government do not undertake this matter because they want to do so. We would much rather have nothing to do with it. If all things were satisfactory, if the City Council and the company were able to get on well together, and if the water supply was sufficient, of course it would be very much better for the Government not to have anything to do with this matter. As I have said, we resisted taking this action for a long time; we refused to come to the rescue; but we have now got past that stage, and we ask the House to approve of these proposals. I do not know that I can say much more in regard to this matter. There is not very much to tell the people. The agreement between the company and the City Council is well known to hon. members—I have copies of it in the papers before me—but the points which

really concern us are not very numerous. The City Council have not the right to purchase for three years, and when they do purchase they will have to pay the amount that is named in the motion, or even more if the company do, in the meantime, expend more on the works. I think that, looking at the purchase as a commercial undertaking, it will pay. I think it will pay the city, and I think it will be no tax whatever upon the people of the colony. I do not think the city will have to pay any more for its water than it does at the present time, and there is a good chance of its paying less. This matter has, of course, received a lot of attention from the people of Perth, as well as from everyone who is interested in it. They all see that, having regard to the expansion of the city and the increase of population, the present appliances of the water works are not sufficient. They also seem to desire that this company should not be able to make a lot of money out of the citizens. I would like to say this of the company, that they undertook these works at a time when it was not so easy for large works to be undertaken as it is now. Things were not so good as they are now. Money was scarce when the company undertook these works. There is no doubt that the sum we propose is more than the cost of the works; but we should remember that the company have never made a sixpence profit out of them, and that they have had to go through bad times during the last few years, and through the financial troubles which we have all experienced more or less. When we consider that they have had to go through those troubles, that they have never received one farthing out of those works, and that they have had to pay a lot of interest for accommodation, as I have no doubt they have, I do not expect that, when everything is paid up—although I have no authority for saying this, and I only speak from my knowledge of the circumstances of the case—there will not be much profit to the company on the works. That being so, we can feel pretty well assured that no one is making much profit out of the purchase. I think, as a commercial undertaking, the proposal is a fairly good one. The £10,000 of revenue for this year will be very much greater, next year, under the new rating

of city property. I do not know what the new rating will bring in, but I expect the city's revenue from rates will be considerably more than at present. However, I have no doubt it will be wholly required in order to meet engagements. We will require an increased supply for the city, and I hope we shall be able to increase the revenue. The proposal of the Government is now before the House. We ask you to approve of the purchase of these works by the Government for the sum of £220,000; and, as soon as that is approved, the Government will pay the money and get the works, and we will then come to this House with a Bill for their management. Hon. members can then discuss fully the Bill that we will present to them. I should like to be clearly understood as to what we want. We want authority to purchase the rights and property of the Water Supply Company. The purchase will then be made, and a Bill will be introduced as soon as possible providing for the management and control of the works and of the water supply. I beg to move the motion standing in my name.

MR. GEORGE: As the oldest member of the City Council in this House at the present juncture, I beg to thank the Premier for the way in which he has introduced this motion. I believe that in the minds of the majority of the citizens of Perth, the action of the Government in this matter is the logical outcome of the action that they have taken in regard to supplying the Eastern goldfields with water. It is certain that the Perth Water Works should not be in the hands of the City Council, for I am sorry to say the City Council have not given the country proof of their ability to manage such an undertaking; but, at the same time, the water supply should belong to the public, in order that a private company may not be able to levy blackmail upon new centres of population in the neighbourhood of the city. I am astonished to hear that the revenue from the water works last year was only £6,937. It would have been more than that had the new valuation been made in time for the levying of last year's rate. As to the question whether the Water Supply Company will make any money out of the sale, that need not trouble hon. members, for whether it loses or makes

is no concern of this House. The agreement with the Water Supply Company is the only thing we have to deal with. In my opinion, the company will not make anything out of the works; and, whatever the opinion of hon. members may be as to the original cost of the works, there is no doubt the water supply of the city has been carried on for the last five or six years at a considerable loss. If the Government or the Council had started those works, there would have been something to make up for loss every year. The main question is that we want the water, and there is no guarantee that we will get it, unless the improvement of the works is taken in hand at once. Whether the short supply of water is the fault of the City Council or of the company is not the question that the House has to deal with. What we have to face is that the city requires more water than the pipes can bring down, and that it is necessary for the Government to buy the works and spend money on improvements, so as to bring sufficient water from the main reservoir. Therefore I thank the Premier for the motion he has introduced. With regard to the constitution of the board, I hope the Premier will reconsider the point of giving only to the Mayor of the city a seat on that board. I trust that the Premier will be able to see his way to giving the City Council two representatives on the board. I think the City Council are entitled to that, and I hope the Premier will accede to the suggestion. As to the City Council not having the right to buy the works for three years, it is not to be supposed the company would not sell them to the Council before that time, if the Government would only provide the purchase money so that the City Council could purchase. The City Council have placed themselves unreservedly in the hands of the Government in regard to the purchase of the works, and I hope the Government will consider the question of giving them two members on the board of control; for, considering the large interests of the City Council in the water supply, I think they should have a dual membership in the control of this important undertaking.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: While I am not taking up a position antagonistic to the purchase of the water works, I think

the motion goes farther than it is intended to do. We are leaving a great deal too much to speculation, by committing ourselves to buy the works at £220,000, when, according to the agreement, the City Council might be able to purchase them for less than that sum.

THE PREMIER : The City Council have no right to purchase at all for three years.

MR. R. F. SHOLL : I take it that is so, but the Premier said the Mayor had given him certain figures, and I should like to know how the Mayor arrived at those figures as to what the purchase money should be.

THE PREMIER : Under the original agreement.

MR. R. F. SHOLL : The original agreement is that the company must produce their books. I may be wrong, but that is my impression.

THE PREMIER : You are wrong. The price is fixed under the agreement.

MR. R. F. SHOLL : But the proposal goes farther, by making provision for the control and management of the works, the payment of interest and sinking fund, and providing additional funds to add to, extend, and improve the present works. Surely, before we commit ourselves to that, we should know the extent to which the works are to be improved, and the amount of money it will cost.

THE PREMIER : £80,000 more, I suppose, we shall want.

MR. R. F. SHOLL : If we buy these works we shall have to pay for the upkeep, so that I think the latter part of the motion is unnecessary.

THE PREMIER : That is not before the House now.

MR. R. F. SHOLL : The first object is to get the works, and then we will afterwards deal with other aspects of the matter. The Government are taking the proper course in purchasing the works, and I have not the slightest intention of opposing the purchase; but I think that the Government should see that they were placed in the same position as the City Council with regard to the purchase of the water works. They should not pay more than the City Council would be called upon to pay.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) : explained that in 1889 the agreement with the Water Supply Company was

entered into, and it gave the City Council the right of purchase within three months. If that right of purchase was not acted upon, it would lapse till the period between the 10th and 25th years of the contract. The 10th year would not come in until 1899, and until that time (three years hence) the City Council had no right to purchase. Members would see that £200,000 was the fixed amount arrived at, by adding one-third to the capital of the company. Since that sum of £200,000 was arrived at, the company had spent £14,000 or £15,000, and, adding a third to that, they would be entitled to nearly the amount now demanded for the water works—£220,000. The company were not bound to sell, and the City Council wanted to buy; so, between the two, he did not think this would be an unreasonable sum to pay.

MR. A. FORREST said the water works question had presented many difficulties, and the City Council during the past three years had had great trouble with the company, there being threats of litigation and always quarrelling. The agreement originally made by the citizens, through their representatives in the City Council, was fraught with evil to the people. It was a most dangerous agreement—one of the worst agreements ever made. It added 33 per cent. to the capital of the company in order to arrive at a price for the works. No one had any idea at that time that the colony was going to move so quickly; but things were altered now, and the proper course was being taken by the Government proposing to purchase the works. The matter was one that any commercial man could look into, and could see his way to pay interest on the principal and sinking fund out of the probable income, after clearing working expenses. It had been notorious, during the last four or five years, that the City Council dared not increase its valuation of city property. It would have been more than their positions were worth for the councillors to rate property on its true value; because, under the agreement with the company, they were bound to levy a shilling rate for water, and the higher the valuation of property, the greater the revenue to the company. He expected the revenue would be at least £10,000 for the current year. The Premier had stated that these water works were being

taken over in the interest of the city, and that the Government did not wish to make any profit out of them. It was known there was plenty of water in the dams on the ranges, but the company were not in a position to spend £50,000 or more in laying an additional pipe; and, at the same time, it would not be wise to allow the company to spend this £50,000, because then there would be added to it the 33 per cent. when the Council desired to purchase. Members who represented the city and the other districts of the colony would congratulate the Government on the bold stroke they had taken, in deciding to purchase the water works.

MR. JAMES expressed his deep thanks to the Government, on behalf of himself and his constituents, for having taken this matter in hand. Those who had had experience in the City Council must have come to the conclusion that it was necessary these water works should be in the hands of the Government, for they were intended to serve not only Perth, but the suburbs. When first the contract was made, provision was put in that the Council should pay the company, in the case of a purchase, the amount of the capital, *plus* a third; but there was no provision in the contract as to what the amount of capital was to be. After the works were completed, and the third added to the cost, it was estimated that £200,000 would be, roughly speaking, a fair purchase price. Further extensions had been made, and the City Council a little while back had reckoned that, if they purchased then, the price would be about £218,000. But even at £220,000, if the City Council had had the money, they would have been glad to purchase the works, because they recognised it would be a paying investment, and that the works would pay handsomely. By the Government purchasing at the price named, the interests of the country would be conserved, and the works would earn interest in addition to working expenses. He was glad to hear from the Government that they did not intend to use their ownership of these works for the purpose of making money. He hoped that, when the House came to consider the details of the Bill, they would bear in mind the interests of the city, and give due consideration to the city on any board that might be formed. He could

assure members that the price was not an unfair one, and that at this price the city of Perth alone, by its water rate, would pay a good interest. It would be by no means a losing investment. He had expressed the view, there and elsewhere, that these works ought to be in the hands of the Government, because it was necessary to look to the interests of the growing suburbs around Perth. If the works had got into the hands of the City Council, the interests of the suburbs would have been made subservient to the interests of the city. By taking the matter up now, the Government would be deserving well of the city of Perth; and he tendered his personal thanks, as a ratepayer, and also the thanks of the constituency he represented.

MR. SIMPSON said he was glad the Government had decided to buy the water works. He had always held the opinion that those water works should be obtained for the city, and he was glad to see that action had been taken to acquire them. The only detail he should like to see investigated was the price of £220,000. He had reason to believe that price had been "loaded," and the Premier knew that he (Mr. Simpson) had at his back facts in support of that statement. He again said that he had reason to believe this purchase price was a "loaded" price, but possibly it would bear investigation. The company were probably in a position to say that was their price, and that they would not take less. Even if that were the case, the matter would have to be dealt with on the price asked by the company, and he hoped the purchase would be completed at the earliest moment. He trusted there would be a board appointed that would give satisfaction to everybody connected with the concern, down to the smallest ratepayer, and that the board would be representative of all the interests, and not be appointed on the lines followed in other colonies.

MR. LOTON said those gentlemen who had been members of the Perth City Council for the last seven or eight years had not a very rosy time in connection with these water works. The trouble had begun with the making of the agreement, though it was hardly worth calling an agreement, for the provisions were all on one side, and against the city of Perth.

The time had now arrived when these water works must be purchased in the interests of the city. It seemed, from what the Premier had stated, that the City Council could not, as a right, purchase under the agreement for three years. The Government, however, had taken the matter in hand, and he understood the company had stated the price they would accept, and the Government would have to pay it or fail to complete the purchase. It was probable that, if the matter were gone carefully into, it would be found there was not much profit in the transaction for the company. He did not think, from the knowledge he had of the company in the early stages of the work, they had kept a very strict account of the expenditure. They had an object in doing that: they wanted to fix the cost of the work as high as they could, and then add the 33 per cent. to it. The question was a very simple one. It was whether the House was in favour of the purchase of the water works, with the object of increasing the adequacy of the works and giving a permanent supply; and when this permanent supply was got, it would have to be made to pay interest, and sinking fund, and working expenses. He was glad to support the motion, in order to get rid of this incubus; but he was not able to say whether this would be a profitable undertaking at the outset. He was inclined to think the board would have to have its wits about it in order to make ends meet at the start. If the Government wished to purchase the water works, they would never have a better or more favourable opportunity than the present; therefore he was heartily in accord with the motion.

MR. RANDELL said he could not let this motion pass without saying a few words as one of the members for the city. He desired to congratulate the Government on having arrived at the present stage in that very important matter. He hoped the step had not been taken too late for the Government to make better provision for supplying the city with water next summer. With regard to the price fixed, the Government were willing to give £220,000, and he took it that it was better to pay this amount than not to make the purchase. He was pleased to find that a board was to be appointed to undertake the management of this

great work; and no doubt the chairman of the board would be a paid officer, for they could not expect an honorary board to discharge the onerous duties of managers of the water works. He also gathered that the Mayor of the city would be, *ex officio*, a member of the board; and it was not likely that the Mayor would be a paid member of the board. The chairman of the board should be a man of considerable ability, and would need also to be a man of strength of character. He would like to ascertain whether the Premier thought it possible, by the end of January next, to have a larger pipe laid between the water works and Perth, as he had reason to believe the present pipes would be utterly inadequate for the wants of the city during the summer months. The water in the main reservoir was ample for the supply of the city, but the main supply pipe was too small. He was glad the Government had taken the action they had, as it would be for the good of the city. He had given his vote against the works being purchased on a previous occasion, because he thought the City Council were not the proper body to have the control of the works.

Question put and passed.

Resolution reported to the House, and the report adopted.

Ordered—That the resolution be forwarded by message to the Legislative Council, for their concurrence.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 10-53 p.m., until next day.
