

present, because it is patent to anyone that even the people now on the electoral roll can vote twice if they wish to.

HON. F. WHITCOMBE: They often do.

HON. C. SOMMERS: In towns like Boulder, Coolgardie, and Kalgoorlie, which are near to one another, a man could, if he wished, vote several times on the same day.

HON. C. E. DEMPSTER: If he voted unlawfully he would be liable to prosecution.

HON. C. SOMMERS: So he would be under the system proposed by Mr. Haynes. I would say that this great question is very dear to my heart; and unless the Bill is sent to the people, more stringent steps will be taken by those who are now called the shifting population of the Eastern goldfields. I trust such legislation will be brought in as will enable the opinion of the whole of the people to be taken on this great subject of federation. (General applause.)

On motion by HON. A. B. KIDSON, debate further adjourned till the next sitting.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

On motion by the COLONIAL SECRETARY, the House adjourned at 5.40 o'clock until the next day at 4.30 p.m.

### Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 22nd May, 1900.

Papers presented—Question: Fishery Regulations—  
Question: Branch Railways (private) on Goldfields—  
Sessional Orders—Address-in-reply, adopted—  
Motion: Duties on Imported Meat; Amendment  
passed—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

#### PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the MINISTER OF MINES: Regulations (new), made under Mineral Lands Acts 1892 and 1899.

By the PREMIER: 1, By-laws of municipalities of Bunbury, Coolgardie, East Fremantle, Kalgoorlie, Northam, Perth, Busselton, Fremantle, Roebourne, and Day Dawn; 2, Further Correspondence re position of colony in regard to federation.

Ordered to lie on the table.

#### QUESTION—FISHERY REGULATIONS.

MR. GEORGE asked the Commissioner of Crown Lands: 1, Whether he had taken any steps to remove the regulations restricting fishing in the Southern waters; 2, Whether he was aware that such regulations had caused widespread distress among a hard-working industrial population.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS replied:—1, No steps have been taken in the direction indicated; 2, I am not aware that there is widespread distress owing to this closure. From careful inquiries I find that there is almost the same number of persons employed in this industry at the present time, in the Southern waters, as were previous to the regulations referred to.

#### QUESTION—BRANCH RAILWAYS (PRIVATE) ON GOLDFIELDS.

MR. VOSPER asked the Commissioner of Railways: 1, Whether it was true that two branch lines of railway or tramway had been constructed from the Kalgoorlie and Kanowna lines by private enterprise; 2, If so, what were the terms of the concession or authority granted; 3, What was the gauge and length of the said lines; 4, Under what legal authority the Government had granted such concessions or authority; 5, What consideration the Government had received for such concessions; 6, Who were the persons to whom the concessions had been granted; 7, What running powers they had.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS replied:—The questions should have been addressed to the Commissioner of Crown Lands, as the Land Act provides for the construction of such tramways. The Railway Department has

merely given siding accommodation, as provided for under the Regulations governing sidings. The Commissioner of Crown Lands, however, advises as follows:—1, Yes, permission was granted to Mr. C. Jobson to lay down temporary tramways for the conveyance of firewood only, during the pleasure of the Minister for Lands; 2, At a rental of £1 per month, subject to existing rights under the Goldfields and Mineral Lands Acts. No timber lease or concession has been granted; 3, Gauge, 3ft. 6in. Length not known; 4, By Government, as provided for under the Lands Act; 5, See answer to No. 2; 6, C. Jobson; 7, None over Government railways.

#### SESSIONAL ORDERS.

On motions by the PREMIER, the following sessional orders were made:—

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

**LIBRARY COMMITTEE.**—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Pennefather, Mr. Harper, Mr. Leake, and Mr. Illingworth; with leave to sit during any adjournment, and during the recess, and with authority to act jointly with the Library Committee of the Legislative Council.

**REFRESHMENT ROOMS COMMITTEE.**—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Wood, Mr. Wilson, and Mr. Higham; with leave to sit during any adjournment, and during the recess.

#### ADDRESS IN REPLY TO OPENING SPEECH.

Debate resumed on the Address-in-reply, moved at the previous sitting.

**MR. ILLINGWORTH** (Central Murchison), speaking as leader of the Opposition, said: This session is an extraordinary one, a session called for a specific purpose; and I propose to take an unusual course, that is, not to speak at any length on the Address-in-reply. I have three reasons for taking this course. The first is that an opportunity, and a better

opportunity, will be afforded to discuss the federal question when the Bill is introduced, than on the present occasion. The next reason why I propose not to speak at length is that the member for Albany (Mr. Leake) has been accepted, I think throughout the colony, as the leader of the federal movement, or at any rate as the president of the Federal League; and as he has done a vast amount of work, I think the honour should lie with him to lead in this final session, or what I believe to be the final session, in regard to the great question in dispute; not upon federation particularly, but the question of sending the Bill to the people. This has been the question in dispute all along, and I think the House is almost, if not entirely, harmonious in its desire to send the question to be decided by the people of this colony. I understand this session is called specifically for the purpose of passing the necessary powers to send the Bill to the people; and it is my wish, and I think it is the wish of members sitting on this (Opposition) side of the House, at any rate federalist members, I think pretty well all members on this side, that the member for Albany (Mr. Leake) shall take the lead in this session on the particular Bill. Another reason why I do not propose to speak at all on the federal question at the present time is that I desire above all things that the question shall be settled upon a basis that is strictly parliamentary and not party; and as perhaps anything I might say at the present stage might be interpreted to have some party significance, consequently I do not intend to discuss the federal question at the present stage. It seems to me the Address-in-reply in this extraordinary session is of a character which necessarily, to a large extent, precludes debate. We have no Bill before us except that which has just been laid on the table of the House; and I think it would be out of place and unseemly to attempt at this stage to discuss the administration of the Government, or the proposed policy of the Government, because we have no such proposals before us. As I understand it, we have one piece of work to do in the present preliminary session. I understand from the Address delivered to us that in a few weeks we are to deal with the questions of the country. I

presume the Government will then outline what they propose to do; and then will be the most fitting time for members to criticise the past actions of the Government, if they desire to do so, and to express their opinions on the future proposal of the Government. I simply rose to explain why I did not intend to discuss this Address or to occupy the time of the House at any length upon this particular question at the present stage. I have nothing more to say at the present moment. I want it to be clearly understood that, as far as this particular Bill is concerned, my desire, and the desire of members on this side of the House, is that the member for Albany shall take the lead in the debate on the federal question.

Question—that the Address-in-reply be adopted—put and passed.

#### MOTION—DUTIES ON IMPORTED MEAT.

MR. VOSPER (North-East Coolgardie) moved :

That in view of the great hardships inflicted upon the poorer classes of the community by the present high price of meat, it is the opinion of this House that the duties upon imported meats and upon live stock should be forthwith reduced or remitted.

He said: I must confess it was not my intention to proceed with this motion this evening, especially as the leader of the House has requested that motions of the sort shall not be considered before the great question of federation. I would like to say, in that connection, I do not hold for one moment that the mere fact that the Government have decided upon a certain line of business abrogates the rights of private members in the slightest degree. I am not bringing this question forward as a party question. At the time notice of motion was given, the leader of the Opposition had not been consulted on the subject; and since a consultation has taken place, his desire has been to as far as possible facilitate the business of the House by confining it to the question brought forward by the Government. It appears to me, however, that at the present moment there is no business before the House. We have already passed the Address-in-reply, and the second reading of the Enabling Bill is set down for to-morrow evening; consequently if we

were to rise at this stage and the House were adjourned till to-morrow, it would simply mean so much time wasted. I wish it to be clearly understood, therefore, that in bringing forward a motion of this importance I have no desire to check the course of the Enabling Bill. In fact, had the two subjects come into collision, I should have had no hesitation whatever in withdrawing the motion. But looking at the way in which the Government have seen fit to arrange the business, and there being no possibility of such collision, it is quite open to the House to settle a matter of this kind. I am glad an opportunity has occurred, because I think there is no question more closely affecting the interests of the country at large than that of the price of meat. We all take an interest, more or less theoretical, in the question of federation; but we take more interest in the question of what we shall eat and what we shall be clothed with. For a few men who take a strong interest in federation and desire to see the Bill pushed through as rapidly as possible, there are hundreds of others who desire to see some change made in the cost of living in this colony. I do not propose to debate the question at any length; nor do I intend to make any violent attack upon what is called the "meat ring" of this colony. If we commence attacking so-called "rings" in this country we shall have a very formidable task before us, because it seems to me these rings are wheels within wheels; a series of concentric circles.

MR. A. FORREST: The "rings" are with you this time.

MR. VOSPER: The present high price of meat is due not only to the operations of a ring that is known locally, but the operations of a shipping ring, which has greatly increased the freights and very much augmented the difficulties of those engaged in the butchering trade. I am informed also on good authority that there has been such a tremendous demand for meat up and down the country that it has led to a considerable interference with the breeding stock, and I understand that the next agricultural statistics will reveal a state of affairs alarming from the pastoralists' point of view, as well as from the consumers' point of view. We are face to face with the fact that the price of

meat is higher in Perth and on the goldfields than it has been for some years past. That may mean a considerable amount of distress among the poorer classes of the community. It follows that when people have to pay extravagant prices for fruit, vegetables, and almost every article of diet, and enormous and unprecedented prices for meat, and also have to pay high rents—

MR. A. FORREST: Rents are not very high: they just pay the rates.

MR. VOSPER: Perhaps the hon. member looks at it from a landowner's point of view, but I can assure him the rents are high enough for my satisfaction. Of course, it all depends upon the point of view from which one looks at the question. The rates in the city of Perth are extortionate.

MR. A. FORREST: The same as they were 10 years ago.

MR. VOSPER: We are not here to discuss the acts of the Perth City Council at the present time, and the hon. member will hear enough on that subject later on. We are here to discuss the meat question, and I assert that, whatever the cause may be, the fact remains that the price of meat is exceedingly high, and the burden of earning a livelihood presses severely on the people of this colony. It is hard enough in Perth and the coastal districts, but still harder in the constituency I represent, and throughout the goldfields generally. It is thought, rightly or wrongly, that the removal or suspension of the present duties on frozen and imported meat would have the effect of throwing the market open, and that it would have a little influence in the direction of lowering prices. That is the object of the motion: there is nothing in the motion beyond that. I could not really say more if I were to argue the subject at length. I shall, therefore, content myself with moving the motion standing in my name, and shall reserve to myself the right of reply, if a debate ensues.

MR. ILLINGWORTH and MR. MONGER (by intimation) rose to second the motion.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): While I think the hon. member is quite right in moving in this matter, and I admit the subject is an important one, still in my opinion it should not have been brought forward

at the present time. It may fairly wait until the ordinary session of Parliament. I am willing to admit that on general principles when a product is high it is not a good thing to place any restrictions upon its importation; still notwithstanding that the price of meat is high at the present time—I refer to beef and mutton, whether imported alive or dead—no one, I think, can make himself believe that the price will be largely reduced by the removal of the import duties. By one who takes the trouble to look into the matter will see that the high price of meat at the present time is not due to the import duties. At the same time I freely admit that the high price of meat may be considered a reason for removing an import duty, be it ever so small. We all know that the duty on imported beef, if imported alive, is about a farthing a pound; and we all know that the duty on imported mutton, if imported alive, is about a farthing a pound. We know that the duty on meat imported is, on dead meat a halfpenny per pound, and on the frozen stuff, as it is called, the duty is three-farthings per pound. It is not a farthing a pound, or a halfpenny or even three-farthings a pound that we want to see the price of meat reduced, but we want it reduced twopence or threepence a pound. I am told the retail price of butcher's meat in Perth is eightpence or ninepence, some people say tenpence a pound.

MR. HIGHAM: A shilling.

THE PREMIER: I know it is higher than it used to be, though I do not know the price exactly now. While we are considering this matter, I think if the mover of this motion (Mr. Vosper) wants a good "cry" to go to his electors—and it is always a good thing to have a good cry: I should like to have one myself—it would hardly be prudent on his part to take away this duty on meat, because depend upon it this is a good cry to have about the tax on what we eat; and if we remove this duty, whether through the hon. member's instrumentality or not, it will be a terrible loss to those who are opposing the Government.

MR. KINGSMILL: We will get a better cry.

THE PREMIER: It will be difficult to get a better cry. You cannot always find a good cry that will "take on."

"The Bill to the people" was a very good cry, and the high price of meat is another good cry; and I should really advise hon. members opposite not to remove all these good cries they have now, because in the coming election they will find them most useful.

MR. VOSPER: That is the Government policy, not the Opposition.

THE PREMIER: I believe that if we take a farthing off imported beef, and a farthing off imported mutton, my good friends, the poor men, are not going to get a great reduction by that; for I believe the importers or the butchers will get the lot. If anyone thinks the consumers are going to get any of it, if they think the wholesale butchers are going to make a reduction to the retailers of mutton, that expectation is absurd. Wholesale butchers do not deal in farthings: I do not think they deal in halfpennies: pence are the lowest coin they deal in for wholesale purposes. So that when we take this farthing off, and although I can do without this farthing, speaking as Treasurer of the colony, still it is useful to the Treasurer because it is a large sum when all the farthings are mixed together; and these farthings will be useful to the whole congregation of butchers throughout the colony. They will have the farthing, somehow, amongst them; but as to the ordinary consumer getting any part of the farthing, he will not get a cent of it. My friend, the member for East Fremantle (Mr. Holmes), who knows all about this business, told us on a previous occasion what was the effect of a reduction in the import duty on meat; and I remember that when we took 15s. a head duty off imported bullocks and took half the duty off imported sheep, the hon. member told us that he got £300 that week out of the reduction, that it all went into his pocket; and he said—I have a good memory and remember this well—that if we would only give him the other half of the duty, he really believed he could afford to make some reduction in the price of meat to the poor man. So it appears that as the wholesale butchers got only half the amount of duty at the previous reduction, they would not make any reduction to consumers, but wanted the other half of the duty also, when perhaps they might be able to make some reduction. When

we do give them the other half, as I hope we shall be able to do some day, the hon. member (Mr. Holmes) may reduce the price to consumers, not a farthing a pound, but twopence a pound. Then we will all cheer him, and look on him as a bit of a benefactor. I am going to move an amendment on the motion, in the most friendly way, because I recognise this is not a matter of urgency, although one of great importance; and if this were an ordinary session, I should be glad to go into the subject and deal with it. It may be possible for me to deal with this question and with many others in regard to duties, in the coming session; and that will be the last opportunity we shall have, probably, of looking at the tariff before federation. If we enter the federation under the five-years sliding scale, we may revise the duties; not with the idea of increasing them, but benefiting our revenue. To do it otherwise would not be honourable as between colonies, but there will be no harm in amending our duties so as to make them more equitable and more beneficial to this colony, although not so as to break faith or do anything that anyone can complain of in regard to the contract under the terms of the federal constitution. I think it would be wise on our part to deal with this matter then; and I propose to do so in the ordinary session. I do not know what we may do then, but I will look into the matter between now and the end of June, when we shall meet again. I do not want my friend, Mr. Vosper, to think we are acting in a manner any way hostile to his proposal. Even if the hon. member carried his motion at the present time, it could not possibly have any effect, or would not be likely to have any effect, during this short session. It could only be an instruction to the Government to deal with the matter, and I do not think we would be able to do it at the present moment. I therefore ask the hon. member if he will accept an amendment, that this question be deferred till the ordinary session, to be held a few weeks hence. If the hon. member will meet me in the matter, I will undertake then to give him every opportunity to discuss this question, and, as I have said, the matter is not so urgent and is not going to affect the people much at the present time, the

items being too small. Although the passing of this motion might give satisfaction to some people in the country, yet they would find that while they were crying out for bread we would be giving them a stone—something they would not be able to realise, because if this duty were taken off to-night, there would be no difference in the price of meat to-morrow. There might be a little difference in the price of frozen meat; perhaps a halfpenny a tin might be taken off it, reducing the price of the 2lb. tin to about 1s. 4d. But if we could make a reduction of twopence or threepence a pound for meat, or even a penny per pound, there might be some urgency about it. But we know that cannot be done by taking off the duty. The question may be fairly left till the end of June, when we meet again. While I give the hon. member consideration for bringing the matter forward in the moderate way in which he has treated it to-day, I think we had better get on with the special business we have in hand, and deal with this question of the meat duties during the next ordinary session. I would ask all hon. members here to let us finish the special work as quickly as we can, and then let us prorogue, to meet again for the ordinary session beginning at the usual time; and let us have the referendum of the people of this colony on the Federation Bill, as soon as it is considered advisable to do so—that is if we pass the Bill. I have no doubt this House will pass the Bill to have a referendum, and have done with it, so that we may see what the people want.

MR. VOSPER: Are you prepared to go on with the Federation Bill to-night?

THE PREMIER: I did not expect the business on the Notice Paper for to-day would be disposed of so quickly. I am quite prepared to go on with the Bill, which is simple and requires little explanation, but the Bill will not be down till to-morrow. The hon. member, in my experience of him, has shown himself to be considerate; and when a good case is put before him and an appeal is made, he is open to reason. Therefore, I ask him to accept my amendment, or to say he will withdraw his motion till we meet again next session. I beg to move

That this question be deferred till the next ordinary session, to meet in a few weeks.

MR. A. FORREST (West Kimberley): There are many members on this (Ministerial) side of the House who are inclined to follow the hon. member on this question; but if this is going to be a party vote, we will not be inclined to support him. If the hon. member wants this duty taken off in the ordinary course of business in this House, many members here are prepared to support his motion. I am prepared to support it, and I represent the largest cattle district in the colony.

MR. VOSPER (in reply): I mean to accept the amendment.

Amendment put and passed, and the motion as amended (for deferring the question) agreed to.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

The business on the Notice Paper having been disposed of, the House adjourned at 14 minutes past 5 o'clock until the next day.

### Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 23rd May, 1900.

Papers presented—Question: Efficient Schools—Question: Railway Workshops, Midland Junction—Session Orders—Address-in-reply, debate resumed and concluded—Adjournment.

THE PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4:30 o'clock, p.m.

#### PRAYERS.

#### PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the COLONIAL SECRETARY: Regulations under Mineral Lands Act 2, Report of Education Department 1899.

Ordered to lie on the table.