

Bill would reach this House to-morrow evening. In these circumstances he moved that the House at its rising adjourn until 7:30 to-morrow night.

SEVERAL MEMBERS: Thursday.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: Some members wanted to get away to the country. The first reading of the Enabling Bill could be taken on Thursday, and the second reading on the following Tuesday.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: The Enabling Bill would not come down to-morrow.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY moved, consequently, that the House at its rising do adjourn until Thursday.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: Was it intended to suspend the Standing Orders on Thursday so as to carry the Enabling Bill through all its stages? Some of his colleagues wished to go away to the country, and would not be back till Tuesday. If the first reading of the Bill were taken on Thursday, the Standing Orders could be suspended on Tuesday.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: It was intended to suspend the Standing Orders, and pass the Bill through all its stages. He understood there was perfect unanimity in regard to the Enabling Bill as it stood at present, and he wanted to do what had been mentioned by Mr. Haynes if necessity arose.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: Some members from the country would like to speak.

Question of adjournment put and passed.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 4:50 o'clock until the next Thursday.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 29th May, 1900.

Papers presented—Question: Ill-treatment (alleged) of a native, inquiry—Question: Post Office for West Perth—Privilege: Aspersions on Legislative Assembly: Member for Geraldton in explanation; Motion for Committee of Inquiry; Points of Order; debate (adjourned)—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the PREMIER: Regulations under Elementary Education Act.

By the ATTORNEY GENERAL: Additional Regulations (information as to moneys paid into Court) under Supreme Court Act. Ordered to lie on the table.

QUESTION—ILL-TREATMENT (ALLEGED) OF A NATIVE: INQUIRY.

MR. ILLINGWORTH (for Mr. Ewing) asked the Premier, Whether it was his intention to cause an inquiry to be held into the alleged ill-treatment of the native "Cooardie" by Mr. G. J. Brockman.

THE PREMIER replied: This case had been dealt with by the Resident Magistrate and a bench of Magistrates at Carnarvon, and he was not aware of any reason for further action in the matter.

QUESTION—POST OFFICE FOR WEST PERTH.

MR. WOOD asked the Premier, When it was intended to commence the work in connection with the erection of a post office and quarters at the corner of Hay and Colin Streets, West Perth.

THE PREMIER replied: Plans would be put in hand shortly. In the meantime, the temporary premises rented by the Post and Telegraph Department on the opposite side of the road were meeting present requirements.

PRIVILEGE—ASPERSIONS ON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY: MEMBER FOR GERALDTON IN EXPLANATION.

MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY—POINTS OF ORDER—DEBATE.

MR. MOORHEAD having previously called attention to a question of privilege,

and the House having made an order calling on the member for Geraldton (Mr. Robson) to appear in his place and explain certain statements made by him, as reported in the *Geraldton Express* newspaper, epitomised in eight affirmations set forth in resolution, and Mr. Robson being now in his place:

MR. MOORHEAD (North Murchison) pursued the matter by formally moving:

That the honourable member for Geraldton be now heard in his place, in explanation of certain statements reflecting upon the character of honourable members of this House, reported to have been made by him, namely:—

1. That the Government was corrupt and rotten to the core.

2. That he would expose the political rottenness he encountered last session.

3. That the Government had withdrawn the Rural Lands Improvement Bill in the Upper House practically to buy the support of the farming element in the House.

4. That many of the members of the Legislative Assembly appeared to be without visible means of support.

5. That he had discovered that there was a group of old financiers interested in keeping the Government in office, and that they paid members.

6. That in further substantiation of the charge he had made of political rottenness, he had an assurance from one of the powers behind the throne that if he would sit on the Government cross-benches he would have financial assistance, that he had declined, and that they could not buy him.

7. That an attempt had been made to bribe him in connection with the Sluicing and Dredging Bill.

8. That the above statements justified his accusations of political corruption and rottenness.

MR. ILLINGWORTH (Central Murchison): Before the question is put, I desire to ask the mover whether it is his intention to proceed under the Act Victoria No. 4, or under the general practice of the House of Commons.

MR. MOORHEAD: My intention is to proceed under the general practice of the House of Commons, which is, I think, based on the view that this House has general superintendence over the conduct of hon. members.

MR. ROBSON (Geraldton): I wish to move an amendment to the motion at present before the House. Before doing so, I desire to make a few remarks; and as I am dealing with matters of great importance to the House and to myself, I shall, although I will be brief,

have to refer to somewhat copious notes. I am accused of making certain statements which it is said reflect on the character of hon. members of this House. In the notice of motion, no fewer than eight statements are referred to as having been made by me; and I at once say I deny none of these statements. The charges appear to have been taken from a report of a speech made by myself at Geraldton, and published in the *Geraldton Express* of 20th February, 1900. That report is substantially correct, and I would remind you, Mr. Speaker, that the address was delivered by me to my constituents.

THE SPEAKER: Before the hon. member proceeds further, I should like to know what his amendment is, because the motion is that the hon. member be now heard.

MR. ROBSON: The amendment I have to propose is that all the words after "that" be struck out, and the following inserted in lieu thereof:—

That the statements made by the hon. member for Geraldton be inquired into by a competent and impartial tribunal, which shall have full power to call for persons and papers, to sit during any adjournment or recess, and whose meetings and proceedings shall be open to the public and the Press.

THE SPEAKER: I do not think that is an amendment to the motion, and I do not see what possible objection the member for Geraldton can have to the motion, which is merely that he be now heard.

MR. JAMES: Surely that is a question for the House to decide.

POINT OF ORDER.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: With deference, I beg to point out that the motion as moved by the member for North Murchison (Mr. Moorhead) is that the member for Geraldton be heard in his place; and I contend an amendment that the member be heard before a committee is in order. On that I ask your ruling, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: My ruling is that the amendment put by the member for Geraldton is not a proper amendment to the motion before the House.

MR. LEAKE: Surely it is competent for an hon. member, either myself or the member for Geraldton, to move that all the words after "that" be struck out?

THE SPEAKER: Yes.

MR. LEAKE: And the amendment the member for Geraldton desires to move is that all the words after "that" be struck out, with a view of inserting other words.

THE SPEAKER: Yes; but not the words the member for Geraldton himself proposes should be inserted, which are not an amendment to the motion before the House.

MR. LEAKE: If it were proposed to strike out the word "now" and insert "two days hence," surely that would be a proper amendment?

THE SPEAKER: That would be so; but that is not the amendment of the member for Geraldton. No doubt a proposal that the member be heard two days hence would be an amendment.

MR. MOORHEAD: On the point of order I would like to know whether, the member for Geraldton having admitted that these charges are substantially the charges which he made and are correctly reported, the question does not resolve itself into a decision by yourself as to these charges being a reflection on the character of the members of the House.

THE SPEAKER: I think that may be so.

MR. DOHERTY: Why not let the member for Geraldton defend himself?

MR. JAMES: Because the Speaker stopped the hon. member.

THE SPEAKER: The member for East Perth (Mr. James) is not correct in saying I stopped the member for Geraldton.

MR. JAMES: You called the hon. member to order. I do not say that you, sir, were not right in doing that, but it is a fact that you called him to order.

MR. VOSPER (North-East Coolgardie): I understand the member for North Murchison (Mr. Moorhead) has submitted a case for your ruling, as to whether or not the member for Geraldton having admitted these statements, the latter do not reflect on the character of hon. members of the House. Before you, sir, give a decision on a point of that kind, I would submit also for your consideration that the House is acting entirely outside its jurisdiction in the matter; and I argue that on the wording of the sub-paragraphs of the motion. The first charge alleged to have been made by Mr.

Robson is to the effect that "The Government was corrupt and rotten to the core." I submit that to charge the Government with being "rotten and corrupt" is no breach of the privileges of the House, and the House is in no way concerned to conserve the honour of the Government as a Government. What is laid down in *May* is very clear on this point, though unfortunately I have been unable to obtain a copy in the House, all being in the hands of other members, who, doubtless, have been looking into the matter as well as myself. But I have perused *May* on this point, and I submit that members must be charged with some offence committed in their capacity as members of the House; and so far as the first paragraph is concerned, members of the Government are charged merely as a Government with being "rotten and corrupt." The word "Government" is capable of very wide interpretation: it may be held to include the judges of the Supreme Court, the head of the Government, the Executive, and all officers engaged in the work of Government, from His Excellency the Governor down to a telegraph boy; and surely the House is not concerned in exercising its powers for the purpose of protecting persons holding offices like these. The second paragraph states that the member for Geraldton said, "He would expose the political corruption and rottenness he encountered last session." Where does he say he encountered the "corruption and rottenness"? There is nothing to show. It is not said that the corruption and rottenness were encountered in this House; and so far as the statement in the motion before us is concerned, there is nothing to show where the hon. member encountered this particular "rottenness and corruption." Even if the two paragraphs be read together, and the second paragraph made the context of the first, it does not help the mover of the motion in the slightest degree, because it is the fact that the Government are accused, and not members of the House. The third paragraph states that the member for Geraldton said, "The Government had withdrawn the Rural Lands Improvement Bill in the Upper House, practically to buy the support of the farming element in that House." There again I submit the

accusation is not directed against members of this House, but against members of another place; and if a breach of privilege of the Council be committed, it is for that House to take action, and it is not a matter within our jurisdiction. The fourth paragraph states that Mr. Robson said, "Many of the members of the Legislative Assembly appeared to be without visible means of support." - I am not aware that this is a charge or imputation against their honour. If the words "visible means of support" are used in the sense of the Vagrancy Act, it might be an imputation; but we are not here to interpret that Act, nor even to consider its existence.

MR. MOORHEAD: As a point of order, Mr. Speaker, you having ruled that the charges set out reflect on members of this House, is it open now for the member for North-East Coolgardie to discuss the question in the manner he is doing?

THE SPEAKER: I consider some of the charges do reflect on members of the House, though I do not think it is for me to judge, but for the House.

MR. VOSPER: The member for North Murchison (Mr. Moorhead) has only asked for that ruling, and yet he now states he has it already.

MR. MOORHEAD: The hon. member is now speaking on the subsequent motion for a committee of inquiry.

MR. VOSPER: That is for us to decide. When we commence these proceedings is the time to raise objections.

THE SPEAKER: I do not think it is a question of order the hon. member is discussing now.

MR. VOSPER: I am endeavouring to show that these charges do not refer particularly to members of this House.

THE SPEAKER: That may be a contention very proper for the general discussion afterwards; but the present discussion is on a point of order.

MR. VOSPER: Surely my contention is in order that the House has no jurisdiction.

THE SPEAKER: The question before the House now is, that the member for Geraldton (Mr. Robson) be heard in his place.

MR. VOSPER: I am arguing that the proceedings are irregular, and that we have no right to call on him to be heard.

THE SPEAKER: Of course, if you are arguing that, you may go on.

MR. VOSPER: The charge made in the fourth paragraph, to the effect that "Members of the Legislative Assembly appear to be without visible means of support," in no way reflects on our honour in the slightest degree. The charge may mean that hon. members are simply persons suffering from poverty, which is not a crime, and is generally considered no dishonour. The fifth paragraph states that Mr. Robson said, "He had discovered that there was a group of old financiers interested in keeping the Government in office, and that they paid members."

A MEMBER: Who are the financiers?

MR. VOSPER: We have not come to that point yet. We have not now to decide whether there is such a group of financiers, or whether they are keeping the Government in office and how they are doing it. There is no specific charge that these financiers are keeping the Government in office by means of corrupt practices; and it is possible for financiers to keep a Government in office by influencing public opinion through the Press and otherwise. The Government, like many others, are kept in office largely by that kind of propaganda, in which there is nothing incorrect or improper; and there is no allegation of impropriety in the statement. In regard to the charge of paying members, what members are alluded to—members of the Assembly or members of another place? There is nothing specific in these charges; and we do not know whether our privileges or those of the Council are attacked. Members of this House have been in a great hurry to assume that an accusation levelled against Parliament generally must necessarily be intended to apply to the Assembly, and they seem in a great hurry, without warrant, to put themselves in the position of defendants. Surely persons situated as they are might wait until they are struck before they cry out. Then in paragraph 6, Mr. Robson is said to have stated that "In further substantiation of the charge he had made of political rottenness, he had an assurance from one of the powers behind the throne that if he would sit on the Government cross-benches he would

have financial assistance, that he had declined, and that they could not buy him." This again is not a matter of privilege affecting this House, but affecting the hon. member himself; for it is simply that the hon. member would have a right, and in fact it would be his duty, to complain to this House that some person in the House or out of it had approached him with a view of buying his support. There is no charge here that any person in the House has done this, and it is not said that the "power behind the throne" is in this House. The person might be a man in the street, for all we can tell to the contrary. Yet on the strength of these allegations the House is asked to put into operation one of its most potent engines, somewhat antiquated no doubt, and one that has not been availed of by the British House of Commons since the year 1810. Then the seventh clause says: "An attempt had been made to bribe him in connection with the Sluicing and Dredging Bill." An attempt made by whom? There is nothing in that, either, which refers to any members in this House. No member is alluded to, nor any group of members. He might have been approached by some person outside, by someone who has nothing to do with this House. Then the eighth clause says: "The above statements justify the accusations of political corruption and rottenness." That would be perfectly true if the hon. member succeeded in his justification; but all these points fall to the ground if he fails to prove them. I will now refer to the case of a member of the British House of Commons, stated on the 75th page of *May's Parliamentary Practice*, where a charge was made of a most atrocious character, that the Commons permitted the presence amongst them of men "whose political existence depends on an organised system of midnight murder"; and this is what became of the charge. *May* says this charge "has been held to be not a case of privilege."

THE PREMIER: Was that statement made by Parliament?

MR. VOSPER: That is as *May* states it; and surely a breach of privilege committed by a person outside the House is quite as heinous an offence as one committed inside the House.

MR. HUBBLE: No; no.

MR. VOSPER: The House is to be told, by such an eminent exponent of constitutional practice as the member for the Gascoyne, that while no member of this House can be permitted to commit a breach of privilege without being punished, yet it is open for any person outside to commit that with impunity.

MR. GEORGE: They do it, too, in the scurrilous Press.

MR. VOSPER: I contend that there is nothing revealed in this motion of the member for North Murchison (Mr. Moorhead) which in any way shows that the hon. member (Mr. Robson) has been guilty of a contempt of this House. It does not reveal any breach of privilege whatsoever; and that being so, I submit that the whole proceedings are out of order. The House is wasting its time and abusing its privileges; and the whole proceedings must of necessity drop to the ground, for the reason that no evidence is revealed against the hon. member.

MR. GEORGE: Why not let the man himself be heard?

MR. MORAN (East Coolgardie): There is one gentleman in this House who knows exactly to what these charges refer, and that is the member for Geraldton (Mr. Robson), who appears perfectly able and willing to take his place and go through with this matter. Of course we could not get through this matter without a learned disquisition from the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper)—the "bush lawyer" must be in it as an authority, that is a certainty. But would it not be a fair thing for the member himself who made these statements to speak here and give his own account of them? Would it not be fair of this House to let the member himself say what he has to say on the matter?

MR. JAMES: He was stopped from the Chair.

MR. MORAN: The member for Geraldton was certainly not stopped from speaking on the motion itself, but he was stopped in moving an amendment which was ruled to be out of order. I am afraid that, looking at this afternoon's proceedings, the cloven hoof of party is distinctly shown again in the matter. If you want to see bitterness personified, look just now at the member for East Perth (Mr. James), with his nose perked out sharp enough to push through a

board. The proper thing is for the hon. member himself (Mr. Robson) to be allowed to say, in this House, whether he is willing to produce his evidence on these charges in any place that may be appointed, and this House will give him the opportunity of doing so. There is no tribunal can try Parliament, except Parliament. No one can say that a creature of Parliament can try Parliament. Any officer of this country is a creature of Parliament. We know Parliament must be the guardian of its own honour, and if Parliament cannot purify itself, no outside influence can purify it. Above all, I do hope and impress on hon. members that this matter should not be dragged into party politics, and that the hon. member (Mr. Robson) shall get a fair hearing. Let us know if we are to elect a committee, and let us know who are accused, because those members accused in these charges should not be on that committee. No one should be on it against whom a charge is laid, and nobody must be his own judge. I am certain the hon. member will be quite willing and anxious not to leave any imputations hanging about, but that he is anxious for a fair trial, and we will give it to him. If we do not elect a sub-committee from this House, then let the whole House resolve itself into a committee, and let the charges be heard and replied to in this House, and let everything that is necessary be done openly, and let the public be present. It is useless to say this case is without a precedent. Charges of this kind have been made in every Parliament in the world. Such incidents have occurred in the lives of the greatest and most honoured of British statesmen, who have all been charged in one way or another. How do we know that the hon. member has not got ample justification for what he has said? This attempt to interfere with the ordinary course of inquiry is not creditable to this House. We ought to allow the hon. member himself to say what he intends to say, in order to get this painful matter removed from the public mind.

DEBATE RESUMED.

MR. ROBSON (continuing his previous statement, the point of order thus merging into the general debate): I will speak to the motion that is before

the House. To follow what I was saying, I would, however, remind the House that the address which I gave was delivered to my constituents, in my own electorate, and it was on matters of public interest. For anything said by me, in this House or out of it, on political questions, I respectfully submit that I am responsible only to those whom I represent. I have, as a public man, a perfect right to criticise other public men, and to discuss matters of public interest. No more than this was done by me on the occasion referred to; and it is not my intention to retract one word of what was then said. I deny that the character of any hon. member of this House was attacked, or that personal dishonour was imputed to any individual.

MR. HUBBLE: Is the hon. member reading a prepared speech?

MR. ROBSON: I ask for the generosity of hon. members, on this occasion. I believed that, politically, the Government were corrupt and rotten, and I said so. The Government did withdraw the Rural Lands Improvement Bill in the Upper House, practically, as I believe, to buy the support of the farming element there, and, as I explained, to enable a dividend tax to be placed on gold-mining companies to the extent of 5 per cent. With regard to paragraphs 4 and 5 in the notice of motion, I ask hon. members to take the context of my speech, in giving an interpretation to what I said, namely:

I often looked around at the Government benches, and could not help remarking how many of the members appeared to be destitute of visible means of support. An inquiry which I made led to some results. I asked the question plainly, "Do you pay those men?" The reply came, "I don't keep them." "Who keeps them?" I rejoined; "there is no payment of members." At last I discovered that there was a group of old financiers interested in keeping the Government in office, and that they paid them. Now, when you find half a dozen men tied up in this manner, how can you expect decent legislation? Is this good government?

It will be noticed that I did not then say that any of the financiers were in Parliament. At about the time of my election, I was told that if I would sit on the Government cross-benches I could have financial assistance. Prior to this remark,

I had received the following telegram from Perth:—

Are you prepared contest election against Simpson, giving Government general support? Reply confidential.—(Signed) FORREST, EMANUEL, AND CO.

I paid my own electioneering expenses, and stood as an independent candidate. The attempt made to bribe me in connection with the sluicing and dredging Bill was not made by a member of Parliament. All this, and much more, was present in my mind when I made the speech complained of. To justify my accusations, I would, in addition, remind the House of some incidents which have happened during the career of the present Government:—1, The payment for prospecting purposes of a sum of money to the Dunn Syndicate, in which Ministers and members of Parliament were interested. 2, The forfeiture of certain leases or mining land at the Londonderry mine, in favour of a syndicate of whom a Minister was a member. 3, The circumstances connected with the awards made in certain arbitrations to determine the compensation payable for land resumed at Bunbury for railway purposes. 4, The practice of Ministers on the eve of a general election travelling through different electorates and promising the appropriation of large sums of money for public works, etc., within those districts. 5, The Premier's speech at Newcastle in 1893, when he said:

Favours that the Government have to bestow will be given to constituents that return supporters of the Government.

6, The report published in the *Murchison Advocate* of the 23rd September, 1899, of the Premier's appeal to the electors on behalf of the Government candidate, urging that a Ministerialist, such as the candidate, would get more for the electors than a man who opposed the Government, and insinuating that the return of a Forrest follower might mean the speedy construction of the Nannine Railway. 7, The action of the Government in connection with the tick question.

THE PREMIER: These are facts within your own knowledge, I hope?

MR. ROBSON: 8, The grant of £2,500 to the Ivanhoe Venture Syndicate. 9, The appointment of the late Resident Magistrate at Newcastle. 10, The purchase of certain trucks from the

Seabrook Battery Company. 11, The mismanagement of the railways. 12, The frequent defalcations by public servants, and the failure to bring offenders to justice. 13, The appointment of justices of the peace to secure political support. 14, The circumstances surrounding the surrender of certain gold-mining leases, and the granting of the fee simple thereof. 15, The practice of the Education Department in requiring to know, not only the religion but also the "political colour" of candidates for their boards. All these, and other matters, I urge in justification of my criticisms of the Government, to whom I referred as a political body, and with no intention or desire to attach to any individual Minister the stigma of personal dishonour. If I have slandered the Government, or members of this House, which I deny, the Press of the colony has labelled them by publishing my speech; but, up to this moment, no proceedings have, so far as I am aware, been taken against the proprietor of any newspaper. I cannot, in the circumstances, withdraw any portion of my speech in Geraldton, but indeed would, unless ruled out of order, repeat my remarks on the floor of this House, disclaiming, as I repeat, the intention to impute personal dishonour to any individual. I do not fear inquiry—nay, I court it; and, in evidence of my sincerity, I desired before to move an amendment, which I regret that you, Mr. Speaker, did not allow me to move.

THE SPEAKER: It can be moved as a separate motion.

MR. ROBSON: I will read the amendment again:

That the statements made by the hon. member for Geraldton be inquired into by a competent and impartial tribunal, which shall have full power to call for persons and papers, to sit during any adjournment or recess, and whose meetings and proceedings shall be open to the Press and the public.

I shall now sit down, saying that I am still of the same opinion, and that I think events will justify my statement that the Government of this colony are politically rotten and corrupt.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): Well, we have heard the thunderbolt! I do not intend to criticise it now, because I think the proper course will be that proposed by my friend the member for North Murchison (Mr.

Moorhead), to ask for a select committee to investigate the charges; but I can say, in regard to most of the matters the hon. member has referred to, that they are very ancient history.

MR. VOSPER: Having "an ancient and a fish-like smell."

THE PREMIER: The reason I rise now is not to go into the statements the hon. member has made, although I could off-hand deal with nearly every one of them from my own knowledge and my memory; but I rise to express my regret at the action of hon. members opposite, who, instead of dealing with this matter as one affecting all hon. members, including themselves—

MR. VOSPER: You say it does not affect all.

THE PREMIER: Certainly their action is not complimentary. We have seen an exhibition to-day which I think must have been painful to everyone in the House who desires to uphold the honour and dignity of the Legislative Assembly. We have seen the member for East Perth (Mr. James) in a state of excitement—[A MEMBER: Frenzy]—yes, I may say bordering on frenzy, which, it must be admitted, is very discreditable to him as a member of this House. He, at any rate, ought to have treated this matter with the seriousness it deserves.

MR. JAMES: It is a party move on your part.

MR. A. FORREST: On your part.

THE PREMIER: What party move is there in it? What is the position I and those supporting me occupy here to-day? We are vindicating our own honour.

MR. JAMES: You want to whitewash yourselves.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member (Mr. James) seems to glory in the fact that some responsible person has said in some place things that are disparaging and things that are disgraceful with regard to us; and the hon. member considers our action in trying to vindicate our characters and our honour is a party move. Where does the "party" move come in? Surely if we consulted our own feelings we should desire to say nothing about this matter; but I and my supporters come here to-day to face the member for Geraldton—a man whom I thought to be upright and honourable, and a friend of my own—I have come

here to confront him to-day, knowing he would make charges against me which would in my opinion be dishonourable; and I can assure you I never came to this House with such a feeling of heaviness upon me as I experienced when I entered it to-day. The last thing I said to my colleagues when we separated was, "I do not know what these charges are; but if any of you have done anything which in any way comes under the definition the hon. member has laid down, you must stand upon your own ground, and must defend yourselves, as I am prepared to stand upon my ground and defend myself for anything I have done." [SEVERAL MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] And the hon. member (Mr. James) says this is a party move! Where does the "party move" come in? Is it a small thing that throughout the length and breadth of Western Australia the Government have been called, as they have been called to-day, corrupt? What is corruption? Dishonourable conduct is corruption.

MR. LEAKE: No; corruption means decay.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member, of course, tries to be funny, but I would ask him to treat this as a serious matter.

MR. LEAKE: Well, take my remark seriously. I mean it.

THE PREMIER: Well, you are impertinent, as you always are. I was about to say something worse concerning your discreditable conduct. Let me go on. I do not want to be taken off what I have to say by the hon. member's interjections. He no doubt thinks, when I am serious in dealing with a serious matter, that a contemptible observation of some sort, or at any rate, a foolish one, will take me off what I am saying, and destroy the effect of what I have said or am about to say. But I wish to treat this matter seriously, because I cannot get away from the fact that I am the head of the Government of this colony, and the leader of the dominant party in this House, and that I have been placarded all over this colony, and in every newspaper not only in this colony, but throughout the British dominions, at any rate throughout Great Britain, as the leader of a Government which is rotten and corrupt; and because we come here and say we want to face this man who has accused us, that we want to hear some justification for his

conduct, we are denounced by the member for East Perth, who, I think, should regret his interjection that this is a party move. Where is the party move? We are really on the defensive. We are here to protect our honour and our good names. And what are the hon. member's (Mr. Robson's) charges against us? I think all the hon. member had to say might have been said inoffensively, in different words. He said something about a speech made by me about eight years ago.

MR. JAMES: And acted upon ever since.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member interjecting could have asked questions and moved motions with regard to those matters. Why has he not done so? He has sat here all these years; and if he knew of any case in which the Government had acted improperly, he might have challenged our action at the time. I do not think the word "corruption" could have been in the hon. member's mind when he said to-day that we had acted dishonourably: that we have acted perhaps unwisely would have been the right way to put it, for him. Why has not the member for East Perth moved from his place in the House to inquire into this or that matter? He has had the Estimates; he has had every opportunity. I do not know that during all the years he has sat opposite me in this House he has ever made a motion in regard to any of these things which he has said were going on ever since the Newcastle speech. What was the Newcastle speech? There was no reporter there, to start with; there was no verbatim reporter; and the occasion was some little entertainment at which myself and the Attorney General, Mr. Burt, made some observations. I really do not know what was then said, except that it was something to the same effect as we had said before and have said since, that we, the Government, gave everything and got very little or nothing back. I tell the people that, openly, whenever I go to a constituency which returns an Oppositionist. I say: "Look what we have done for you, and yet you have put in a man to oppose us." I have said that many times at Albany. I have told them there: "Look around you and see what we have done for Albany. What

have you done for us, except to send men into Parliament to take away our political lives?"

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Does not Albany pay taxes?

THE PREMIER: I shall not answer interjections. The member for Central Murchison is the leader of a party, and is a man who poses—I only say poses—as a constitutionalist; and he ought to know that he must not interject. The speech at Newcastle was made when the hon. member (Mr. James) never thought of coming into political life, and I do not suppose he ever saw the newspaper in which that speech was recorded, nor do I think I could find the paper either. I made a little remark which some newspaper hostile to me headed, "Spoils to the Victors": probably it was a Geraldton paper, or some other of those papers which now criticise and misrepresent the Government whenever they get a chance. This paper said, "Spoils to the Victors"; and from that day to this the expression is rung on me as if I had said something of real moment; whereas, if anything was said to that effect, it was not said by me at all on that occasion. Then there is something about the Dunn syndicate, which we have long ago threshed out in this House, and in regard to which the papers have been laid on the table. It appears the Government assisted some prospectors. I was not a member of the syndicate at the time, but some other people asked for £100 to help a prospecting syndicate. The prospectors had been out in the bush for about six months, and had gone round to the eastward, and away down to Dongara, and had given a report to the Government, a very interesting report too, of all the party had seen, describing the auriferous country, and everything else discovered. A man named Dunn was at the head of the party: they had exhausted their funds, and the Government advanced them £100. They continued operations, and after a year or two the same people did pretty well, and they paid back the £100. Then what is all the talk about? This is a subject which was disposed of long ago, yet it is revived against us to-day. Then we hear something about the railway arbitration at Bunbury. That was the most bare-faced charge that anyone could listen to. I am aware of the facts of the

case, because I have been charged with it a dozen times, and there is a motion about it in the Upper House now, though all the papers have been laid upon the table and have been explained, and though I had no more to do with it than the man-in-the-moon. It appears the Railway Department took some land, at Bunbury, and there was an arbitration, in which I believe Mr. Moseley, the Registrar of the Supreme Court, acted as umpire; and it was found out that one of the arbitrators was in some way supposed to be interested in the award.

MR. VOSPER: He got a commission.

THE PREMIER: Yes; he was supposed to have received a commission; and the Crown Solicitor advised that we should not pay the award, but should try to upset it. Then some people at Bunbury kicked up a row, and said we ought to pay the claimants. I was then at Albany for the sake of a change of climate, and Mr. Dempster, a member of the Upper House, wrote to me and said: "This is too bad: the Government are getting into great disrepute about this thing. Why do you not pay this amount?" I then sent a telegram, which has been printed and laid before this House. I cannot remember its exact wording, but it was something to the effect that when I got back to Perth the money should be paid or the award upset. Mr. Burt, the Attorney General, when I came back said the best thing we could do was to pay the amount of the award; and it was paid. I did not know then who those claimants were; I did not know who owned the land; I do not know now. I had no interest in the matter, and in fact I did not know anything about it. Again this is brought up to-day as something that I did. I had not anything to do with it. I did not know who the persons were, nor where the land was—knew nothing except that I in the end expedited the settlement of the matter by paying the award of the arbitrators, on the advice of the Attorney General.

MR. VOSPER: Are you quite sure that was done on Mr. Burt's advice?

THE PREMIER: I am positive of it. However, I will promise the hon. member to give him the papers, and he can see for himself. It happened several years ago. The only question was whether we ought

to upset the award or pay the money; and I believe we eventually decided to pay the award and not to re-open the case. This is the case mentioned again in the Upper House. Then there is the "Londonderry" case. I do not remember anything about that. I know the member for Albany (Mr. Leake) was connected with the Londonderry, and that he tried to bring to bear upon it his position in this House. With regard to that matter he tried to "feather his own nest" at the expense of the country.

MR. GEORGE: I rise to a point of order.

THE PREMIER: Well, I withdraw that, and apologise too.

MR. GEORGE: I will rise to a point of order. I think the speech the Premier is making is more adapted for evidence than for this occasion. I move that the right hon. gentleman take his seat.

THE PREMIER: There is now a very good audience present, and I am going to say what I have to say. Never mind the hon. member (Mr. George): he is one of the most honest men in this country; but I am the best guardian of my own character. I know the "Londonderry" case. From that day to this, the hon. member (Mr. Leake) has never been friendly with me, because I would not do what he wanted me to do at that time. He wanted us in the Executive Council to give a decision in favour of himself, which we were not willing to give. The hon. member knows that very well. He had a large interest in that venture; and the Government acted in the interests of the country and did what was right. The hon. member also interviewed me concerning our action, and I called attention in the House to his conduct in regard to that matter.

MR. LEAKE: You should not address me: you should address the Chair.

THE PREMIER: You did things to me which were not creditable. You can hit me as hard as you like; but I am not going to let you hit me without retaliating, to some extent. I am quite prepared to stand on my own ground, and you can stand on yours; but you go running about from member to member trying to advise people, and I suggest that you wrote that very thing that has been read to-day.

MR. LEAKE: You may be quite sure I had something to do with it.

THE PREMIER: Yes; you had, and a very poor thing it was, too, making a party question of this matter. Instead of trying to protect the honour of this House, you have tried to make the question a party matter, and to depict me as a man who belongs to a rotten and corrupt Government, as one trying to buy the support of people in the Upper House. Instead of sympathising with me as you ought to have done, instead of saying "We will have this thing sifted to the bottom: we are determined that nothing shall be said in this House until this member has made his statement, and I will refuse to advise him or have anything to do with him until he states his ground for what he has done"—instead of that, you have connived with him in making these statements. You have been in close contact with him, and you have produced this document, which is nothing at all. I hope he will get a select committee, although there is nothing in the charge which he has made. We have heard about "a mountain" and the difficulties of that mountain, and have heard of a "mouse" coming forth; but I do not think there ever was so tiny, so microscopical a mouse as has come forth here to-day. I did not catch the other things the hon. member said.

MR. GEORGE: There is the "tick" question, for one.

THE PREMIER: The tick question was fought out in this House.

MR. MORAN: Your own brother suffered, too.

THE PREMIER: I do not know whether he voted for me or not.

MR. MORAN: He voted against you every time.

THE PREMIER: They say "blood is thicker than water," and so it is, for I can tell you I am very sorry to have to do anything against those belonging to me; and as to that tick question, I certainly will not refer to it again, for we have had it all over repeatedly. It was decided in this House, the House afterwards removing the restrictions in regard to cattle; and it has been shown by events that the House was wise in the action taken. Had we not removed those restrictions with regard to the tick, instead of the price of meat being what it is at present, 8d. or 10d. a lb., it would have been 2s. or 3s. a lb. I am glad to

say thousands and thousands of cattle are coming from the Kimberley district, and the effect will be that meat will be cheap.

MR. LEAKE: You would have lost two votes.

THE PREMIER: We have never yet been down so low as to miss two votes. That is the way with the hon. member; he attributes everything to personal or dishonest motives, and he speaks of the loss of two votes! What about the other members who in this House were opposing me? What about my trusted and honoured friend the member for Beverley (Mr. Harper), my friend the member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest), and all those who were against me? I lost them on that question.

MR. GREGORY: The member for West Kimberley did not vote against you.

THE PREMIER: There were other members here against me.

MR. MORAN: Both "whips" were against the Premier.

THE PREMIER: For all that, the matter was discussed openly here. An endeavour to make the motion one of "want of confidence" was made by the hon. member opposite (Mr. Leake), who always, like a drowning man, catches at a straw to try to save himself, to do something or appear to do something. The result was that they were defeated, and the tick cattle were allowed to come in from that date to this—now three years. I think no injury has been done to the colony by that act, and if an injury had been done, we should have heard something about it. Yet this is one of the things now brought against us. Members might as well say everything brought forward in this House and freely debated and carried by a majority, is corruption. I think rather that the question to which I refer was one of public importance, brought forward and decided upon by a majority of votes.

MR. GEORGE: What about the Resident Magistrate at Newcastle?

THE PREMIER: I know nothing about that matter, except that it refers to the magistrate who has just gone to the North-West. Three or four years ago he was appointed there, with the consent of the public men in this House, and from that day to this I have never

had a report with regard to him which is to his detriment in any way whatever. So that if people have anything to say, they have kept it to themselves. For my part, I knew him before he went to Newcastle. At Northam he was practically Resident Magistrate, without the pay. We appreciated his services, and gave him a small resident magistracy at Newcastle. I repeat that I have never heard anything against him; nothing was ever reported to me with regard to him; and I really consider that, unless there is something very serious and tangible, nothing but harm can result from dragging public officers into the arena of this House. Of course if there is anything discreditable that unfits him for his office, that could be stated; but even then it would not prove corruption on the part of the Government, if they were unaware of it. It would prove nothing more than that the Government made an undesirable appointment. I suppose every Government in the world sometimes makes appointments that do not turn out as well as they were expected to do. That will happen to anyone, not only in public departments, but also in private life. We often give appointments to people whom we think suitable, but who are afterwards found to be unsuitable. Surely there is nothing in that to justify wholesale charges of rottenness and corruption against the Government. I do not know that I need say anything more. I look upon this matter as having absolutely fizzled out, and I really do not want to hear anything more about it. [MR. LEAKE: Hear, hear.] I do not know what my friend will do: I think he had better have a committee. The hon. member has named these things now, and he may just as well have a committee, or else perhaps these matters will come up again and be talked about. If that is all the hon. member could say against me or any member of the Government, I think he might have said it in a very different way. I am glad indeed he says the financiers who were paying members were not members of this House. That is very satisfactory indeed. I would ask the hon. member, when he speaks again and makes charges of this kind, to be careful to say to whom he refers, because the inference on reading the speech is that the assertion referred to members of this House. I

have met a great many members, both on that side of the House and this, and they have always told me it referred to some member of the House. I think we can very well accept the hon. member's assurance; so there is nothing more to say about that except that it has given a great deal of pain to members of the House, who have thought that the words might in some way or other apply to them, or that the hon. member intended the words to apply to them; but now members are assured he did not intend them to so apply. Members will be sorry about the matter and regret it all the same, but I have no doubt they will be satisfied with the statement now made. Then reference has been made to several conversations. To whom did the hon. member put the questions? Who said that members were paid? We would be glad to know, and probably the committee may find it out. Then it was said the member for Geraldton was offered financial assistance, and the member read a telegram from a firm at Fremantle with whom he was doing business as carrying agent. This firm seems to have telegraphed to him and said: "Will you oppose the late member, Mr. Simpson, and give a general support to the Government?" What more reasonable request could there be than that from people who are friends? And even if they are not friends—but they were friends doing business together—what was there unreasonable in this civil question? Yet that was construed to mean that the Government were going to give money to help the member in his election. I will go further than that and say there is nothing wrong that I am aware of—although I do not think I have ever done so yet, and in fact I am sure I have not—there is nothing wrong in helping a man in an election in the country. It is done in England. Many men are put into Parliament on the understanding that their election shall not cost them sixpence.

MR. GEORGE: Is that representation of the people?

THE PREMIER: It is common enough in England, and it is well recognised. There is no reason why a poor man should not be put into Parliament, if he is capable, by someone who has the means to win an election for him.

MR. VOSPER: Yes; a wealthy man's servant.

THE PREMIER: I believe there are men in this House whose election expenses have been paid. There is nothing wrong about it.

MR. MORAN: Labour unions pay their members.

THE PREMIER: Why should they not? In England they do. We know one man gets an allowance as a member of Parliament, and there is nothing wrong in it at all. But, as a matter of fact, I would like the hon. member to show—and he certainly has not shown—that there was any offer to pay him anything. I do not like to attribute any motives, but it almost seems there was some sorrow in the mind of the hon. member because somebody did not pay part of his expenses. I can assure him that such an idea as offering to pay part of his expenses never for one moment entered the minds of the Government. I would not have thought of offering him part of his expenses. The hon. member told me he was a man in business and in affluent circumstances, and to offer a man in affluent circumstances compensation for his election seems to be out of the question. It has never been done in this country yet, and, I repeat, it never entered into our minds to offer to pay part of the hon. member's election expenses. If that telegram is the only one he has to justify his saying that if he sat on our side of the House he would have financial assistance, the evidence is very poor. The hon. member told me himself, in writing, what course he intended to pursue in this House, and I remonstrated with him for his intention to sit on the Opposition side. He said his district was neglected by the Government, and I replied, "You are all wrong about that; in fact your minds up there are poisoned by the newspaper there, which is hostile to the Government, and therefore the matter is not argued in a reasonable and fair way." He told me he was going to sit on the Opposition cross-benches because he thought his district was neglected. I had the highest opinion of the hon. member, and nothing has been so painful to me during my parliamentary life as the feeling I experienced in Melbourne when I saw that the hon. member, whom I looked upon as one who might be one of the

best men in the Assembly, was making these disgraceful charges against this House and myself. I repeat that nothing so pained me as the reading of these charges. There is nothing whatever between the hon. member and myself that cannot bear the light of day. I wanted his support, there is no doubt about that. I wanted the support of his constituency, and if I wanted the support of any constituency in the colony, I would endeavour to obtain it. Everything I said to the hon. member was above-board and fair. I do not know that I need say anything more. I shall be glad to have a select committee appointed for these things to be investigated to the bottom. Probably that would be the best, although, as far as I can see, there is nothing to investigate; nothing at all. I do not urge any course, except that I think it would be preferable in the interest of the hon. member, myself, and everyone else in the House, that there should be a select committee, so that we can, at any rate, have the opportunity of finding out more than we know at present about the statements of the hon. member.

MR. GEORGE (Murray): I must congratulate the member for Geraldton on the courage he has displayed; for at any rate he is one of those who, having made a statement, is man enough to stand before a tribunal and ask for a fair hearing. My remarks will be very brief, and I think the inquiry indicated by the Premier, but first suggested by the member for Geraldton (Mr. Robson), is one that will do a considerable amount of good. I would like to see the scope of that inquiry somewhat widened. I would like to see the powers of the Government, if they could be, widened so that we could deal with the scurrilous and lying Press of the colony. It is possible for us in Perth, it is possible for us on the goldfields, and it is possible for us in different districts of this colony to find newspapers, instead of trying to lead public opinion into fair and honest lines, poisoning the minds of the people when the evil exists only in the prurient minds of those who have conceived the articles. Take the *Kalgoorlie Miner*, which only a few days ago referred to this very matter which is being dealt with this evening. That newspaper referred to members of this House as being akin to the "forty

thieves" of the "Arabian Nights Entertainment." I cannot take up that *Kalgoorlie* newspaper any day, and I can scarcely take up the *Sunday Times* (Perth), without finding statements in those newspapers which attempt to poison the minds of the people. One would imagine that the writers of these articles would be ashamed of them, if they are not lost to shame already.

MR. VOSPER: Take them to the Court. [Other remarks, not heard distinctly.]

MR. GEORGE: I am not dealing with the hon. member as the editor of a paper, but as a member of this House.

MR. VOSPER: Nor do you speak as the representative of the Black Swan Foundry, either.

MR. GEORGE: The Black Swan Foundry does not deal with persons' characters: it deals with persons in an honest way, and pays them an honest wage. It does not find work in the prurient imaginings of a diseased imagination, and does not gain its living by sowing matters that disease the mind, as the *Sunday Times* does.

MR. VOSPER: You are getting mixed.

MR. GEORGE: The hon. member can take his change out of that, either in the House or outside of it. I say this, that I would like to see the inquiry go further. The way certain newspapers are conducted—if the cap fits anyone, let him wear it—is a disgrace to humanity. The editors do not try to elevate humanity, but to drag people down to a muck-heap.

MR. VOSPER: The hon. member is a subscriber, and complains if he does not get his paper regularly.

MR. GEORGE: I subscribe to the *Sunday Times*, and as a public man I regret that I have to wade through all manner of filth, in the vain hope occasionally of dropping across a little bit of truth. I have not yet found that in the *Sunday Times*, and I still continue to subscribe to that newspaper and help to swell its dividends, if the proprietors will receive my money when the account becomes due. I have been on the goldfields during the last few months, and I was publicly insulted in a hotel there in reference to the question which is before the House this evening. One of the charges made by the member for Geraldton is in reference to certain leases which it is stated on the goldfields—not said by

the public, but by newspapers—have been surrendered, and that in consideration of the influence used to get the surrender, blocks of land have been given to certain members of Parliament. Last week I gave notice of a motion, which the Premier has told me the Government will not resist, for a return to be laid on the table in regard to this matter, because I want to look into it as far as I can. As long as I am in public life I shall be jealous of the responsibilities of Parliament. If the statements which have been made are true, I shall be ashamed of being a member of Parliament, and if they are untrue, I shall take great pleasure in informing the man who insulted me in a hotel that he is a liar. These assertions are made publicly by a diseased Press on the fields, and they are copied by the Press down here. I appeal to members to assert their manliness, and to say if public opinion should not be lifted up and not dragged down by the drivel it is being dragged down by at the present moment. After many years of travelling round the world, I may say that I know of no good ever having come to the working man, of whom I claim to be a representative, from the misrepresentations of a filthy and mucky Press.

MR. JAMES (East Perth): No one can question the wide extent to which the privileges of the House reach, and no one can shut their eyes to the fact that the powers conferred on the House are almost supreme. They are like the powers of the Supreme Court in the matter of contempt of court. They are powers of the most extensive nature, and when it becomes necessary to exercise those powers in urgent cases, those who are called upon to handle the powers require to use good sense. If the people of the country knew what the powers of the Supreme Court were, or if the people of the country knew what the powers of Parliament were in dealing with questions such as that now before us, they would not allow a continuation of those powers, which strike at the liberty of every subject in the country, for one moment. When we hear members discussing the question, and point out the theoretical powers which we have, and no doubt the actual powers which we have, members should bear in mind that if Parliament attempts to use those

powers to the fullest extent—the theoretical powers conferred on us—they would create such a feeling in the country that the powers would be destroyed. These powers, although used elsewhere, are always sparingly used, and they are not used unless some great and serious charge is made against Parliament as a whole. Parliament is an important body, and we should do our best to realise that; but I do hope that members of Parliament, especially those who form the majority of Parliament, will realise that the people who send us to Parliament are infinitely more important than we are, and the supreme duty we owe is to our constituents who send us to Parliament. During the last session I was constantly endeavouring to urge that point on members in connection with the question of federation. It is important and vital that we should remember at all times that a member is responsible, and responsible alone, to the constituency which sends him to Parliament. That is the first principle we should go on, and if we begin to call members of Parliament to question and to book, because they have made some statement about the conduct of the Government, party or the conduct of the House, I say we shall destroy, we shall strike a blow at the liberty of speech. All of us members of Parliament use strong language which at times is not justified by facts. Some of us in moments of excitement use language which we should not use. If we have strong convictions we speak strongly, and when members are addressing their constituents, more particularly on a question of a change of policy, this House, or any House of Parliament, should be extremely careful before it invokes its power for the purpose of calling in question what that member says. The House should be very careful in invoking its power in attacking one party of the House and in protecting the party which the hon. member has left.

THE PREMIER: He never left a party,

MR. JAMES: Do hon. members remember that during last session the Premier boasted that he had wrested one of the seats from us?

THE PREMIER: Who said so?

MR. JAMES: It was said that one of the seats had been wrested from us during the late election.

THE PREMIER: That was North Murchison. The member for Geraldton sat in Opposition always.

MR. JAMES: On the Opposition crossbenches. When the member for Geraldton goes so far as to justify the change he has taken, those whom he has left feel a disappointment at the loss. When Parliament calls on any member to come before the House which he has attacked and justify himself, I say it is a monstrous travesty of justice. I say deliberately, as one who has the right to speak as a public man in the country, that it is a travesty of justice, especially when members comes into the House prepared to vote against the member for Geraldton.

MR. MORAN: On a point of privilege, is an hon. member in order in saying that members have come into the House prepared to vote against anybody?

MR. JAMES: When a member is charged with a breach of privilege, to a certain extent that member is tied. The member for Geraldton is not called on to justify his remarks, or to give the grounds on which he has made them; and when those who think a wrong proceeding is being adopted—technically right and theoretically right—and when other members think some proceeding should be taken to whitewash ourselves, should an opportunity be taken to call a member to order? The one man in this House whose duty it is to take care of the privileges and the honour of the House is the Premier. No one is entitled to speak on behalf of the honour of the House or its privileges, except you, Mr. Speaker, more than the leader of the House. The Premier is the proper person to maintain the honour and dignity of the House in a proceeding of this kind, and I wonder why the right hon. gentleman has not the courage of his convictions, but hides himself behind the most junior member of this House, for we know it is the Premier's motion, and his motion entirely. Because the member for North Murchison (Mr. Moorhead) brings forward the motion, that does not hide the real fact. Why does not the leader of the House, or the Attorney General, bring forward this motion? Because the member for North Murchison brings forward this motion that does not free it from party bias. The greatest liberty of speech should be given to every

member, both inside and outside this House. A great many statements are made which are entirely wrong. I have suffered myself, as other members have suffered, in regard to statements being made. But it will be a travesty on Parliament if every time a statement is made a member be called upon to explain, and that it should be said that the dignity of Parliament has been injured, and that the extreme powers of Parliament are to be invoked. No question is so important as that which affects the personal integrity of members of Parliament, or the honour of the House. On that question I think the freest discussion should be allowed to members; but criticism is one thing and bald statement is another. I realise that, but a great number of members cannot realise it. We should not deal in legal cobwebs: we should be allowed to express our convictions freely, and not be afraid to do so. We do not want men in public like that. We want men who have convictions, to express those convictions freely and honestly; and the member for Geraldton when he expresses his doubts is not referring to a matter altogether removed from present or practical politics, but is actuated by a state of uneasiness that is in the minds of more than one member. It may be that the suspicion and uneasiness are unfounded, but the suspicion is prevalent not only in the House but throughout the country.

MR. MOORHEAD: The member for Geraldton says he is not reflecting on members of the House.

MR. JAMES: What I want to say is that the member for Geraldton is not making statements expressing a suspicion which he alone feels, but is expressing a suspicion felt by other members and by people outside this House, that there is something floating about which requires to be looked into.

THE PREMIER: What do you want?

MR. JAMES: That suspicion may be entirely erroneous, but am I to understand that if I make a statement that wolves are voracious, I am to submit myself to the wolves to see whether they will eat me or not? Am I to understand that if I say there is a feeling of uneasiness, I am to hear a crowd of voices on the Government side calling upon me to prove the statement to their satisfaction?

A MEMBER: Why do you not prove it?

MR. JAMES: Prove it! The request is a travesty on our sense of justice. A charge is made against a member of the House, and he is called upon to justify himself before the men who make the charge, and before men who are, to a certain extent, charged.

THE PREMIER: The members charged would not be there.

MR. JAMES: True; but it must not be forgotten that we have to deal with this matter.

THE PREMIER: The member for Geraldton is not charged.

MR. JAMES: It is not to be forgotten that no suggestion has yet been brought forward by the Government that these charges or statements should be submitted to an impartial tribunal for trial, but the suggestion has been made by the Premier for a select committee. But what is a select committee, but a representation of this House?

MR. HUBBLE: The member for Geraldton moved for a select committee.

MR. JAMES: He did not.

MR. HUBBLE: Pardon me, he did. The member for Geraldton suggested a select committee or an impartial tribunal.

MR. JAMES: What the member for Geraldton suggested, or desired to move, was that the matter be referred to a competent and impartial tribunal, and there was no suggestion whatever about a select committee. The Premier did not suggest that this House should deal with the matter, because that would be too strong and too startling a proposal; but he suggested these charges should be inquired into by a select committee, which we know would not be, under the circumstances, fair and impartial.

THE PREMIER: Why do you say that?

MR. JAMES: It is a matter of opinion. A select committee represents the opinion of a majority of the House, and, in such a case as this, to appoint a select committee is to appoint a body the majority of whom think the charges made are not true, and that they are a reflection on themselves; and we are to leave them to determine whether the charges are true or not.

THE PREMIER: Both sides of the House would be represented on a select committee.

MR. JAMES: But we on this side may be as biased as hon. members on the other side.

A MEMBER: You have no right to be.

MR. JAMES: What is wanted is a tribunal perfectly unbiassed, and a select committee is not unbiassed. What is the use of shutting our eyes to the fact that a select committee always reflects the opinion of the Government? It is a monstrous injustice that in a case like this the majority should appoint a committee for the purpose of saying whether the member for Geraldton has substantiated his charges, because that is clearly making the prosecutor the judge of his own cause; and that is a very undesirable practice. I do not for one moment question the power or competency of the House, but we ought to exercise our power with the utmost caution, and, before doing so, ought to look at the statements complained of, and ask ourselves whether those statements are of such a character as to reflect not, mark you, on the dignity, honour and integrity of the Government, which is a party machine, nor on the dignity, honour and integrity of the Opposition, which is also part of the party political machine, but on the honour, dignity and integrity of Parliament as a whole. That is the only time this power should be used; and the charge is not that Parliament has been attacked, but that the Government have been attacked. The argument was used that if the Government be attacked, or their purity and sincerity called in question, then the purity and sincerity of the members who support the Government are also called in question; but that is an argument never heard in any other part of the world. The dignity of Parliament is the dignity of Parliament as a whole; but if we allow this matter to be used as a part of party politics—if a member of the Opposition makes a statement against the Government, or the Government make a statement against a member of the Opposition—indeed we had a very grave statement made to-night that the leader of the Opposition had “feathered his own nest” at the expense of the country.

A MEMBER: “Endeavoured to feather his nest.”

MR. JAMES: A statement was made that the late leader of the Opposition had endeavoured to “feather his own nest” at the expense of the country.

THE PREMIER: I withdrew that.

MR. JAMES: But the mere fact that the statement has been withdrawn does not alter the fact that the statement was made; and, appealing to members in their calmer moments, it appears to me that if this matter causes so much feeling and warmth, a select committee is the worst possible tribunal to go to for an impartial decision. I venture to think the statements made by the member for Geraldton are not statements which in any other representative institution in the world would be regarded in the light in which the Government regard them. When the Premier dealt with the statements—he went into his defence before the member for Geraldton had brought forward evidence he had in support of the accusations—the Premier did not refer to the dignity of Parliament, but to the dignity of the Forrest Government.

THE PREMIER: No; I did not.

MR. JAMES: If one looks at these statements, it is obvious that most of them have nothing to do with Parliament at all, but simply have reference to the Government; and the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) has, I think, dealt with them with great fairness. But when I look through these charges, and follow the speech of the Premier, I cannot see that any one of the eight paragraphs is an attack on the honour and integrity of the House as a whole, and all of the Premier's observations were directed to showing that he personally was hurt because the charges had been made. There are many in the country who desire to criticise the Premier. I know it may be wrong or blasphemous to do so, but there are men who do, and who have a right to do so; and even if men do make charges of corruption against the Premier or any individual member of the House, our powers ought not to be exercised under a plea of privilege, for the purpose of vindicating any particular individual charged. That would only mean that a majority of the House would be called on to pass a resolution whitewashing themselves, and there is a proper tribunal provided to decide such charges of corruption.

A MEMBER: What is that tribunal?

MR. JAMES: The law courts. But in the case of charges of the kind now under discussion there is only one tribunal, namely, the people of the country.

MR. HUBBLE: Whom we represent.

MR. JAMES: Who represents the people?

MR. HUBBLE: You do not.

MR. JAMES: As I have said, when members, in dealing with political matters, attack a party as a whole, either the Government or the Opposition are responsible to their constituents alone. If I make a statement which I think I ought to make, if I think there is a certain feeling of uneasiness about the House, as there is, I shall feel it my duty to say so to my constituents.

THE PREMIER: Why not say it here?

MR. JAMES: I have said it here. What right has this House to say that a member must wait until he can prove his statements? Such statements are difficult, almost incapable of proof, and if members keep their mouths closed and do not express the feeling of uneasiness—

THE PREMIER: You can ask questions.

MR. JAMES: If we neglect our duty, our constituents would at once say "Why did not you, as a public man, give us warning, and tell us of your fears?"

THE PREMIER: You want to libel people.

MR. JAMES: It is not a question of libel. Members have heavy responsibilities and a duty to their constituents; and some members realise that it is an urgent duty on them to express any suspicion or uneasiness, if they think the suspicion sufficiently strong to warrant expression. In this case, I think the suspicion is sufficiently strong.

THE PREMIER: You should express the suspicion here, because it is the best place.

MR. JAMES: I do not say it is not the best place; but our constituents have a right to expect us to address them on the point, and I wish to express my own uneasy feeling that there is something in the air that requires rectifying. Of course, I may be wrong, and I hope I am, but I believe there is that feeling of uneasiness

amongst members and throughout the country.

THE PREMIER: In diseased minds, perhaps.

MR. JAMES: We can only express our opinion conscientiously and openly, and I firmly believe that the sooner we have a general election, and have things cleared up, the better it will be in the interests of the country.

THE PREMIER: You are so much more honest than we are!

MR. JAMES: I hope I have said nothing of the sort.

THE PREMIER: That is what you have said.

MR. JAMES: I do not say that a general election will result in the return of the Opposition, but the Premier appears as if he were afraid that would be the result. A general election would, at all events, result in the return of members who, if not new, would come here with a fresh mandate from the electors, and would do a great deal of good. I say unhesitatingly, as a public man entitled after seven years' experience, to speak with some authority, that this House is not respected by the electors of the colony.

MR. HUBBLE: It is a shame of you to say so.

MR. JAMES: I say that the House does not enjoy the respect and esteem of the electors of the colony. It may be I am wrong, but it is possible the people are right. I submit, apart altogether from the danger of calling to your aid this extreme power for the purpose of vindicating the Government and protecting the reputation of one or two members who, after all, are not attacked — apart from that general danger, it is most undesirable that in the last session of a moribund Parliament we should bring to our aid this extreme power for the purpose of vindicating a House which every member knows, as well as I do myself, has not the respect and esteem of the great majority of the electors.

MR. WOOD: Why not resign?

MR. JAMES: I will resign if the hon. member for West Perth (Mr. Wood) will resign.

MR. MORAN: I will resign and fight you (Mr. James) for your seat. Take that challenge if you like, now or at any time.

MR. JAMES: I think there is something far more important than the dignity

of Parliament, and that is freedom of speech. Members should have the fullest opportunity of expressing their views to the electors, and should look to the electors alone for punishment if they are wrong, and for support if they are right. The power which it is now sought to exercise has never been exercised in the old country since 1838.

MR. MOORHEAD: Nonsense! It was exercised in the case of Mr. Plimsoll, in 1875.

MR. JAMES: I prefer to take my own reading on the matter, and say that this power has never been exercised since 1838, a time when freedom of speech was not understood; and we ought not to exercise the power, even if we were not moribund and had a strong case. In a case where the Government are laying an accusation against a man who has charged them with corruption and left the Government because he thought those charges were true, whether we have the power or not, I say it is a bad power, and members should be responsible to their constituents alone, who are the only persons who have a right to judge in the matter.

MR. GEORGE: Let them wait till the general election.

MR. JAMES: They can deal with the matter at the general election. No responsible man will for one moment risk his position by making such serious statements without some foundation, though he may not be able to prove them entirely.

MR. DOHERTY: Then he should not utter them.

MR. JAMES: I do not agree with the hon. member that he should not utter them. I say a member owes his first duty to his constituents.

MR. DOHERTY: But should he utter mere suspicions?

MR. JAMES: If he thinks those suspicions are well founded. We ought to have the honour of this House above suspicion; no man can say that it is so now; and I say that no number of indignant repudiations in this House, no number of resolutions passed by this House, no resolutions of a select committee, can maintain the honour and dignity of this House, if the people of the country have lost confidence in that honour and that dignity.

MR. OLDHAM (North Perth): I desire to say a few words on this question, and I suppose every member of this (Opposition) side of the House, and the hon. member most particularly concerned, regret very much that his (Mr. Robson's) speech was ever delivered. My friend who has just sat down has been at some pains to show that this Parliament should not in any way interfere with what concerns its own honour. He says, and very properly so; that a member's constituents are more important than the member, and that the member is responsible only to his constituents. I say a member is responsible to this House for any accusations he may make, charging one or more members of this House with corruption. At the same time, I was particularly pleased to hear that the hon. member (Mr. Robson) had no desire to convey to his hearers on that memorable occasion that any personal dishonour was attached to any member of the Government or of this House. Now that is not what every member of this House understood from that speech; that is not what every newspaper in this country understood from it; that is not what every man, woman and child in this country who has any intelligence at all would have understood from the speech delivered by the member at Geraldton. If it did mean anything at all, it meant that the Government of this country was personally dishonourable, that members of this House were personally corrupt; and to prove that statement I should like to read an extract from the *Kalgoorlie Miner*—a paper which, I believe, has more influence on the goldfields than any other paper in this country; and I do not think I should be wrong in saying that the leaders in that paper receive more credence from the goldfields people than almost Holy Writ.

MR. VOSPER: That is very probable.

MR. OLDHAM: This is what the *Kalgoorlie Miner* says, as nearly as I can remember. The words may not be exactly the same, but I can assure hon. members they are absolutely correct in substance. After dealing with the charges made by the member for Geraldton, that paper goes on to say:

It will not be for one moment thought that Parliament can inquire into a matter of this

description. If it did so, the case would stand something like this: The members of that House—about 40—are accused of being thieves; at least the majority of them. The numeral 40, to those somewhat acquainted with the "Arabian Nights Entertainments," is somewhat significant.

MR. GEORGE: That is supposed to be smart.

MR. OLDHAM: That is the *Kalgoorlie Miner*; that is a paper which has a great influence on the goldfields of this country; and the construction that paper places on the hon. member's remarks is that a majority of the forty members of this House are thieves.

MR. VOSPER: We can judge of the construction by the remarks.

MR. OLDHAM: I want to know seriously whether it is or is not within the province of this Chamber to take notice of an hon. member's remarks, which remarks lead to the publication of such a leading article in an important paper like the *Kalgoorlie Miner*. Surely it is decidedly within the province of this House to do so, when the majority of the House, at all events, are concerned. It is decidedly within the province of this House to take notice of the speech that has called forth such an article.

MR. VOSPER: How can you make the member for Geraldton responsible for the remarks of the *Kalgoorlie Miner*?

MR. OLDHAM: I certainly make the member for Geraldton responsible for the remarks of this paper. That leading article was founded on the speech delivered by the hon. member; and that is the construction which the *Miner* places on that speech. That is the construction which a number of people in this country have placed on it. What can be fairer to this House—not only to members on the Government side, but to those sitting on the Opposition benches—than that an inquiry should be held? I suppose in the not far distant future some hon. members, now in Opposition, will be occupying seats over there (Government benches).

MR. GEORGE: Hear, hear; that is so.

MR. OLDHAM: And I suppose they would feel such remarks quite as keenly as the Premier has felt the remarks which affect his personal honour. For my part, I sincerely trust that the hon. member (Mr. Moorhead) who has brought forward this motion will persevere with

it, and will see, so far as he possibly can, that the matter is sifted to the bottom by the most competent tribunal before which any man can be arraigned in this colony and that is a select committee of this House.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I should like to ask permission to withdraw a statement I made to-night which was a very improper statement made in the heat of the moment, and which I was not justified in making when I referred to the member for Albany (Mr. Leake) as having done something in this House to "feather his own nest." The words came out without sufficient consideration. What I did intend to say was that the hon. member used his influence, all the influence he possessed, not with the members of the Executive but used his influence to get a certain decision; and when matters did not turn out in the way he desired, he was very angry, and resented it very much to me personally, so much so that I complained in this House of the remarks the hon. member had made. My words might have borne the construction that the hon. member had done something personally dishonourable. I am very sorry indeed to have used them, and I desire to withdraw them unreservedly.

MR. LEAKE (Albany): I should like to say I did not for one moment think the right hon. gentleman intended to reflect on my personal honour. I bear him no possible shadow of a grudge or ill-feeling for what he has said. Many such things are said in the heat of the moment.

MR. MOORHEAD (in reply): Having listened to the explanation given by the member for Geraldton (Mr. Robson), I must confess I am not satisfied therewith, and neither am I convinced by the special pleading of the member for East Perth (Mr. James). On the evening when I gave notice of this motion, several members who occupied seats in the Opposition found fault with the fact that the member for Geraldton had not had sufficient time to prepare an explanation of the allegations he was reported to have made. This evening the House has listened to the hon. member, and we have not had a retraction of his charges, but a childish attempt to explain them away.

MR. LEAKE: No.

[Interjection by MR. GEORGE.]

MR. JAMES: The judge is speaking!

MR. MOORHEAD: I am at liberty to comment, and comment freely, not alone upon the explanation of the member for Geraldton, but on the equally childish attempts of certain hon. members to whitewash him. Amongst others, I endeavoured to follow the attempt of the member for East Perth (Mr. James) to explain away the language used; and, having explained it away, to further explain that that speech made at Geraldton was merely voicing or echoing a suspicion which exists in this House. What is that suspicion? Is it not voiced in these charges made by the member for Geraldton? He says the Government are corrupt and rotten to the core. Why? Peruse the speech, and we shall find the answer. The Government are corrupt because they are identified with financiers who are keeping members of this House—paying those members to support a rotten Government. The Government are rotten because they attempted to bribe him (Mr. Robson); they are rotten because they attempted to withdraw a certain Bill in the Upper House, or did withdraw it, to satisfy a section of their followers. Are not all these statements reflections, not alone upon the Government, but upon each and every member of this House who supports that Government? Nay, more, is it not a reflection—probably unseen by the member for East Perth, because he may be dull—is it not a reflection upon every member of that Opposition, each of whom is daily brought into contact with members on this (Government) side of the House. Can we suppose for a moment that members of the Opposition, if they believed these charges, would consort with members on this side, would consult them for the regulation of the business of this House, as I understand the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) is in the habit of consulting with the leader of the House? Why, in their heart of hearts they cannot believe the accusations. The member for East Perth, in his dramatic manner, says: "Oh, there is a suspicion in this House; we cannot get rid of it; and the hon. member was merely trying to voice that suspicion." Why, that is what we complain of. It is a low,

insinuating attempt to instil a poison into the minds of the electors, to keep it there, and to give us no opportunity to vindicate ourselves. Says the member for East Perth: "Go back to your constituents, if you have made a mistake." That is exactly what has been done in this case. The hon. member (Mr. Robson) flaunted these charges before his constituents, and said: "There is the style of House, there is the style of Government, and that is the style of majority which supports them!" And what is the voice of the Press? I do not blame the Press for one moment. I am as fully in favour of the liberty of the Press as the member for East Perth, and probably have done more for it than he will ever be called upon to do; and I say, when the Press got these charges in front of them, which were made by a man supposed to be in a responsible position, why should not the Press comment upon the charges? I should say the Press would have been at the beck and call of the corrupt Government—as certain hon. members would make out the Government to be—if the Press had not taken up these charges. Now what are these charges? Is it not idle to say these charges do not reflect upon the character of the House? Just listen for one moment to the hon. members who support the member for Geraldton. With the exception of the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper), who is on this occasion even a better special pleader than the member for East Perth (Mr. James), why, they have covered them up, glozed over them, and said they contain no reflection upon the House. I do not consider this a fitting time, nor is there any necessity, to appoint a select committee to inquire into these charges. The hon. member (Mr. Robson) has repeated them. He says: "I admit these are the charges." Well, do not these charges, on the face of them, reflect upon the members of this House? What need to go into the evidence which he will call in support of them?

MR. VOSPER: You do not want an inquiry?

MR. MOORHEAD: No; I say I want no committee of inquiry—certainly not, because the charges are admitted. It is now for this House to say whether these

charges, in the opinion of the House, constitute a reflection on the honour thereof. The hon. member says he did not mean them to apply to members of the House. The question for the House now to decide is: Are they, as the member for East Perth says, a voicing of this suspicion which some members entertain? That is the question to be decided. The member for Geraldton contends that the Government are corrupt and rotten to the core. The member for Albany says, "Oh, that is decay." There can be no decay, unless the seeds of corruption are there; and it is there that the hon. member wishes to place them when he pointed to the Government. Why are the Government corrupt? Listen: "The above statements justify his accusations of political corruption and rottenness." The above statements—what are they? "That the Government had withdrawn the Rural Lands Improvement Bill in the Upper House, practically to buy the support of the farming element in the House." The hon. member has adopted that, has ratified it, and the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) rejoices in the ratification. Then the hon. member (Mr. Robson) says "Many of the members of the Legislative Assembly appear to be without visible means of support." The hon. member says also: "I do not mean to reflect upon members of this House." If he had stopped there, there could have been no reflection, because poverty is not a dishonour and is not a crime. [MR. GEORGE: Hear, hear.] But what does he go on to say? "He had discovered there was a group of old financiers interested in keeping the Government in office"—mark you, the rotten and corrupt Government—"and that those financiers paid the members." Whom did they pay? The "members without visible means of support." Why, the more we look at the matter, the more childish and the more unmanly is his attempt to crawl out of the statements he has made. Some hon. members stated they were pleased that the hon. member had the courage to stand up and repeat his charges. Another hon. member echoes that statement now. Yes; the hon. member (Mr. Robson) repeats the charges; but what does he say? He says: "I did not mean to reflect upon the personal character of members." What person of

ordinary intelligence could read that speech, and not see that what the hon. member has said is that there are members on the Government side without visible means of support, and that he knows of old financiers who pay those members to support that Government. Who can say that is not a reflection upon members of the Government side of the House? I say it is not alone a reflection upon the Government side of the House, but upon every hon. member on the other side, because it means that Opposition members are bound to consort, and do consort freely with those on the Government side, and consult with them, and approve from time to time of arrangements for the conduct of business—consult with men who have laid themselves open to receive and have received bribes. I say it is no longer a case for a committee to inquire into evidence to be adduced; because the hon. member says he did not mean the statements to apply to members of the House.

At 6:32 the SPEAKER left the Chair.

At 7:30, Chair resumed.

MR. MOORHEAD (continuing): As I intend to conclude my remarks with this motion, I may ask if there is any motion at the present moment before the House. It appears there is some doubt on that point.

THE SPEAKER: There is really no motion before the House, because I was not permitted to put it before the hon. member (Mr. Robson) made his statement.

MR. MOORHEAD: That being so, I am now in a position to conclude my remarks, and to move the House formally in regard to the motion which I intend to move; but before doing so I wish to conclude my observations generally on the discussion which has already taken place. When we adjourned, I was considering the nature of these charges, and how they bore upon the character of the House itself. I may say now, by way of concluding my remarks, that the charges themselves may be resolved under two heads; one being a charge against the Government of offering bribes, and the other a charge against members of receiving bribes; and, of course, as "the

receiver is as bad as the thief," the reflection is equally upon members of the House. Therefore, if the statement by the hon. member for Geraldton, that he had no intention of charging members of this House with receiving bribes or being guilty of anything which would reflect upon their personal character as members, were accepted in its entirety without qualification, we would be in this position, that the House itself should then consider whether the words did convey a reflection or not; whether the charges he made conveyed a reflection upon any members of the House. I am dealing now with the question altogether apart from the charges made against the Government itself. That being so, there would be no necessity for a committee of inquiry. As the member—if I may use a popular expression—has "climbed down," and has withdrawn the charges he had made against private members, there would be no necessity for a committee, inasmuch as there would be no evidence to bring forth; therefore the logical outcome of the present position of the member for Geraldton, apart from the charges levelled at the Government itself, would appear to be that the House should consider whether the words themselves are capable of the interpretation members on this side say they are. Therefore, I had intended originally to move the first portion of the motion which I shall presently submit to the House, without adding to it an addendum that a committee be appointed to inquire into the truth of these charges. However, upon reflection, I have come to the conclusion that it might be open to my friends on the other side of the House to say at a subsequent period, when they go before their constituents—which the member for East Perth is so anxious to do—"You gagged the member: he had no opportunity of answering the charges." To prevent a reflection of such a character, I now formally move:

That, in the opinion of this House, the charges made by the hon. member for Geraldton constitute a reflection upon the honour of members of the House; and that a select committee of seven members thereof, be appointed to inquire into the truth of these charges.

There is only one other observation I have to add. A great deal has been made by the member for East Perth (Mr.

James), in reference to freedom of speech, and the hon. member claimed that while a member is addressing his constituents the ordinary rules applicable to public speaking must be waived, and that freedom of speech must degenerate into unbridled license. I refuse to accept such a rule for the guidance of public speakers, especially speakers who are members of this House. The ordinary rules of decency ought to obtain, and a member should reflect that he belongs to a House which, after all, is the highest tribunal in this country, endowed with the right of making laws; and that if the charges made could be proved, then the Legislature of this colony are nothing but a corrupt and rotten body, as has been already charged against a good portion of them, namely the Government. I formally move the motion I have read.

Mr. GEORGE (Murray): I second the motion.

Mr. ILLINGWORTH (Central Murchison): I very much regret that a question of this character should have been brought before the House, and that a session specially called for a specific purpose, in relation to which the House was in an amicable disposition, should have been marred by the introduction of a question of this nature. The right hon. the Premier, in his speech on this question the other evening, in which he spoke in the most heated manner, was good enough to tender to me, as leader of the Opposition, some advice as to how I ought to protect, or assist in protecting, the honour and reputation of this House. I may suggest that I have lived in the world longer than the Premier, and have had a pretty varied experience, and the conclusion I arrived at many years ago in regard to public men, and the reputation of public bodies whose acts are before the public, may be summed up in a single sentence, which is, that a reputation which cannot protect itself is seldom worthy of being protected. It does seem strange to me that at a time like this, when the whole country is anxious to settle the most important political question that has ever been placed before it, we should have this "red herring" drawn across the track. What does it amount to? It amounts to this, that the hon. member, when speaking before his constituents, made use of cer-

tain terms which, it seems, have given offence to certain members. It is most interesting to notice how these terms are used and changed to suit the views of different members who speak. The Premier has claimed that these statements are a distinct charge of dishonour upon the House itself, that they are not limited to the Government, and not limited to individuals, but that the honour of every member of this House is affected by the charges which have been made. I venture to say the House has suffered in reputation and honour more from three speeches delivered by the Premier than by twenty of such speeches as have been delivered by the member for Geraldton.

MR. HIGHAM: Rot!

MR. ILLINGWORTH: One speech at Coolgardie, one at East Fremantle, and one on the floor of this House last week. If we are to be so anxious, so desirous of maintaining the honour and reputation of this House, surely we may expect that the Premier himself shall lead in maintaining, by his own speech and his own utterances, the honour of this House, not only inside the Chamber but out of it.

THE PREMIER: What did I say?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Perhaps the right hon. gentleman did not know what he was saying: perhaps he does not know what he said. I am expressing an opinion which I am perfectly justified in expressing, that the reputation of this House has suffered more by speeches of that kind than any such speeches as that delivered by the member for Geraldton.

THE PREMIER: You had better tell us what they are.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It is not necessary, and that is not the subject before the House.

THE PREMIER: You had better not refer to it then, but what was it?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The right hon. gentleman just now informed me that having some acquaintance with constitutional practice, it was against constitutional practice to interrupt a member when speaking. That being so, perhaps the hon. member will take a dose of his own medicine, and apply it immediately.

THE PREMIER: I want a little information, that is all.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: If the hon. member requires information, the House

does not at present require information on that point. I say again this House requires no vindication either by motion or select committee as to its honour.

MR. HIGHAM: Who said so?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Parliament is responsible to the country. Every member is responsible to his own constituents, and to those only. In a very short time everyone of us will have to give an account of our stewardship before the country, and it would be more dignified and more to the credit of the House if this question had never been brought before us at all.

MR. DOHERTY: And give you an electioneering cry.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: We are not so short of electioneering cries as to take the remarks of the member for Geraldton; we are not so short of electioneering cries as that, so that we need not concern ourselves with opinions which the member for North Fremantle (Mr. Doherty) may require to give us. I am only expressing my own opinion, but it seems to me an absolute degradation that members should make such speeches as they have made to-night, and take such action in regard to the question. What are the facts? A speech has been delivered, and it has been published in almost every newspaper in the colony right round Western Australia. We are supposed to take action with the hon. member who made that speech. Is it intended to take action with every newspaper which has published that speech, because according to constitutional practice the greater offence is the publishing of statements of this kind.

MR. MOORHEAD: They are protected by Act of Parliament.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: They are not protected as members are. Are we to have the ridiculous spectacle of passing a motion in this House to inquire into statements made by the member for Geraldton, and then are we to have actions in the Supreme Court to penalise every newspaper which published that statement? Are we so dependent on resolutions and the results of select committees that we in this House, and the Ministry of the country who have been in power for ten years, are we to get a huge whitewashing machine in order to whitewash the Government and the members of this House? Is that what

we have come to, after ten years of the Forrest Government? If that is so, the Lord deliver us from the Forrest Government as quickly as possible! What has it come to? Suppose a motion appointing a select committee is passed, a committee to examine and call evidence, what will that committee be composed of? It can be no other committee, according to constitutional practice, than a committee of the House. The Premier says the whole House is charged with dishonour and corruption: he claims that these charges are made against the whole House. A committee must be selected from the House, so that the House charged by the member for Geraldton with corruption and rottenness is to have a committee appointed from this House to vindicate its honour and put a coat of whitewash over it. The thing is so ludicrous that if anything can degrade the House of Parliament, that motion will degrade it. If anything can be calculated or is calculated to bring dishonour to this Parliament, to the Ministry and the members of this House of Parliament, and to Parliamentary institutions generally, the procedure under this motion is the thing to do that. I have sat here with very great pain to see the action taken in the attempt to get hold of the member for Geraldton. If we are to follow the speeches of members on the Treasury benches, and analyse them in the same spirit as the speech of the member for Geraldton has been analysed, we may have votes of privilege every day. To-night on the floor of the House we have had a statement made, and be it said in all honour to the Premier that he has had the courage to withdraw it, a far more serious question of privilege than any words uttered by the member for Geraldton.

MR. HUBBLE: Bring it up, then.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It is absolute childishness, a weak and imbecile attempt to whitewash the House, which ought to be, and is, beyond reproach, to maintain and support the honour of the Ministry, which is beyond reproach. Sitting in Opposition, and knowing the words I use, I say there never yet has been personal dishonour charged against the Government. The member for Geraldton has not charged it, and to try and "fake up" a charge against the hon.

member is truly far too ridiculous altogether. When we have great questions to discuss, with the greatest question of all to discuss, can Parliament waste its time and energy, and disgrace and dishonour itself by giving time to such a motion as this? I do hope the matter will be brought to an immediate termination. A committee has been asked for, what to do? a committee to be appointed from this House. We will take away the charge against the members of the Opposition, for none of the gold has been carried to this side of the House, and I can say that I do not think any has gone anywhere else: I do not think there has: I am not going to suggest it. The Government have a majority in the House, naturally and properly, and the Government will therefore hold the power to select the committee. Suppose we say that the charges are against the Government, and are against the Government supporters, I do not detect anything against the Government supporters, only a political charge against the Government. Then the Government have the power to appoint a committee, and this committee has to send in a report. Will any living man in the country think anything different of the question than he does now? Is anything to be done to satisfy any individual by appointing a select committee, or dealing any further with this question? Surely we have wasted enough time, and in view of this, and in the strong belief that the House is wasting time, and is dishonouring itself by the motion now before us, believing that it will serve no useful purpose, I beg to move the previous question.

THE SPEAKER: Does anyone second that?

[A pause ensued.]

MR. ILLINGWORTH: As there is no seconder, the debate must go on.

MR. MORAN (East Coolgardie): The Premier this evening, before tea, made rather a personal accusation somewhat reflecting on the character of a member of this House, but the hon. member referred to did not get excited about it. I noticed the hon. member was imperturbable. It had no effect in disturbing him at all. No doubt the hon. member anticipated that the Premier's better sense would overtake him later on, and lead him to

withdraw what he had said. The Premier made the accusation and withdrew it in the House, and many hon. members say things in the heat of the moment which they have to withdraw. It did occur to a great many members, when they saw the speech of the member for Geraldton, that perhaps some extraordinary thing had taken place in his electorate, that something had happened to him on the occasion when he made the first declaration of his opinion. Later on information came through that the speech was delivered after a willy-willy up North, and willy-willies do occur at Geraldton sometimes, when there is a cricket match on. Perhaps Mafeking had been relieved there. Mafeking was relieved at Geraldton on this particular day, and the member was present at a dinner. I know that the hon. member's teetotal principles are not hidebound: he is not a bigoted teetotaller in any way.

MR. LEAKE: Are you speaking of me?

MR. MORAN: Oh, no; I should not accuse the hon. member of being a teetotaller, let alone a bigoted one. But I was saying that the member for Geraldton is not a bigoted teetotaller, and he may have been affected perhaps by the viands around the dinner table: not that he had taken any himself, but that he was affected by those around him, and that he then made that speech. We thought that the hon. member's better judgment afterwards would lead him to wish that he had not made use of the statements. After the explanation this evening, I was inclined to think that the member for Geraldton had not made use of the words at all. I am certain of one thing, I feel it, that if the member for Geraldton had been able to make up his mind afterwards to admit this fact, he would have done it. Why do I say this? Because this afternoon in the House we had the member for Geraldton saying that he never intended in any particular to reflect on the personal character of any member of this House. He never intended such a thing! Since all the newspapers in the colony, and nearly every member in the House, thought he did mean to reflect on the personal character of the House, the same remedy is open to him that was open to the Premier. The Premier made an unconditional with-

drawal: it was open to the member for Geraldton to do the same, and to make an unconditional withdrawal. No doubt the hon. member could say with truth that the Government had been influenced to spend money in the constituencies of members assisting them, and this will go on while party government lasts. That can be said of every Government in the world, because party government will be party government for ever; and while we have this party government, we will find one party accusing the other of helping and assisting in some way those whom they represent in the House. The hon. member has the course that I have indicated open to him. Does anybody suppose for a moment that the House wishes to force the hon. member to an inquiry, if he is not willing? Does any hon. member wish to hold the member for Geraldton to his statements? Not for a moment. We all agree with the leader of the Opposition that this is a most painful incident, especially in a special session of Parliament; but it cannot be avoided. Yet when the leader of the Opposition suggests that we should ignore the matter and go to the country, I cannot give him credit for being altogether sincere. He knows at the present time that the charges are made against the Government and their constituents, and the newspapers will hurl these charges at Government supporters, pointing out that the definite charges made were never inquired into and that, therefore, the charges were justified. If the two parties go to the country, and these charges are unsolved and not inquired into, the Opposition may be chivalrous and generous enough not to mention them in the political campaign, but they could not, if they would, escape a certain halo of glory reflected around themselves as being that party against whom the charges were not made. If a member of the Opposition never mentioned these charges we may rest perfectly assured they would be used by persons who were supporting them; and no matter how lofty or noble the action of the members of the Opposition might be, they would still be before the country as the party who had never been charged with bribery and corruption.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Would a select committee remove that?

MR. MORAN: Now I come to the suggestion that no tribunal can try Parliament except Parliament; and that is what I myself have said before and still maintain. If, as a member of Parliament, I were asked to appeal to any other tribunal, I should refuse to do so. So long as I am a member of Parliament, I shall uphold the privilege of Parliament, and regard it as the tribunal to try Parliament—the tribunal, after that, being any that the members of Parliament select. But the whole history of Parliament shows that the only tribunal to try Parliament is Parliament itself. The hon. member said that Parliament must not be tried by the present Parliament. Why? Because, said he, there is a party in Parliament which happens to have a majority. But will the hon. member tell us any Parliament in Australia where there is not a party with a majority? Will he tell me, that when he gets on to the Government side of the House, he will not have a majority? Yet, he says that he cannot trust the present Government majority. Does he expect to be trusted when he has a majority, or to have flung in his teeth a charge of bribery and corruption?

MR. VOSPER: He would not look to the Opposition for support.

MR. MORAN: I should hope he would do so, as the Government do now. But there is a fear the Government will use the majority to burk inquiry. Let us see what that accusation is worth. There will be one member at least whose tongue will not be tied, namely the member for Geraldton (Mr. Robson). What are his powers and position before a select committee, if every single member of the committee be biassed against him? He has the undoubted right to call for whatever evidence and documents he likes, and these will be printed. The report of a select committee is not only brought up as has been said by the leader of the Opposition, because a select committee cannot bring up a report without also bringing up the evidence, unless the House passes a resolution that the examination shall be made *in camera*, and the Press and shorthand writers be excluded.

MR. VOSPER: The Press are excluded in the ordinary course.

MR. MORAN: Then I will put it this way: the evidence must be laid before the House unless a resolution be passed that the shorthand reporters be excluded, and nothing laid before the House except what has been termed by the leader of the Opposition the "whitewash brush" of the Government.

MR. VOSPER: The evidence must be printed by resolution of the House.

MR. MORAN: The hon. member is suggesting we will pass a resolution to the effect that the evidence shall not be printed.

MR. VOSPER: I am only raising the point as to what is the usual course.

MR. MORAN: I do not know what point the hon. member is raising, but I see no possible chance of burking an inquiry. Let us hope the select committee will come from both sides of the House, and, so far as I have a voice, I will see that it does, and that it is composed of as level-headed and honourable men as can be found. But for the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) to suggest that after going so far as we have, we should let the matter rest, when two courses are open to the member for Geraldton, is a proceeding which I cannot understand. The hon. member can withdraw his statements.

MR. LEAKE: He never made those charges in the sense in which they are taken.

MR. MORAN: What is the use of a half withdrawal, which, after all, will leave the same impression behind it? If the hon. member does not mean what these words absolutely mean to every man who reads them—even to the leader of the Opposition and every member of the House—he should withdraw the words altogether. Would he be any the less an honourable man for taking such a course? Is a man any the less honourable who, having made an accusation and thinking he has overdone it, or has done somebody an injury, withdraws that accusation? What in the world is more manly than an honourable withdrawal of calumny or injury? Is it not expected of every man in ordinary life that he should either withdraw such accusations or pursue them to the bitter end? And the proper way of pursuing the charges in this matter is by taking them before the tribunal of Parliament. The only other way is an

absolute withdrawal; and I do not think we would have seen the galleries of the House filled in such a boisterous manner—

MR. LEAKE: Boisterous! They are perfectly quiet.

MR. MORAN: I do not think we should have seen the galleries filled in such a boisterous manner if the destinies of this great colony had not been in question. I do not think half the number of people would have known as much as they do about the "Robson charges" had these not come before the Assembly, or had the hon. member intimated that he had acted impulsively and did not wish the words to be taken in the sense in which they were taken. I confess it is painful to have to listen to this debate, and I do not think there is a single member who believes these charges will be sheeted home in the way which the *Kalgoorlie Miner* hopes they will be. I am glad to hear the leader of the Opposition at last say that, in his opinion, the charges are absolutely groundless as applied to the House. That is an honourable admission; and holding that view, why does he not use his influence to urge on the member for Geraldton that the latter has made a mistake.

A MEMBER: Is he the "leader" of the Opposition?

MR. MORAN: I choose to look on the member for Central Murchison as the leader of the Opposition at the present time. Why leave a sense of dissatisfaction on this side of the House, and make it appear as though he wanted the matter slurred over so that he could say the charges were never inquired into and were never withdrawn?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The hon. member has said all I said. He said it applied to political dishonour and no more.

MR. MORAN: Political dishonour?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Yes.

MR. GEORGE: You are getting tangled.

MR. MORAN: Political dishonour! If the hon. member (Mr. Robson) meant anything, it was that there are members on the Government side of the House who have no visible means of support. I do not know that the means of support of members of the Opposition are too visible either, but I should be very sorry to say there was any group of old or new financiers in West Australia who

would go to the trouble of keeping the Opposition in power. Just to look at the facetious side of the question for a moment, I am perfectly certain that everybody would like the member for Geraldton to declare what financial institution is doling out money to members of Parliament; because, if he did so, there would be a terrible rush to-morrow morning. The hon. member, however, keeps the information to himself, and is very unkind to do so if he knows the philanthropists who are willing to give that financial assistance which is so much needed by everybody in Western Australia at the present time. If we were informed as to what institution was doing that, it would have a warm day when it opened its doors to-morrow.

MR. EWING (Swan): I was unfortunate in not having the opportunity of hearing the member for Geraldton (Mr. Robson) this afternoon, because I feel that had I had that opportunity, I would approach the matter on very much sounder and safer grounds. But I understand the member in effect said: "I deny none of the statements, which appear to have been taken from the *Geraldton Express* of the 20th February; the report is substantially correct; I am responsible to my constituents; and it is not my intention to retract anything I have said." Starting with these premises, I would like to deal with the third remark the hon. member made use of, namely "I am responsible to my constituents." No doubt the hon. member is responsible to his constituents, and I do not think any person would gainsay that statement for a moment. But he is responsible to a wider tribunal than his constituents: he is responsible to this House, and, as a member of this House, to the whole community. It is impossible for the hon. member to say that, sitting in this House as members of the Legislature, we are only responsible to our individual electors. That is a fallacy which cannot, to my mind, be supported by any serious argument. We are the representatives not of the Swan, nor of Geraldton, nor any particular portion of the colony, but we are the representative of the community, and as such representatives, the community have a right to be our judges. The member for Geraldton has not thought fit to retract or withdraw anything he has said; and, consequently

the next duty the House has to perform, when considering the resolution moved by the member for North Murchison (Mr. Moorhead), is to decide really whether the statements made by the member for Geraldton do reflect on this House, and whether they are such remarks as should be thoroughly investigated. On looking at the newspaper containing the report of the speech of the member for Geraldton, I find he says:

Well, I will give an explanation of my charges, and expose the political corruption and rottenness I encountered during last session.

It has been sought to draw a distinction between political corruption and personal corruption, but I, for one, am absolutely incapable of appreciating any such distinction. A man who is corrupt is corrupt all the world over; and a man who is politically corrupt is condemned in the strongest possible language as a member of this House. After all, are we to consider the personal and individual conduct of hon. members? We are surely here to consider the conduct of hon. members in the light of the fact that they are members of Parliament; and, therefore, the question we have to consider, above all other questions, is not only as to whether members are personally honest and straightforward, but whether they are politically honest and politically straightforward. It is, therefore, my humble opinion that there is no distinction whatever between the one class of dishonesty and the other. It is quite sufficient for me that an hon. member says a member of this House has been exposed to political corruption, and that he has seen, within the doors of the Chamber, in the conduct of hon. members, actions which he deems to be so serious that he states to the community that in the House there is political corruption. That statement alone, without anything else, is sufficient to put this matter in such a light as to call for the strongest and fullest inquiry. Again, we hear it said that a Bill which was before this House was withdrawn by the Government absolutely, and without a division, practically to buy the support of the farming element there. No doubt the Government have a perfect right to withdraw any measure they see fit to withdraw; but to buy the support of the

farming element—what does that imply? It implies that the farming element in this House and in another place were to be sufferers to some extent by a piece of legislation, and that the consequence of the withdrawal of that piece of legislation was to relieve those hon. members. The thing is plain. What else can it mean? And if this is not personal and political corruption, I do not know what is. There were several other statements made: it was said that certain powers behind the throne offered money, that members of this House are supported and kept in their places for political reasons; and a number of other charges are made which to my mind clearly offer this House full ground for inquiry. But in passing I should like to say a word on some remarks of the member for East Perth (Mr. James); and I certainly did not think the speech of that hon. member was either dignified or proper. [MR. MORAN: Hear, hear.] It seems to me that, when the hon. member says Parliament has no right to inquire into corruption that is said to exist within its own boundaries, the hon. member lays down a proposition which he cannot support. The hon. member says we have no interest in this matter as a Parliament: let the country decide. What does the hon. member mean?

MR. GEORGE: He does not know.

MR. EWING: Does he mean to say, if the corruption exists, we are to sit here as members and see that corruption rampant in our midst, and to take no notice of it? The hon. member certainly could not have seriously considered the remarks of which he made use. The responsibility, he says, is with the electors. The responsibility is certainly with the electors, but is there not a responsibility on this House to preserve its integrity, to expel an undesirable and improper occupant of any of its benches? Is there not a duty cast upon this House by the community which elects it, to see that public affairs are carried out honestly and uprightly, if not with the greatest wisdom? Above all things, I take it the electors ask us to be honest; above all things they expect us to be honest as individuals, and to expose any improper conduct of members of this House. Then what does the member for North Murchison (Mr. Moorhead) ask in his

motion? I take it he asks what the member for Geraldton wants. The member for Geraldton says: "I made these statements; I am responsible to my constituents; the statements are substantially correct; and it is not my intention to withdraw them." Therefore, what is the hon. member's position? He knows full well he is repeating the statements he has made in using the expressions he used to-night; he therefore knows there is nothing for this House to do but to cause the fullest inquiry to be made; and I take it he expects us to gather from his words that he desires that inquiry just as fully as we do. It has been urged that the proper method of inquiry into this matter is not the means of a select committee. I understand, and as far as I am able to gather, a select committee is the only constitutional and proper method. It is urged that members implicated in this matter should not sit as judges; but will hon. members sit as judges on this occasion? Is it not a fact that in every newspaper throughout the length and breadth of the colony, aye, and throughout our sister colonies, the evidence offered to that committee will be published? And can it be said that the community will not take into consideration, but will accept in its entirety, the decision of that committee? No. In my opinion, every elector in the community will read that evidence and will judge for himself; therefore, I take it we are not sitting in judgment alone on this matter: we are offering to the community, through the medium of a select committee, the information upon which the community can found its judgment; and every elector in this colony, every citizen and every individual, will, to my mind, become a jurymen, and will try the members who are alleged to be implicated. [MR. A. FORREST: Hear, hear.] Through the medium of the select committee we shall reduce to writing the evidence adduced; we shall publish that evidence for the benefit of the community; and we shall have a trial by the community upon the evidence offered before that select committee.

MR. JAMES: But what about punishment?

MR. EWING: I am not considering what punishment should be meted out to

the member for Geraldton. I think I should be absolutely premature if I assumed the hon. member ought to be punished. I, for one, do not intend to prejudice him: I shall wait to hear the evidence he has to offer before I say whether anyone is entitled to punish him for his action. But I do say the community will, by this means and by this means only, have a full and ample opportunity of seeing whether the Parliament which represents it is or is not corrupt. The leader of the Opposition (Mr. Illingworth) says this Parliament requires no vindication. This Parliament does require vindication; for whenever and by whomsoever statements of this kind are made, it is necessary for the person charged to offer the fullest explanation; otherwise it is always said he is afraid of the consequences of a full investigation. Believing, as I do, that a select committee is the proper constitutional method of investigating this matter; believing, as I do, that the decision of the members of this House who sit upon that committee will not in any sense be conclusive, but that every elector will judge for himself upon the evidence offered: I lend my most hearty support, for what it is worth, to the motion of the member for North Murchison.

POINT OF PROCEDURE.

MR. LEAKE I understand the motion before the House is that a select committee be appointed to investigate these charges.

THE SPEAKER: That is the substance of the motion.

MR. LEAKE: I want your ruling, sir, upon this question. As I understand the authorities—and I may say I have looked into them—if there is any body which can investigate such charges as these, it is the House itself; and I cannot see that a select committee has any authority whatever to investigate the charges. The body that investigates the charges must inflict the punishment; and who can say the select committee has power to inflict punishment? The authorities show that the House itself must judge and must resolve as to the guilt or innocence of the accused; and if the House affirms by resolution that the party accused is guilty, the House there and then proceeds to administer

punishment. Sometimes that punishment has been a rebuke from the Chair, at other times it has been a committal to the Tower or the pillory. We have neither the Tower nor the pillory in existence in Western Australia; and probably the hon. member (Mr. Robson), if found guilty, would be administered a severe rebuke from the Chair. But I put this point to you, sir, in all seriousness, and with an earnest desire to have your ruling. My humble submission is that this House, and this House alone, can deal with this matter, because members rely, as the mover of this motion said, upon the privileges of Parliament, which are the outcome of Parliamentary custom, and the result of ages of experience; and in order to find the authority which is sought to be enforced, we have to go back several hundreds of years, and to apply a mode of procedure which has practically lain dormant for ages.

MR. MOORHEAD: No, no. It has lain dormant only since 1881.

MR. LEAKE: It has been revived only at long intervals. At any rate, I submit to you, sir, and upon this I ask your ruling, that the House cannot delegate its power to inquire and to commit to any select committee. The select committee can only report to the House, and it is for the House to determine; and if the House must ultimately determine, why should not the House at once inquire? I submit, therefore, it is out of order to move for the appointment of a select committee, and that, if this matter is to be inquired into, the inquiry should be made by a motion submitted to the House, to the effect that the hon. member (Mr. Robson) has been guilty of a breach of privilege. I may say the proceedings have not been taken under the Parliamentary Privileges Act: it is evident the mover could not proceed under that Act, although there was apparently an attempt to do so; consequently we have to fall back upon parliamentary procedure and practice. I ask your ruling as to whether or not it is in order to appoint this committee to try, and perhaps to sentence, the hon. member.

MR. A. FORREST: There is no sentence.

MR. DOHERTY: Nobody said anything about a sentence.

MR. LEAKE: I said it. The triers must sentence.

THE SPEAKER: I have no hesitation in saying that, according to *May's Parliamentary Practice*, it is in the power of the House to appoint a select committee to make inquiry into these statements; and *May* also goes on to say that for this purpose it is not even necessary to give notice; that, on a question of privilege, a select committee can be appointed without notice.

MR. LEAKE: I do not wish for a moment to question your ruling; but is it the duty of the committee to inflict punishment?

THE SPEAKER: Certainly not: only to report to the House. No select committee can do more than that.

MR. LEAKE: No, sir; that is what I say.

MR. DOHERTY: An "innocent abroad!"

MR. VOSPER (North-East Coolgardie): Before the tea-hour I addressed myself principally to the question of procedure, and I asked your ruling, sir, as to whether the procedure up to that time had been altogether in order. That opinion you have not yet seen fit to give, and perhaps it is as well; because I think it desirable, now that the member for Geraldton (Mr. Robson) has heard the motion, that the matter should be proceeded with. Before going into the merits of this case, I think the House will agree with me when I say there was nothing in my former remarks in the course of this debate which warranted the coarse vituperation to which I was subjected by the member for the Murray (Mr. George). I regret the hon. member is not in his place at the present time, and I shall say no more on that head than to observe that his choice of epithets, such as "filthy" and so forth, is very appropriate indeed to his own mental condition; and as it is impossible to see a clear moon through a cloudy telescope, so it is doubtless possible for the hon. member to detect filth where none is present to be detected. At all events, we have it recorded in *Hansard* that on several occasions the hon. member has delivered speeches in this House which distinctly lowered the tone of debate, and had the effect, more than once, of emptying the Ladies' Gallery. So that, as an authority on filth, no doubt the hon. member is unexcelled in the House. I contended before tea that the pro-

ceedings of the House should be taken as quickly as possible, and that there should be the utmost care that the forms of the House, no matter how trivial, should be observed, because I hold that if this House, in its desire to censure or punish a member for what it is pleased to call a breach of privilege, should proceed in a way foreign to its proceedings or rules, it would become guilty, so to speak, of a breach of its privileges, and would probably in the course of a little while bring the institution of Parliament into more contempt than would any number of members by making any number of vituperative speeches. I maintain that the speeches chiefly have been characterised by improper haste and insufficient consideration, and there has been exhibited on the opposite side of the House a degree of rancour, animosity, and contempt towards the hon. member for Geraldton which makes the proceedings bear comparison with the act of a mob more than with that of a deliberative assembly. If it can be said that the House resembles any kind of court of justice, it certainly, in its desire to condemn a defendant unheard, bears more resemblance to a drumhead court-martial than to a civil court. The member for North Murchison (Mr. Moorhead), in moving this motion, has twitted the member for Geraldton (Mr. Robson) with being practically unmanly, with having made certain admissions. I am not quoting the hon. member's exact words, but endeavouring to give the effect of them. He has asserted that the hon. member has attempted to wriggle out of the position in which he finds himself, and that the hon. member has endeavoured to convey to this House that he did not mean what he said, and that he had no desire to reflect upon the honour of hon. members. What I think was said by the hon. member for Geraldton was that he absolutely refused to retract those charges; and if he did not intend to reflect upon the honour of this House, he certainly did intend to reflect upon the Government; and, so far as he said that, his conduct was manly, upright, and straightforward.

MR. MORAN: What is the House?

MR. VOSPER: If the hon. member will take the trouble to look over *May*, he will find a broad distinction drawn

between utterances against members of the House and utterances against the House as a whole. At the present moment we are proceeding on the practice laid down in regard to a defence of the whole House. It has been laid down repeatedly, by hon. members on the Government side, that the reflection was an aspersion on the whole Assembly.

MR. MORAN: The Speaker ruled that was not so.

MR. VOSPER: It is safe to say that members who are prosecuting this matter are within the procedure, although I do not think they are very far from the boundary. I cannot see why the member for Geraldton should be threatened with removal from his position because he will not admit innuendoes placed upon his utterances by what I may call the prosecution. The member for North Murchison (Mr. Moorhead) has had considerable experience as a special pleader; he has had practice at that business every day of his life; and I can speak of it, having on one occasion had the misfortune to be interested in a case in the Supreme Court in which he appeared, and I could not help being struck during the speech he made on that occasion. Then he deliberately contended that certain newspaper articles were libellous and slanderous to the last degree. He did that in the course of his professional conduct, doing his best for his client to put on the articles in question a series of innuendoes which my counsel denied they bore. The same appears in this case. The hon. member is counsel for the Government; the Attorney General, I believe, being away for the good of his health. He has, I say, appeared as counsel for the Government on this occasion, and as counsel of course, he has done his best to make out a case for his client; consequently every fact and insinuation made by the member for Geraldton has been strained to the utmost capacity in the case of which the hon. and learned gentleman has charge. Then, again, I think the member for Geraldton not only acted in a manly and straightforward fashion, but in a manner infinitely wise. His speech has been short and well-chosen. He has reiterated the statements made, and left the House to deal with them. If he had said more he might have given away his case, and at this stage that would have

been very foolish. If you give away your case, it is a weapon for the opposite party. Then the hon. member is prepared for any investigation this House thinks fit to establish, and having announced such to be the case, I think he has acted wisely. For my own part I am not at all sorry that a select committee is to be called upon to inquire into this matter. Speaking for myself personally, I am rather glad that such is the case, because it frequently happens that accusations are made against hon. members and cast broadcast throughout the country, which accusations have not a scintilla of truth in them, or any foundation in fact. I have myself been a victim of that kind of thing. It has been frequently stated on the goldfields and elsewhere that the right hon. gentleman made an offer to buy me over the federal question, on which I happened for a short time to take his side. For my own part I should be only too glad if these accusations were made in a formal manner by some responsible person, so that they might be brought before this House or some competent tribunal to test the truth of them. At all events the Premier will bear me out in saying that nothing of the sort occurred between us.

THE PREMIER: Hear, hear.

MR. VOSPER: Or between any hon. member and myself.

THE PREMIER: Quite so, so as far as I am concerned.

MR. VOSPER: I am somewhat inclined to agree with the member for East Perth when he says the member for Geraldton has to a great extent merely voiced a suspicion which is regarded as general throughout the country. A general suspicion has gone abroad throughout the country that there is a degree of corruption either in our parliamentary institutions or in the background of our governmental institutions. It is not my province at the present moment to say why that opinion has gone forward: that we can leave to hon. members. Still, at the same time, a great deal of colour has been lent to that suspicion by the action of the Government themselves.

THE PREMIER: By the newspapers.

MR. VOSPER: And also by the injudicious speeches made by the Premier and his colleagues—more perhaps by the Premier than the others.

THE PREMIER: Where?

MR. VOSPER: I must remind the Premier about that Newcastle speech.

THE PREMIER: Seven or eight years ago is too far back.

MR. VOSPER: I remember also that in the month of March, 1894, a speech was delivered by the right hon. gentleman, a report of which appeared in the *West Australian* during that month, in which he distinctly made use of the term "spoils to the victors." Why or in what connection I do not know. He said it was more natural for him as head of the Government and the Government generally to be kind to their friends than to their enemies.

THE PREMIER: I only used it as a simile, to explain.

MR. VOSPER: Then we must fall back upon innuendoes. There have been innumerable leading articles, and a false impression has been created. I can only say that the Premier himself made a false impression. Now I have a matter of far more serious moment to bring under the notice of the House, and the right hon. gentleman particularly. I have no desire whatever to lend further acrimony to these proceedings by making charges myself, but I want to show the House and the country that the Government patronage is used, or has been used, in a manner which lays it open to suspicion, to say the least of it.

THE PREMIER: No.

MR. VOSPER: I am going to cite a case which occurred about the period I am speaking of—1894. The general elections took place in the month of May, and I was a candidate, and one of the unfortunate ones. A week before the polling took place in the Kanowna or North-East Coolgardie district, the right hon. gentleman was on a visit to the goldfields. He does go there just before a general election, although he does not visit the goldfields much at other times.

THE PREMIER: I do not think it was so near as that.

MR. VOSPER: It was within a week or a fortnight.

THE PREMIER: Several weeks, I am sure.

MR. VOSPER: I can secure the evidence, and am prepared to bring it before the select committee, if required.

THE PREMIER: There was no election talk then, I know.

MR. VOSPER: I want to tell the House what happened. It was told me by credible witnesses. Among the guests at the banquet were a large number of leading men from my own constituency, and I was informed a few days after the banquet that the right hon. gentleman, in conversation with some of those leading men, told them that if F. C. B. Vosper were returned, it would be bad for the district, because the Government could not see their way clear to give them the same share as they otherwise would.

THE PREMIER: I deny that. I never said anything of the sort.

MR. VOSPER: I will give my authority. The first person who told me was a member of the Town Council, Mr. Councilor Barry.

THE PREMIER: I deny him, too. I do not know him.

MR. VOSPER: Probably the right hon. gentleman will know him in due course. Further, a few days before the polling took place I addressed a public meeting at Kanowna in which I made charges, in the same words almost as I am now using, in the presence of the acting mayor, Mr. Batho, who was present at the time the right hon. gentleman made these statements, and I challenged him, as a supporter of the Government, to contradict them.

THE PREMIER: He could not?

MR. VOSPER: He could not.

THE PREMIER: I expect he did not know. Why did you not say something about this? You sat here and never said anything about it.

MR. VOSPER: As a matter of fact I have spoken about it more than once.

THE PREMIER: You never spoke to me about it. It is a lot of twaddle. There is not a word of truth in it.

MR. DOHERTY: You are not to be bribed at all.

MR. VOSPER: It is said that Rome was once saved by the cackling of geese, and members are trying to save the Government by the same process. Allow me to resume. We are to have a select committee to inquire into these charges made by Mr. Robson, and here is one added to the charges, and I throw down a challenge to the right hon. gentleman.

Witnesses can be brought down from Kanowna and examined in due course. Take another example of the kind of conduct which has created suspicion throughout the country, and in a large measure justified the remarks of the hon. member for Geraldton. Take what happened in the case of the hon., now I believe Sir Edward Wittenoom, and the Fremantle Smelting Works. There was a motion before the House that it was undesirable that Ministers of the Crown should be members of a company. The facts were these. The hon. gentleman who was at the time a member of the Ministry, was practically the managing director in this colony of the Fremantle Smelting Works, and in the capacity of managing director he applied to the Government for the grant of a private railway and a sum of £5,000, and he also secured certain leases in the vicinity of Northampton. Before I go on to that, I should say it is quite impossible to separate the personal capacity from the political capacity of any hon. gentleman. The same argument has been used here by my friend the member for the Swan (Mr. Ewing). I contended at that time that no man could be Minister of Mines and at the same time managing director to a mining company, and do justice to both; for if just to the Government he must be unjust to the company, and if just to the company unjust to the Government and the people of this colony. All this can be found in *Hansard*. It is all recorded there among many other buried scandals.

THE PREMIER: We have had it all over before.

MR. VOSPER: The Premier's reply was that at the time the grants were made to this company, Mr. Wittenoom was not a member of the Ministry, and at the time Mr. Wittenoom was managing director of the company he was not a member of the Ministry. Over twelve months after that, papers were placed on the table of the House which went to prove that Mr. Wittenoom was a member of the Ministry at the time he was managing director of the company.

THE PREMIER: Did I make that statement?

MR. VOSPER: I think you did. It is all in *Hansard*.

THE PREMIER: Cannot you give us something new? We have had all this before.

MR. VOSPER: Am I to understand that the Government are such hardened criminals that we are asked to bring up something fresh against them? Are we to understand that their record resembles a sort of Newgate calendar? I say there are scandals lying rotting in the political graveyards of Western Australia waiting to be dug up, and the select committee is going to be the means of digging them up.

THE PREMIER: With you as principal grave-digger, if you like.

MR. VOSPER: I propose to dig up a few dry bones before this Parliament lapses, from the time of the Londonderry Leases down to the time of the matter in reference to the Bunbury Brewery.

THE PREMIER: What was that?

MR. VOSPER: The Premier succeeded in getting the Bunbury Brewery Company a contract to supply beer to the military Contingent at a higher price than was given to others, and the member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest) is one of the directors of the company, and the Premier is a shareholder.

THE PREMIER: I am not, and I never have been.

MR. A. FORREST: Do not bring the matter of twelve dozen bottles of beer into the question.

MR. VOSPER: How many?

MR. A. FORREST: Twelve dozen.

MR. VOSPER: All I am saying is that the whole history of the Government, from the time of the Londonderry leases down to the Bunbury bottles of beer, teems with cases of this kind.

THE PREMIER: What are the Londonderry leases?

MR. VOSPER: I do not want to bring that matter up again. The member who had charge of that department of Government has long left this world. The member who acted as counsel—

MR. MOORHEAD: I was counsel in the Londonderry cases, and I never came across any member of the Crown in it.

MR. VOSPER: The hon. member who has acted as counsel for the Government, *vice* the Attorney General, is the same member who is now acting as the mover of the select committee. There are good

reasons for the select committee being appointed, even if it can do something towards the cleansing of the Augean stables, and a select committee was never more required in the history of Parliament than now.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Do you think the committee will be any good for the purpose?

MR. VOSPER: I must now turn the vials of my wrath, so to speak, to a certain extent on the member for Geraldton. If I had been in that hon. member's place I should not have made the same remarks that he did. I might have given the same meaning, only I should have gone a different way about it: I should not have made specific charges. The hon. gentleman's notion of politics is about 150 years behind the times. He is thinking of the days, not of John Forrest, if I may use that name, but of the time of Horace Walpole. Then it was customary for the Premier to go down to the House with peerages and grants of land in his pocket, and to take members into the lobbies like flocks of sheep; but they do not do things like that nowadays. Things have been vastly improved and greatly embellished. "We" do not give money for votes nowadays: "we" only back members' bills for them. "We" do not give members grants of land for their use, but "we" give huge unnecessary public works, the building of a bridge over a river which has no existence, or a railway to Goomalling. "We" no longer buy a member, because he is not worth buying: he is the creature of his constituents. If we had payment of members, things might be different; but people are given to understand that if they want public works they will find it worth their while to vote for a man who will support the Government every time. It would be well to find out how long that policy has been carried out in this country. This select committee may be useful in finding that out. The Government do not buy members' support, but heaven help the man who gets into the clutches of the Government, if he votes against the Government.

THE PREMIER: How have you got on?

MR. VOSPER: After three or four years of parliamentary life, I stand here absolutely independent of any member on the Government side, and on my own

side. There is only one man in the House to whom I owe a favour, and I should not have owed a favour to that man only he is an old friend of long standing.

THE PREMIER: That does not bear out your statement, then.

MR. VOSPER: I do not indulge in things which some members do. I am not a dangerous speculator, because I have no money to speculate with, but I try to jog along as the proprietor of a newspaper, about which the member for the Murray (Mr. George) made such complimentary remarks to-night; and I stand in an independent position to-day. With regard to the select committee, if any investigation is required, and it is required, a select committee probably is the only means of accomplishing that investigation. The hon. member for East Perth (Mr. James) laid down correctly the fact that no tribunal was competent to try this House. It is a judge and a law unto itself. The hon. member says that when a breach of privilege has been committed, or is likely to be committed, the House itself is the tribunal which must judge. Although that is true, it is none the less regrettable, because it means that the House becomes not only the accused but, as we have seen here to-night, the accuser, and in the course of an hour or two it will constitute itself judge, and afterwards it will be the executioner. All this constitutes very largely the monstrous travesty of justice to which the member for East Perth (Mr. James) referred. There can be no justice where the parties concerned are the judges. To assume that the member for Geraldton gets anything more than bare justice at the hands of a biased majority in the House, I cannot imagine. What is the usual procedure in regard to these select committees? First of all there is a motion such as is moved by the member for North Murchison (Mr. Moorhead): then there is a ballot. Usually there are four members on the committee in addition to the mover, and it has been the custom in this House that the mover of the committee is the president of the tribunal. Therefore the member for North Murchison, who has appeared here in the capacity of counsel for the prosecution, will be the president of that committee: he will be the chief justice. Then the members

for the Government sent round a ballot paper to their supporters, with names upon it, asking their supporters to vote for the members so marked; therefore the select committee is not representative of the whole House, who in the present instance consider themselves the accused persons. Therefore the select committee is going to be a delegation from the accused and the accusers, headed by a gentleman who in consequence of his legal talent and forensic skill has been chosen to lead this movement. That is the process that is followed right through. Any member on this side of the House who gets on a select committee does not do so because of his right to be there, but because of the favour of the head of the Government. As far as the members following the Government in this matter are concerned, the hon. gentleman is less like the Premier of a constitutional Government than the Sultan of a harem.

MR. MORAN: You are a good candidate for a hair-em!

MR. VOSPER: I am not likely to be making harum-scarum speeches, at any rate. I am informed that the Premier himself has asserted in this case all those mighty prerogatives which the constitution of the country allows him. I am informed that he has insisted this evening on nominating the whole of the members of the select committee himself. If the members of the Government had any sense of fairness, they would leave the House and leave the select committee to be chosen impartially; but instead of that we find the Premier demanding his right to nominate the whole of the members of the select committee.

MR. MOORHEAD: That is not so.

MR. LEAKE: The word has come round here, at any rate.

MR. VOSPER: I will take a denial from no one but the Premier himself, and he has not given it. If he, as the head of the Government, and his colleagues in the Ministry, had one spark of that sense of honour that they boast so much about, if they had a single spark of manhood and of justice, they would leave the House and let hon. members act impartially in choosing the select committee. Instead of that, what do we see? That the Premier, with a brutal majority, is making this select committee himself.

THE PREMIER: I should be sorry if you selected them.

MR. VOSPER: The Premier is perfectly safe, as far as I am concerned. We have had two nights discussing this question about the statements made by a member of this House, and we are told that the Opposition are attempting to block an inquiry. What do we find? The Government do not want an inquiry: they want what the leader of the Opposition called a whitewashing, to get a certificate of character from their own nominees. The Forrest Ministry are accused and they are to be judges and executioner, yet they have the unparalleled impudence to come before the House and pretend to ask for a free and open inquiry. The verdict of that select committee will not be worth the paper it is written on. It will be a mockery and a by-word; it will be a degradation of the forms of Parliament; it will be an attempt to drag the fair fame of the House through the mud, and more than that it will destroy the last shred of respect which the country possibly have for the Ministry. The Government are afraid to face an impartial inquiry; they are afraid of an exhaustive examination; but they want their own puppets, their own friends, to try them and to deliver the verdict. We cannot prevent them: we protest, but our words go as naught. If the Government carry out the procedure which is intended, then if there be one disgrace more than another which will rest on the escutcheon of the Ministry, it will be the burking of a free inquiry, and the establishment of a machine for whitewashing their own characters. Their whole position reminds one of an attempt to get back a reputation which has been lost. The member for Geraldton has done more perhaps than he himself imagines, because he has shown, and the Government by refusing investigation in the proper way have helped him to show, that there is something behind the scenes which will not bear exposure.

A MEMBER: Which way is that?

MR. VOSPER: The proper way would be to have a select committee appointed by the House without the interference of the Premier. If the Premier wants a fair investigation, he and his colleagues should leave the House, and leave the ordinary members to select the committee.

But the Premier will not do that, and will not face the consequences of an open and exhaustive inquiry; with the result that the inquiry will be a farce, and the verdict a sham and a lasting disgrace to the Ministry.

[**MR. MORAN** interjected a remark to a member who was leaving the Chamber.]

MR. VOSPER (replying): Nothing you can say can disgrace me.

[**MR. MORAN** retorted in an undertone.]

THE SPEAKER: Order!

THE MINISTER OF MINES (Hon. H. B. Lefroy): I should be sorry if words such as those used by the member for North-East Coolgardie (**Mr. Vosper**) were allowed to go forth to the country, and the people led to believe that the members of a select committee, when they inquire into a matter concerning this House, give the verdict and are the judges. I have never heard of a select committee who did not undertake inquiry and deliberate on evidence with a due sense of the responsibility appertaining to their position. The object in appointing a select committee, as proposed by the member for North Murchison (**Mr. Moorhead**), is merely to collect evidence with regard to the charges made by the member for Geraldton (**Mr. Robson**). It would be impossible to collect that evidence in the House, and the select committee are appointed, not to give a verdict or to judge in the matter, but simply to take evidence, and submit that evidence, with their report thereon, to the House, with which it rests to decide what the verdict shall be. It is absurd to allow it to go forth to the country that this House is derogating its power to a select committee; because such is not the case, and never has been the case in the past. Speaking for members on the Government side of the House, I can say deliberately that if ever it was sought to force them to vote for Government members of a select committee, by the influence of the Premier or any of his colleagues, they would refuse to be forced.

MR. GREGORY: Has a list not gone round?

THE MINISTER OF MINES: It is usual for any party in a House to know what they are going to do before they decide to vote, and I am quite certain that in a matter of this kind members of the Opposition themselves arrange for whom they shall vote.

MR. GREGORY: We want to select a number this time, at any rate.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: It is always the desire of the Government to select committees with due consideration for all sides of the House.

MR. LEAKE: The Government "select" the committees? Why, that is what we object to!

THE MINISTER OF MINES: Personally, I am extremely sorry we have had anything to do with this matter at all.

MR. LEAKE: Hear, hear.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: But the member for Geraldton has made charges which have been repeated throughout the country press, though I have no complaint to make about the Press, which naturally published the statements of the hon. member. The people of this colony, and of all countries, seem to like these sort of racy charges against anybody in authority or power: and the Press has taken advantage of the present opportunity. I have heard, though I have not seen it stated in the Press myself, that members of the Opposition have also taken advantage of the words used by the member for Geraldton to, at any rate, depreciate the Government in the eyes of the people of the colony. Such being the case, and this language having been used, the member for North Murchison (Mr. Moorhead), not considering the Government, but more particularly considering those who support the Government, thought fit to move that the member for Geraldton should in his place explain what he meant by the charges. I believe the member for Geraldton (Mr. Robson) was probably carried away for the moment, and that if he had to go over this again he would not repeat the statements he made in February last, because to me it is inconceivable that an hon. member who makes charges such as these, and states he is prepared to prove them, should be indifferent to going before a select committee and producing what evidence he may have in support of his accusations. The hon. member might have withdrawn these charges, but possibly vanity, obstinacy, or something of that sort, prevented his doing so. I have been in the House for a considerable time—at any rate, very much longer than the member for

Geraldton, and during the three years I have been a member of the Ministry I have never heard of a single member of this House being offered a bribe either inside or outside, and it is news to me that this sort of thing can occur. I have always thought that members of the House were gentlemen whom the people of the country could respect, no matter how they might differ in political views. This matter has now reached that stage that it is due to the House and to the country that a select committee should be appointed, and all possible evidence brought forward. So far as I am personally concerned, the select committee may have every paper and every file in my department, and the same, I am sure, may be said of every other department of the Government, from that of the Premier downwards. It strikes one with pain to hear those for whom we have the greatest respect called dishonourable or corrupt; but when one looks around the world and hears what is said in the old country, and even in Australia, of men whom we honour, it is not surprising that similar utterances should be used in Western Australia. I regret the member for Geraldton should have been so carried away as to make use of the expressions he did; and I do not think members on the Government side of the House can be twitted with any precipitancy in the matter, which has been taken up with every deliberation and with coolness. It is due not only to the members of the Government side of the House, but to members of the Opposition side, that an inquiry should be held. I do not propose to go into these charges specifically, because I think very little of them; but there is one charge here, No. 3, which reads: "That the Government had withdrawn the Rural Lands Improvement Bill in the Upper House, practically to buy the support of the farming element in that House." I would like to know what the hon. member has to support that charge, because it appears to me that after the Rural Lands Bill was withdrawn from the Upper House—and I do not think the Government had anything to do with the matter—the members for the farming constituencies supported the Government less than they had ever done before. Two most important proposals were brought before the Legislative Council, proposals

which the Government were desirous of passing, and these were thrown out there owing to the action of the farming members, so to speak. One was the proposal to send the Commonwealth Bill to the people, and that was a matter in which the Government were perfectly serious at the time; at any rate, I am quite certain the Premier was perfectly serious, and never endeavoured to use any influence with the farming community to stop the passing of that proposal. Then there was the other important question, which was a real and vital matter to the Government, namely the passing of the loan item for the construction of the Norseman line. Did the farming members support that proposal after the Rural Lands Bill had been withdrawn? No; it was the farming members of the Upper House who prevented the passing of that item; and, just looking at this one charge, it appears to me that all the rest will finish in the same way as this, if an inquiry be held. I am sure the Government desire every possible investigation, now that the matter has reached this stage; and any select committee appointed by this House are not going to allow themselves to be dictated to by the Government, or by anyone connected with the House, as to the methods under which they will conduct the inquiry. The member for North Murchison (Mr. Moorhead), by virtue of his having submitted this motion, will be a member of any select committee which may be appointed; and hon. members will feel sure that he, at any rate, is not one to be influenced by the Government. If that hon. member is, as I hope he may be, chairman of the select committee, I am certain the proceedings will be conducted, not only to the honour of the House, but to the honour of the committee themselves. I trust this discussion will now come to an end. I think the House has virtually decided that the question shall go to a select committee. It seems to me neither seemly nor becoming to continue a debate such as this. It is due to the House and to the country that the matter should be thoroughly gone into, and having come to the conclusion that such must be done, it will be better for the House, for the member for Geraldton, and for everyone concerned, that the matter should be dealt with as quickly as possible.

MR. LEAKE (Albany): When I rose a short time ago to ask your opinion, Mr. Speaker, as to whether the procedure in this case was the right one, I really thought it was peculiarly the province of the House to deal with this matter. I, of course, bow to your ruling, and appreciate what you said, namely that the House has a perfect right to pass on this matter to a select committee for their report. But whilst the House in doing this is, I acknowledge, strictly within its privileges, I cannot help thinking that the House is avoiding its responsibilities. It would be better, I think, that we should follow the practice of the British Parliament in cases of this kind; and if hon. members will refer to page 75 of *May*, they will there see that on the 26th February, 1838, complaint was made of expressions in the speech of Mr. O'Connell, a member, at a public meeting, as containing a charge of "foul perjury" against members in the discharge of their judicial duties in an election committee. "Mr. O'Connell was here in his place, and avowed that he had used the expressions complained of. He was declared guilty of a breach of privilege, and by order of the House was reprimanded in his place by the Speaker." That is an almost exact parallel to the present position. But instead of accusing hon. members of perjury, which is by some considered one of the most heinous of all offences, the hon. member (Mr. Robson) merely says he thinks the Government rotten and corrupt.

MR. HIGHAM: Quite as bad.

MR. LEAKE: Well, I leave to hon. members who understand the elements of these things to determine this question, and that being so, I do not ask the House to put me on this proposed select committee; indeed, I do not intend to vote for the committee, because I think it is beneath the dignity of the House to avoid the responsibility of this inquiry and to pass the matter over to a select committee, who cannot possibly conclude their labours and sift all these so-called charges before this session closes. We know it is a short session, and the result will of course be that the whole thing will be allowed to drop, and the matter will never be brought into the House again.

MR. HUBBLE: Not so far as this (Government) side is concerned.

MR. LEAKE: Oh! That side of the House will carry this persecution to its last extreme; but I am not asking for that: I am asking for common fairness.

MR. MOORHEAD: Where is the dignity now?

MR. LEAKE: Every man on that (Government) side has made up his mind what he is to say, whom he is going to vote for on the appointment of the select committee, or how he will adjudicate on the offences of the hon. member (Mr. Robson).

MR. MOORHEAD: Certainly not.

MR. LEAKE: Then why should we play with the unfortunate hon. member? Let us put the poor fellow out of his misery at once: let the Speaker reprimand him.

MR. HUBBLE: That is just what you would like.

MR. DOHERTY: Let him resign.

MR. LEAKE: Well, I say if the House would be satisfied, the hon. member would resign and be judged by his constituents. I am perfectly satisfied he would have a fairer hearing and a fairer trial before his constituents than he would have before members of this House.

MR. DOHERTY: Nonsense.

MR. LEAKE: It is ridiculous. I can hardly treat this matter seriously.

MR. HIGHAM: No; I do not think you can.

MR. LEAKE: I am told the hon. member says he will resign, if hon. members wish.

MR. DOHERTY: That is what he should do.

MR. LEAKE: It seems to me it is almost impossible to treat this matter with seriousness. But some hon. members—I do not want to be offensive in what I am saying—are more like a pack of angry, scolding, old women who, whilst they slander others, squeal when they themselves are attacked, or their weaknesses are exposed. Upon my word, it is beneath the dignity of hon. members to act as we are acting to-night.

MR. HIGHAM: Hear, hear. I am glad you said "we."

MR. LEAKE: It is almost contemptible.

MR. HIGHAM: It is quite so, in my opinion.

MR. LEAKE: Some hon. members have a great regard for their honour. We know there is honour among thieves.

[MR. HIGHAM: Hear, hear.] We are told there is special pleading on this (Opposition) side of the House. [MR. HIGHAM: We know that.] Of course there is no special pleading on the Government side. I am going to admit for a moment that I am a special pleader this evening, because nobody would believe me if I were to say I was not in sympathy with the member for Geraldton. I am in sympathy with him, and I think I am better maintaining the dignity of this House if I implore hon. members to let this wretched matter drop.

MR. MOORHEAD: Maintaining the dignity of the House!

MR. LEAKE: Yes; its dignity. I can understand the member for North Murchison (Mr. Moorhead). We know perfectly well it is out of place for him to accuse hon. members here of special pleading. The member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) has sufficiently pointed out his position, and so has the member for East Perth (Mr. James). The hon. member (Mr. Moorhead) is put up by the Government because the Government did not like to put up the Attorney General.

MR. MOORHEAD: Nothing of the sort.

THE PREMIER: Who put you up?

MR. LEAKE: I got up myself; and whilst I am up I intend to do my best to defend the member for Geraldton. Let there be no mistake about that.

MR. HIGHAM: We heard that a week ago.

MR. LEAKE: Regard me as a partisan; and I say if this House is going to try and to convict the hon. member, better do so at once without going through the farce of a select committee, a select committee which can be packed just as anybody chooses; and when the select committee is appointed by a faction of this House, what sort of justice does anybody suppose the hon. member will receive? It is prejudging his case altogether. Let the House, which has apparently made up its mind, determine this question at once, and put the poor chap out of his misery. That is what I should like to see; and let us get on with the real business of the session, which is the consideration of the Commonwealth

Bill. And I may here in parenthesis observe, if the select committee which is to be appointed this evening is to be on a parallel with that appointed last session to consider the Commonwealth Bill, it will be, to say the least of it, a one-sided affair.

MR. HIGHAM: Whose fault was that?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The federalists on that committee were outnumbered by eleven to three.

MR. LEAKE: It is curious throughout this debate that nobody has yet said he does not believe the hon. member's (Mr. Robson's) statements. People have said, "Oh, these are horrible things to say; these are very nasty things; they are improper."

MR. MORAN: Your own leader said so.

MR. LEAKE: "Oh," it is said, "it is very improper to say of anybody that they are in a state of decay"; and that, after all, is the fair interpretation of the hon. member's statement. He does not accuse the Government of having accepted money as a bribe. Much as I—I was about to say, dislike the Government—little as I admire them, I do not accuse any gentleman on the Treasury benches of being a dishonourable person. There is no one there whom I am not pleased to meet and glad to know, whose acquaintance I do not value; and I say there is no attempt whatever to reflect personal dishonour upon those gentlemen. I heard the Minister of Mines say just now that the member for North Murchison (Mr. Moorhead) was not put up to defend the hon. member, but the honour of members of this House.

MR. JAMES: That is all "flapdoodle."

MR. LEAKE: I do not like to use the expression used by the member for East Perth, though I will admit it is appropriate; but the Minister said the hon. member (Mr. Moorhead) had done what he has done in the interests of hon. members generally. Well, it is only a circumstance, I will admit; but not a single member of this (Opposition) side of the House was consulted; and nobody has thought fit to protect the honour of us on the left of the Speaker, but they seem to regard it as possible that it is only their honour which can be attacked. I assure you, sir, I do not consider my personal honour as being attacked by the member for Geraldton—

[MR. ILLINGWORTH: Hear, hear.]—and I should like to hear the hon. members who think there has been personal dishonour reflected upon themselves rise and say so.

MR. MOORHEAD: I say so.

MR. LEAKE: That accounts for the hon. member's leading the prosecution, and sitting in the chair of justice to adjudicate on the accused. I say again, I do not think we are adding to the dignity and honour of Parliament by proceedings such as these. When the Premier spoke, he lashed himself into a fury which, we all know, is most unusual, and declared that his personal honour was attacked; but throughout Mr. Robson's speech, is the name of Sir John Forrest mentioned once? I do not think it is. The general body of the Government only is referred to, and again I say there is no personal attack upon the Premier. The Commissioner of Railways does not say he has been offended; the Commissioner of Lands does not say so, nor does the Attorney General, nor does the Minister of Mines. There is nobody who says the Premier has accepted bribes, or is afflicted with any disability except, practically, that of political decay; and that may be the result of old age. The Government have now been in office ten years, and I dare say some of the public are tired of them. But it is not libel to say so. If I had had to make the speech of the member for Geraldton, I believe, with the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper), that I should have wrapped up my meaning in different language. But when I have been attacked, when I have been accused of being a traitor, when I have been told, practically, that I ought to be decapitated, subjected to capital punishment, and that I have attempted to feather my own nest by my actions in the House, I do not run squealing to the Speaker and say, "Mr. Speaker, I move that the hon. member who made those statements should be now heard in his place": I did not do that. I laugh at the statements because I am a public man; I know I have to bear hard knocks, and that I must not be thin-skinned; and I know perfectly well that words spoken under the influence of political excitement or in anger are not really meant to bear the meanings which in cold blood and in print they appear to bear. That is the position I take, that it is

beneath the dignity of public men or politicians to smart under public censure or criticism. I do not desire to be ungenerous. I told the House before tea, when the Premier withdrew his hasty and really offensive observations to me, that I accepted his withdrawal. I say again I know the hon. member's generous disposition, and he did not want to brand me as a man. Has not the hon. member (Mr. Robson) said over and over again that he does not mean to brand the Premier or his Ministers with any stigma at all.

MR. MORAN: Make a clean breast of it.

MR. LEAKE: If he has not said so I will say it for him.

MR. MORAN: Make a clean breast of it.

MR. LEAKE: You will have nothing but his blood. If you will have it, you had better get it through the proper constitutional course, and have it on the floor of the House. I am not going to advise the hon. member to withdraw the statements at all. I have said harsh things about members of the Government, but I have always spoken of them in their political capacity, and have never attempted nor desired to reflect personal dishonour upon them. If anyone abused me, I would not bring the matter into Parliament, but rather take it into Court. I know that in taking it into Court I should be running a fair amount of risk. I might get a fair trial, and a fair judge and jury, but if I lost I might go down for costs. After all, prudence is the best course. If we desire to obtain a certain thing, perhaps the easiest and safest way is that which we should pursue, and that is what appears to be influencing the Government on this occasion. I admit they are in a difficulty. They have had nasty things said about them. I am reminded by the Premier himself that one was the Londonderry jumping case, and the other the Bunbury arbitration case.

THE PREMIER: You ought to be ashamed to mention the Bunbury arbitration case.

MR. LEAKE: I am not ashamed: that is the peculiarity about it. I am not annoyed when the right hon. gentleman tells me I ought to be ashamed. I am just going to explain what he does not seem to remember, and it is about this Lon-

donderry jumping case. There was an application for forfeiture by a syndicate of whom a Minister of the Crown was a member. These leases were forfeited, the syndicate got them, and the Minister did not lose anything by the transaction. That is one little matter. The other matter is the Bunbury arbitration case, in which, as the right hon. gentleman rightly says, it was found that one arbitrator was getting a commission on the award. That did not seem to be right to the Crown law officers for the time being—I was one, I think—and instructions were given that we could not accept the award; but as the right hon. gentleman said, Mr. Spencer, of Bunbury, a leading man in somebody's constituency, stated it would create a lot of public ill-feeling and displeasure against the Government if these matters were not settled at once, and the money paid. The money was paid over, and the arbitrator, I suppose, got his commission. Viewed from the strict and high standard of political and public morality, there were elements of decay showing even then. The hon. member for Geraldton has referred to a string of things, and I submit that, if it is possible for him to establish a case in any one of these instances, he is justified in making his remarks, and when I say justified, I assert that a public man is justified in making a remark without absolute proof to conviction of the party whom he attacks. He is justified in going upon rumour or facts which afford reasonable or probable ground for the belief he expresses. As public men criticising officials, public men, and public matters, we are not bound down by the strict rules of legal evidence.

THE PREMIER: Truth.

MR. LEAKE: I will say that if you like, but truth cannot always be proved.

THE PREMIER: It always prevails.

MR. LEAKE: It will prevail, and I am inclined to think it is going to prevail this time, somehow or other. As I say, it is very difficult to establish the truth by actual legal evidence. An hon. member reminds me that in a case like this in a court of law, one would have to prove malice, and it is very difficult to enter into a person's mind in order to prove by what motive he was particularly actuated.

MR. MORAN: The stomach, in this case, I think.

MR. LEAKE: I agree entirely with what was said by the hon. member for East Perth (Mr. James), when he pointed out in very forcible and clear language that there was a danger in calling into force these extreme powers of Parliament. They should be exercised only in matters of very great emergency, and I submit such emergency has not arisen on the present occasion. That there has been severe, or if you like cruel, criticism in regard to a public body, I am prepared to admit, but there is really nothing to justify this wrath of Parliament or wrath of half of Parliament—because I take it that, if Parliamentary honour is really wounded, we all have the sense and manliness to stand up in our seats and say “We will have none of this underhand and unfair play, and we will condemn the man who goes outside the bounds of fair criticism.”

MR. HIGHAM: You do not show it.

THE PREMIER: That is what you ought to have done.

MR. LEAKE: Fremantle is alive!

MR. HIGHAM: Yes.

THE PREMIER: That is what you ought to have done.

MR. LEAKE: Of course the member for Fremantle does not think at the present moment I am directing any remarks against him.

MR. HIGHAM: You can direct any remarks you like against me.

MR. LEAKE: I am sure the only unkind thing I have said of the hon. member up to the present time is that he is a Government supporter, and has to do what he is told.

MR. HIGHAM: Say a little bit more.

MR. LEAKE: We cannot take notice of mere abuse, whether uttered inside or outside the House.

A MEMBER: Can we not?

MR. LEAKE: If we do, we are not better than a pack of schoolboys, and that is the position some hon. members would drag us down to. I have left my school-boy days, and if we are public men and have to stand up and be shot at, do not let us squeal every time we are hit. I should be grey or bald-headed if I were to take notice of all the things said of me inside and outside the House. No man has had a greater volley of abuse or

invective hurled at him than I have. I do not say, “Do, Mr. Speaker, ask the hon. gentleman to appear in his place and defend himself for attacking me.” Such a course of conduct is childish. The Government are going out of their way, as it were, to bring a sledge hammer to crack a nut, and then after they have flourished the hammer they are afraid to bring it down. That is the position. First of all it is moved that the hon. member be in his place to explain, and that motion has gone by the board. I understand that it has been allowed to lapse, and another motion, without notice at all, has been sprung upon the House—that which we are debating at the present time—that this matter be inquired into by a select committee. Now we know what the tactics of the select committee are going to be. That explanation given by the hon. member for Geraldton is the explanation he will be held to. He will not be allowed to go outside that explanation. Perhaps he will be held to that list, a list of particulars, and must not go outside that. I should not be surprised. Curiously enough, the mover of this motion and the members of the Government have said very little about procedure and the justification for this exceptional course, and I do not really know with what powers the select committee are armed, or how they will exercise the powers they possess. Here is a copy of a letter which, I am reminded, is apparently referred to by the hon. member for Geraldton in his remarks. The hon. member talked about certain action of the Education Department. Here is the letter, No. 1107 of 1900, from the Education Department:—
The Hon. Secretary, District Board of Education, Geraldton.

SIR,—With reference to your letter of 20th ult., would you kindly give me some information about Mr. Box, before I submit the matter to the Minister. Also, I should like to know the denomination of the Rev. W. Watt, whose place it is proposed he should take. At present I have nothing to show to the Minister about either political or religious colour of the new candidate or his daily avocations. The Minister has recently asked most of the boards, when a vacancy occurred, if they could not find a lady to serve.

I have the honour to be,

Your obedient servant,

CYRIL JACKSON,

Inspector General of Schools.

Is that fair?

A MEMBER: What is the date?

MR. LEAKE: May 4, 1900.

MR. HIGHAM: And the libel was February 20.

MR. LEAKE: Quibbles again! They are going to allow the hon. member to refer to only the enormities of the Government prior to the date of the speech given. But this is only one link of the chain of circumstances.

MR. HUBBLE: The missing link, I suppose.

MR. LEAKE: If it is, I am glad I have found it, because when we find Ministers requiring to know not only the religious but the political colour of applicants after office, is it not a fair inference that the Government are in a state of decay? Is it not fair to say they are utterly corrupt?

MR. HIGHAM: No.

MR. LEAKE: I do not want to select phrases which will please only myself. I desire to please the hon. member.

MR. GEORGE: That letter is unfair. It ought not to have been written.

MR. LEAKE: Of course it is unfair, and I am appealing to hon. members to say whether an action of that kind does not justify their very severest criticism, and the use of much stronger language than has been used, language such as might be used under the most extreme circumstances, even by the member for the Gascoyne (Mr. Hubble). One case is ample: we do not want to rake up a whole bushel of these matters, and I say a letter of the kind I have read would be justification for any member to use statements such as the member for Geraldton has used.

MR. MORAN: Let us have it out, then, now.

MR. LEAKE: That letter alone is sufficient justification for the position the hon. member for Geraldton takes up to-night in refusing to withdraw his allegations. I have said all I can on this matter. I do not intend to vote for this select committee, I have a feeling of abhorrence in being mixed up in this matter. I do not believe in upholding the honour of Parliament, or the personality of hon. members. If the Government like to take the responsibility of appointing a select committee they can do so. As a member of this House, I am

prepared to try the hon. member now. do not want to hold over the decision of the consideration of the matter until after the select committee has taken time to report. Who is going to bring forward the witnesses? Who is going to bring the evidence? Is the member for Geraldton to be put to all this expense?

MR. HUBBLE: Let him climb down.

MR. LEAKE: I understand the member for Geraldton is an honourable man, so are some members by courtesy. I shall let us determine the question at once.

MR. HIGHAM: How can we? How can we get all the evidence?

MR. LEAKE: Have not the hon. member and his friends on that side already prejudged the hon. member?

MR. HIGHAM: Certainly not.

MR. LEAKE: And it only rests to execute him. Let us execute him at once, and the only way to get out of execution is for the hon. member to resign.

MR. DOHERTY: Certainly, let him resign.

MR. LEAKE: No doubt the hon. member will do so if he says so. Do not let us waste the time of the House and unnecessarily prolong the session by having these inquiries. If we inquire into these matters which have been referred to by the hon. member in his speech this evening, it will take months to come to some termination unless we determine it before the dissolution—and we are told on good authority that the dissolution must be soon—or the whole proceedings of the select committee will be lost or wasted. The House only ought to intervene when the case is incapable of being disproved, when there has been something so glaringly offensive and wrong that it cannot be disproved. If the House resolve itself into a tribunal, whitewashing committee, then the time of Parliament will be occupied as a tribunal to try all sorts of flimsy matters. We will be trying the tastes and feelings of hon. members, next. If this motion be carried then every time any members on the other side abuses me during this session I shall move that the hon. member be invited to answer to the House for this indignity placed on members on this side.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I am very sorry to have to speak again on this matter, and I assure you, Mr. Speaker, must be as tired

as all are of the long speeches delivered by members on the other side. I think, too, that you must be very much pained at the turn this matter has taken during this evening's debate. The hon. member (Mr. Leake) seemed to make a matter of fun, or tries to make a matter of fun, out of this very painful incident. Does any one in this House for a moment think, no matter where he sits, that if no notice had been taken of the statements made by the hon. member, which have been published throughout the colony, and far beyond this colony, that hon. members opposite would not have called the attention of myself and others to the incident? Does anyone for a moment think if we did not move in this matter that the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) would have sat still and said nothing, or that the member for Albany (Mr. Leake), or the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) would have said nothing? What would have been said of Ministers and members by hon. members opposite, the Press of the colony, and the people of the colony? They would have said that, having been grossly traduced and insulted by the member for Geraldton, when there was an opportunity we dared not move in the matter, in fact that we were afraid to move in the matter. Cannot anyone see that? Surely we are not carried quite away by feelings of political hatred to one another that we cannot do what is right and just. I cannot understand the actions of members opposite. The member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) moved the previous question.

MR. MORAN: And did not get a second.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member complimented me that I, as the leader of this House, managed to earn the goodwill and the support of members around me, but the member for Central Murchison seems to manage his side of the House so well that he could not get a second to his motion! If that is the way the hon. member is going to manage the business of his side of the House, the sooner he hands his position over to the member for Albany (Mr. Leake) again—he seems to be the leader still, he seems to be an automaton, to be put up and pulled down—the better. It is useless for the member for Albany to tell us we

are wasting the time of the House, or doing anything discreditable or foolish.

MR. LEAKE: I did not say discreditable.

THE PREMIER: Well, foolish.

MR. LEAKE: Ah, yes.

THE PREMIER: Or unnecessary: whatever you like. I know the tactics of the hon. member: everything he can do, whether it is right or not, he will do in order to get political advantage. I know him very well. I am quite ashamed of the action taken by members opposite in regard to this matter.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: So am I.

THE PREMIER: I felt yesterday and I feel to-day that, in the circumstances, I would sooner not be in the House, to be associated with members who think so little of grave and serious charges made deliberately, persisted in, made again, and which reflect on this House, and which have been made to the people of this colony, and have gone beyond it. Members opposite talk about this matter in a careless manner; they think no action necessary, and that no action should be taken. If that is the course the hon. member sets out for himself, very well. If it is understood, no matter how untrue is a statement in regard to men occupying responsible places in the Government, and responsible positions as representatives of constituencies, if other members can go about the country and traduce and take their characters from them, and we are to sit still and say nothing, and to treat the statements with contempt, if that is to be rule, then it is a different rule from that insisted on in other places, and mind you we must be more careful here than is the case in larger communities. We are a small community; most of us are well-known throughout the length and breadth of the country, and should our friends throughout the colony read the disgraceful statements in regard to us, which are made by the Opposition, that the Opposition should take every advantage and we should do nothing, our friends would say "These charges are made by responsible persons; they have been printed throughout the country, and no notice has been taken of them." What would our friends think of us? They would say we are afraid, and that we do not want inquiry. Hon. members have been

changing about in regard to this matter, both at the last meeting and to-day. Some have told us that they do not want to burk inquiry, but they have been trying to burk inquiry all through. I do not include all members on the Opposition side; some of them, I believe, do want inquiry, but the leader of the Opposition, and his coadjutor, are almost alone. There is the member sitting behind (Mr. Gregory) who will follow him anywhere through devious paths, no matter where the leader of the Opposition goes.

MR. MORAN: His *fidus Achates*.

MR. LEAKE: Is it right for the Premier to accuse a member of going through devious paths: I ask is it in order?

THE SPEAKER: I do not think the hon. member was out of order.

MR. LEAKE: All right then, you can recite "devious paths" again.

THE PREMIER: I say those three there, I charge them with trying to burk inquiry.

MR. LEAKE: Is that in order, Mr. Speaker?

MR. GREGORY: I rise to a point of order.

THE SPEAKER: I do not think the hon. member should say that.

THE PREMIER: Well, then, I withdraw it. I will say, to prevent inquiry.

MR. LEAKE: Then on a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker, I now move without notice that the right hon. gentleman be now heard in his place in explanation, for having used certain statements reflecting on the character of an hon. member.

THE SPEAKER: I do not think the hon. member can move that: it is for me to say whether the hon. member has exceeded his proper right of debate.

MR. LEAKE: Then I ask you, sir, is the motion in order?

THE SPEAKER: It is not.

MR. LEAKE: Then it cannot be put.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member likes to play the mountebank. I defy the hon. member, I have defied him for a number of years, and I care not for his smiles or the reverse. But hon. members opposite do not desire an inquiry; and as to the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper), I do not want to say more of him than that he took an opportunity to make a speech—

MR. VOSPER: And I say I made a speech, too.

THE PREMIER: One which you may perhaps regret.

MR. VOSPER: I do not think so.

THE PREMIER: It has been suggested that hon. members on the Government side of the House are somewhat vindictive in this matter, and desire to humble the member for Geraldton (Mr. Robson) to a greater extent than necessary. But I altogether disavow any such intention. We do not want to do any harm to him at all, and, personally, I would rather do him a good turn than otherwise, although he has done me a bad turn. What we want to do is to defend ourselves and our political and personal character before the people of the colony. We are not trying to hurt the hon. member, but simply trying to prove to the people that his statements are not true, and that he cannot prove them. Indeed, I defy him to prove that we are a corrupt Government, or that we have given bribes to people, or done any of the things with which he has charged us. But with no idea whatever of injuring him in his own estimation or in the estimation of his friends, we now ask him to bring forward what proof he may think he has. As to the hon. member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth), I do not know whether he was reported correctly, but a friend of mine told me that hon. member had said all over Perth that these charges would be proved up to the hilt. That, however, has not been said in the House to-night.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I never said anything of the sort.

THE PREMIER: I am very glad to hear that disavowal, because I thought it a most unworthy thing to say. Indeed, every member opposite ought to desire that these charges should be disproved.

MR. LEAKE: Hear, hear.

THE PREMIER: I hope the member for Albany (Mr. Leake) does not desire that these things should be proved.

MR. LEAKE: I say I do not believe the charges about you.

THE PREMIER: Then you ought to use your influence to induce the member for Geraldton to make some reparation or apology which would be satisfactory to hon. members.

MR. LEAKE: You are the last man I would apply the words to.

THE PREMIER: Then why does the member for Geraldton not take your advice and act accordingly? We on the Government side are not vindictive, but are only determined, at all hazards, to vindicate our honour and character. It is said that we want to persecute, or prosecute, the member for Geraldton; but whoever thought of such a thing? I dislike these proceedings as much as the member for Albany; in fact, I have been ashamed to-night of being a member of the House, and was ashamed of being a member of the House the other night. It is no credit to be in a House where such tactics are pursued as those pursued by hon. members opposite, who ought to have joined with us. I do not include the member for Pilbarra (Mr. Kingsmill), who has said nothing, but I say there are three gentlemen opposite—a triangle—and I accuse them of making me ashamed of being a member of the House to-night. They ought to have joined with us most strongly, as I should have done with them under similar circumstances, in insisting that a member who made such charges should either substantiate or withdraw them. Such action is due from them, as members of the House, and due to us on the Government side. We have as much interest in the uprightness and honour of hon. members opposite as we have in the honour of members on the Government side, and we do not want to be associated with people who do things they ought not to do. If a man so far forgets himself as to give pain and annoyance to other hon. members, and cast reflections on their honour and integrity, the first thing he ought to do, and which every member ought to insist upon his doing, is either to withdraw the statements or justify them. There is no use in "beating about the bush" or making a long debate, because the whole point is simple—either the charges have to be substantiated or withdrawn. Every member of the House, wherever he sits, has as much interest in that course being taken as I have myself. Everything has been said of the Government and hon. members that is disagreeable. It has even been said that the select committee will be a lot of rogues who will not do their

duty in collecting evidence and information.

MR. LEAKE: Nobody said the select committee would be a lot of rogues.

THE PREMIER: You said they would not give a fair trial.

MR. LEAKE: I do not like the word "rogues."

THE PREMIER: I speak in the vernacular and plain English.

MR. LEAKE: I was defending somebody else, not myself.

THE PREMIER: You said we were persecuting the member for Geraldton (Mr. Robson), and that is a thing we have no desire or intention of doing; and you further said the select committee would not give a fair trial and would be a farce. If that is not as much as telling us we are not honourable men desiring to do what is right, I do not know what is. The member for Geraldton has given a half-and-half withdrawal in regard to some of his charges; he has reiterated others, and given instances of what was in his mind; but all of these statements can be disproved because there is no truth in them. If the hon. member (Mr. Robson) had taken the trouble to ask anyone, he would have found that nearly all those points had been discussed and disposed of years ago; and, if we on the Government side had not moved as we have done, we would have been discredited before the people of the colony; and I again say that members opposite would be the first to discredit us, had we not done so. I repeat that I do not want to do anything which could be described as unduly harsh or in any way unfair; in fact, I want to be generous. I am ashamed of the matter, because it is somewhat humiliating to have to stand up and defend one's integrity.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It is quite unnecessary.

THE PREMIER: But, seeing these charges have been placarded and published all over the colony, I appeal to every fair and right-thinking man whether a painful duty has not been cast on me and those who support me; a very painful duty indeed, and one which I very much regret to have to perform. I cannot understand this debate, or the motives that moved the hon. member (Mr. Leake) to get up in his place just now and tell

us he is a partisan, an advocate of the member for Geraldton (Mr. Robson). The member for Albany (Mr. Leake), holding the view that he does not believe the Government are corrupt, or have done wrong in the sense in which the speech of the member for Geraldton (Mr. Robson) is understood, ought to have told that hon. member that the only straightforward way was to unreservedly withdraw the statements, or prosecute them to the end and prove them. There is only one of two courses open to a man under the circumstances—either to withdraw his statements, or to admit having made them and proceed to justify them willingly and at once, without any pressure. Even if a member, under the circumstances, had no proof at all it was his duty to move at once and have the matters brought under the notice of hon. members, and then, if he found a mistake had been made, there is nothing so noble, so pleasant, or so honourable, as to withdraw and express regret when a man knows he is in the wrong. I hope that the debate will not be continued, because, as I said before, I feel ashamed at being in the House to-night.

MR. DOHERTY (North Fremantle): The most painful feature of the painful debate to-night has been the line taken by the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth), who told us that federation should come first and honour afterwards.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I never said anything of the sort.

MR. DOHERTY: I beg your pardon, you did.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Never.

MR. DOHERTY: The hon. member urged that we should get on with federation, and that the matter now under debate could stand over.

MR. GREGORY: That was the inference you drew.

MR. DOHERTY: Now we understand that federation must come first and honour afterwards; and that being so, I can quite understand the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) taking the member for Geraldton (Mr. Robson) to a banquet at Cue, and there allowing the latter to reiterate his statements contained in the charges made.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I rise to a point of order. In the first place there never

was a banquet at Cue, and in the second place the member for Geraldton never repeated his statements at Cue.

MR. DOHERTY: Then I apologise, being sure that the people of Cue appreciate the hon. member to such an extent that they would not give him a banquet. What is the honourable course for the member for Geraldton to pursue? Either to prove these charges or withdraw them. The second paragraph of the motion states that the member for Geraldton said he would expose—he used the word “would”—“political corruption and rottenness.” Why does he not do so?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: He has not had the opportunity yet.

MR. HUBBLE: We gave him every opportunity.

MR. DOHERTY: There is no fairer tribunal in the world than Parliament. After my experience of a few years, I hold that hon. members will always have a fair hearing here. But when the hon. member (Mr. Robson) had the opportunity, did he defend himself? No; he was fortunate enough to have two leading members of the bar to defend him, and all they did was to offer a lame excuse. The hon. member also had an amateur lawyer—

MR. MORAN: A “bush” lawyer.

MR. DOHERTY: A “bush” lawyer, or journalist, or something of that sort: I forget the term applicable to that class of people. But the hon. member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper), in his overweening vanity, always places himself first, and talked about Kanowna in 1894, although I do not think he addressed the electors in that year, because he has not been six years in the House.

THE PREMIER: It was in 1897.

MR. DOHERTY: The hon. member said 1894, and he defended himself, forgetting his poor colleague. The most characteristic thing I know of Mr. Vosper is something I saw in his own newspaper—it was a sort of Vosper on Vosper, or red on red.

MR. VOSPER: Is the hon. member in order in referring to another hon. member by name?

THE SPEAKER: No; certainly not, though I did not hear the member for North Fremantle (Mr. Doherty) mention your name. The hon. member must not mention any hon. member by name.

MR. HIGHAM: Call him the editor of the *Sunday Times*.

MR. DOHERTY: A member ought not to be ashamed of his name. As I was saying, the most characteristic thing I know of the hon. gentleman (Mr. Vosper)—and I will emphasise “gentleman” if the hon. member wishes—

MR. VOSPER: You will be quite right.

MR. DOHERTY: That is a matter of opinion.

MR. VOSPER: Your opinion on the point is worthless.

MR. DOHERTY: I wish the hon. member would cease his interruptions. I merely want to point out a characteristic of the gentleman. He debated all the members of the House, condemned gentlemen he pretended to be friends with, and praised others. It was about a new Ministry, and in speaking of “F. C. B. Vosper”—I may use the name now—he said it was a pity his time had not come, and I interjected that it was a pity. I meant his political funeral—his time had not come. But underneath that article was a quotation from another paper, which said there was no man fit to be Premier but the member for North-East Coolgardie. In his own paper he said he was not fit for the Premiership; but the other paper he quoted from said, in about a column and a half, that the hon. member was the only man fit to lead this House. This only shows the vanity of the hon. member.

MR. VOSPER: What on earth has that to do with this subject?

MR. DOHERTY: No; I do not think it has anything to do with it; but we shall always look upon you with contempt.

MR. GEORGE: Who wrote the article in the other paper?

MR. DOHERTY: There are two courses open to the member for Geraldton, or three if we include the course the select committee may propose. I think he should either explain in this House or resign. Let him go to his constituency and give his explanation there. He has no right here. If we are corrupt, dishonest, or dishonourable, he has no right to associate with us, or to sit amongst us: he has a right to resign. If the people send him back, then I

think it will be our turn, and we can resign and go to the country.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Will you do it?

MR. DOHERTY: The member for Albany (Mr. Leake) became quite serious in this debate, and said they, meaning the Opposition, understood full well that their honour was not attacked. I admit that. I say one cannot attack an unknown quantity. It is impossible. And I will agree with the hon. member as to that, without further argument. I am sorry for this incident, and of course we are all sorry, because, after all, it is one of our own members who is being tried, and I think tried in a fair and upright way. I think if the committee be appointed, good will come of it—good for the country, because it will show that in the place where people now think corruption and dishonesty exist, no such things exist. If, on the other hand, the hon. member resign, his constituents will decide whether he shall or shall not be their member in this House; and I hope he will see his way to do that, and will to-night signify his intention of handing his resignation to the Speaker, because he should not sit amongst us believing us to be dishonest and corrupt.

MR. HALL (Perth): I think there can be no doubt in the minds of hon. members, or of those of the public who have heard the explanation of the member for Geraldton, that the charges made have all “fizzled out”; and I think it would now be well, these charges having “fizzled” out to allow the whole thing to fizzle out, and to pass on to the Commonwealth Bill.

MR. HIGHAM: Not at all.

MR. HALL: But if there were any doubt at all in the minds of hon. members as to the necessity for bringing this matter before the House, that doubt should certainly have been dispelled by the interest taken in this matter, as exemplified by the large number of people who have endeavoured to obtain admittance to this Assembly. It has been suggested by one of them that it is a pity a charge could not be made for admission to-night, and the proceeds devoted to these members who are said to have no visible means of support; and I must add, it was the expectation of startling revelations which attracted this large audience;

the cause of the large audience has been the expected revelations which have never yet come to light. I am distinctly at issue with those members who have said the member for North Murchison (Mr. Moorhead) was not the proper person to bring this matter before the House. He is the youngest member in the House, and I hold he is the only member who could feel sure that the charges were not levelled at himself. They could not possibly have been levelled at him, because he is a new arrival; and therefore he is the proper person to bring this matter before the House, and to find whether he is or is not supporting a dishonourable, corrupt, and rotten Government. Some hon. members have stated they admire the member for Geraldton; they have congratulated him on the manly course he has followed in sticking to his guns; but I hold that the more manly course would have been, finding he could not substantiate his statements, to have withdrawn the charges in this House; because it must be admitted that, now the bubble has been pricked, it has vanished into thin air, and the charges have fizzled out. If the motion for a select committee be carried, I hope there will be on that committee, as nearly as possible, an equal number of members from each side of the House. We have heard something said of punishment, but I deprecate any talk of punishment in this connection; and I trust, whatever be the decision of the select committee, there will be no attempt to make a martyr of any member of this House.

MR. GREGORY (North Coolgardie): It was not my intention to address the House on this subject, as I felt sure the matter would be dealt with hereafter; but after the impertinent remarks of the right hon. gentleman opposite—

THE PREMIER: That is not Parliamentary.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member must withdraw that.

MR. LEAKE: I move that he appear in his place, and explain.

MR. GREGORY: As for the incorrect statement of the right hon. gentleman opposite, that I and two other members of this House had done our best to burk this inquiry, I must give that a flat denial. The only protest I made was that when I heard this motion was to

be sprung upon us I urged that there should be some delay, that we should have time to consider what action should be taken; and that was the only statement I made in regard to this subject. And I may say further, I never had an conversation on this matter with the member for Geraldton until yesterday, and this matter has not been a party matter, because every member on this (Opposition) side intended to vote with the Government even for this extraordinary select committee, about which we heard so much a little while ago, when it was remarked that there were to be three Opposition members and four from the Government side of the House. We were satisfied to get a committee; but when I spoke to the Premier about what members should form that committee, was told at once that the whole of the committee would be nominated by the Premier.

THE PREMIER: You should not repeat what I told you outside the House.

MR. GREGORY: This is a matter of parliamentary business.

MR. A. FORREST: You are the Opposition whip. You ought to have come to me, the Government whip.

MR. GEORGE: But the Government whip was in the Town Hall.

MR. GREGORY: One objection I took to the select committee was that it would not be an impartial committee: it would simply be a whitewashing machine.

THE PREMIER: You want some whitewashing yourself.

MR. GREGORY: I have no need of whitewashing. I sat on your side of the House for years, and you cannot point to anything improper in my conduct; and you paid a great compliment to my leadership to-night when you said I could not sit on that (Government) side any longer. With regard to the character of the Government, I do not think it is honourable just prior to the elections, for the Government to run up into the country and distribute money broadcast, and give grants which they had refused months before to members for the districts.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: No one of them was refused before.

MR. GREGORY: I may inform the Commissioner of Railways that some months ago I spent nearly an hour trying to obtain some money from the Premier

for the erection of a municipal hall at Menzies, and I received an absolute refusal. The Commissioner of Railways went up there, and granted the application in such a manner that the people were sorry they had not asked for £1,000; and that was just before the elections. And the same thing happened throughout the goldfields; and the Government should have been ashamed of themselves for throwing away money at that time.

MR. GEORGE: There was none thrown away in my district.

MR. GREGORY: And our idea in that district was that the money was given for the purpose of trying to aid a certain gentleman's candidature. The Premier has also gone further. He has gone out into the back blocks and told the people that when they had any requests to make, to make them to him direct, and if they were at all in reason he would be only too pleased to grant them; but that if he did grant them it was their duty to return members prepared to support him, and that he did not want independent members, but the men he wanted were men who would support him in difficulties.

THE PREMIER: I wonder you do not want me to shut up, and not to say anything when I go out there. Surely I have freedom of speech, the same as you.

MR. VOSPER: And you exercise it.

THE PREMIER: Not unduly.

MR. GREGORY: I think this matter should have been held over until the next session; but as the Government seem intent upon bringing forward these serious matters now, I hope they will finish with this and with the Federation Enabling Bill, throw out all other business, and dissolve Parliament. We know this is a moribund Parliament. Very few members here can say they represent their constituents. We on the goldfields would be only too pleased to see the electors have a chance of returning new representatives.

MR. HIGHAM: You will not come back here.

MR. GREGORY: I do not know. I think my chance is just as good as that of the member for Fremantle. I would not care to change places with him. I have no desire to delay the House. I only say I am in favour of a select committee being appointed, now that, owing

to the pressure brought to bear upon the Premier, he has seen fit to allow us to nominate three members to be elected on that body.

MR. MORAN: Be fair. He never refused.

MR. A. FORREST (West Kimberley): I should like to say one word in reply to the hon. member who has just sat down. He stated the Premier has agreed to allow three members to be appointed on the select committee. Now I, as Government whip, will tell the hon. member that the Premier had nothing whatever to do with allowing three gentlemen from the Opposition to be put on this select committee which will be elected.

MR. HUBBLE: It is not certain they will be elected.

MR. A. FORREST: I think they will, for we on this (Ministerial) side of the House decided this matter without reference to the Premier; and I am rather sorry that the hon. member, who is the Opposition whip, should have approached the Premier in a case where a question before the House was being discussed; because he knows full well that if I ask any member of the Opposition a question, I go to him as the representative of my party, and the hon. member, when he comes to this side, comes as the responsible man from the Opposition side of the House; and I am surprised he should drag the Premier into this discussion, because the Premier has nothing whatever to do with it. We, Government supporters, did not even consult the Premier on the question. We said: "We will not make this a party question: we will put three leading members of the Opposition on the committee, with three from the Government side, and the member for North Murchison (Mr. Moorhead) as chairman; and they will decide this question."

MR. HUBBLE: And the member for Albany (Mr. Leake) declined to vote for the election of members.

MR. A. FORREST: This question has been pretty well threshed out by hon. members opposite, and everyone who has listened to the debate cannot but be surprised at the address of the member for Geraldton. One cannot help saying that his speech was a great climb down. We on this side were charged with offences; but of course he dared not charge his own

side with being corrupt, with being open to bribes, and being open to everything that was bad. But the hon. member actually said in his place in the House, after making his speech in Geraldton in February, confirming it in March or April, and going to Cue with the leader of the Opposition, further confirming it by saying he had a pigeon-hole full of papers which he would bring to Perth, and with which he would prove to the satisfaction of the country that the Government were corrupt, and that hon. members on their side of the House were practically corrupt also—

MR. VOSPER: He has the papers all right.

MR. A. FORREST: Why did he not produce them?

MR. VOSPER: Because he did not want to give away his case.

MR. A. FORREST: He had a chance which he will never have again.

MR. VOSPER: He acted very wisely.

MR. A. FORREST: I do not think he did. It is nothing but a "climb down," and I am sure the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) can only say, as a fair man, that it is a great "climb down."

MR. VOSPER: The Government side are authorities on "climbing down."

MR. A. FORREST: I do not know what the Government do. I am speaking of the member for Geraldton. We all came to this House not knowing what charges were going to be brought against us. Many of us have been here many years.

MR. VOSPER: Were you in fear and trembling?

MR. A. FORREST: No doubt after twenty years in Parliament there are lots of little things—one ought not to have done this or that; but that does not say one is untrustworthy, or that one's honour is at stake, and that he is not doing his duty to the country. The member for Geraldton did not say that. He climbed right away down, and said he had no charge whatever to make against individual members of the House, that those "behind the throne" who were finding the money were outside people. No one could have read the speech complained of without coming to the conclusion that the hon. member referred to members of the House. Members of the Opposition

must feel very proud of this. They have had a hard case to fight. One of their colleagues has got himself into trouble, and they are in a certain hole and do not know how to get out of it. The member for Albany (Mr. Leake) uttered language of the kind he generally makes use of in business and in this House. No doubt that speech was not typewritten by him, but written by him and typewritten by somebody in his office, and it was brought down here and we were to swallow it. I do not think we were quite prepared to do that.

MR. LEAKE: It is not badly done.

MR. A. FORREST: No; it is very well done, because every single charge the hon. member made was let down as lightly as possible. He wound up his speech by saying the Government were corrupt. I think he might have left that out.

MR. LEAKE: I did?

MR. A. FORREST: No; the hon. member for Geraldton.

A MEMBER: The speech you put together.

MR. A. FORREST: An ingenious speech was made by the member for North-East Coolgardie. He read this list item by item, and made us almost believe the hon. member said nothing. I almost felt inclined to believe you could twist the words of the hon. member for Geraldton in any way you liked, and they were put by the hon. member for North-East Coolgardie with a view to bamboozle members of the House. I am sorry a gentleman of the standing of the member for North-East Coolgardie, who I think every week of his life libels the people of this colony, and more especially Parliament, should try to allow the member for Geraldton to go scot-free after making these great charges.

MR. VOSPER: It is a breach of privilege to accuse me of libel.

MR. A. FORREST: It is all very well for the hon. member to say "Go down to the Supreme Court." We know what going down to the Supreme Court means. Perhaps both sides have not money, and you may find yourself a large amount out of pocket, and with no recourse against the other side. I do not say that as against the hon. member, but that is the thing we put up with every day of our lives—not against the newspapers, but

others. One side has money and the other none, and the verdict is generally for the party who has none. It is a very expensive luxury to go into the Supreme Court. I am sorry the member for North-East Coolgardie, for whom I have great respect—

A MEMBER: You are awfully fond of him.

MR. A. FORREST: I am sorry the hon. member should have twisted the speech and advocated the claims of the member for Geraldton. I am not certain—I will know to-morrow—but I believe the hon. member's newspaper almost defied the Government and said they dared not take up the question in the House.

MR. VOSPER: You are wrong.

MR. A. FORREST: If you did not say so, it was the *Sunday Times* of Kalgoorlie, which I believe is parent to the one here; also the *Sun*, the *Kalgoorlie Miner*, and all the other papers in the North-East, from Menzies upwards. Not only so, but the trees have been placarded "A corrupt Government," and these placards have been distributed by the leading whip of the Opposition, the member for North Coolgardie (Mr. Gregory). These placards were placed all over the district, "A corrupt Government, Mr. Robson's charges," and wherever we went we were asked whether we were fair specimens of members of Parliament, to be charged as corrupt by the member for Geraldton. The whip of the Opposition placarded the charge all over Western Australia, to the detriment of the Government and the members on this side of the House.

MR. GREGORY: Do I understand you to say I placarded trees?

MR. A. FORREST: Yes.

MR. GREGORY: I did not.

MR. A. FORREST: If you did not put them on the trees, you made a speech on every public platform in the Northern portions of the Coolgardie district. You quoted Mr. Robson's speech.

MR. GREGORY: I did not.

MR. A. FORREST: The papers reported so, and I get the papers.

MR. GREGORY: I made my own statements.

MR. A. FORREST: I read the *Sunday Times*, and it is pretty hard to read that, considering that three-fourths

of the paper is devoted to abusing myself. I only hope this committee will be appointed. It is due to this House that it should be appointed. We have given way, and I think we have not got the credit of it, because the whip on the other side reproaches the Premier, who had nothing to do with this question whatever. It is for the members of this (Government) side outside the Government to act with regard to the election of members of the select committee. The Government were not consulted as to who are to be the members of the committee. It is due to the members of this side of the House that the matter should be probed to the bottom. I am sorry to say members of the Opposition have not upheld the dignity of the House as they should do, and I am sorry that my old and esteemed friend, the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth), did not at once fall in with the motion to have a select committee appointed to try this case. The honour and integrity of the hon. member are as much at stake as the honour and integrity of any other member of the House.

MR. WILSON (Canning): I think at this juncture it would be well to adjourn the debate until to-morrow.

SEVERAL MEMBERS: No.

MR. WILSON: It will allow the heated atmosphere of this House to cool down.

THE PREMIER: There is no heat here.

MR. WILSON: It will also give the member for Geraldton some little time to consider his position. I move the adjournment of the debate, and commend the motion to the House.

SEVERAL MEMBERS: For that reason, yes.

Question put and, passed, and the debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 10:39 o'clock until the next day.