

sue should be put before the jury unless counsel agree otherwise. I speak after considerable experience in this particular I hope the Colonial Secretary will submit this question to his colleagues, because this is not a matter which he can thoroughly understand, although I have had the opportunity of appearing before the hon. gentleman as a justice, and of obtaining his opinion on many matters.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 6.30 p.m., until the next day.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 10th August, 1898.

Paper presented—Petition: Perth Deep Drainage and Medical Practitioners—Question: Inspection of Hoisting Tackle, etc.—Motion: Perth Water Supply and Administration—Motion: Alluvial Dispute and Compensation to Diggers; Division (negative)—Motion: Government Contracts and Minimum Wage; Amendment, Division (negative)—Motion: Women's Franchise. debate adjourned—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

PAPER PRESENTED.

By the MINISTER OF MINES: Alluvial Dispute in certain gold-mining centres, Correspondence.

PETITION: PERTH DEEP DRAINAGE AND MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS.

Presented by MR. WALTER JAMES, signed by medical practitioners in Perth, praying that the deep drainage of the city be undertaken. Petition read and ordered to be printed.

QUESTION: INSPECTION OF HOISTING TACKLE, etc.

MR. SOLOMON asked the Premier, whether, in view of recent accidents which had occurred in consequence of inferior gear and tackle being in use, the Government would take into consideration the advisability of the appointment of an inspector of tackle and gear of shipping, also that used in commercial circles.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied:—Inquiries have been made, but so far no definite information has been obtained as to what is the usual practice in other places. As soon as that is ascertained, an announcement will be made on the subject.

MOTION: PERTH WATER SUPPLY AND ADMINISTRATION.

MR. WOOD (West Perth) moved:

That a Select Committee be appointed to consider the question of the Perth water supply and the administration of the Perth Waterworks Board.

He apologised to the Speaker and to the House for the serious risk he had run in being absent on two occasions when this motion should have been brought forward. On the previous day (Tuesday) he had made provision, but unfortunately the member to whom he sent the message did not receive it in time. The object in moving for a Select Committee of Inquiry was in no way antagonistic to the board which managed the Perth water supply, nor did he wish to cast any doubt upon the ability of its members, and he would like that to be clearly understood. It was recognised that the board was dealing with a large amount of public money in carrying on this water supply; and as there had been critical remarks made on the board's management, from time to time, it would be only fair to the board that an opportunity should be allowed, through the medium of this inquiry, for such explanations and statements to be made as the board could give in regard to its past and present management. The chairman of the board (Mr. E. Keane) was recognised as probably the ablest man in the colony for the position; and the other two salaried members of the board, though not experienced in works of this character, brought to bear

upon this business a large experience gained in other affairs. The expenditure of the board was now running into large figures, being over a quarter of a million and not far from half a million in one year, and the board received a large revenue, which amounted to £19,000 in the previous year, and to £15,000 for eight months ending June last. There was the more necessity for this inquiry, as the chairman of the board had made a startling announcement last year, to the effect that the water supply of Perth was likely to be short of the requirements; and he (Mr. Wood), acting on that statement, had moved in this House last year, for the purpose of having that supply increased, which was done by obtaining water from several bores in and about Perth, thereby making up a larger supply. He must say that the water obtained from the bores was very unsatisfactory in quality, notwithstanding that the Government analyst had reported it to be fit for human consumption. Water supplied to the people of Perth should be of such a quality that the analyst could certify it was not only just fit, but fully suitable for the purpose. The board had done a good deal of work this year, and in fact had apparently accomplished more than it had the legitimate means of carrying out; for it appeared the board had constructed works out of revenue which should have been constructed out of capital, at a cost amounting to something like £17,000. Of course that was not unprecedented, and he did not say this board was worse than other persons in that direction, but that could be inquired into. If the capital provided was insufficient, what was necessary must be obtained; for there was nothing so important in this city as a permanent and efficient supply of water. The board's report showed that at one time the supply nearly ran down to what might be termed starvation point, for one paragraph in the report stated that when the first rains of the season began to run into the reservoir, it contained only some 40 million gallons, being less than one month's supply for the city of Perth. That was a serious state of affairs; and if anything would justify a Select Committee to inquire into the whole system of water sup-

ply, that one paragraph would do so. Just now, too, the board was asking for an expenditure of a large amount of money for a new reservoir and an additional supply. In view of the present state of the money market, that was a serious question which would have to be considered. Still, the supply of water was of such importance that something must be done, no matter at what sacrifice, and there could be no question about that at all, because it was one of the most important things in connection with the government of Perth and of the country generally. He had much pleasure in submitting the motion.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): The motion was one which would do a great deal of good, and he was glad the hon. member had tabled it. We all knew the history of the Perth Waterworks and of the Metropolitan Waterworks Board. A Bill was passed authorising the purchase of these works for £220,000, and the money was to be raised by the sale of bonds, the sale being restricted to the Government. It was also known that the money was provided by the Post-office Savings Bank; and that, besides the purchase money, a further sum of £120,000 was authorised to be expended. The whole of the £120,000 had now been expended, so that the board had spent all that it had authority to spend. The board's report, which was laid on the table of this House a few days ago, showed that the board required more money for providing the people of Perth with a sufficient supply, and the board also proposed to extend the supply to the suburbs. That had been always contemplated, and it was provided for in the Act which created the board. Of course the whole subject was governed by the question whether the board had funds for the purpose or not. All these questions required consideration, and he did not think there was any better way of getting at the bottom of the matter and forming a conclusion in regard to it—seeing that Parliament was in session, and that any further money required would have to be voted by this House—than to appoint a Select Committee. It might also be right and proper for the Select Committee to not only consider the future, but also examine the past,

and ascertain how the board had expended the £120,000 that had been entrusted to it. He agreed with the mover, that no one would take this motion as a reflection on the Metropolitan Waterworks Board, or upon anything that board had done. He (the Premier) had one grievance against the board, the only one that had come under his notice, and it was that it had not paid the interest. The board had expended £120,000, which was entrusted to it, and also spent the water rates in providing for the works, but had neglected to pay the interest due. If that had been done to any other institution than the Savings Bank and the Government, probably the board would have been in the Supreme Court before now, and been compelled to pay. He had no hesitation in saying that it was most improper on the part of the board to expend money on works when that money did not belong to the board, but belonged to the public, to the Savings Bank of the people. Of course the consolidated revenue was liable for the amount of the interest due, and it would have to be provided for out of the consolidated revenue of the colony, until the board paid it. He had never heard of a more reckless or improper proceeding on the part of any public board, and for that reason he would be glad indeed for this Committee to be appointed, so that it might look into the matter, and see what justification the board could find for this conduct. He felt very strongly about it. The first thing that a public body, entrusted with the expenditure of public funds and the control of a great public enterprise, should do was to pay the interest. The interest on the money advanced was low, being only 4 per cent. Still, the board had not paid it, and at the present time the board owed £13,000 to the Government—because it was the Government that would have to provide the interest payable on deposits placed in the Savings Bank.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Who would pay the compound interest?

THE PREMIER: The country, he supposed, unless we got it out of the board. He always liked to give credit to those who deserved it, and he might say the board had grappled with the question of supplying the city with water in a very

energetic way, with the result that the board was able to meet the necessities of the population. He did not agree with his friend the hon. member for Perth (Mr. Wood) that the water supply was not satisfactory, for we should rather congratulate ourselves on the fact that we had found rivers of water hundreds of feet beneath the city, that water being certified as pure, and that we had it brought to our doors fit for use. It had served us well up to the present, and he would continue to do so for many a day. He was glad indeed that we had such a supply, because it would save us a considerable amount of expenditure in the immediate future. As he had said, the motion was not meant, as he understood, to be in any way adverse or antagonistic to the board. He had no fault to find with the board, except with regard to the particular point he had mentioned. While the board had shown a good deal of energy, he was unable to say whether it had practised as much economy as it might have done, but that was a matter which the Committee would be able to investigate. The only grievance he had against the board was that it did not carry out its obligations; and that was a serious matter which did not reflect credit on a public body. The Committee would deal with the future and with the past; therefore he welcomed this motion, believing that nothing but good could result from it.

MR. QUINLAN (Toodyay): The remarks made with regard to the necessity for bringing this important question before the notice of the House met with his entire approval, and nothing but good could result from the inquiry. He must enter his modest protest against the management and administration of the present board. The chairman was the only competent person on it, and was the only member who regularly attended to the duties. In reality, the chairman had done the business himself for near the last twelve months. So far as the other two members were concerned, he had only to say that the payment by the country to each of them of £150 a year at least warranted their attention to the business of the board, and it was a gross injustice that the country should have to pay £300 a year to two men who had

not fulfilled their duty. He knew what the business of directors in companies was, and that it would not need their attention beyond about an hour per week : and surely those to whom he referred could devote that amount of time to the duties of this board. There were plenty of men in this city and in the colony who were better qualified, who were competent authorities on this subject, and were willing and able to fill the positions for £50 a year each. In regard to the question of the city reticulation, he could not agree with the statement in the report that last summer we had no complaints of want of water. He really could not imagine how such an assertion was made, unless the members of the board had been better supplied at their premises than other people. One had only to go to a two-storeyed house in the city and ask the occupants if they had water during the whole of last summer, to learn that the statement was incorrect. As to the question of a new reservoir on Mount Eliza, he regarded the estimated cost as monstrous. Whatever necessity there might be for better accommodation in that direction, the proposal made was sufficient to warrant the appointment of a Select Committee. He knew of a town in New Zealand where water was supplied to 9,000 people, provision being made for supplying double that number ; and there were 24 miles of mains, the service being laid on about 12 feet inside each person's premises. Yet the whole cost of that system did not exceed £30,000, and only two men were employed, an engineer and a stoker. Water could be supplied to any house in that city, and some of the dwellings were three storeys. He visited the place, and went up the tower to see the provisions made. A similar proposal was made years ago with regard to Perth by Mr. Victor, who was well known as an able and qualified engineer ; but it was not carried out. What did happen was that the Government had to pay eventually, for purchasing an unfair and unjustly managed scheme carried out by the consent of the City Council. He referred to the £200,000 paid for a concern that never cost £100,000. Unfortunately, the City Council and the

citizens had then to deal with some persons who might be described as unscrupulous, for they got the better of the City Council and the Government, and they actually obtained £200,000 as the purchase price for a concern which, immediately after the transfer, required such a large reconstruction that new and larger pipes had to be laid from the main source of supply. The Waterworks Board was now asking that, in order to supply Subiaco and Leederville, it should be enabled to expend £71,190, or a partial reticulation of Subiaco, Leederville, and Victoria Park at a cost of £30,150 ; and the board also proposed to expend £6,500 on further reticulation in Perth, £11,500 on a new reservoir at Mount Eliza (Perth), and £1,500 on a pumping main from Wellington street. Those persons in Perth who had to pay rates and taxes must feel keenly the present depression, and must recognise the necessity of great economy in the expenditure of further money on this water supply. The board had not, in his opinion, exercised the strict economy which was desirable. The chairman was the only competent authority on the board, and he was not too well paid for the duties he performed. As to the other members, he repeated that it was a gross injustice that they received £150 a year and did not carry out their duties. He hoped the result of this inquiry would be that the board would be abolished, or be reconstructed, or be placed under the management of the present chairman. So far as the revenue was concerned, the number of empty tenements in Perth at present, and the general depression, should be a warning that the revenue was likely to be less rather than more during the ensuing year. He was sorry to say this, but the fact was staring us in the face, and this was another reason why some inquiry should be made. He therefore supported the motion.

Mr. A. FORREST (Mayor of Perth), in supporting the motion, said he had a seat on the board as an honorary member, but the little time he was able to give to the board's business did not enable him to grasp fully the details of this large concern. The management must necessarily be left mainly to the chairman, who could devote nearly all his time to it.

A board of this kind was not absolutely necessary, and it would be better if the chairman were placed in charge of the business, under the control of a Minister who would be responsible to Parliament. The other two members of the board were busy men, and probably could not devote more time than they did to these duties, while the amount of fees received by them was not much; and, of course, if a man was expected to give close attention to the business of a large concern, he must be adequately paid for doing so. If the board were reconstructed in the way he suggested, the Minister would be responsible to this House and to the country, and the water supply would be managed in a more satisfactory manner. This inquiry could not but do good, as it would show whether there had been extravagance or not; and also show whether it was necessary that a large expenditure should be incurred for increasing the water supply. Where the funds were to come from he could not say, but it was necessary that the people of Perth should have a larger supply of water than at present. The bore water, which formed a considerable part of the present supply, was objectionable. The question raised by the Premier about the payment of interest was a serious one, as the interest should be provided for before other expenditure was undertaken.

Question put and passed.

A ballot having been taken, the following members were appointed a Select Committee:—Mr. George, Mr. Lya'll Hall, Mr. Quinlan, Hon. H. W. Venn, and the mover (Mr. Wood); the committee to report in a fortnight.

MOTION: ALLUVIAL DISPUTE AND COMPENSATION FOR IMPRISONMENT.

SELECT COMMITTEE (PROPOSED).

Mr. VOSPER (North-East Coolgardie) moved:

That a Select Committee of this House be appointed to inquire as to whether certain alluvial diggers who were imprisoned about the period of the late alluvial dispute were illegally or unjustly incarcerated, and to report whether in the opinion of the committee such prisoners are entitled to any recompense or compensation for their detention.

In proposing this motion, he did not desire to make any remarks antagonistic

either to the Ivanhoe Venture Company, which has been concerned in the dispute referred to in the motion, or to say anything censorious on the action taken by the Government in regard to that dispute. His object was to have an inquiry made by a Select Committee of the House, as to whether the men imprisoned for alleged contempt of court were justly or unjustly imprisoned; and, if it could be shown that they had been unjustly imprisoned, then those men should be granted that compensation to which they would in that case be undoubtedly entitled. In briefly sketching the history of this alluvial dispute, he would endeavour to avoid controverted questions as far as possible. A number of companies had taken up land at the Boulder and in the neighbourhood of Kalgoorlie, and they had been prospecting and working their leases for some considerable time before the commencement of the alluvial dispute, though few discoveries of a satisfactory character had been made before that dispute began. Discoveries of alluvial gold at considerable depths were made in the neighbourhood of Kanowna, and it was argued, from the appearance of the country, that similar discoveries would be made in the neighbourhood of Bulong and at the Boulder. With the object of proving whether alluvial gold existed there, prospecting operations were commenced by alluvial miners on leases lying to the south-west of the town of Bulong, and on the Ivanhoe Venture lease, situated to the eastward of the Boulder. No doubt the lessees had to suffer a considerable amount of inconvenience, if not actual loss, by the presence of alluvial diggers on their ground; but it was also true, and in this contention he was upheld by the most eminent legal authorities in the colony, that these men had a legal right to enter upon those leases under section 36 of the Goldfields Act, for the purpose of searching for and carrying away alluvial gold. But they were bound by certain restrictions, which no one pretended had been violated. True, there had recently been an attempt to peg out a certain shaft on the Ivanhoe Venture lease, but this was subsequent to the dispute; and it was noticeable, as showing how strictly the men desired to keep

within their rights, that the peggers-out of the shaft were refused the support of the Alluvial Miners' Association, and they finally abandoned the ground. The managers of the claims concerned were apparently puzzled as to what course it was best to pursue for excluding alluvial diggers from their leases, and they adopted the extraordinary method of pegging out the four corners of their ground, and declaring those to be the boundaries of their lodes, the law providing that the alluvial miner could not come within 50 feet of the course of a lode. This action, however, did not deter the alluvial men from working the leases, and the matter was brought before the warden's court. A prodigious amount of argument and evidence was heard; and the warden upheld the action of the mine managers, and issued injunctions to prevent the men coming within the four corners of the areas pegged out by the companies. Backed up by legal advice, the men chose to act in defiance of the orders of the warden.

MR. MORAN: They did not act on legal advice.

MR. VOSPER: There was a legal interpretation given to those men of the terms of section 36 of the Act, and they were advised that, in spite of the warden's decision, they could work inside the leased areas. The men disobeyed the warden's injunctions; and, when the cases came before the warden's courts again, the magistrates were asked by counsel for the diggers to state special cases for the Supreme Court. This they at first refused to do. They declined to allow the men that opportunity of appeal which would have gone a long way towards settling the dispute in its initial stage. A special case was refused when applied for by Mr. Jones and other counsel in Kalgoorlie; and the same thing occurred in connection with the Bulong dispute. The men were thus denied their right of appeal, for the old Act made it optional with the warden whether he would state a special case or not. The wardens afterwards devoted the whole of their energies and authority to keeping the men off the leases; but the diggers still worked on in spite of these decisions. The next thing that happened was the arrest of some of the men.

In no case did a digger resist arrest—all they did was to maintain their right to go on the leases—and the result was that a number of them were committed to Fremantle gaol. Of these, some fourteen or sixteen were from Bulong, and some half-dozen from the neighbourhood of the Boulder. They were incarcerated for various periods, from one month to six or seven weeks.

MR. MONGER: And they never lived better in their lives.

MR. VOSPER: Some people might have a taste for gaol accommodation, but these men were not so far degraded. This House should try to treat the matter in a serious spirit, as this was not a matter in which frivolous interjections were justifiable. If these men had suffered an injustice, they had suffered one of the most gross injustices that could be inflicted on human beings; and if they had been illegally imprisoned, they were entitled, in the name of common justice, to such compensation as the country could afford to give them. He contended that the men had suffered a grave injustice; but he would not ask the House at this stage to endorse his contention, and to say that the wardens were wrong and the men were right. He merely asked that an inquiry should be made by a Select Committee of the House, to ascertain the exact position of affairs. It was remarkable, in connection with this contention, that every case brought for trial at the Supreme Court had been decided in favour of the diggers. Judging by the Supreme Court decisions, the men were well within their rights from the beginning; and, even at the commencement of the dispute, there were not lacking evidences to show that they were right. Their solicitors advised them to take the course which they adopted. A well-known solicitor on the goldfields, a gentleman deservedly respected in his profession, and who had been frequently employed by the Crown in criminal cases, had written him a private letter fully bearing out that contention. Whatever injury the Ivanhoe Venture Syndicate had suffered in respect of this dispute would appear to be due rather to the neglect of the management to take advantage of the provisions of the law, than to any fault in the

law or in its administration. The law was explicit, and provided a remedy for the difficulties of the company, of which the management did not avail itself. The directors either knew, or did not know, that their lease contained alluvial gold. If they did know of it, then section 33 of the Goldfields Act provided that, in such cases, the Minister could grant a lease for alluvial purposes.

MR. MORAN: They did not know of the existence of the alluvial.

MR. VOSPER: On that subject he had come provided with the best evidence obtainable—that of the Government geologist of this colony; and the Government geologist of New South Wales, one of the foremost scientists in Australia, who fully confirmed the opinion of our own local authority. In section 33 of the Act, an immense power was given to the Minister, who was the officer appointed to interpret the Act for all administrative purposes, and who, if applied to, could have granted the syndicate an alluvial lease for their ground. And not only did section 36 of the Act allow them to preserve intact from the encroachments of the digger an area of 50 feet on each side of any lode or reef running through their property, but regulations 43 and 44 provided for the reservation of a machine site of five acres, on which digging could not be carried on. In addition, they were entitled, by regulation 46, to apply for a tailings area of another five acres. Thus the syndicate could, before the dispute arose, have taken up something like 14 acres out of the 24 of which their ground consisted, leaving only ten acres to be worked by the alluvial digger, or they could have applied for and obtained an alluvial lease. Probably it was because they did not suspect the existence of alluvial that it did not occur to them to take such precautions. The alluvial men were supported during the dispute, not only by legal advice, but also by scientific evidence. Take, first of all, what the Government geologist said at the Kalgoorlie warden's court. There Mr. Gibb Maitland declared that some of the ground in the Ivanhoe Venture claim consisted of alluvial to a depth of 116 feet, and that there was no trace of a lode formation at that depth.

MR. MORAN: The lode was below that.

MR. VOSPER: Mr. Gibb Maitland explained that alluvial might be superimposed on a reef or lode formation, but that a reef or lode formation could not exist through alluvial. And, according to the Government geologist, while there was nothing to show that a lode or a reef existed on this property, there was, on the contrary, every evidence that alluvial existed there. The Act authorised these men to go upon certain ground to search for alluvial; and, being informed on the high scientific authority of the Government geologist that it was alluvial, and came within the scope of section 36, they were perfectly justified in asserting that they were searching for alluvial in accordance with the Act. Similar evidence was given at Bulong. The evidence adduced by the Government geologist was totally disregarded by the board. Since that time the view of the Government geologist had been confirmed by Mr. Pittman, who was here on a visit, and gave much attention to what took place on the fields. It was not his (Mr. Vosper's) business to censure or say a word about the Ivanhoe Venture people or their doings, but it was sufficient to show that in the opinion of competent persons there was alluvial on those leases, and that the law provided that miners might go there and search for alluvial. Mr. Pittman was asked:—

In the course of your inspection of the mines here, I suppose you have come across a good many cement deposits?—Yes.

In your opinion, should cement be classed as alluvial?—I may state that that was one of the points I looked forward to investigate with some curiosity, because I had seen specimens of cement in Sydney from the 25-Mile, and believed that they were sedimentary rocks or desert sandstone; but I must admit that, having since inspected the deposit, I was wrong. I was led to a wrong conclusion by the small hand specimens. There is now no doubt in my mind that it is an alluvial deposit.

This evidence bore out what Mr. Maitland said, and also indicated that the men were justified in thinking, even if they were wrong in their opinion, that they were quite within their rights in entering upon this ground to search for alluvial. Had the resolution recently passed by this House taken a wider scope, by

providing for an inquiry into both sides of the question as to whether any person or persons suffered injury, he would not now be delivering this speech. He would have supported such a motion heartily; but the resolution actually passed was a great deal too narrow for his purpose, and consequently he was obliged to come before the House and ask it now to appoint a separate committee. If it were necessary to merely enlarge the functions of the present committee, so that they might carry out this work, he would have no objection; but he did not move in that direction, for the reason that while he had no personal objection to the committee, he thought it possible that the House might look on this as a separate question and might desire a separate committee. He was not present when the member for York (Mr. Monger) moved for an inquiry; otherwise he would probably have asked him to accept an amendment to widen its scope. The opportunity for that was now past; consequently he had no course open to him but to ask for this inquiry. The House should seriously consider, in the interests of justice, whether this inquiry was not necessary. A good deal of harm had been done and ill-feeling provoked by the imprisonment of those miners; and if it should be found that they had been treated unjustly and had a grievance against the Government, then the Government would, he thought, say that those miners should be fairly compensated. If, on the other hand, this was not proved, then we would dispose of the question, and it could not afterwards be raised against the Government or the House that there was a refusal to do justice.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): The hon. member asked this House to appoint a committee to inquire whether certain alluvial diggers, who were imprisoned during the period of the late alluvial dispute, were illegally or unjustly incarcerated, and he desired that, if they had been, they should be compensated. He (the Premier) regretted that the hon. member had brought forward this motion. It seemed to him that the usual procedure, in cases where individuals with grievances had a

desire to approach Parliament, was to present a petition, as they had an undoubted right to do.

MR. VOSPER: A man could not petition for an advance of money.

THE PREMIER: A man could petition to ask the House to do what he thought was right; but in this matter the hon. member was faking up a case and asking the House to start an inquiry and to gather evidence, whilst the persons who were said to be injured had not themselves approached Parliament. That appeared to be a procedure which should not be encouraged. If this House was to inquire into every grievance that occurred in the colony, and appoint a select committee in regard to it, we would have a good deal to do. There was an order of the court made in regard to this matter, and these miners deliberately disobeyed that order. He took it that the legal members in the House would say that the order of a properly constituted court was good and binding upon persons until the order was properly set aside. It was open to these men, as to every other person who was convicted, to at any rate appeal to a higher tribunal; but what did these men do? Instead of obeying the order of the warden's court until it was set aside by a higher tribunal, they deliberately disobeyed it and treated it with contempt. The hon. member admitted that they deliberately disobeyed the order and took the law into their own hands, considering the order bad and paying no heed to it.

MR. VOSPER: The Supreme Court said the views of the men were right.

THE PREMIER: Yes; afterwards. The ordinary course for law-abiding citizens was to endeavour to get a decision set aside, and not to flout it. Where would law and order in this country be, if every person was to take the law into his own hands, and because he did not agree with the order of a judge or magistrate, treat that order with contempt, as waste paper, defying the law? He (the Premier) told the men at Kalgoorlie, to their faces, that they had defied the law as propounded by the warden, and that they ought to obey it till it was set aside. As to the rights of these persons to go

upon the Ivanhoe Venture Company's property, he desired to say a word upon a point which had not been taken before, but which seemed to him to be of great importance. The procedure laid down under section 36 of the Act, and also under the 103rd clause of the Regulations, was that anyone desiring to enter upon land in search of alluvial had to give notice to the lessee; that within 48 hours after the notice, the lessee had to mark off his reef; and then that the miner—no one else—was entitled to go within 50ft. of the reef and search for alluvial. Did the hon. member assert that these men went through that procedure?

MR. VOSPER: The men at Bulong did.

THE PREMIER: Every one?

MR. VOSPER: Yes; he thought so.

THE PREMIER: We knew there was a rush at the Ivanhoe Venture. The men did not go to the warden at all, but they invaded the place, and never gave 48 hours' notice to do so. They took none of the steps necessary under the 103rd clause of the Regulations. The object of these persons was lawlessness, and they treated with contempt the judicial authorities of the colony. He was acquainted with the facts of the case.

MR. VOSPER: Why was not that evidence brought out at the Supreme Court?

THE PREMIER: The question there was whether these miners had a right to go upon the lease; and the Supreme Court decided that an alluvial miner, following the procedure of the Acts and Regulations, had such right. Would any one say that the persons who invaded that lease took the precautions which were specified? We knew very well that they did not. As soon as one man was arrested for disobeying the order of the court, another jumped into his place. Had each man adopted the proper procedure, he would have given 48 hours' notice to the lessee that he intended to go on the lease and work it for alluvial. Those men defied the law and regulations. We all regretted this unhappy trouble, but it was fanned by persons who were desirous of clinching home, as far as they could, their right to enter upon alluvial ground wherever they could find it, whether in accordance with the regulations and the decision of the warden

or not. There was an alluvial association up there which took this matter in hand, arranging it all, and making heroes of those who were brave enough, when they said it, to defy the law as laid down by the courts. He (the Premier) believed he told them by letter, and at any rate did so orally, not to go to prison to please any of those people. He advised them to obey the law, and that if they were not satisfied with the interpretation of it as propounded by the warden, to appeal to a higher tribunal and have the matter settled. He told them that, as far as he was concerned, he would give them every facility to have an appeal heard, and informed them that the Government had no power to interfere with the magistrates. We heard in this House on Tuesday night that the Government had no right to interfere with the wardens' judicial acts. What right had any Government to interfere with the action of a magistrate sitting judicially, except by the exercise of the royal prerogative? This motion of the hon. member was altogether unusual. The proper mode of procedure, if anyone had a grievance, was by personal application on petition; and if, on the hearing of the petition, the petitioner, whether he was one of these persons who were incarcerated or any other person, made out a case which, on the face of it, showed he had been unjustly treated, then this House would never refuse to listen to what the petitioner had to say. But in this case, could any sensible person assert that the men were blameless? The order of the court was made, prohibiting them from going on this lease, and that order should have been obeyed until it was set aside. There were means provided in the Act for setting aside a judicial decision; but, instead of adopting those means, these persons entered upon the lease and defied the order. The consequence was that some of them were sent to prison. He very much regretted that they should have been sent to prison. They ought to have had more sense. Their duty was to uphold the administration of justice, which was as much in their interest as that of anyone else in this country. It had happened, and perhaps it would happen again, that these very persons would have to shelter

themselves under the orders of the legally constituted courts of the country ; and would they then say to other persons who disobeyed the courts and treated their orders with contempt, that they were justified in the action they took? It was a two-edged sword, this disobeying the orders of a legally constituted tribunal ; and such disobedience might act in a way they might not anticipate. There was only one plain duty for us, whether as legislators or as citizens, and that was to obey the orders of the legally constituted courts, until those orders were legally and properly set aside. Therefore, he could not support the motion ; and though he had not spoken to any member of the House on the subject, he hoped that members generally would support the Government in resisting this motion. If the hon. member pressed it to a vote, he (the Premier) hoped that members would assist the Government in upholding in this country a proper respect for the law, whether it was administered in the Supreme Court or administered on a goldfield ; the essential question being whether the order of a properly constituted court should be obeyed, until that order was properly and legally set aside.

MR. VOSPER (in reply) : In spite of the advice of the right hon. gentleman, he intended to press this motion to a vote, if necessary. All he asked was that a committee should be appointed to inquire and report whether an injustice had been committed ; and members of the legal profession generally would admit that an illegal order from a court was no more worthy of respect and obedience than an order given by any other person. He had known persons who had resisted an illegal distraint by a bailiff, and had also known men who had resisted illegal arrest and incarceration ; and these men had been upheld by the courts in so doing.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL : That would not be acting with the authority of the court.

MR. VOSPER : The contention on behalf of the men was that the order which they were refusing to obey was not that of a person acting legally, but was the order of a warden acting outside of his

powers ; and when a man was acting in pursuance of delegated authority, and went outside the limits of that authority, his action became at once null and void. The contention of the diggers was that the warden exceeded the bounds of the authority delegated to him by the terms of the Act, and as soon as he did so his action became practically null and void. That was the view of the diggers, and which their legal advisers took also, and that had been the contention all through, as to whether regulation 103 had been properly made. He knew that in every case brought before a higher court, it was shown that the conditions had been fully complied with by the diggers. Mr. Moorehead, in arguing the case in court, made that point perfectly clear.

MR. MORAN : He was the solicitor for the other side.

MR. VOSPER : Well, the result of the argument was that the whole of the questions raised before the judge were decided in favour of the diggers ; and it was peculiar that in every case that had been before the Supreme Court, there had not been any attempt made to show that the diggers failed to comply with the conditions of regulation 103.

THE PREMIER : That point never came before the court.

MR. VOSPER : When the cases were being tried in Kalgoorlie, no one pointed out a single instance in which the men did not comply with the regulation ; and in fact an association was formed for the purpose of insuring that the men should comply with all the formalities which the law required. The only point was as to whether or not the warden's injunctions were good legal documents or were so much waste paper, and that was the point he wanted to have investigated by a Select Committee. He wanted it to be ascertained and shown whether the men, in being imprisoned for disobeying the warden's injunctions, had acted rightly or wrongly ; and if the Committee found that the warden had been wrong in issuing those injunctions, then it became a moral obligation that the men who had wrongly suffered imprisonment should be compensated. As to the men not having applied to this House in the form of a petition, that was probably an oversight ; and he would point out

that when the Ivanhoe Venture Company had their claim placed before this House, a few days ago, in the form of a motion for inquiry by a Select Committee, their case was not presented in the form of a petition. He had not opposed the motion in that matter because he felt that, when persons believed they had been subjected to loss through some improper action taken by the Government, it was desirable their claim should be investigated. That was all he asked in the case of these diggers, and it was only justice that their claim should be investigated in the same way. These men had been ill-treated to an almost infamous extent, because the interpretation of the law by the warden had been incorrect from the very beginning. The tendency of this discussion had shown that, even if there was no actual injustice, there was a grave suspicion of injustice, and therefore it became the duty of this House to inquire how far this suspicion was well founded. If, when this motion was put, the voices were against him, he would ask for a division; and he earnestly appealed to members to bear in mind that he was not asking this House or the Government to take any particular course of action, or to pay any compensation, or to censure the Government, but was asking only that a Select Committee should be appointed to ascertain whether or not injustice had been done to these men.

MR. ILLINGWORTH (Central Murchison): The motion was not asking us to support any lawless action, and the mere suggestion of supporting lawlessness would be rejected by this House. If the Government started by making regulations which were diametrically opposed to an Act of Parliament, and if difficulties arose in consequence of that wrong action, and certain persons suffered in the commotion which ensued, then it was right and proper that this House should appoint a committee to investigate the circumstances, and to ascertain whether the persons who had suffered wrong were entitled to compensation. If it was found in the inquiry that certain persons had suffered on behalf of the whole community, and that injustice had been done to them, then the Committee could report as to the

wrong which had been done. It should not go forth that, through an accidental breach of the law, certain persons had suffered injury, and yet that their claim for compensation would not be inquired into by this House. This motion was to appoint a Committee for investigating whether the men who were sent to gaol did actually suffer a wrong which they ought not to have been subjected to; and if it could be shown that they had been subjected to such wrong, then it was within the province of this House to compensate them for the wrong so suffered. He did not see how any hon. member could possibly vote against a motion of this kind. If the Committee, after due investigation, reported that these men had not suffered wrong, the matter would end. If it were a question whether these men should or should not obey the order of a court of law, whether the order were right or wrong, he would be with the Premier on that question.

THE PREMIER: These men defied the order, and treated it with contempt. They tore it up and burnt it.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Granted that they defied the order, if it were shown by the investigation that these men were the cause of their own suffering, then this House would have settled for all time a very difficult problem, and a great feeling of unrest would be removed from the public mind. If it were only to settle the question as to whether these men were in the wrong, it would be worth while to appoint a Select Committee.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. W. Pennefather): The member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) had gone quite beside the question before the House. On the constitutional aspect of the case, there could be no two opinions. In every civilised country, if the right of an individual to protection for his person and property had been infringed by any superior force, which it was the duty of the Government to quell, such a person had a perfect right to demand from Parliament, altogether apart from any court of justice, some compensation for injuries he had received. But the contention of the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) was a different one, for he frankly and lucidly stated that the men who had been committed to prison were

sent there by a warden whose order they had flouted. These men were sent to gaol because they, believing that the order was wrong, openly flouted it.

MR. VOSPER: Their belief has since been confirmed by the Supreme Court.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Admitting that, ten thousand times over, yet what state of society would we have in this country if it lay in the mouth of every disappointed litigant against whom an order of the court had been made, to say "I will not obey your order: I take upon myself the responsibility of flouting it." Why, the police force would have to be increased a hundred-fold to cope with the state of things which would then obtain. Of what use would laws be then? Laws were civilised means of avoiding the use of force. If people would not obey the law, then the law must be forcibly carried out. In this case certain men believed they had the right to go on certain leases, and the case was heard before a warden's court. The magistrate, rightly or wrongly, made an order telling them what his opinion was. It then became the men's duty to obey that order; and afterwards, if they had reason to believe that the decision was wrong, it was their right and duty to appeal against it.

MR. VOSPER: They were refused an opportunity of appealing.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Whether they were refused that opportunity was not the point. Perhaps they did not avail themselves of the proper procedure, if it existed; but even if it did not exist, that did not justify a defiance of the law.

MR. VOSPER said he was not justifying the men's action in that respect.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: But it was common talk throughout the length and breadth of the country that these men went to gaol because they would not obey the order of the court. That was admitted. Then what was the use of arguing about anything else? Were they justified in taking up that position? Clearly not. If such things were allowed, there would be an end of all law in the community.

MR. WALLACE (Yalgoo): Having watched the whole of the proceedings in these cases, he had come to the conclusion that these men were sent to prison,

not for committing a breach of the mining law, but for contempt of court; and therefore he could not support the motion. The action of the Government in this case was to be commended. Hon. members were here as legislators for the purpose of making laws; and, if we were going to allow sentimental considerations to prevent the enforcement of these laws, we had better do away with laws altogether. He would vote against the motion.

MR. EWING (Swan): The few words he had to say on this question would, he hoped, be taken as uttered on the assumption that the warden, in giving his decision in the court at Kalgoorlie, was wrong; that he exceeded his jurisdiction when he made the order against the alluvial diggers. The second point was, for what offence were the men imprisoned? Were they imprisoned for disobeying an unlawful order of the warden, or for something else? The warden made an order which he (Mr. Ewing) believed to be wrong; and he so advised the men at the time. He advised them that the order was *ultra vires*; but he at the same time knew, as a lawyer, that the men had a right of appeal to the Supreme Court, and he advised them that their proper procedure was to appeal accordingly. Moreover, when those men were in prison, they had still the right of appeal. Any morning they liked they could have applied to a judge in chambers through an affidavit, and could have shown him that they were unlawfully imprisoned; and, had they taken that course, they would have been released forthwith. But, instead of bringing the machinery of the law to bear for their protestation, what did they do? They tore up the injunction of the court and set it at defiance; and hon. members, as legislators, would be falling far short of their duty if they did not assert the dignity of the law, and stand by its administration. It was not a question of whether the regulation was lawful or unlawful, but of whether the laws of the community were to be set at defiance with impunity. The member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) had taken up an untenable position. A person who had been falsely imprisoned could not get damages from the man

who had imprisoned him, unless he could prove that it was done with malice. The hon. member had contended that the Government should, in this respect, be in the same position as a private individual; and so they were. If it could be shown that the Government had not acted maliciously, damages would not lie against them any more than against a private person. If the principle embodied in the motion were once admitted, every man who had been imprisoned and ultimately acquitted might demand that a commission should be appointed to inquire as to whether he was entitled to compensation for the injury he had sustained. This would be a very dangerous precedent, and therefore the motion should be opposed. Secondly, he would oppose it because it was the bounden duty of hon. members to see that the orders of courts of justice were treated with proper respect, even if they were afterwards set aside by superior courts.

MR. LEAKE (Albany): While agreeing in a great measure with the observations of the last speaker, he would ask hon. members to look at the wording of the motion.

THE PREMIER: That must be taken in conjunction with the speech of the mover.

MR. LEAKE: Yes; but it was impossible to overlook the fact that the House had previously been asked to deal with what was really the other side of this question, by a motion brought forward by the member for York (Mr. Monger) on the 27th July, when he moved for a Select Committee to inquire into the circumstances of the alleged hardships of the Ivanhoe Venture Gold Mining Company. There were the Ivanhoe Venture on the one hand, and the alluvial miners on the other. Without debate, the House had granted an inquiry into the company's view of the question; and this motion now asked for a similar Committee to inquire into the alluvial men's grievances. The hon. member (Mr. Vosper) would probably bear him out in saying that, had it not been for the first motion, probably the second would never have been heard of.

MR. VOSPER: Probably not.

MR. LEAKE: Further, law on this case was based on section 36 of the present Act, which authorised the alluvial

miner to go on a leasehold and seek for alluvial gold. A proviso made it incumbent upon the lessee to mark out the line of reef on his property within 48 hours after receipt of a notice calling upon him to do so. What was done by the lessee? Upon receipt of notice from the alluvial men, instead of marking out the line of reef, the lessee practically marked out the whole of the leasehold, and said, "That is my reef, that is my lode, and you must not come within my boundaries at all." Therefore the next alluvial men who entered upon the lease, if they did not give notice, might well be excused for not doing so by the arbitrary action which the lessee had taken in the first instance.

THE PREMIER: Certainly not.

MR. LEAKE: Perhaps their action was not right in law; but, in common fairness, it was surely reasonable. It must also be remembered that all the trouble arose from what was known as the 10-feet regulation.

THE PREMIER: Not at the Ivanhoe Venture lease.

MR. VOSPER: It did at Bulong.

MR. LEAKE: In the month of April, the Government modified that regulation by providing that the alluvial man, if he did enter upon a lease, must not unnecessarily interfere with the lessee. Then there happened what was known as the Kalgoolie riot, and finally came the repeal of the offending regulation. That was an extraordinary series of events; and, in view of the fact that the whole affair was, at the time, a burning question, the House should hesitate now before refusing to grant the inquiry asked for. What the result of that inquiry might be he did not know; and possibly, when the Committee's report was presented, he would be entirely in accord with the member for the Swan (Mr. Ewing) and would say that, in the circumstances, no compensation should be paid. But that was not the question at the present moment. The question was, should the House deny that measure of inquiry which this motion sought to afford? The member for York had asked for an inquiry into the alleged hardships of the Ivanhoe Company; and surely the motion before the House did not go much further, when it asked for a similar Committee to inquire whether the decrees of the courts were illegal, and

whether the men had been unjustly imprisoned and were entitled to compensation.

THE PREMIER: They disobeyed the order of the court.

MR. LEAKE: Certainly, they should have attacked that order in the proper constitutional way in the Supreme Court; but it afterwards turned out that the order was improperly made. These working men did not approach the question from the point of view of hon. members, who had perhaps a full knowledge of all the legal refinements bearing upon it. They saw from the start that they were improperly treated, and they maintained that such improper treatment had continued to the end. There could be no objection to the appointment of a Select Committee; but, when it came to considering the Committee's report, the matter might then present itself in a different light.

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

At 7.30 the **SPEAKER** resumed the chair.

MR. HALL (Perth): In view of the statement of the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper), that he intended to press for a division, a silent vote was not desirable. A comparison had been drawn between the motion introduced by the member for York (Mr. Monger) and the one now submitted by the member for North-East Coolgardie. It must be apparent to everyone that there was no analogy between the two; for the Ivanhoe Venture Company did not set the law at defiance, and these men did. The gist of the matter was that these diggers wilfully and deliberately broke the law.

MR. VOSPER: Including the warden.

MR. HALL: They might have been unlawfully imprisoned, but that did not alter the fact that they defied the order and broke the law. It had been pointed out by several members that these men had their remedy at the time, but they would not take it. No; they preferred to remain in prison and pose as martyrs. If we agreed to the appointment of this Select Committee, we would be offering a premium for men in the future to set the law at defiance, and the outcome of

it would be much trouble. It was undesirable that the House, consisting of law-makers, should in any way aid and abet law-breakers, and thereby become law-breakers themselves. We should make it clear, not only to the member for North-East Coolgardie, but to the people generally, that this House would not in any way aid and abet law-breakers. The solicitor to these men told them at the time that they had broken the law. He said practically, "I could have assisted you, but now you have taken the law into your own hands, I throw up my brief."

MR. VOSPER: Nothing of the kind.

MR. HALL: The lawyer was, he believed, Mr. Jones.

MR. VOSPER: Mr. Jones never threw up his brief.

MR. HALL: When these men broke the law, Mr. Jones declared that he would act for them no longer, simply on the ground that they had broken the law.

MR. MONGER (York): The motion of the member for North-East Coolgardie emanated from one which he (Mr. Monger) brought under the notice of this House about a fortnight ago, and which hon. members were good enough to carry. The Select Committee appointed on that occasion had the privilege of inquiring into the alleged hardships inflicted on a certain mining company. Nothing more. There was no power given to that Committee to say that compensation was due to that company for alleged hardships or otherwise. The motion now before the House asked for a Committee to be appointed with power to grant or to state the amount of compensation which certain persons should be entitled to owing to illegal imprisonment.

MR. VOSPER: It was to inquire into the question of whether compensation was deserved.

MR. MONGER: Owing to their illegal imprisonment. He did not wish personally to say anything against the gentlemen who were unfortunate enough to get into the hands of the law; but, as far as he had been able to judge, they had not been as well off for many months previously as they were in the few days or weeks during which they were imprisoned.

MR. VOSPER: Send them all there. That was the best thing to do with them.

MR. MONGER: A lot of them would be very glad to get there. He did not wish to go into the facts or the arguments in favour of or against the Ivanhoe Venture Company. He could only say that every possible inquiry would be made, and he believed that when the report of the Select Committee was brought up the member for North-East Coolgardie would be of opinion that there was little or no occasion for the inquiry now proposed.

MR. KENNY (North Murchison): The motion of the member for North-East Coolgardie had been received on the Government side in a manner which rather surprised him. He had expected that the leader of the Government, taking a lesson from the past, would, when such questions as these were discussed, have come to the conclusion that possibly a little discretion would show the better part of valour. A great deal had been said on matters which were in no way connected with the question before the House. Only a few days ago, a motion proposed by the member for York for a Select Committee was carried, the House acting generously in the matter, believing the appointment of a committee could do no harm. For the life of him, he could not see where the difference came in. Who had more right to table a motion and to expect favourable consideration from this House than the member who represented the diggers who suffered, or alleged that they suffered? Both motions were on all-fours, and he could not understand how certain members could justify the one application and reject the other. He had hoped that the House would receive this motion without any discussion, for the simple reason that it would have been well for the House and the country to let sleeping dogs lie, and to refer as little as possible to what occurred on the fields at Kalgoorlie a few months ago. The less that such subjects were discussed, either in the House or outside of it, the better for the community. Although members might not see eye-to-eye with the member for North-East Coolgardie regarding this motion, a little generosity might have been dis-

played towards him and the benefit of the doubt, if a doubt existed, be given to him. Every free-born citizen in Western Australia had a right to appeal to the tribunal of the people. One great charge brought against the alluvial miner was that they flouted the law. If they did so, they were wrong; but he must also assert that, if they did err, they erred in very good company. The Government should remember that, while they were accusing the alluvial men at Kalgoorlie of flouting the law, the Government had flouted public opinion, the opinion of the Press and the people of Western Australia. Week after week lawful appeals were made to the Government; but he could not forget the reply received to the representations made by 19 persons, members of Parliament and others, who appeared in the Acting-Premier's office armed with resolutions calmly considered, and introduced in a deliberate and respectful way. Probably not even the strongest opponent of the alluvial miner in this Chamber would say there was one member on that deputation who could be branded as a supporter of lawlessness. No one regretted more than he (Mr. Kenny) the unfortunate occurrences which took place on the goldfields in connection with this alluvial question; but he regretted still more deeply that there was a Government in power which endeavoured to justify such unwarrantable interference with the rights of alluvial miners. The Government and the Acting Premier at the time were fully aware that clause 103 was *ultra vires*, that it was diametrically opposed to the spirit and the law of the Gold Mining Act; yet they allowed that clause to remain in force for some weeks after the trouble began, and it was through their neglect in not withdrawing it that the trouble became so serious as it did. That was an error which he regarded as being worse than a crime. The Premier had remarked that the order of the court was good until set aside. Probably the Premier was right, from his standpoint; but he (Mr. Kenny) maintained that what was morally wrong could not be legally right, and there was no doubt that clause 103 of the regulations was morally wrong. It was condemned throughout the length and breadth of the

colony, and was condemned even by Government supporters, and subsequently the Government admitted that the clause was wrong. If that were not so, why were those miners liberated from gaol, after having been sent there for disobeying that clause? He had yet to learn that a warden, or an Acting Premier, or a Minister of Mines, was justified in framing a regulation and giving to it the force of law, when that regulation was admitted to be bad and vicious. Two motions had been placed before this House, the one on behalf of a syndicate asking for their alleged loss to be inquired into; and the other motion brought forward by a representative of working miners; asking that the claim of those miners to be compensated for wrongful imprisonment should be inquired into in the same way.

MR. MONGER: Those motions were worded in very different language.

MR. KENNY: Probably that was so; but the effect was the same; and he looked to the spirit of the motion, and not to the mere letter of it. What was sauce for the syndicate goose was sauce also for the dry-blowing gander.

Motion put, and negatived on the voices. Mr. Vosper having called for a division, it was taken with the following result:—

Ayes	...	...	...	4
Noes	...	...	...	20

Majority against ... 16

Ayes.

Noes.

Mr. Leake	Sir John Forrest
Mr. Vosper	Mr. Pennesfather
Mr. Illingworth	Mr. A. Forrest
Mr. Kenny	Mr. Lefroy
(Teller)	Mr. Locke
	Mr. Higham
	Mr. George
	Mr. Holmes
	Mr. Hassell
	Mr. Solomon
	Mr. Wallace
	Mr. Monger
	Mr. Piesso
	Hon. H. W. Venn
	Mr. Hall
	Mr. Wood
	Mr. Kingsmill
	Mr. Conolly
	Mr. Ewing
	Mr. Wilson (Teller)

Motion thus negatived.

MOTION: GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS AND MINIMUM WAGE.

MR. VOSPER (North-East Coolgardie) moved:—

That, in the opinion of this House, it is desirable that in all Government contracts, and upon all public works, a minimum rate of wages shall be established, which shall be not less than the standard rate ruling in the district where such works or contracts are being carried on.

In submitting this motion, he was actuated by somewhat mixed motives. Firstly, in various parts of the colony it had been the practice of certain contractors for the execution of public works to make use of their contract as a means of reducing the wages paid to those whom they employed, and in this way lowering the standard rate of wages paid in the locality, especially on the goldfields; this being done on the plea that what the particular contractor offered was the rate paid in Perth or Fremantle. On the goldfields, where public buildings and other works were being carried out by the Government under the contract system, men had been imported from Perth and Fremantle to do the work for the contractors, and had been paid at rates of wages current in Perth and Fremantle. But there was this difference, that what might be a living wage in Perth or Fremantle, and perhaps satisfying men in those places, was not sufficient as a living wage for men employed on such work on goldfields. The result had been that two or three strikes occurred in connection with public works on the goldfields; and though these had, up to the present, been on a minor scale, and not serious, yet some delay in the execution of public works had resulted, and there might be the further effect of causing the contractors to apply to the Government for an extension of time for completing their contracts. In a case at Kalgoorlie, delay had already occurred, which was detrimental to the public interest, particularly in regard to a contract for the erection of the warden's court; and as this building was badly required at Kalgoorlie, the tendency must be to cause inconvenience to the public. It should be considered, also, that in the near future the Government would be undertaking a gigantic work on the goldfields;

and he understood it was the intention of the Works Department to let that work by contract, for execution in sections. If any delay took place in connection with that great work, it could not be otherwise than detrimental to the goldfields, and injurious to the colony generally. One of the objections which some people had to public works being carried out by contract was that the contract was made an instrument for depressing the position of the wage-earner.

MR. GEORGE: Nothing of the sort.

MR. VOSPER: In some cases it was so.

MR. GEORGE: Why, there was sweating in the printing trade.

THE PREMIER: The practice of contractors was to give the highest wages in the colony.

MR. VOSPER: As to sweating in the printing trade, the most of that would apply to the Government Printing Office, so far as the evidence went. The reason why a person sometimes objected to the execution of public works by contract was that the contractor who took a job at the lowest price, being unable to make a legitimate profit, tried to get a profit illegitimately by lowering the wages. That became even more prominent when work was let out by a contractor to sub-contractors. Some works were so subdivided, that there was a series of sub-contractors and gangers, until the workmen became the victims of the final sub-contractor. Such cases having occurred in the past, it might be inferred that they would occur in the future; and the possibility of labour disputes occurring in connection with public works executed by contract was not calculated to bring about either efficiency in the character of the work, or speed in the completion of it. The system he was advocating in the motion had been adopted to some extent in other colonies, with excellent results. A Select Committee was appointed in New South Wales, in 1887, to inquire into the case of day labour *versus* the contract system; also to inquire into the working of what was known as the minimum wage; and it was proved that, in every instance where the minimum wage was made a condition of a public work, the tendency had been to diminish

the cost of that work to the country, and to increase the efficiency of the work itself. The reason must be obvious, because if an employer of labour, carrying out a large work, paid a high rate of wages, he was able to pick the class of men he would employ; whereas the contractor who paid a low rate of wages must employ anyone whose necessities compelled him to accept the low wages offered. In carrying out Government works, it should be made a condition that there should be the highest efficiency in the workman, the greatest possible speed in execution, and the best quality of work done. The best class of labour was not to be obtained by allowing a contractor to fix wages at his own sweet will. One reason for moving this motion was that he desired to see a better standard of work done in connection with our public works. The effect of the motion would be, not only to protect the workmen against oppression by contractors, but to raise the standard of our public works; and no great hardship could be inflicted on the contractor, because he would know beforehand that the best class of labour would have to be provided and paid for, and he would allow for it in his tender.

MR. KENNY seconded the motion.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. F. H. Piesse): The question of a minimum wage had frequently been brought before him by the Trades and Labour Council, and he had decided that the Government would not yet be justified in introducing such a principle into the conditions of contract for the carrying out of public works. Possibly the system might work with advantage in Victoria, and in other places mentioned by the hon. member; but it must be remembered that the conditions under which public works were carried out here were very different from those which obtained in the eastern colonies. In talking of the ruling rates of wages, the vast distances from the centres of population at which some public works had to be carried out must be considered. There had been a change lately in the rate of wages paid on the goldfields; for where at one time miners and carpenters, and mechanics of that class, received as much as £1 per day, the rate

had since fallen to 15s. a day, and at the same time the conditions of life there had very much improved in consequence of the increased facilities of travel which had been afforded. Thus the standard rate of wages was by no means fixed on the fields, and it would probably be still further reduced in the future. With regard to the sub-letting of contracts, if the hon. member would refer to the printed conditions under which all contracts were carried out, he would find that sub-letting was prohibited, and the Works Department most rigidly adhered to that principle by making it a rule that their supervisors, whenever they discovered a case of sub-letting, should bring the contractor to task. Heavy penalties were inflicted for breach of the regulation. In the one or two instances which had been brought under his notice, the contractor had immediately been served with notice that he was violating the conditions of contract, with the result that he discontinued the practice. It was better that this question should be open for some time longer. It could easily be understood that the contractor on the fields would desire to obtain labour at less than the local rate, though contractors, as a rule, paid the highest wages; and from all he knew of them, their desire was to obtain the best class of labour, and for that class of labour they were prepared to pay. But when the labourers in a district attempted to rule the contractor, as was done some time ago at Kalgoorlie, it was quite within the province of a contractor to do as he pleased with regard to the wages he would pay; and why should the Government step in? It was a matter between the contractor and the labourers he employed. A fair rate of wages should be paid; and the fact that he had upheld this principle in every instance was proved by the rates paid on the railways and other public works executed since he had been in office. But the labouring classes should themselves be able to deal with the question, and it rested with them to do so. It was to a large extent within their own control; and he would say, let it rest with them, and let them regulate it as they liked. The time had not arrived when such a proviso could be embodied in the condi-

tions of contract for public works; and he must therefore oppose the motion.

MR. JAMES: (East Perth): For the reason that he agreed with the statements of the Commissioner of Railways, he had come to a different conclusion from the hon. gentleman. This was one of those questions in which the views of the workers were entitled to consideration. They had a right to make their own regulations, as the Commissioner had said, but they were entitled to do it through hon. members who represented them; and this was a proper opportunity and a proper tribunal to lay down regulations by which the Government, who represented hon. members, and who also represented these workers, should be guided. This was an illustration of how, from the same facts, very divergent conclusions could be drawn. It was difficult to understand the position of those who maintained that the overwhelming majority of the people of this colony had no right to have their views expressed through their representatives in Parliament, and that they must be content with what they could do by means of private organisations to carry out their objects. When the Government entered into a contract, it did so as the representative of the workers, who were the large majority of the community; and it must not be forgotten that the working men of the country paid practically the whole of the taxes. Each individual in this community paid practically as much in the form of taxation as any other, though married men, of course, paid more than bachelors. Men of wealth in this country paid neither a land nor an income tax, and they were entitled to no special privileges. If the workers of the community considered that the comparatively few men employed by the Government should be paid a certain rate of wages, they were quite within their province in asking the Commissioner to give effect to their desire; for that extra wage would have to come out of their own pockets. If they wanted it paid, where was the objection to paying it? The workers of the community employed certain labourers, either directly through the Government as civil servants, or indirectly as the servants of Government contractors, and surely

they were entitled to say that a minimum rate of wage should be paid them. He would not go so far as to say that such rate should be equal to the standard wage in any particular district. He would be satisfied with less than that; but a minimum rate should certainly be laid down. The Premier had frequently maintained that this colony ought to employ the best talent and pay the highest wage. That argument would apply to the contractor's workman as well as to the well-paid official. There was no intention of attacking the contractor, who, if a minimum rate were struck, would provide for it in his tender. The only question was whether the Government, being employers of labour, should not set an example by being good employers. It was notorious that private employers were to a large extent influenced by the wages paid, directly or indirectly by the Government, and this enormous influence should be exercised. The extra burden imposed on the taxpayer would only be £20,000 at the outside, which sum would come out of the pockets of the very men to whom it would return in the shape of increased wages.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The system did not work very well in Victoria. There the minimum wage had become the maximum.

MR. JAMES: If that were so, it was peculiar that those who first supported the principle in Victoria still believed in it, and that this argument was only used by the opponents of the system.

THE PREMIER: It was not satisfactory to the Victorian bootmakers.

MR. JAMES: The bootmakers' strike was in Adelaide, not in Melbourne.

THE PREMIER: When the Convention delegates were in Melbourne, the bootmakers complained bitterly of the effects of the minimum wage.

MR. JAMES: Even so, it had not been a failure there, for the workers, who had power to alter it, still desired its continuance. They were satisfied with its operation and were standing by it. By this system unscrupulous contractors were prevented from taking an unfair advantage of their competitors by reducing wages.

THE PREMIER: There had never been a case of that sort yet.

MR. GEORGE: Hear, hear.

MR. JAMES: There had been several instances of it; but, as might be expected, complaint was seldom made by the men till the contracts had been completed. The object of the deputations which waited upon the Commissioner was, not so much the insertion of a new principle in the conditions of contract as the addition of some sanction to the existing stipulation. At present no penalty could be inflicted for a breach of the regulation. There should be a fine, and the fine should go to the person who laid the information. The difficulty of detection in such cases, which had been a great drawback in the past, would thus be obviated. The attention of the present Commissioner and of his predecessor had been frequently directed to this point. The contracts themselves did not contain provisions sufficiently stringent and far-reaching to carry out that principle which was embodied in the stipulation against sub-letting. If we had this provision about the minimum wage we should not require the provision about sub-letting. So long as men were paid adequately, there was no objection to sub-letting, the great objection to which was that it was used for sweating. A minimum wage would stop all that. He could not see why it was not competent for the House to decide that those who were employed by the Government should be paid a fair minimum wage, and be protected against the artful wiles of gentlemen called contractors.

MR. GEORGE (Murray): The member for East Perth (Mr. James) should confine himself to matters on which his education, training, and experience gave him a right to speak. The hon. member had never been a working man, and knew nothing about them, except the twaddle which he spoke when seeking election. What did he know about the way in which they lived and worked, or what their good qualities or bad qualities were? His hands had never been soiled with toil. Yet he came and preached to men who, all their life, had been intimate with the class of work referred to. He launched insults which he ought to be ashamed to utter. He talked about contractors, yet there was not a man in the House who knew so much about contractors as he (Mr.

George) did ; and, having been connected with them for about 28 years, he had never yet been on a contract where they had not carried out the one rule, and he defied any man to controvert it, that when they had wanted their work done, they paid the highest wages to have it done, because they knew they thus got the best men and the best labour. He could not sit there and hear the member for East Perth, or the member for North-East Coolgardie, stating that a class of men like contractors sweated those who worked for them in order to get a greater profit. A man must be a born fool or a born idiot, or the two combined, if he tried to sweat his men in order to make a profit on a contract. If a man took a contract from the Director of Public Works, he did not want to dawdle over it, but to set to work and rush it through, and the only way to do that was to pay good wages. He (Mr. George) had no objection to a minimum rate of wage being stated, and no contractor of any respectability or standing would object to that. The contractor did not care a button about what rate of wages was fixed. If 10s. a day was fixed as the minimum rate, and he found that he could not get the class of men he wanted under 12s., he would pay 12s. The contractor would pay the wages which would enable him to get the class of men who would carry out the work as quickly as possible. There had been some talk of sub-letting. On a railway contract there were certain portions of earthworks in connection with side cuttings, and this work was generally let to men who were perhaps a few years on the wrong side of middle life—men who had followed earthwork contracting year after year, but were no longer able to stand with the ordinary body of men. What were those men to do if they were not good enough to be put on a contract at 8s. or 9s. a day? Were they to be debarred from making a fair living by taking a side cutting? A side cutting was let at so much per yard. When the boss came along, he could run a tape over the work and tell what had to be paid. We had the 8 hours a day principle. If a navy or carpenter put in 8 hours a day, he did as much as one could expect. Having spent the best of the day in labour, he required the rest to recuperate.

The hon. member for North-East Coolgardie spoke about strikes causing delay. They did, but in the class of contracts which he (Mr. George) had been associated with since 1883 in the colonies they had only had one strike, and that was on McNeil's, in Victoria. That strike lasted for only four hours, and Mr. Trenwith, now a member of the Legislative Assembly of Victoria, came up by train and ordered the men to go to work. He (Mr. George) took it as a matter of particular pride, not only to himself, but to his employers, that during eleven and a half years they had only one strike, lasting four hours. There was more sweating done by the working men who became "bosses" than by the class of men who were generally big contractors in this colony. He had no objection to any provision for the wages of workmen to be fully secured in all Government contracts ; but hon. members should see that the conditions under which the security was taken were such that they would not defeat the end in view. He knew of an instance that occurred a little time ago, in which a decent, honest, hard-working man, who had risen to the position of a contractor, had his work stopped and his contract practically smashed, simply because of the condition insisted on by the Government in carrying out the Workmen's Lien Act, the whole of the money being stopped by the department, and the contractor was not then able to carry on.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: No.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Another "fact" gone wrong.

MR. GEORGE: The hon. gentleman knew the case he was referring to. This man had a little money, he understood the work, and possessed a considerable amount of honesty. The men working for him wanted their wages, and they would have got them but for the action of the Government in stopping the employer's certificates. He had known of certificates being hung up in the archives of the Minister's office times without number, on absolutely untenable grounds. The grounds were such that, when the settlement of the contract took place, substantial damages were claimed and paid. The last part of the motion was one with which he could not agree, for

it said that payment should be not less than the standard rate ruling in the districts where such works and contracts were to be carried out. How was the standard rate of wages to be arrived at? That was where the great trouble came in. If the hon. member could cut out that portion of the motion, he would vote for it. If it could be shown how the standard of wages was arrived at, and how the men were going to be forced to work for it, he would be prepared to vote with him thus far. The Government might fix as many standard rates of wages as they pleased, but they could not send men to gaol because they would not work for them. If the Government fixed a standard rate of wages, and the contractor could not get men to work at that price, would the Government compensate him for the loss? He was willing to support any legislation which would improve the condition of any class of the community; but, in the anxiety to bring about improvement, let us not make a mistake which might land this country, or this Legislative Assembly, in the position of having to solve a difficult problem. If, as was stated, certain contractors were reducing wages on the goldfields by bringing up men from Perth and Fremantle, how were the Government to stop that? If an employer in Perth wanted skilled labour in the shape of carpenters' and bricklayers' work, hundreds of men now walking the streets would be glad to work for any wages offered. If the Government fixed a standard rate of wages at Coolgardie and other places, that would not stop contractors from taking other men there. He believed the hon. member (Mr. Vosper) even got his printing done at that notorious sweating place, the *Morning Herald* office, where there had been any amount of trouble between the management and the printers. Members knew that, last year, the sharp, enterprising manager of that paper got the better of the Works Department—at least the better of the other paper, for the man was not born who could get the better of the Public Works Department—by obtaining £4,000 for advertising, whereas the other paper got only £2,000. He knew that the manager of the *Morning Herald* was grumbling about

his men a great deal, a short time ago. The *Morning Herald* office was well known—at least he had understood it from persons who ought to know, as they belonged to the Trades and Labour Council—as the biggest sinner in Western Australia in regard to sweating; so there could not be much doubt in regard to that. Then the hon. member had referred to a strike at Kalgoorlie, and to an advertisement in the papers warning carpenters, bricklayers, and others not to go there; but that would not prevent a workman, whose wife and children wanted bread, from going there to work. He thanked the hon. member for his forbearance in not referring to the Public Works Department, for he understood there was a nice little game on there about what might be called sweating. Seeing, however, that it was a Government job, he would not call it "sweating," but speak of it as a necessary diminution of wages which was required by the exigencies of the Treasury.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): What a genial task it would have been for the member for East Perth (Mr. James) to have spoken on this subject, bearing in mind the manner in which he treated it on a former occasion, when he produced stacks of books from which he quoted authorities on the question of a minimum wage. The hon. member had spared us this time, and contented himself with taking only a minor part in supporting the motion. No member of this House would desire that what was called "sweating" should be practised in connection with any occupation in the colony, nor was it desired that men should have to work for a very low wage. The general desire of members would be that men should get good wages. His objection to motions of this kind was that no necessity had been shown to exist for moving in this direction at the present time. He did not see why we should rush in and interfere with the arrangements which people made for the employment of labour, unless some good reasons were shown for inserting in contracts such conditions as the motion proposed. No one had shown a case in connection with a Government contract in this colony, within the last few years, in which unduly low wages had been paid,

or in which the men employed on the work were not paid fairly for what they did. Surely those who moved in the matter should prove the necessity for this motion, by showing that something had happened which made it desirable to pass the motion. It had been said that the system of insisting on the minimum wage in Government contracts might be very good here, that it had worked well somewhere else, and that it was necessary the system should be established here to prevent something occurring which had not occurred here hitherto. But during the seven years he had been connected with the Government, he had not heard a single complaint that a contractor for public works had sweated anyone or paid him too low wages. It was notorious that contractors who undertook railway construction and other public works paid the very highest wages, and worked their men the hardest. Men were willing to work hard if they got good wages, and were sure of regular payment. That being the case, why should this subject be discussed again, when no necessity had arisen for raising it afresh before the House? No cases had been cited in support of the motion.

MR. VOSPER: Cases could be cited.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member should have cited them when moving his motion. He might possibly have found one case in the colony.

MR. VOSPER: A dozen cases could be given, if they were wanted, and he had them here.

THE PREMIER: Then the hon. member must have gone about hunting for them, for no complaint had reached him (the Premier) from any person as to his not having been fairly paid for the work he had done, nor were such cases heard of through the Press. No serious controversy had occurred in this colony in reference to the wages paid on Government work carried out by contract, and no question as to wages had arisen that was not settled amicably between the parties within a short time. Why should we desire to compel people to pay a particular wage, when there was no necessity to compel them, and no necessity to interfere with the freedom of contract?

He was much averse to legislation of this sort, so long as it could be avoided. If it could be shown that some great injury were being done, he would go with hon. members in trying to obtain justice. Only fancy the trouble there would be, in letting every contract for Government works in the colony, to ascertain what was the ruling wage in each particular locality! The Government had many unpleasant duties to do, but that would be the most unpleasant of all; and if the Government attempted to do it, there would be complaints that the Government had fixed the wages too low or too high. A minimum wage would have to be fixed in every contract, and it would be a terrible trouble to do that, and it would be impossible to give satisfaction. Such a system would work badly in the interests of the working men themselves; for if a minimum wage were fixed, it must be very low or it could not include those men who were somewhat advanced in life, or those who were not so strong as the younger workers. Would there not also be an inducement on the part of contractors to treat the minimum wage as being the maximum wage? A contractor might say the particular work was not turning out in the way he had expected, that he was not making a profit out of it, and could not afford to pay more than the minimum wage which the contract required him to pay; and the result of that system would be that sweating might be done in that direction, and the system would thus work very injuriously to the wage-earners. If it were necessary to fix the wages to be paid on Government contracts, why should it not be equally necessary to fix the wages to be paid by private individuals who employed labour, and say that no one should employ labour unless he paid so much wage? If that were so, why should not a maximum be fixed as well as a minimum, so as to give every worker a chance? After all, there was an inexorable and impassable barrier that would defeat legislators, and that was the law of necessity; for if there were a superabundance of labour at any time, it did not matter about the minimum wage, because, as the member for the Murray had said, men who had families to maintain would not sit idle be-

cause they could not get the maximum wage, but would accept such employment as they could get even at a minimum wage, the law of necessity compelling them to do it. People had to work for what they could get, so long as there were more workers than work, and it was no use trying to govern in these things by hard and fast rules. In carrying out the motion great trouble would be caused to the department; much controversy would be raised; injustice would occur, and altogether it would be found to create a great deal more dissatisfaction than the present system, to which no great exception had been taken, and which had not resulted, at any rate up to the present, in Government contractors paying low wages. Government contractors paid the highest wages, and expected very hard work for those wages. While not at all opposed to assisting those who were called the labouring classes, he must say that persons who moved motions of this kind, when there was no necessity for such action, were not advancing the interests of the working classes. Such motions unnecessarily took up the time of the House, and it would be quite time enough to bring up a social question of this sort when great urgency was shown.

MR. A. FORREST said he disagreed altogether with the motion, as one which was not required. The member for the Murray (Mr. George) had stated that the proprietors of the *Morning Herald* were the greatest sweaters in Western Australia; but as chairman of the company which owned that newspaper, he would like to inform the House—and the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) would bear him out—that in the present week there were sixteen employees who had averaged 9 hours 5 minutes each, at 1s. 8½d. per hour.

MR. GEORGE: That was a big wage, was it not?

MR. A. FORREST: Operators who had been at the machines for twelve months averaged £4 to £4 10s. a week, for days of 8½ hours each.

MR. GEORGE: The hon. member said, some time ago, that he had nothing to do with the management of the paper.

MR. A. FORREST explained that what he said was that he had nothing to do

with the editorial management. The highest wages earned by operators at the machines was £6 per week, and yet these men had been asked by the Typographical Society to come out on strike, because the proprietors published a Sunday paper at a less cost than that paper could be produced for in the ordinary course of business.

MR. GEORGE: If the hon. member lost his livelihood, he would be a little anxious, would he not?

MR. A. FORREST: At any rate he would take nobler means of getting his livelihood back than by striking. When high class machinery was brought to bear, wages must fall and the number of employees decrease. No doubt the member for the Murray, with his present machinery in a foundry, did not employ so many men as formerly.

MR. GEORGE said that, although he got machinery, he kept his men on and did not sweat them.

MR. A. FORREST: If the hon. member kept on men he did not require, not much could be thought of him as a business man. The *Morning Herald* men worked shorter hours and were better paid than in any printing office in the colony.

MR. GEORGE: The *Herald* proprietary had more trouble with their men than any printing employers in the colony.

MR. A. FORREST: There had not been the trouble represented; but the *Herald* proprietors were progressive men and got the best machinery, and so could do with fewer men. As to the motion before the House, he had been engaged in commercial transactions all his life, and had not seen any sweating carried on; and in all undertakings in which he was interested, the employees were paid a fair rate of wages. There ought to be no interference with State contractors or anyone else in regard to a minimum wage. There were ups and downs in the labour market. Take the timber trade, for example, in which, as against £4 a load obtained two years ago, only £2 10s could be obtained now, and that, of course, meant lower wages. The working classes did not always agree to take their share of the burden, but some did, and many did so because they were obliged by necessity. He had never seen

wages given on which men could not live—at any rate, not in any concern he was connected with. Indeed, he would be the first to say he would not allow unreasonably low wages. He hoped the motion would be withdrawn, as one for which there was no urgency.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The motion was surrounded with a great many difficulties, which would remain whatever might be said. The Government were the chief employers of labour, and should endeavour to control the rate of wages in the direction of helping the workers. But it would not be possible to carry out the latter part of the motion, which provided that the "rate of wages should not be less than the standard rate ruling in the district where such work or contracts were being carried out." Society was very much like a pyramid, with the working men at the base bearing the weight of the whole social structure. Anything that elevated the working man, by raising the standard of wages and making their circumstances better, elevated society as a whole. He suggested that the latter clause of the motion to which he had drawn attention should be struck out, and that the House should content itself with affirming the desirability of putting an end to sweating. It was useless for the Government or the Minister of Works to say that sweating was not carried on in Government contracts.

THE PREMIER: It was curious the Government were never told anything about it.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Contractors would not tell the Government.

THE PREMIER: But there were the employees.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The men had not access to the Government. Those who took employment under sweating conditions were usually in very dependent circumstances, and, in their own interests, did not care to complain of their employers. But he, himself, had constant applications and letters begging and entreating that something should be done to stop sweating. Some of those letters might not be based on very good grounds, but it was impossible that all could be without foundation. A good deal of mischief was being done without the know-

ledge or consent of the Government, and, if anything could be done to stop it, it was the duty of the Government to step in. As to the difficulty of carrying out the latter clause of the motion, it need only be pointed out that all kinds of labour were employed on Government contracts, and that it would be utterly impossible for the Government to fix on a standard rate of wages in each branch of labour in a particular district. The question had been raised as to how the minimum had to be fixed. Most of the leading trades had their own organisations, and they were in a position best to judge what the minimum wage should be, and the Government could ascertain from that source what it should be. His object in rising was to move that all words after "established" be struck out. Perhaps the hon. member who moved the motion would consent to the alteration. If not, he (Mr. Illingworth) would move that the words be struck out.

MR. WALLACE seconded the amendment.

MR. VOSPER (in reply): Before replying to remarks made on the motion, he could not pass in silence the speech made by the member for the Murray (Mr. George), in reference to what he stated was the sweating which was taking place at the office where his (Mr. Vosper's) printing contract was being carried out. He (Mr. Vosper) did not wish to hurt the feelings of the member for the Murray, but a statement of that kind should not be made under cover of the privileges of this House. A newspaper depended for its business on its popularity; and to assert that a certain newspaper was "sweating" its employees would do a lot of harm. If such a statement were made in a newspaper, or in a public meeting, it would be actionable; therefore, such a statement should not have been made in this House, unless it was for the good of the public. These slanderous statements reflected upon himself, also on the member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest), and on anyone who happened to be connected as a proprietor or a temporary employee of the *Morning Herald*. Before taking his printing work to get done at the *Morning Herald* office, he was extremely careful to find out that the

ruling rate of wages was paid by the newspaper to its employees; and he ascertained that, whereas last year the ruling rate of wages demanded by the printers' organisation was £3 10s. per week, yet in the *Morning Herald* office the wages paid were £4 per week and over. As to the argument that he was taking his work to a place where machine labour was employed in preference to hand labour, he must say that those who used such an argument were really asking that the hands of the clock should be put back, or that we should revert to barbarism. When the digger on the gold-fields knocked off crushing by a battery, and when the agriculturist ceased to use the threshing machine, then would he revert from machine labour to hand labour. He did not mention these things to vindicate himself or the *Morning Herald*, but simply because he was placed in a curious and anomalous position, standing here as an advocate of the minimum wage, and, as he might be termed, the friend of the working man. He did not say this because a general election was pending, but as an employer of labour who at the present time was threatened with a strike because he used machine labour in preference to hand labour. That was not the first time he had been placed in such a position. As long as a labour organisation defended the rights and privileges of the employees from the greedy capitalist and greedy employer, it did a great deal of good; but men were often elected to positions in a labour organisation who did a great deal of harm to those bodies. As soon as the society or trades union turned from the principles it was formed to carry out, no matter how friendly one might be to trades unionism, it became his duty to enter an emphatic protest. As far as the cheaper product was concerned, the last cheque he paid to the proprietors of the *Morning Herald* was £45 10s., and anyone who saw the size of the paper which he turned out would say that this was a reasonable amount for its production. He had the authority of the manager of the *Morning Herald* for saying that the effect of taking his (Mr. Vosper's) work there had increased the labour of some of his hands

from four to eight hours a day, and that now these men were earning the full rate of wages. It had been a benefit to the employees rather than the reverse.

Mr. GEORGE: And to the employer.

Mr. VOSPER: To the employer, and to himself also. He had been an advocate of the rights of the working classes, no matter what position in life he had found himself in. During the last general election, he had to win his seat against the utmost efforts of the labour organisations in his district; and he thought he could say that those organisations had no reason to regret that he had been elected. He was with those organisations in matters of principle. He believed that a man should receive a full and fair day's wage for a full and fair day's work, and that was why he stood here in favour of a minimum wage. He had promised the Premier he would give an instance in which the Government had acted detrimentally to the employees generally. He had a letter from the Kalgoorlie and Boulder District Labour Council, in which that body stated that a contract for the erection of the railway engine sheds was let to a contractor named Vincent, and that contractor paid his hands £4 a week. The trades affected were stonemasons, carpenters, and plumbers. A deputation went to Mr. Vincent and pointed out that the rate which should be paid to stonemasons was 15s. a day, to plumbers 16s., and to the building-trade labourers 12s. a day. Mr. Vincent said, in reply to the representations made to him, that the reason he had reduced the wages was that the Government were paying to the same tradesmen 12s. a day. In the course of the same letter, which was lengthy, half a dozen more instances were given.

THE PREMIER: It was 13s. 4d. a day.

Mr. VOSPER: The contractor compromised with the council on that.

THE PREMIER: Were the Government to fix the minimum wage at 13s. 4d?

Mr. VOSPER: The contractor said the Government had fixed the wage at 12s. a day. If the Government fixed the minimum rate lower than that which the trade organisations thought should be the rate, those organisations would make

a move and ask the Government to put the matter right.

THE PREMIER : Suppose some of the men were not good?

MR. VOSPER : The Government, as a contractor, should pay a reasonable rate of wages to efficient men. As far as he had learned, there was no objection to the men being employed on piece-work. Those employed on piece-work were engaged at so much a yard, and the Government should set a good example instead of a bad one; but in the Boulder district the Government had set a bad example.

THE PREMIER : Was the hon. member referring to sub-letting?

MR. VOSPER : Sub-letting was when a man let out a portion of his contract to some one else to do it for him; while, on the other hand, if it were piece-work, men received so much per yard to take out the earth. Piece-work was not called sub-letting. What he was asking was that, on account of the Government being the largest employer of labour, they should have some idea of the wages paid in the various trades. He was anxious that the Government should pay not the lowest wage, but the highest they could give, and so set a good example to other employers. If that principle were once extended, it became the duty of the Government to establish a minimum rate of wage.

THE PREMIER : When it was desired to lower the minimum, there would be a bad time.

MR. VOSPER : There would be trouble, no doubt; but there was trouble at the present time. If there was a general attempt at the lowering of wages, there must be trouble; still, there was trouble at present.

MR. GEORGE : Supply and demand would regulate the wages.

THE PREMIER : The hon. member had shown no necessity for a minimum rate being fixed.

MR. VOSPER : Some necessity had been shown, if the Government imposed a rate of 12s. a day for skilled labour on the goldfields, when the ordinary wage was one or two shillings more. The result was to bring down the rate of wages in the district. If the Government took the initiative and introduced this system of lowering wages, as they had been doing

on the goldfields, it would lead to a reduction all round.

THE PREMIER : The Government were paying 13s. a day.

MR. VOSPER : They were paying 12s. a day when they should have been paying 16s. for tradesmen. The Government were paying the rate for skilled labour which should be paid for unskilled labour. That was not a good position for the Government to take up.

THE PREMIER : The minimum wage would have to be lower than that.

MR. VOSPER : If the motion were carried, and representations were made to the Government, the Government would have to alter the rate. All he was asking was that the rate should be fixed at a fair wage. At the present time the Public Works Department practically had fixed a minimum rate of wages, but in a slipshod and haphazard manner. It should be fixed in a systematic and more generous manner than it was done now. He would have pleasure in accepting the amendment, and hoped that in the amended form the motion would be passed unanimously.

MR. GEORGE : The sole reason for troubling the House again was that he wished to refer to a few words uttered by the member who represented the *Morning Herald*, and by the hon. member who represented a Sunday newspaper.

MR. A. FORREST : Was an hon. member in order in speaking of a member as representing a private institution? Ought not one to be spoken of as the member for the constituency he represented?

THE SPEAKER : Yes; a member ought to be referred to by the name of the electorate he represented.

MR. GEORGE : Those words could be withdrawn, and he would assert that the one hon. member did not represent the *Morning Herald*, but represented West Kimberley, and that the other did not represent a Sunday newspaper, but represented North-East Coolgardie. The member who represented West Kimberley had shown him the wages-sheet of the *Morning Herald*, in proof that his (Mr. George's) statements were incorrect. He was sorry to say that he could not accept those wages-sheets as a proof, because

the situation as it was at present with regard to that journal was not that to which he referred. That journal had trouble with its workmen. The managing director told him so himself, months ago. The hon. member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) had said the member for the Murray made slanderous statements. He wished the hon. member would be more careful. He was perfectly sincere in the statement he had made with regard to the newspaper, which paper had been disavowed by both gentlemen. The facts to which he referred took place some six or nine months ago.

MR. VOSPER: The member for the Murray was speaking in the present tense.

MR. GEORGE: What occurred led to considerable trouble with the Typographical Society. He (Mr. George) had nothing whatever to withdraw.

MR. A. FORREST: The hon. member for the Murray ought to withdraw.

MR. GEORGE: The hon. member might not think much of him as a business man; but, although not rich, by any means, yet he and his partner paid over £1,000 in wages last year, put into stock, instead of discharging men, when they could have obtained men at 2s. or 3s. a day less; and at the present time they were paying employees more than was given in the Government workshops. The member for West Kimberley did a lot of kind things which were not known, and he might leave the member for the Murray alone, in that respect. The amendment had his support, and he hoped the House would pass it.

MR. KENNY (North Murchison): The motion was one which he would support. He was amused at the remarks of the member for the Murray, who was always amusing—more amusing than instructive. He was reminded of the opening remark in one of Miss Braddon's novels: "What a pity that lovely women should talk so much about what they do not understand." When the hon. member began to talk about the printing trade and other matters he had touched on, he certainly bore a strong resemblance to the young ladies

referred to by that authoress. As an illustration of how little hon. members of this Chamber might know about those who belonged to the early families of the colony he might remark, in reference to something which fell from the hon. member for the Murray in relation to the hon. member for East Perth, that if he had been with him (Mr. Kenny) in the far north-west in the early seventies he would have seen a youth approaching manhood carrying out a contract to fence a large run, his object being to put enough money together to pay the expenses of an education in the old country. The education he paid for out of his own hard earnings enabled him to rise to the high and responsible position he now occupied as member for East Perth. He (Mr. Kenny) had himself repeatedly suffered from remarks passed by hon. members. The right hon. the Premier had frequently told him that although he represented the picks and shovels of North Murchison, he had never used one. The right hon. gentleman was just about as fully vested in what he (Mr. Kenny) had done in his life as he was in the general requirements of the people of West Australia. His range of vision with regard to the requirements of this colony never appeared to reach beyond the four corners of his drawing room.

THE PREMIER said that he had had to work, and had used a pick and shovel.

MR. KENNY said that he put in six months as a Government official at a minimum wage of 1s 3d per day and a maximum wage of 1s 9d.

THE PREMIER said he did that too.

MR. A. FORREST said he put in three years at 1s 3d a day.

MR. KENNY: No member of this Chamber was justified in telling him, when he spoke of the labourer, that he did not know what he was talking about. It was remarkable how few of those hon. members who at election time evinced such wonderful interest in the working men of the colony, had stood up on the present occasion to lend a helping hand. No doubt another change would come about ere the next general election, and those hon. members would once more appear before their constituents, and assure them of the great interest they had ever felt and would feel in the horny-handed

sols of toil. However, the way in which hon. members treated their constituents did not concern him. He had been sent to the House by the men of North Murchison, and while he occupied a position as their representative he would always consider that his first duty was to those who placed him here. He had the greatest pleasure in supporting the motion.

MR. WOOD: Hon. members had been highly interested in the hearing of the youthful adventures of different members of the House—what they had been and what they had done. From half-past 4 till a quarter to 10 o'clock, not a bit of business worthy of the name had been transacted. It was altogether too bad. If the proposal of the member for North-East Coolgardie had not done anything else, it had given a great scope for the discussion of matters outside the motion. As to whether a minimum wage would be a good thing or a bad thing for working men, the difficulty was how such a wage could be fixed.

THE PREMIER: It could not be done.

MR. WOOD: Who was going to take the responsibility of fixing it? And, when fixed, who would be satisfied? He felt sure that no one would be satisfied. At the same time, he did not think the motion would do a lot of harm.

THE PREMIER: It would do a lot of harm.

MR. WOOD: The amendment would receive his support, and he had his own reasons for supporting it; and for once in a way he might vote with the member for North-East Coolgardie, which he had not hitherto been able to do during this session.

Amendment (Mr. Illingworth's)—to strike out the words "which shall be not less than the standard rate ruling in the district where such works or contracts are being carried on"—put and passed.

Motion as amended put, and negatived on the voices. A division being called for by MR. VOSPER, it was taken with the following result:

Ayes	...	...	...	10
Noes	...	...	...	12
				—
Majority against	...	...	...	2

Ayes.

Mr. Conolly
Mr. George
Mr. Holmes
Mr. Illingworth
Mr. James
Mr. Kenny
Mr. Solomon
Mr. Vosper
Mr. Wallace
Mr. Wood (Teller)

Noes.

Hon. S. Burt
Sir John Forrest
Mr. A. Forrest
Mr. Hassell
Mr. Higham
Mr. Lefroy
Mr. Monger
Mr. Pennefather
Mr. Piessé
Mr. Throssell
Hon. H. W. Venn
Mr. Leake (Teller)

Main question thus negatived.

WOMEN'S FRANCHISE.

MR. WALTER JAMES (East Perth)
moved:—

That, in the opinion of this House, the best interests of the colony justify the extension of the franchise to women.

On two previous occasions I have trespassed on the good nature and forbearance of this House; and, in submitting the motion to hon. members for the third time, I do not expect that I, and those who agree with me, will succeed in securing a majority of the House in favour of the motion. We have, however, this gratification, that as year by year rolls on we find our numbers increasing, not only inside this House, but outside; and we are certain that, when the next general election is held, this question will be so prominently brought before the electors, that in a newly-elected Assembly, if the question be not previously solved, it will be answered by an almost unanimous affirmative. I regret I am not sufficiently qualified to be able to place before hon. members the old facts in a new dress; but I will, on this occasion, state as shortly as I can those arguments which have convinced me that, in the interests of this country, the time has arrived when we should extend the franchise to women. One would naturally think that, in dealing with any question involving an extension of the franchise, one would ask himself whether those to whom the extension is proposed to be given come within the four corners of the existing legislation. I want it to be borne in mind that if any member of this House takes up our present legislation, he will find there is nothing on the face of it which excludes a woman; but, on the contrary, he will find when he reads the statutes by the light of the Interpre-

tation Act, that every expression which involves the male includes the female; therefore every expression in our Electoral Act which states that every person shall have a certain right, and that he shall do this or do that, implies by virtue of the Interpretation Act that it includes the female as well as the male. And so ingrained is the old sex prejudice in the mind of Parliament, not only in this colony but in other parts of the world, not only in the minds of members of Parliament, but even in the minds of judges on the bench—so ingrained is the old sex prejudice, so impossible is it to realise that persons, unless they use the most solemn and express words, intend to give to women the right they give to men, that in spite of the fact that our Interpretation Act expressly says that the word "he" includes "she," nevertheless in the Electoral Act the word "he" implies the male, and the male only. But although the law may be abundantly clear to the lay mind, the judges are influenced by this sex prejudice, and give this construction which to a man of common sense it would not for a moment bear. As to the qualification which our existing law lays down, I ask members, can they point out any qualification upon which at present we ground the right to representation which applies to men and not to women? So, in any colony of Australia or in Great Britain can members point to any qualification in any of these Acts which women cannot fulfil at any time? We have had instances, in days gone by, of representation on a property qualification, where we gave the right to vote to those who had property only; and we used words which said that because he was an owner of land he should have the right to vote. But even in this instance a great number of women fulfilled the conditions established by the Act, but could not exercise the right to vote; therefore, how can we account for that distinction unless we put it down to that ingrained sex prejudice? If we pass away from that, and take the broader view of giving a vote to the taxpayer, we shall again find that where there were a few property owners, there were tens of thousands of taxpayers; but the women taxpayers were excluded from voting. We pass

from that, and did not recognise the mere taxpayer alone, but we were prepared to give a vote to any individual as a rough indication of the possession of intelligence. We said, in principle, we will not give to a man the right to vote simply because he has property, which might be affected by legislation or by taxation imposed by Parliament, but we give him the right to vote because he is subject to the laws which Parliament makes, and therefore has a right to have some influence in controlling that force which takes possession of him in the cradle and accompanies him to the grave. Is there a member who will say these reasons do not justify the extension of the franchise to women, just as strongly as they justify the extension of the franchise to men? Let us ask ourselves this question: If the qualifications which the law demands now, and the qualifications which the law demanded in days gone by, are fulfilled by women as they are by men, why in the name of justice should we refuse to women those rights which we give to men? Every extension which is made in the franchise, every principle on which this extension can be based, tends to make the existing distinction between the rights of men and the rights of women, in this connection, more and more unjust; and every person who justifies the extension of the franchise, even to that stage which it has reached to-day, if he attempts to justify the extension on the ground of principle, then, if he is honest and free from prejudice, must accept that principle and extend it to women for the same reason that he extends it to men. It is consistent with the only principle on which we can justify our existing legislation, and it is the logical outcome of the existing legislation. I will go further and say that a loyal adherence to the principle of Parliamentary Government demands that we should give women the right to vote. When that stage arrives in the history of a community that you have a Parliament which is supposed to represent public opinion, and you find that public opinion very largely controlled by a force that has no direct part, no direct influence upon Parliament, then you are placing Parliament on the high road to a speedy ruin. There never

has been a time that Parliament has been able to do its work successfully, when it has been out of touch with public opinion. I do not refer to public opinion as the mere gusts, the mere passionate outbursts from day to day—those occasional outbursts which are bound to arise—but I refer to the public opinion which influences public life, and which must control this Parliament and every member in it. Parliamentary government can succeed only when Parliament actively and truly represents public opinion. It is simply because that fact is realised, and because day after day the influence of women in the formation of public opinion is growing so enormously, that this question has come so prominently to the front during the last quarter of a century. It is because women have an increasing influence on the formation of public opinion, that persons who, perhaps, in days gone by, did not realise the justice of giving to women the right to vote on the same qualification as men, that persons who did not realise the justice of giving the vote to the women themselves, do now realise the absolute need of extending the franchise in the way here proposed. The member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth), in the speech he made on this subject in December last, showed how great the influence of women is, when he said:—

No man can escape the influence of women ; no man has ever been able to escape the influence. From the cradle to the grave every man has been all his life working and toiling on the side of women, either for a mother, a sister, or a wife, or a friend. Every law that has been put on the statute book has behind it the influence of women. If it has been admitted that women have been influencing men in all ages, how is it that that influence has not been sufficient to influence right laws on the statute book? We must take it from the admission made to-night that women's influence is not crushed ; it is not overriden ; it is not crushed down in the universe of God. She is here with all the force that God gave her, but there is one force she does not possess, and that is physical force.

There was a recognition of the enormous influence which women exercise on the formation, control, and direction of public opinion. Does the hon. member think it consistent with the safety and responsibility of Parliamentary Government that there should be in a community an enormous body controlling public opinion,

but having no direct responsibility? If experience of Parliamentary Government teaches one thing more than another, it is that the best possible system is that system which casts on those who have power, direct responsibility for the exercise of that power. I go further, and say that attempts to depart from that principle for a length of time prove the evil influences which must arise if responsibility be not on the shoulders of those who have the power.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : Where is the foundation for that principle?

MR. JAMES : The principle is always recognised, except when we are asked to extend the right of voting to women. If we could free our minds from the women, and imagine a class in our community, not women, but as numerous, and seeking the franchise on the same qualification as men, would any hon. member say it would be in the interests of the country and Parliamentary Government to have such an enormous mass of disfranchised public opinion? Yet these arguments, so apparent when applied to the male, seem to lose all their force and become swallowed up and entirely submerged in prejudice—and it is nothing else but prejudice—which suggests that because a woman is a woman, and has never had a right to vote, then, by the help of Providence and this House, she never shall have a vote. That is no argument. I want, as far as I can, to raise this question free from prejudice, and to think of women as though they were disfranchised men. If the House of Parliament is out of touch with public opinion, it is supposed to have lost its mandate ; it is supposed to have exhausted its powers. As the member for Central Murchison would tell members, in a case like that, Parliament must go back to the electors to place itself in touch with public opinion. But that hon. member refuses to give to the women, who so largely assist in forming public opinion, the right, when the time comes, of expressing by their votes who are the men they desire to have elected, and who would represent that public opinion, the great part of which can only be expressed by the women themselves, because they are the force which creates it. Women ought to have a vote, because the whole trend of pre-

sent legislation is towards social and domestic reform. We have passed away from those times when the chief object of Parliament was to pass laws relating to property, or the increase and decrease of taxation. We have arrived at a stage when legislation is becoming more and more social and domestic, and when prominence is given to such questions as the extension of the divorce law, conciliation in labour troubles, the temperance movement, and others. If women had the right to vote, they would bring to bear in the determination of those questions—which we all recognise as questions of the future, if not of the immediate present—a steady and direct influence without which these social problems will never be solved.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Evidence is against that.

MR. JAMES: Women as a sex or class are not directly represented in Parliament, and I submit that they are not even indirectly represented. It is impossible to look at the statute-book without realising that, as a class, they are not put into the position they have a right to expect. Experience in this House shows us legislation which, if women had the vote, would not be passed. Have we not seen during the past few days an instance which proves my argument? It was not in this Chamber, but in another place, where legislation, suggested for the purpose of giving seating accommodation to women employed in shops, was rejected. It is humiliating and degrading to think that there is a body of men at the end of the nineteenth century who can commit themselves to such inhumanity. These men are representative, or are supposed to be representative, of the public opinion of this country.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That law has been passed elsewhere by men.

MR. JAMES: But the fact remains that we have a body of men who do an act which one would think the lowest instincts of humanity would cause them to hesitate to do. But these men refuse to pass the legislation, because they want to give free play to the low, brutal greed of a few employers. These are

members of Parliament who are supposed to represent women. Does any member mean to say that, if women had a right to vote, we would see members on whom this brutal and degrading influence is brought to bear, allowed to remain in Parliament after next election? We have passed laws under which a mere dog cannot be hurt without imprisonment following the offence. But if legislation is introduced for the purpose of protecting women from insult, cruelty, and wrong ten thousand times worse than that inflicted on the dog, the Bill is thrown out with contumely and insult. In view of these facts, can it be said that men represent women in the Parliament of the country? The reply is in the fact that we need only go back twenty-four hours to find how grossly untrue it is to say that women have any direct influence on the election of Parliamentary representatives, who make laws affecting women just as much as they affect men. There are dozens of other inequalities in the statute-book, but these need not be referred to. The member for Central Murchison thinks that experience elsewhere is adverse to the arguments of those who advocate the extension of the franchise to women. In a matter of this kind, predisposition makes it difficult to prevent one's mind being coloured in drawing inferences from facts. It may be because I believe in the principle that I draw inferences favourable to the extension of the franchise, while the member for Central Murchison, because he is adverse, draws contrary inferences. But I cannot overlook the fact that, wherever the vote has been given to women, it has always been extended, and never taken back. In England the vote was first given to women in connection with school-boards; then it was extended to municipalities, county councils, and parish councils. And if women have a right, not only to vote for the county council, but to sit as members, that proves the success of extending the franchise. Although the county council might perhaps suggest itself to members as being something like a shire or town council—

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The women only vote as property-holders.

MR. JAMES: But as property-holders the hon. member would not give them a vote.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Yes, I would.

MR. JAMES: I understand the hon. member's objection is to women as women.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: No.

MR. JAMES: The hon. member said, on the last occasion this question was before the House, that there was something in women which, if they were given the right to vote, would destroy their womanhood. That was the hon. member's whole line of argument. If a woman has a right to vote because she is a property-holder, I do not see how it matters whether she votes as a taxpayer or as an individual. Whatever limitation is put on the right to vote in connection with the county council, a woman votes on exactly the same conditions as a man. The County Council of London consists of a body of men who, hon. members will agree, are superior to ourselves in every way. They are of higher standing and higher abilities, and I think I am right in saying the London County Council deals with a revenue far in excess of our revenue, and with matters far greater in importance than those dealt with in this Parliament. The county council exercises enormous powers. We often hear it said that "the mother country does not do it." I am sure the Premier is listening now, and I tell him that the mother country does do it. Women there have the right to vote for, and sit on, the county council, which exercises greater power than this Parliament.

THE PREMIER: No; a county council cannot make laws as we can.

MR. JAMES: The London County Council solves social questions of far greater importance than ever come before this Parliament. In South Australia and New Zealand, the principle of allowing women to vote and sit is in operation. A measure has been carried in the Lower House in Victoria; and I believe the principle is to be adopted in New South Wales, the present Premier having given a promise that he would take the matter up as soon as the federal question has been dealt with. In all these instances

where the power was in force, we find the principle approved by those best able to judge. In those countries where there has been time enough, as in England, the principle has been extended, as time warranted and opportunity arose. How are we, in the face of such experience, to say we are moving on the side of right and justice?

THE PREMIER: Why not follow the mother country?

MR. JAMES: In what respect?

THE PREMIER: In this respect.

MR. JAMES: I submit we should be following the mother country.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It is in the Municipal Act now.

MR. LEAKE: It is in the Federal Bill too.

MR. JAMES: I am talking about the county council, which is a body far more important than we are as an Assembly, and the members of it are returned by a tenfold or a hundredfold more electors than we represent. The constituents are quite as intelligent as ours. How can we have a better test than that? The county councils in England discharge the greater part of the functions that we discharge, because the Imperial Parliament is largely wrapped up in matters of imperial concern, and matters such as we deal with are dealt with by the county councils. The London County Council has been taking up the question of the purchase of a tramway, which is just as important as the construction of a railway here. That appears to be the most important work we have had in hand for the last seven years; and will anyone say the issues involved in the purchase of a tramway in London are not more important than the issues involved in the construction of a railway in this colony? In these issues women have a right to express their opinions. There is an instance in which this principle has been adopted and recognised. It is not fair for the right hon. gentleman to say, do they do this or do they do that in the old country? Whenever the right hon. gentleman thinks that justice demands a certain reform, he never hesitates to carry out what he thinks justice dictates. He never asks himself whether it is in force in the old country or not, but says we have to fight out our own

principles in this country ; and that is quite right too, and I ask him to be as strong in dealing with this important matter as when he is dealing with questions affecting the material progress and prosperity of his colony. I want the right hon. gentleman to exhibit the same fearlessness in regard to this question as he does in other matters.

THE PREMIER: It is a very good thing to go slow, in a matter of this sort.

MR. JAMES: Yes, I say go slow, but if we listen to the arguments which have been advanced we shall go too slow. I will not refer to the argument that if you give a woman the right to vote she will lose her womanliness. It would not be right for us to do anything which would interfere with that womanliness that is such a charm in woman. If we give the right to vote to women, they may assist in modifying our opinions and making our results less selfish and less masculine than they are now. The principle of the right of women to vote is admitted in South Australia, in New Zealand ; it has been adopted in the Victorian Lower House, and it had been promised by the Premier of New South Wales that it is to be adopted there. The principle has been admitted in England, and there from time to time it has been extended, always having been approved, and as occasion arises it is increased. The right of the woman to vote is required most strongly to give us assistance to carry out matters of social domestic legislation, which are bound to be important matters for our consideration in the future. It is required to infuse into our public life a little bit of that moral influence that is sadly wanted now. It is required to check the loose tendency of the modern elector, the man who is willing to vote for another man because he is a good fellow. These are reasons why I believe the principle should be adopted. We may fail, I suppose we shall, on this occasion. I feel almost inclined to give a sigh, and say that the Premier on the next occasion will be found voting for it. On each occasion his opposition has been less and less ; he is becoming more and more impressed with the cause I am advocating ; he has always shown himself generous

in the extreme towards those who have no great power to forward and advocate their cause. And this is one of the cases in which I think the right hon. gentleman's generosity could be used, and I believe next year it will. We are bound to succeed : we have right on our side. I ask hon. members to put this question to themselves. Is it just to women that they should have this right? And, if it is, women are entitled to it. Passing away from this question, I ask them to put this further question to themselves: It is not necessary in the interests of the State, that we should place on those who have the power of influencing public opinion the responsibility to exercise that power? I say further, apart from that, is it not in the interests of the State that we should carry out the mandate which day by day is placed on members of Parliament, to enact social and domestic legislation? If we carry out that mandate, is it not essential that we should give the right to vote to women? We are so apt to temporise in these matters. Men are always, as it were, sitting on a rail on matters that interfere with the rights of somebody else. I am now appealing on behalf of a cause that is just and which is necessary in the interests of the community, and which, if we adopt it, is simply giving to women that right which they have had the right to demand, I may almost say, generations ago. Because women do not agitate ; because they do not do as men would do ; because women do not have noisy public meetings where people are burned in effigy, and where there is no bellman ; because women leave this matter to be treated by men, and do not rush on to platforms and make vituperative speeches ; because they do not do these things there is no reason to think that they do not require this reform. If the cause is just we ought to give the vote to women ; we ought not to refuse this concession until people are clamouring at the doors of Parliament. We can give this concession gracefully now. Do not leave it until when we do grant this concession ; it would appear as if it were a desire to curry favour with the coming power, but give it because justice demands it.

MR. LEAKE: I second the motion.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I do not know whether it is the wish of the House that the debate should be adjourned, or whether it is the desire that I shall go on.

SEVERAL MEMBERS: "Go on" and "divide."

THE PREMIER: We should like to hear you.

MR. ILLINGWORTH (Central Murchison): This is the fourth time, since I have had the honour of sitting in this House, that such a motion as this has been submitted. On the first occasion it was defeated by only one vote, and on the second occasion it was defeated by three votes. And on this occasion it is hard to say what will happen to it. I simply desire to convey to the House a few facts which I was unable to bring before the House on a former occasion. It is not at all necessary to repeat statements which I made on a former occasion, because they will be in the mind doubtless, of hon. members, so far as they will be of any worth in influencing this discussion. The whole crux of this question of manhood suffrage rests upon a basis which all representation rests upon, that is, where there is taxation there should be representation. We are aware that, in taxing woman's property we give her the right to vote, and we are therefore consistent. All property in the city of Perth which pays rates, and is held by a female ratepayer, is represented by the vote of the woman who owns it. It is universally agreed that the basis of representation is taxation, that those who pay the taxes are entitled to representation; and while I say that all women do not pay taxes, I go further and say the greater portion of women do not pay taxes. In so far as they are separate owners, possibly they do pay; but the most that can be made from such an argument will be that those women who do pay taxes are entitled to representation. I am dealing with a question which has been asked by the hon. member, and that is the question of the justice of the situation. I venture to assert, in passing, that in questions of this kind there are other things more important than the mere abstract theory of justice. Vastly important as it is,

there are other questions which touch our social life that are still more important to us. But taking it upon the law of abstract justice the most that could be said is that those women who pay taxes are entitled to representation. The next point that I want to suggest is this. Women as consumers, of course, as has been suggested, pay taxes, but they pay them indirectly, as they are not the bread earners, and as the taxation which they pay comes through the bread earners.

MR. LEAKE: What about widows or spinsters?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: We are not dealing with exceptions. I am not going to turn to side questions. The women who pay taxes pay through their husbands, or the bread earners, and they have their representation through the bread earners, so that on the question of taxation they are not unrepresented. They pay taxes indirectly, and they are represented indirectly; consequently on the basis of taxation women are represented in the same way as they pay their taxation. I want to suggest, however, that all governments exist and raise money and spend it for the public protection and the public good. Not all women contribute to the State, and very few, if any, women can protect the State. These are the two cardinal principles which lie at the basis of the whole question. Governments exist and taxation is levied for the purpose of maintaining government and social order. Behind social order there is physical force, and because by her very nature she is not able to take her place in the support and maintenance of law woman is excluded from the right of making the law.

MR. MORGANS: What about Jean of Arc?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: What about Lucretia Borgia, Helen of Troy, and Cleopatra? What about Jezebel? I want to put before the House a few facts, because, after all, this question must be settled upon the basis of facts, and I do not wish to keep the Assembly at this late hour with statements of my own. The hon. member who introduced this motion has very frequently, in this House, referred to a historian of some note. I allude to Mr. Bryce. Mr. Bryce

gives us in his work entitled "The American Commonwealth" the whole account of women's suffrage in the United States. I desire to refer only to a few points. What are the facts in regard to women's suffrage in the United States? He says:

In no State has the suffrage in elections to the State Legislature and to State offices been extended to women, and therefore they nowhere enjoy the right of voting in Federal elections. Amendments to State constitutions purporting to confer this suffrage have been passed by the Legislature in several States; but the people have invariably rejected them, and generally by a decisive vote. In three Territories, however, the right of voting at Legislative elections has been given by the Legislature of the Territory, and in one of these, Wyoming, it is still enjoyed.

It is well to take note of this little State of Wyoming. When the Act was passed, there were 5,000 people in Wyoming; and it was passed by a little trick. A legislator went to one side and said that by voting in this particular way they would strike a blow at the other side, and then he went to the other side and said that their opponents were going to vote for it. Thus, by a trick, he got the measure through, and the parties laughed at each other when the game was over.

MR. EWING: Have they not ratified it?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Mr. Bryce also says:—

In Utah it was abolished by a Federal statute. In Washington Territory the law which conferred it in 1883 was declared invalid by the courts in 1887, because its nature had not been properly described in the title; it was re-enacted immediately afterwards, and was in 1888 again declared invalid by the U.S. Territorial Court, on the ground that the Act of Congress organising the Territorial Legislature did not empower it to extend the suffrage to women. In enacting their State Constitution (1889) the people of Washington pronounced against female suffrage.

Having had it for three or four years, the people of Washington, an important State, abolished it; and of the two States I am speaking of—the States that had the power—Wyoming is the only one that still possesses it, except that Colorado has recently passed a resolution in favour of it. Mr. Bryce further says:—

In two States, Arkansas and Mississippi, women have the right of voting, though not in person, upon the question of granting licenses for the sale of intoxicants. In those States where women possess the school suffrage

it is reported that extremely few vote. In the Territory of Wyoming women serve as jurors. Those whose opinions I have inquired inform me that the presence of women on juries was deemed a grave evil; and that in prosecutions for gambling or the sale of intoxicants a defendant had no chance before them. It is also stated that comparatively few went to the poll. As regards Wyoming Territory, where the experiment has been longest at work both as regards full suffrage and jury service, the balance of such evidence as I could collect seems to be unfavourable. One of the most trustworthy authorities writes to me as follows:—"After the first excitement is over, it is impossible to get respectable women out to vote, except every two or three years on some purely emotional question like Prohibition or other temperance legislation. After a year or two it is found that the women of the worst classes are those that most regularly go to the polls." The experience of Wyoming is of slight value. It is a very small and raw community, which in 1880 had a population of only 20,000. That of Washington is entitled to more weight. The people in 1889 refused the suffrage to women after a four years' trial. There is a widespread apprehension that to bring women into politics might lower their social position, diminish men's deference for them, harden and roughen them, and, as it is expressed, "brush the bloom off the flowers." This feeling is at least as strong among women as among men. Of the many American ladies whose opinions I inquired, the enormous majority expressed themselves hostile; and I hear that quite recently a Ladies' Anti-Suffrage League has been formed.

MR. JAMES: Why do you not quote Colorado?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I want to quote one or two authorities on this question, and I will quote one near home, that is, Mr. Robert Harner, of Melbourne, who said, in his place in the Legislative Assembly, on the 8th October, 1896:—

I know of no legislation intended for the amelioration of the condition of woman that has yet been refused by any Parliament. There may be questions yet unsettled, but they will, after due consideration, be settled. I know that many of the women who are agitating for this change are active, benevolent, and good women, but they desire to vote for a particular reason. They wish to see legislation passed dealing with the liquor traffic, and with one or two other matters. My belief is that these questions can be settled quite as well, and perhaps better by their influence outside of politics. If women are subjected to the rough and tumble of political life, then I say that it will be much worse for them and also for the human race.

When I spoke on this question a year ago, I was unable to give the quotation

from Mr. Gladstone, and I now take the opportunity of giving it as quoted by Mr. Harper. Mr. Gladstone published a letter, when this question came before the British House of Commons in 1892; and in it he said that such an important change ought not to be made without a clear and unmistakable expression of the people's will. Then he added:—

A permanent and vast difference of type has been impressed upon women and men respectively by the Maker of both. Their differences of social office rest mainly upon causes, not flexible and elastic like most mental qualities, but physical, and in their nature unchangeable. I, for one, am not prepared to say which of the two sexes has the higher, and which has the lower province. But I recognise the subtle and profound character of the differences between them, and I must again, and again, and again, deliberate before aiding in the issue of what seems an invitation by public authority to the one to renounce as far as possible its own office, in order to assume that of the other. I am not without the fear, lest beginning with the State, we should eventually be found to have intruded into what is yet more fundamental and more sacred, the precinct of the family, and should dislocate or injuriously modify the relations of domestic life. As this is not a party question, or a class question, so neither is it a sex question. 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.

MR. MORGANS: Who is that?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That was said by Mr. Gladstone;—surely a name that will carry weight in this House, as it carries weight throughout the whole of the English-speaking world.

MR. MORGANS: He was sometimes wrong, you know.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Right or wrong, his opinion is worth something. I will quote another name, that of a man of great ability in the British House of Commons, a man who has been associated with movements in which women are particularly interested, as much perhaps as any man in Great Britain; I mean Mr. Asquith, who is the leader of the Radical party in the House of Commons. He said:—

I am bound to add that, so far as I can form a judgment, it has been very largely accepted, not from conviction, but without mature examination or inquiry; in that spirit of flaccid fatalism by which people persuade themselves

that a thing must come if only it is shouted for loud enough, if only it drapes and clothes itself in a democratic disguise. You are asking the House to give women the vote and the power to count head for head with men in the making of laws, in the determination of policy, in the supervision of the national administration; and yet at the same time you are not casting upon them the burden which is cast upon every male citizen; and why? Because nature does not allow it. I have heard this measure recommended in the name of democracy. But it is not a democratic measure. The doctrine of democracy demands that we should equalise where inequality exists among things fundamentally alike, but not that we should identify where things are fundamentally unlike. The inequalities which democracy requires that we should fight against and remove are the unearned privileges and the artificial distinctions which man has made, and which man can unmake. They are not those indelible differences of faculty and function by which nature herself has given diversity and riches to human society.

We have here statements from men who are able to speak on these questions, and who are equal in breadth of knowledge and in experience to the hon. member who introduced this motion. When the question was before this House previously, I was seriously taken to task by ladies who are behind the hon. member in this movement, because I made a statement that the effect of placing woman in the arena of politics was calculated to degrade her. Let us now have the opinion of some persons who are able to judge. I will quote Professor Goldwin Smith, of Canada, who on this question of the degradation of women said, in the *Times* 26th May, 1896:—

I thought until this election that it would be a good thing, but I do not think decent women in Denver will ever go to the polls again. Why, the political bosses ran the women from what they call "the Row" just like sheep, and shamed every decent woman in the city; and the worst of it was that these same women voted, of course, against their own sex and for all the "bums" on the ticket. My wife says she will never vote again except to repeal the Women's Suffrage Act.

MR. JAMES: The hon. member knows the reply women made to that, I suppose!

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I have not met with the reply, and perhaps the hon. member will quote it.

MR. JAMES: I did so when the subject was last before the House.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I did not hear it, and now I quote a lady who is of some note, namely, Mademoiselle de la Rame, better known as Ouida. This is a woman who knows something about women, and is capable of giving a sound judgment. She says:—

The supporters of the new woman declare that she will not surrender her present privileges, i.e., though she may usurp his professional seat and seize his salary, she will still expect the man to stand that she may sit; the man to go wet through that she may use his umbrella. Yet surely if she retain these privileges she can only do so by an appeal to his chivalry, i.e., by a confession that she is weaker than he. But she does not want to do this; she wants to get the comforts and concessions due to feebleness, at the same time as she demands the lion's share of power due to superior force alone. It is this overweening and unreasonable grasping at both positions which will end in making her odious to man, and her being probably kicked back roughly by him into the seclusion of the harem.

Then she explains very ably the extent to which woman imitates man, and proceeds to give her opinions as to what woman's influence might be. She says—

Her influence on children might be so great that through them she would practically rule the future of the world; but she delegates her influence to the vile school boards if she be poor, and if she be rich to governesses and tutors; nor does she in 99 cases out of 100 ever attempt to educate or control herself into fitness for the personal exercise of such influence. Her precept and example in the treatment of the animal creation might be of infinite use in mitigating the hideous tyranny of humanity over them, but she does little or nothing to this effect.

Ouida's opinion on woman are thus described:

This writer (Ouida) contends that the proper sphere of woman is in her own home, that she is born to be the mother of a family, and to educate her children, and that her place is not in the midst of political contention. Ouida says that if woman enters into the sphere of politics she abdicates her position as a woman and a mother. Then she goes on to describe how, instead of exercising an influence such as has been already spoken of, the new woman "wears dead birds and the skins of dead creatures," animals are killed in the most cruel manner in order that their skins and furs may be used to decorate woman, the feathers of ostriches are torn out of the reeking birds for her, "and she continues to trim her Court gowns with the aigrettes of ospreys."

That is the appeal of a lady of some standing.

MR. JAMES: Ouida is a "lydy," not a lady.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: She knows something about ladies, at any rate.

MR. JAMES: And her character.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I do not know her character, because I have not made her acquaintance. I will now quote something which, at any rate, will demand the respect of the House, and which comes within the lines of Parliamentary procedure and practice. It is a petition presented to the British Parliament against the extension of the franchise to women, and amongst the signatures to that petition are those of Lady Stanley of Alderley, Lady Randolph Churchill, Mesdames Broadhurst (wife of a labour member), Huxley, Asquith, W. E. Forster, Max Muller, Humphrey Ward, Leslie Stephen, Alma Tadema, and J. R. Green. The petition itself reads as follows:—

We desire to foster to the fullest development the powers of women, so that their energies and education may fit them to take up work of a responsible character towards the State. But that work must have assigned to it a definite limit, and the working of the State machinery is of such a character that it should be assigned only to men. We heartily sympathise with the efforts of women, and the work which they are able to perform in connection with our school boards and our public institutions, which afford them opportunities of developing to the utmost their public usefulness. But at the present time what may be termed the emancipation of women has reached its limits fixed by their constitution and by the natural difference of occupation selected by them. No better sphere of usefulness can be found for women than the care of the sick and the insane, the treatment of the poor, and the education of children. In all of these directions they pre-eminently shine as the equal, it not the superior, of man, and extended powers may well be given them. But in reference to the foreign or colonial policy of a nation, or of the grave constitutional changes which nations undergo, the normal experience of women does not provide them with those materials necessary to form a sound judgment. It is alleged that to give women the franchise will check the excess of partisanship. The reverse is the case. Women's natural eagerness and quick temper make them heated partisans. They are prone to lay aside all prudence in a right cause, and though this may be considered as one of the peculiar excellencies of women, when this self-abandonment is shown at the right time and at the right place, or when it is used to influence the more highly-trained and developed judgment of man, yet, if their quickness were to be directly translated into

political energy, and allowed to permeate through the vast and complicated subjects of political importance, the risk attached to politics at all times would be greatly increased, and what might be, under certain circumstances, a national blessing, would prove a national calamity. To admit women into the ordinary machinery of political life would inflame partisanship, increase those evils already too conspicuous, would blunt the special moral qualities of women, and so lessen the national reserves of moral force. The political and practical efforts which would follow the transformation of an influence now beneficent, because indirect and gradual, are much to be dreaded. We do not undervalue or seek to depreciate the importance of women, their position, and their immense power for good by influencing the sterner sex. It is because we are keenly alive to the enormous value of their special contributions to the community that we must oppose female franchise. The pursuit of mere outward equality with men is, for women, not only vain but demoralising. It leads to a total misconception of women's true dignity and special mission. It tends to personal struggle and rivalry, when the only effort of both of the great divisions of the human family should be to contribute the characteristic labour and the best gifts of each to the common stock.

That was a petition presented in all good faith by some of the first ladies of England against an exactly similar proposal to that made by the member for East Perth. That petition expresses the calm and deliberate opinion of some of the best ladies in England, and was signed by a vast number of the leaders of thought in English female society.

MR. JAMES: What leaders of thought signed the petition?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I have already given the names.

MR. JAMES: You only mentioned two.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I mentioned half-a-dozen. The member for East Perth, in submitting this motion, starts off with the proposition that all women are angels. That is pure cant of the very worst kind. All women are not angels. If they were they would not be fit for the world, and the people they have to live with.

MR. GEORGE: Oh, yes, they would; they are very good, and, if they stop at home, they are better.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The member for the Murray (Mr. George) interrupts rather more than the forms of the House permit. All women are not angels; if they were, it would perhaps

be as well for us to give up governing and let them run the show. (MR. JAMES: Hear, hear.) But hon. members know as well as I, if not better, that women are not all angels. The whole superstructure raised by the member for East Perth rests on the assertion that all the evil thoughts of humanity are possessed by the male sex—that all the weaknesses and imperfections are on the side of man. Is that true? We have to treat this matter from a practical, common-sense point of view. No man has greater respect for women than I, and no man appreciates their value more than I.

MR. JAMES: That is why you won't trust them.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: But I value women too much to bring them out of that sphere in society where their power and influence for goodness, truth, and righteousness can be most fully and freely exercised. I am too much identified with women, and women's work, to bring them down from the high pedestal on which they stand, to mix with that social life which most men have to live. Then, again, there is another fallacy. The hon. member says the main influence that is expected from womanhood suffrage is that the vote will be on the side of right—that women will vote for temperance and on social questions on the side of right. What are the facts? Let us fairly and squarely face the facts. In Perth we have had public meetings behind which has been the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the very best and the very cream of the influence that is around us. They have had public meetings, and who were put on the platform to speak? I have been at the meetings, and have seen one or two first-class men in the temperance cause sitting in that meeting with the banner of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, "For God, for Home, and for Humanity," in front of them—and who were the men who were put on the platform to speak? The men who stood there told the people to their faces that they (the speakers) were not temperance men, and would never become temperance men. And yet, in the face of this fact, we are told that women will cast their votes on the side of righteousness.

What was the women's vote cast for in South Australia? Was it cast for truth and righteousness? Anyone who knows the facts, knows that it was not so. Go to New Zealand—were the votes of women there cast for truth and righteousness? I say they were not. All the evidence leads us to the one conclusion, that except when emotion comes in, women's votes are not to be trusted. Women will be influenced by other forces just the same as men are influenced. They will be influenced by other causes than those of truth and righteousness. One of the greatest and best managed institutions is the Women's Christian Temperance Union, managed by women; I do not depreciate it, but I say here is the realm in which women are entitled to stand, in which they can wield a mighty and powerful influence for the uplifting of society. But when woman goes beyond that, she goes into realms that must necessarily degrade her from her object. The worst thing that can happen to the Women's Christian Temperance Union is for women to get the franchise. The very day that women get the franchise, nine-tenths of the influence of that body will be gone, and its banner "For God, for home, and for humanity," will be dragged in the dust. That is my conviction, and I speak with all the earnestness which I possess. Whether hon. members agree with me or not, I speak the conviction of my heart. I speak on the side of woman, not against her, and I have been in the battle for over forty years. I know what woman's influence is and I know what she is capable of doing. Take woman out of the cause which appeals to the emotions, and place her in that position where reason, logic, and argument has to come in, and where calm experience has to come in, and woman will not help it. When it comes to a question of emotion, woman's force is great, but when you bring women into the arena of Parliament and deal with other questions from other standpoints, you injure not only Parliament but the women themselves. If it were a simple question of voting, and sitting in this House, and taking part in our deliberations, I should be very pleased to welcome it. But something lies behind it. There is the

great social structure of which we form part. And now look at the absurd position which the hon. member takes up. In this country we have 70,000 men, not half of whom have votes, and yet he is agitating for women's suffrage. I do not know whether I shall have the support of the hon. member or not when I come to this House and ask for a re-distribution of seats. I hope I shall; but surely in a country like this our first duty should be to obtain votes for the men.

MR. A. FORREST: We will look after ourselves.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: And I suppose the hon. member looks after his wife. If he does not he has no right to have one. I suppose those of us who have wives, mothers, sisters and daughters, entertain as much respect for them as the hon. member does for his relations. But I am speaking from this standpoint. I am speaking in defence of those I love most, and for the best half of humanity. I am speaking not for men, but for women. If it only concerned men, I would let the thing go on, but I am acting in the interests of women. It is for them I plead, that they should be saved from themselves—not so much from themselves as from a few who think in their mistaken zeal that they will gain a power over the State by exercising a vote. If the measure be passed, those women who advocate it will be completely swamped by the people whom they are trying to save. The very people whom they are trying to reclaim are those who would overthrow them, and send into Parliament not the men that they desire, but men whom they would weep over with bitterness. I could say a great deal more, but it is not necessary nor wise that I should do so. The hon. member is on the side of women. He is in favour of women's rights. I do not like to disagree with him, and I am going to join with him on the side of women's rights. In order that I may express briefly what they are, I will quote the following:—

The rights of woman—what are they?
 The right to labour and to pray;
 The right to watch while others sleep;
 The right o'er others' woes to weep;
 The right to succour in reverse;
 The right to bless while others curse;
 The right to love whom others scorn;
 The right to comfort all that mourn;

The right to shed new joy on earth ;
 The right to feel the soul's high worth ;
 The right to lead the soul to God,
 Along the path her Saviour trod ;
 The path of meekness and of love ;
 The path of faith that leads above ;
 The path of patience under wrong ;
 The path in which the weak grow strong.
 Such woman's rights—and God will bless
 And crown their champions with success.

(General applause.)

On the motion of Mr. GEORGE the debate was adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 11.10 p.m. until the next day.

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 11th August, 1898.

Crown Suits Bill, Report—Police Act Amendment Bill, first reading—Motion: Redistribution of Seats—Local Courts Evidence Bill; second reading; in Committee, reported—Criminal Court of Appeal Bill; second reading; referred to Select Committee—Early Closing Bill: Recommitted—Division on Clause 5; reported—Inebriates Bill, second reading; Amendment (passed)—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

CROWN SUITS BILL.

SELECT COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

HON. R. S. HAYNES brought up the report of the Select Committee on the Bill. Report read, and ordered to be printed.

POLICE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Introduced by the HON. R. S. HAYNES and read a first time.

MOTION: REDISTRIBUTION OF SEATS.

HON. H. G. PARSONS moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the Government should forthwith introduce a Bill providing for a redistribution of seats.

He submitted the motion, he said, with considerable confidence that the House would adopt it. It was not entirely an academic opinion, but one which the House held and acted on, that Parliament existed for the *prima facie* purpose of adapting legislation to the needs of the country at the moment. It had been a growing opinion, and was now universally admitted in all parts of the country, and by all sections of people, that the time had come when, if no seats were to be taken away, at all events further seats should be given to the districts of this rising colony.

HON. F. T. CROWDER: It was a sinking colony.

HON. H. G. PARSONS: It was a colony rising in population, at all events, and it was to be hoped that in the future it would increase in prosperity. There was no doubt a natural reluctance on the part of the Government to redistribute seats too soon. The Government did not wish to unsettle the public or to visit members of another place with the pains and penalties of elections, which were notoriously too expensive. Possibly the Government wished to leave things as at present, so long as they themselves could maintain their undoubted hold on the colony. If a redistribution of seats had to come, taking into account the lengthened period which would naturally elapse before a Bill could be introduced and debated, the House could not impress on the Government too much the advisability of taking up the matter at once. He had collected statistics as to the particular part of the colony which he himself represented. He did not intend, however, to occupy the House with those statistics at this moment, beyond saying there was reason to believe that on the rolls at Kalgoorlie and the Boulder there were some 6,000 electors. Perth and Fremantle required further representation, and it was admitted by hon. members that further representation was also required by the goldfields. Those mem-