

pledged the colony in no way, although we did say that we believed at no distant date the qualification would be done away with. That was the utmost we did, and I think it is desirable that the public should know, that not only did we not pledge the colony, but that it was impossible for us to do it, having, as we had, distinct instructions not to depart from the terms of the Bill. The question was well fought out here, and the majority of elected members favored the striking out of the clause, and I certainly agree with the Ministry that before the next general election the qualification should be done away with. With regard to the question of the franchise my opinion will not be shared by many other hon. members. It was only a night or two ago that one of our most moderate, trusted, and able public men reminded me that when the present Constitution was being drafted he and I agreed that, in Conservative interests, we should not commit the mistake which had been made elsewhere. We should begin, we thought, where we are going most certainly to end, and not give opportunities for those constitutional struggles which have taken place elsewhere. I think, however, that the Ministry are acting wisely in delaying this matter, for the reason that some little time hence, when further consideration will have been given, we are more likely to arrive at some decision which will give a greater amount of finality than there would be if it were forced on now. I say, in the interests of Conservatism, we should alter the franchise, as there is no doubt the Act as it now stands is simply intolerable; and whatever be the nature of the change it should be in the direction of finality as far as possible. I do not intend to say anything further on the Speech, except that I am glad to notice that the hon. the Colonial Secretary has taken an early opportunity of showing us that the Government is willing to give this House a fair share of the work of the session. Of course we have not yet reached that stage in our political history when the advantages of an Upper House are so manifest as they are in the other colonies. It is generally in times of trouble, or where there is a strong opposition in the House below against a weak Government, or where, perhaps, the Lower

House is out of touch with the constituencies that the Upper House proves to be of so much use. Another advantage in an Upper House is that the measures of the Government can be considered with more quietude than in the more stormy atmosphere of the other Chamber. I trust the Government will acknowledge this, and will give us every opportunity to further the interests of the colony.

Question—put and passed.

ADJOURNMENT.

The Council at 10:30 p.m. adjourned until Friday, 11th December, at 3 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 9th December, 1891.

The establishment of Agricultural Bureaux—Rain-producing experiments in the Northern Districts—Sessional Orders—The Address-in-Reply: Adjourned Debate—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the chair at 7:30 p.m.

PRAYERS.

ESTABLISHMENT OF AGRICULTURAL BUREAUX.

MR. RICHARDSON: I wish to ask the Premier, Whether the Government propose to take any steps with a view of establishing Agricultural Bureaux similar to those existing in the other Colonies?

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): The Government has not yet arranged or done anything in the matter, but I may add that I shall be glad to consult with the hon. member on the subject.

RAIN-PRODUCING EXPERIMENTS AT THE NORTH.

MR. RICHARDSON: I desire to ask the Premier, Whether, in view of the great drought prevailing in the Northern

Districts of the Colony, the Government have made, or intend to make, any preparations for conducting experiments with dynamite or other explosives, with a view to causing a fall of rain?

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): The Government are making inquiries from the Government of South Australia on the subject, and will give the matter their consideration.

SESSIONAL ORDERS: BUSINESS DAYS AND HOURS.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) moved that, unless otherwise ordered, the House will meet for despatch of business on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, at 7:30 p.m.; and on Tuesdays and Fridays at 2:30 p.m., and until 6:30 p.m.

Agreed to.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) moved that on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, Government business shall take precedence of all Motions and Orders of the Day.

Agreed to.

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) moved that the Standing Orders Committee for the present Session consist of the following members, viz.:—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Burt, and Mr. Parker; with leave to sit during any adjournment, and authority to confer upon subjects of mutual concernment with any Committee appointed for similar purposes by the Legislative Council.

Put and passed.

LIBRARY COMMITTEE.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) moved that the Library Committee of this House for the present Session consist of the following members, viz.:—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Burt, and Mr. Parker; with leave to sit during any adjournment and during the recess, and with authority to act jointly with the Library Committee of the Legislative Council.

Agreed to.

PRINTING COMMITTEE.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) moved that the Printing Committee for

the present Session consist of the following members, viz.:—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Venn, and Mr. Randell; to assist Mr. Speaker in all matters which relate to the printing executed by order of the House, and for the purpose of selecting and arranging for printing Returns and Papers presented in pursuance of motions made by Members, and all Papers laid upon the Table, whether in answer to Addresses or otherwise.

Agreed to.

REFRESHMENT-ROOMS COMMITTEE.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) moved that the Refreshment Rooms Committee for the present Session consist of the following members, viz.:—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Marmion, and Mr. R. F. Sholl; with leave to sit during any adjournment and during the recess.

Agreed to.

THE ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

ADJOURNED DEBATE.

MR. CANNING: Sir, I shared the hope entertained by many persons that the Speech of His Excellency would have announced an intention on the part of the Government to bring forward during the present session a large and comprehensive measure for the advancement of the interests of the colony. It was expected that a well-thought out and comprehensive project for introducing and settling on the lands of the colony immigrants in considerable numbers would have been announced. It was also expected that there would have been shadowed forth a well-conceived financial policy. I have listened attentively to the Speech, but I have failed to discover anything of the kind. With regard to immigration, I may point out to hon. members that there is very little hope or prospect of any substantial and permanent progress being made by this colony until our population be largely increased. We have had spasmodic efforts from time to time to introduce immigrants, but we have had no regular, well-considered and well-sustained efforts in that direction. It will be borne in mind, I have no doubt, that in the other great Australian Colonies for many years immigration on a large scale formed a prominent feature of the policy of every Government. Even at

the present time Queensland is still continuing that policy; she continues to introduce people irrespective of occasional failures, occasional disappointment in the results of the policy. That colony—as all the other colonies did formerly—still continues to introduce immigrants, and she will, in the long run, undoubtedly reap the benefit of such a policy. For what does population mean? Population means prosperity; population means an increase of production, an increase of consumption, an increase of exports, and an increase of imports. It means the success of our railways and of other public works; it means prosperity to the agriculturist, the stock-owner, the merchant, the professional man, the artisan, and, in fact, to every class of the community. Population gives a permanent and increasing value and a market for all property; and without population we cannot have any real progress. There are, no doubt, many members here who have visited England lately, and who have seen the effects (or rather the results) of the continuous stream of traffic that goes on in the large cities in England. We know that it is the enormous population of London that suggested such works as the Underground Railway, and it is the continuous stream or volume of traffic that renders such undertakings remunerative. And, in order to render our own railways, which are the first and principal source from which we expect returns amongst our various public works,—in order to render them reproductive, we must have a continuous stream of traffic upon them; and we cannot have that without population. I can only express the hope that the Government, although they have not expressed their intention to do so, may take some steps, during the current session, to introduce a measure for bringing into the colony a steady stream of population, and of settling that population upon the land. I will simply remark that I believe that if last year a sum of £250,000 had been placed on our Loan Bill for the purpose of introducing immigrants and of settling them on the land, we should have been in a far more prosperous condition than we are at the present time. A large and increasing population and increased settlement would benefit the colony in every way; it would

inspire confidence in those who control the money market at home, and from whom we expect assistance in the floating of our loans. What is the answer if mention is made at home of Western Australia? The answer is summed up in a very few words: "What is your population? You have only a population of 40,000 or 50,000, and what can you expect?" Hon. members present who have visited England know very well that that is the language held in London—and it is to London that we must look for that financial assistance which will enable us to make any substantial progress. I think, sir, in view of our present financial position and of our large and increasing expenditure, present and prospective, in view of the costly public works that we have undertaken, we might have expected that the Government would have come forward with some well-conceived financial scheme that would not alone have provided for our certain and contingent liabilities, but also have redressed the grievances that have been generally and loudly expressed with regard to the anomalies and inequalities of our tariff. I cannot help on this occasion calling attention to the enormous, the prodigious, rate at which our expenditure has increased during the last twelve months. But before doing so, I should like to refer to another matter. A great deal has been said about our present balance in the Treasury; but I venture to say that when that question comes to be considered, and all our circumstances come to be looked at, it will be found that that balance, or the prospect of prosperity held out by that balance, will be found to be very deceptive indeed. We have, since the inauguration of Responsible Government twelve months ago, since the present Ministry entered office, increased the salaries of our better-paid officials in nearly every department of the Public Service. New and highly-paid offices have been created, and there has been a general and lavish—not to say reckless—expenditure all round. It is impossible for us to estimate exactly at the present moment what the amount of this increased expenditure has been,—no doubt we shall be able to do so later on; but that it has been very large cannot be concealed. In view of our actual financial position, in view of our liabilities present and prospective,

and in view of the fact that the balance of our Loan has yet to be successfully floated, and of the danger that we may be compelled to bring our public works to a standstill,—in view of all existing circumstances, I do trust that the Government have seriously considered our position, and will be prepared to bring forward this session some well-considered, well-thought out financial scheme to place the colony in a satisfactory position. The announcement made in the fifth paragraph in His Excellency's Speech, dealing with the question of the amendment of the Constitution Act, is one that has created a feeling of profound disappointment, not to say dismay, in many quarters. It was confidently hoped and expected that the Ministry would have announced their intention of at least bringing forward a measure for the abolition of the property qualification for members of this House. The feeling generally throughout the country is that this qualification should be swept away at the earliest possible moment; and it is considered in many quarters a question of paramount importance. What reason is given for the postponement of the question? It is said that it would involve a dissolution and a general election, and the consequent dislocation of the system of public works to which the colony is committed. Well, sir, in the first place we know that—I will not say threat, in the present case—we know that tactics of that kind are "as old as the hills," as old as Constitutional Government in these colonies. It has been the weapon that has always been held in reserve by Ministries who wish to continue to control a majority in Parliament and to retain their own seats. Even if such would be the result of the proposed amendment of the Constitution by the abolition of the property qualification of members—which I deny; but even if the inevitable result would be a dissolution, I say it would be better to face that contingency, with all its inconveniences—and they are not so very great after all; it would be better to face even the inconveniences of a dissolution and a general election than to perpetuate what is generally admitted to be a crying evil and injustice. But I deny that there is the slightest necessity for a dissolution, in

the event of the present property qualification of members being abolished; and I will cite two precedents in support of my contention. One is that of Victoria, under circumstances exactly parallel in every respect. In Victoria, in 1857—a little over twelve months after Responsible Government was established in that colony—a measure for the abolition of the property qualification for members of the Assembly was passed, and no dissolution followed as a consequence of the passing of that measure. That is one precedent. But I have another case, a case that will be within the knowledge of all the members of this House. Only last session an Act was passed in this colony to amend the Constitution Act of 1889 in a most important and essential particular. That Act was called the Officials in Parliament Act. That the Ministry were conscious that it was an amendment of the Constitution Act can be easily ascertained on reference to the records of the House itself, because in the "Votes and Proceedings," on the occasion of the second reading of the bill, it is specially and specifically mentioned that the second reading was passed by an "absolute majority," as required by the Constitution Act. It is within the knowledge of every member that that measure was passed last session, and it is equally within the knowledge of everyone that no dissolution followed, no dreadful cataclysm succeeded, the passing of that direct amendment in an essential particular of the Constitution Act of 1889. Well, sir, I think that the two precedents which I have cited are quite sufficient to show that this House may fairly ask the Government—I do not say on the present occasion, for the question is not now before the House—but this House may fairly ask the Government to bring forward a measure—which I venture to say would be passed with acclamation—during the present session, for abolishing the property qualification of members, and that they may do so without causing any inconvenience or delay in the other business that is likely to engage our attention this session. Referring again to His Excellency's Speech, I notice that allusion is made to the appointment of a General Traffic Manager for our railways. I cannot see, and people are asking why, in our present stage of pro-

gress, we should be increasing, and enormously increasing, our expenditure by employing highly-paid officials all round, before we have really made any progress in the matters with which these officials should have to deal. The present Traffic Manager is generally admitted to be a most efficient officer, and really most persons, the public at large, are at a loss to discover why this change is necessary at the present moment. However, that question will probably be discussed more fully hereafter. With regard to the promised improvements in our railway stations, I think the Government have had ample time to consider these improvements before now. There is certainly a need for some such improvements, and it was only reasonably to be expected that some steps would have been taken already to carry them out. Sir, it would be meaningless affectation to speak of that part of His Excellency's Speech which mentions the appropriation or guarantee of £60,000 of the public money in aid of the Midland Railway Company, as if the matter now came to our knowledge for the first time. The announcement of the fact was made public in the columns of a morning newspaper on the 6th November last. For some little time previously, articles or paragraphs had appeared in another newspaper commenting apparently in unfavorable terms upon the apathy, or inaction, or indifference, of the Government to the then existing state of things in not taking some measures to provide employment for men who had been thrown out of their ordinary work by the temporary stoppage of the works on the Midland Railway. On the 4th November an article again appeared in the evening paper, commenting in stronger terms upon the inaction of the Government, and concluding with the very remarkable and significant suggestion that they should undertake some works to relieve the men referred to, and employ some of the balance then in the Treasury for the purpose of carrying out such works. The paper did not suggest that the Government should employ the public money in carrying out any particular authorised work, but that the money should be employed in the prosecution of some public works, in order to keep these people in the colony. Those who noticed that article, as I did myself, thought the

suggestion was well meant probably, but that the Government would not be likely for a moment to apply a portion of the public money in any way that had not already been authorised by Parliament. But, sir, we were startled on the morning of the 6th November to read in the columns of that day's paper that the Government had decided to advance to the Midland Railway Company a sum of £60,000.

THE PREMIER: Not advance, but a guarantee in advance.

MR. CANNING: Well, I may be wrong.

THE PREMIER: You are wrong.

MR. CANNING: It may have been a guarantee, which is the same thing. If you guarantee a certain amount you must contemplate the probability of having to pay it.

THE PREMIER: The possibility.

MR. CANNING: The probability. These somewhat significant words occur in the newspaper article I refer to: "It is a well-known fact that not a few of our most prominent citizens, men whose financial assistance, we say advisedly, is essential to the rapid development of Western Australia, are so far involved in the success of the Midland Railway, that the failure of that undertaking would place them in a position of much difficulty, and, it may be, plunge the colony into the midst of a commercial and monetary crisis in an acute form." I will not attempt to analyse the sentence. The article goes on to say that in making the advance, the Government had taken abundant security from the assets of the Company, and that they had also obtained from the Company a modification of some of the conditions of the contract. Well, sir, many people are asking who are these "prominent citizens" who are so deeply interested in the success of this scheme. The question has been frequently asked, and will probably be asked again. I am not pressing it at the present time. I do think it is a most regrettable thing, a most deplorable thing, that the first Ministry under Constitutional Government in Western Australia should have been guilty of the most unconstitutional, illegal, and unjustifiable act that has ever been committed by any Government under the British Crown possessing free institutions. It may be said that these

are very strong terms; but, before I finish, I believe I shall be able to justify every single term I have used. To begin with the unconstitutional aspect of the question. I say unconstitutional is almost too mild a word to use to characterise such a proceeding: it is little short of a revolutionary proceeding on the part of any Government responsible to Parliament and to the people—a proceeding that is subversive of all our ideas of free institutions, of those institutions in which Englishmen have prided themselves for centuries. It will be borne in mind by hon. members that no right has been more uncompromisingly insisted upon, no power more resolutely exercised, by the House of Commons and by the lower branch of the Legislature in every British colony enjoying Responsible Government as the control of the public purse. It is by the control of the public purse that we are free men, that we are not serfs, under the rule of a despot, or of an oligarchy, consisting of a few families knit together by ties of relationship and common pecuniary interest. The control of the public purse by the Legislature as the representative of the people was contended for in the mother country for nearly seven centuries. The people of England made enormous sacrifices to obtain it. They fought for it, with various degrees of success, against many obstacles, and finally they succeeded in wresting it from the Crown, and establishing it on a basis that no Government has yet ever attempted to disturb. I am not indulging in mere rhetoric, but in historical facts which are incontrovertible. To begin with, I will go some little time back. In 1689 the Bill of Rights declared and defined the rights of the people, and defined and limited the power of the Crown or its representatives, the Ministry,—who at that time were the subservient tools of the Crown and not the representatives of the people; and it was then settled, for all time, that the “pretended power of suspending, or dispensing with laws, or the execution of laws, without the consent of Parliament, is illegal.” The Bill of Rights is all that we have in the nature of a written constitution; and all subsequent legislation has been consistently in harmony with that great measure, and never in violation of, or contradiction to, its great principles. Sir, this question is

of such great importance to my mind that I claim the indulgence of the House while I show, not by dogmatic assertion, but by reference to undisputed authorities, that the course adopted by the Government in this instance by the first Ministry under Responsible Government in Western Australia, was opposed to the law and custom of Parliament, and the spirit of constitutional Government, and also a direct infringement and violation of our own Constitution. “May,” whose authority will not, I think, be disputed, says: “A grant from the Commons is ‘not effectual in law, without the ultimate assent of the Queen and of the House of Lords. It is the practice, however, to allow the issue of public money, the application of which has been sanctioned by the House of Commons, before it has been appropriated to specific purposes, by the Appropriation Act, which is reserved until the end of the session.’” And again he goes on to say: “In 1784, when Mr. Pitt was in a minority in the House of Commons, and it was well known that he was only waiting for the supplies in order to dissolve the parliament, the House resolved, ‘That for any person or persons in His Majesty’s Treasury, or in the Exchequer, or in the Bank of England, or for any person or persons whatsoever employed in the payment of public money, to pay, or direct, or cause to be paid, any sum or sums of money, for or towards the support of services voted in the present session of parliament, after the parliament shall have been prorogued or dissolved before any Act of Parliament shall have passed, appropriating the supplies to such services, will be a high crime and misdemeanor, a daring breach of a public trust, derogatory to the fundamental privileges of parliament, and subversive of the constitution of this country.’” Further on he says: “In order to make the grants of the Commons available, and to anticipate the legal sanction of an Appropriation Act, ‘The Exchequer and Audit Departments Act, 1866,’ provides for the issue of moneys from time to time to meet the grants of the Commons”—which merely implies that they are not to touch any of the public money except that of which the expendi-

ture has been authorised by Parliament. It will be seen how jealously the expenditure of the public money is controlled even after Parliament has sanctioned it. The possibility of money being expended without Parliament being consulted at all seems never to have been contemplated. In order to show how expressly it is forbidden, I will quote from another work, Professor Dicey's recent work on "The Law of the Constitution." He says: "My aim is 'not even to give a sketch of the matters 'connected with the raising, the collection, and the expenditure of the national 'income, but simply to show that the 'collection and the expenditure of the 'revenue, and all things appertaining 'thereto, are governed by strict rules 'of law.' Again: "Not a penny of 'revenue can be legally expended except 'under the authority of an Act of Par- 'liament." And further on: "Every 'penny of it is, unless the law is broken, 'paid away in accordance with Act of 'Parliament." Again: "In either case—and this is the point to bear in mind— 'payments made out of the national 'revenue are made by and under the 'authority of the law, namely, under the 'directions of some special Act of Par- 'liament." Again he says: "The ex- 'penditure, therefore, no less than the 'raising of taxation, depends wholly and 'solely upon Parliamentary enactment." And: "The centre of this system of Par- 'liamentary control is the Comptroller 'and Auditor General. The grand 'result of this system of control and 'audit is that in England we possess 'accounts of the national expenditure of 'an accuracy which cannot be rivalled 'by the public accounts of other coun- 'tries, and that every penny"—this is the point to which I wish to draw the attention of members—"every penny 'of the national income is expended 'under the authority and in accordance 'with the provisions of some Act of Par- 'liament." Members can draw their own inferences; but I think I have clearly shown that the recent action of our own Government has been most unconstitutional. I have not simply cited old antiquated authorities on the subject—authorities that apply to a state of things past and gone; I have quoted the very latest authorities, which are recognised as

indisputable all over the British Empire. Mr. Dicey's work is almost the most recent work we have on Constitutional Government, and his dictum I do not think can be controverted. I have, I think, shown that the action of the Government was unconstitutional, and I believe I shall also be able to satisfy hon. members that it was illegal. I say it was a direct infringement of the Constitution Act of 1889, the Act by which we exist at the present moment as a Legislative Assembly; and I further say it was in the fullest sense of the word absolutely illegal. Section 66 of our Constitution Act provides that "all bills for appropriating any part of the consolidated 'revenue fund, or for imposing, altering 'or repealing any rate, tax, duty, or 'impost shall originate in the Legislative 'Assembly." The next section provides that "it shall not be lawful for the Legis- 'lative Assembly to adopt or pass any 'vote, resolution or bill for the appro- 'priation of any part of the consolidated 'revenue fund, or of any rate, tax, duty 'or impost to any purpose which has not 'been first recommended to the Assembly 'by message of the Governor during the 'session in which such vote, resolution, 'or bill is proposed." There is no ambiguity about those words. And the provisions of our Constitution Act are strictly in accord with the spirit and the rules of the British Parliament. "May," after quoting the Standing Orders of the House of Commons to the same effect, remarks: "So strictly has this principle 'been enforced that the House has even 'refused to receive a report from a select 'committee, suggesting an advance of 'money, because it had not been recom- 'mended by the Crown. . . . In ad- 'dition to the necessity of a recommenda- 'tion from the Crown, prior to a vote of 'money, the House has interposed another 'obstacle to hasty and inconsiderate 'votes, which involve any public ex- 'penditure. . . . By Standing Order, '20th March, 1866, it is provided: If 'any motion be made in the House for 'any aid, grant, or charge upon the 'public revenue, whether payable out of 'the consolidated fund or out of moneys 'to be provided by Parliament, or for 'any charge upon the people,—and that 'is really the whole gist of it,—the con- 'sideration and debate thereof shall not

"be presently entered upon, but shall be "adjourned till such further day as the "House shall think fit to appoint, and "then it shall be referred to a committee "of the whole House, before any resolution or vote of the House do pass "thereon. . . . A similar rule was "made a Standing Order on the 29th "March, 1707, viz.: That this House will "not proceed upon any petition, motion "or bill for granting any money, or for "releasing or compounding any sum of "money owing to the Crown, but in a "Committee of the whole House. . . . "This order was renewed 14th April, "1707, 7th February, 1708, and 29th "November, 1710, and is constantly observed in the proceedings of the House." It will, I have no doubt, be very clear to members, what was the object of these provisions, under this rule established in the British Parliament. It was that the Ministry for the time being should not come down and suddenly bring forward a motion for the appropriation of a sum of money, and take the House by surprise and so carry the vote, but that some time should be allowed for deliberation. Well, sir, it will then be seen that the principle which for nearly two centuries has formed part of the law and custom of Parliament, and is solemnly and distinctly embodied in our own Constitution Act, has been absolutely set at naught by the first Ministry under our new Constitution. But, it may be urged, granting all that has been so far advanced, a great occasion, a great crisis, a great and overwhelming necessity justifies a course that under ordinary conditions and circumstances could not be sanctioned. Can any such justification be pleaded in the case we are dealing with? I think it would be idle to labor the point. I say, further, that the action of the Government was uncalled for and wholly unjustifiable, because Parliament was about to meet; there could have been no great inconvenience in the delay of a few weeks, —all that would have been necessary to enable the Ministry to consult Parliament and obtain its sanction. Even granting the plea of urgency, Parliament could have been called together at once, and its opinion taken; so that it was open for them to have acted in a legal and constitutional way, if they wanted to assist this Company out of public money.

Were there no misgivings on the part of our "prominent citizens" who are so far involved in the success of the Midland Railway lest, if the matter were discussed by the public and debated in this Chamber, the sanction of Parliament would have been refused to a misappropriation of the colony's money? That is a question that will probably be asked them. People will also ask, as they have asked, who are these "prominent citizens," in whose interests it was desirable that the Government of the colony should come forward with an advance out of the public purse? It has been urged that this Midland Railway scheme is of the greatest importance to the colony at large. I question this very much. It may have been of importance to those settlers on the route between Geraldton and Perth, and possibly of some advantage to the settlers of the Lower Murchison; but the advantages to be derived from it by other parts of the colony are somewhat problematical. But, granting for the moment that the work is one of importance to the colony, that would not in any way justify the action of the Government in illegally appropriating any portion of the public funds of the colony without Parliament being consulted in the first instance. It cannot for a moment be said that it was a case of overwhelming necessity. If a hostile fleet were threatening to bombard our coast, or if famine were stalking through the land, or even if the employment of the money would have averted the destruction of our flocks and herds, these would have been some excuse. But in the case with which we are now dealing no such universal or overwhelming necessity existed. In this case the interests of not even a class of the community were not at stake. It was simply the interest of a private company and of certain individuals financially connected with that Company, and who had probably become so for their own advantage. If their expectations have not been realised, if they are likely to lose rather than to gain by their connection with the scheme, we may deplore their misfortune as we would deplore the misfortunes of any other member of the community involved in temporary difficulties. But it was not a case in which constitutional law and usage should be set at naught. Let us suppose

the case of a large manufacturer, or of the promoters of some local industry in our midst: can it be said for a moment that the Government of the colony, in the event of the promoters of the undertaking finding themselves in temporary difficulties, would be justified in advancing them money out of the public chest in order to enable them to tide over their financial difficulties? Or let us suppose the case of a tradesman or a local shop-keeper becoming temporarily embarrassed, will it be contended for a moment that it is the business of the Government to take money out of the Treasury to enable this tradesman to tide over his difficulties? I think not. If once such a principle were admitted, where would it end? It has been stated that the Government took ample security for this advance of £60,000 to the Midland Railway. The Treasurer, in his recent speech at Bunbury, explained the nature of this security. First, he mentions £12,000 deposit held by the Government as caution money for the due carrying out of the contract by the Company. Surely the hon. gentleman's mind must have been in a state of confusion when he made such a preposterous statement. That £12,000 is lodged with the Government for a special purpose. If the Company fail to carry out their contract that sum will be forfeited absolutely to the colony for any possible loss or inconvenience to the colony occasioned by their failure. How, then, can the same sum be regarded as a security for cash advanced? If we apply it in re-payment of cash advanced, how can it be regarded as a security for the performance of the work? It would only be idly laboring the question to say another word about it. It must be patent to every individual that this £12,000, lodged with the Government, for a specific purpose, cannot at the same time serve that purpose and also serve as a re-payment in part of the money advanced,—an entirely different object. We are also told that 200,000 acres of some of the finest land in the colony is another security held by the Government. But the question arises, is that land not already pledged in England to the holders of the Midland Company's debentures? If it is, it cannot be also used as security here. If it is not pledged, and if that land

would sell at 20s. an acre, as the Treasurer said it would, why did not the Company sell a portion of it, and so place them in possession of funds, instead of asking the Government to take the unprecedented step they have taken? If this land is worth 20s. an acre, why didn't the Company dispose of 60,000 acres of it, and so obtain the money they wanted, instead of coming to the Government for assistance? If this land is not already pledged in England, why did not the Company adopt that legitimate step to relieve them from their embarrassment? Why did not the Government suggest this course to the Company, instead of adopting the illegal and unconstitutional course they did? Again, with regard to the Company's debentures, said to be saleable at £70 each, why, if the Company could dispense of them at all, did they not do so, even at a heavy discount, rather than ask the Government to take an unconstitutional course? I and many others for some time past have entertained very serious doubt as to the ability of the Midland Railway Company to carry out their contract efficiently, and these doubts are reduced, to my mind, to a moral certainty by several considerations. In support of this, I need only refer to a paragraph in His Excellency's Speech. This portentous statement occurs at the commencement of the 18th paragraph: "During the 'past year the Midland Railway has 'been proceeded with at a rapid rate, 'and at the present time 100 miles have 'been opened for traffic. The Company 'has expended nearly half-a-million of 'money upon this railway.'" Can this be so? Half-a-million of money spent on 100 miles of railway!

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) : One hundred miles are open for traffic; there is a great deal more work than that done.

MR. CANNING: I will allow a considerable margin for other work done. The fact remains that only 100 miles are ready for traffic, and that the expenditure has been at the rate of £5,000 per mile, so far as we have any available result. Are we to believe that what should have been one of the least expensive lines in Australia has cost the enormous sum of £5,000 per mile? It appears to me we are placed in this dilemma, or rather

those who are interested in this railway are placed in this dilemma: they have either recklessly wasted money in the construction of this line—wasted it in a way that is criminally reckless, if they have expended anything approaching £5,000 a mile upon its construction, or else—and this is the alternative—if they have not done so, an enormous sum has been wasted on purposes which were the reverse of being legitimately in connection with the undertaking. If that money has not been spent on the construction of the railway, what has become of it? A reasonable allowance for the cost of constructing such a line would be about £2,500 per mile, and, if the amount mentioned above has been expended, it leaves a quarter of a million to be accounted for. What has become of it? What are we to think of an undertaking, or what hopes are we to entertain of its ultimate success, when there is a strong probability, when at any rate there is a reasonable inference, that a quarter of a million of money has been expended on purposes that have not been disclosed? Again, how far will £60,000 go in carrying on these works? At the rate of £5,000 per mile it will suffice for twelve miles. I think I have shown—I have endeavored at all events to show—that parliamentary law and usage and constitutional principles have been utterly set at naught, and our own Constitution Act been directly violated, by the course taken by Ministers in disposing of public money without the sanction of Parliament in assisting this Company out of its difficulties. I have conclusively shown there was nothing in the circumstances of the case to extenuate or palliate, much less to justify, this unconstitutional and illegal proceeding. But, sir, a very solemn and important duty devolves upon this House. It rests with hon. members to show, by the way they deal with this question, that they will be no party to so flagrant a departure from an established principle which the collective wisdom of the nation has declared to be inviolable, and which has been acted upon consistently by the British Parliament and by every colonial Parliament under Responsible Government. It remains for this House to say whether they will sanction this departure, and whether

they will give up their rights and powers as representatives of a free people, and become passive and pliant instruments in the hands of any set of men who may contrive to obtain office—I am not referring particularly to the present Ministry; I am dealing with the general question. I ask hon. members not to stultify themselves by sanctioning the proceeding in question, after the determined stand made by this House last session, when it was thought that their rights, as regards money matters, were being infringed by the action of the other Chamber; and I ask hon. members whether, having strained at that gnat, they are prepared to swallow this camel? No other construction can be put upon our action if we give our sanction to a proceeding of this kind. Will they not, rather, after the determined stand they took last session in opposing any infringement of their constitutional rights and powers in dealing with money matters,—will they, in the face of that stand, now yield up those rights, surrender those powers? Will they not rather maintain their constitutional rights inviolate for themselves and their successors and for the people whose interests they are solemnly pledged to protect? This is not a mere question of a formality, the observance or non-observance of which would have no practical effect. In this case the consequences are so obvious, so immediate, so direct, and at the same time so far-reaching, and so practical that there can be no confusion in the mind of any man who bestows any thought upon the subject as to the course that this House ought to pursue. If this House sanctions this flagrant departure from constitutional usage, it will practically take all real powers out of the hands of the members of this Assembly in dealing with money matters. If the action of the Government in this instance is to be regarded as a precedent, it will be quite sufficient for any Ministry for the time being to come down to this House with their Estimates so framed as to meet all ordinary and necessary expenditure, and, after these Estimates are passed, and Parliament is prorogued, to dispense the money granted to them, not for the purposes for which it was appropriated, but upon any object to which their own sweet will may incline them. A Minis-

try having this enormous power in their hands would be able to retain their seats indefinitely. There would practically be no limit to what they might do, or the time they might continue in office. I therefore urge hon. members, in the name of their duty to themselves, of their duty to the conditions and principles of Constitutional Government, and in the name of those who may succeed them as representatives of the people in this House, and in the name of posterity—I urge them to refuse to sanction this unconstitutional and altogether unprecedented action of the Ministry. I ask them at all events to mark their sense of disapprobation so distinctly that nothing of the kind is ever likely to occur again. I appeal to them, not by their action in this matter, or their indifference, to give up a power that could not possibly by any means known to the British Constitution be wrested from them. In order, therefore, simply that the House may express its opinion of these proceedings on the part of the Government, and show Ministers that their action in this matter shall not form a precedent, I beg to move—"That this House desires to express its disapproval of the course taken by the Government in lending or guaranteeing the payment of public money to or for the Midland Railway Company, without the granting of such aid having been recommended to the House by message from the Governor, and thereupon considered and sanctioned by Parliament."

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member can move that as an amendment upon the Address.

MR. CANNING: I move it rather in the form of a substantive resolution.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot do that. The question before the House now is that the Address-in-Reply be agreed to. The hon. member can move it as an amendment upon the Address.

MR. CANNING: Then I move it as an amendment on the Address.

THE SPEAKER: The proper time to do that will be when the Address is brought up and its adoption moved.

MR. RICHARDSON: After the rather lengthy speech of the hon. member for East Perth, members will expect those

who follow to make their remarks rather short. I do not intend to deal so fully with the various questions referred to in His Excellency's Speech as the hon. member who has just sat down; but there are a few matters I should like to refer to, and I should also like to slightly criticise some of the remarks that fell from that hon. member. In doing so I will first deal with his accusation against the Government as to their not having announced any immigration scheme. The hon. member censured the Ministry for not bringing forward some comprehensive scheme of immigration and settlement, such as the other colonies adopted some years ago, and said that in his opinion it would have been advisable if the Government had spent £250,000 in carrying out such a scheme. In the first place, I submit this is not the time of day at all to raise such a question as that; it was when we were discussing the Schedule of the Loan Bill last session that this question of immigration policy should have been raised. It is too late now. That Loan Bill has been passed, and all the money appropriated. Surely it is not proposed that we should have another Loan Bill yet; and have another £200,000 added to the £50,000 already voted for immigration. If not, I cannot see where the point of the hon. member's criticism comes in, unless he raised the point as a plausible pretext for finding fault with the Government. Further than that, I maintain that the experience of the other colonies has gone to show that, in their result, their immigration schemes have proved complete failures, and I think it would be still more disastrous for this colony to attempt any such vast immigration schemes as the other colonies resorted to years ago. It is beyond discussion almost that when a Government attempts to carry out these ponderous and cumbersome immigration schemes and to settle people on the land; when they undertake to bring shiploads of all classes from the over-populated towns of the mother country, and shunt them on these shores, and expect them to settle on the land, and become prosperous colonists and taxpayers, the result has been a huge failure. Such schemes sound very well in theory; *doctrinaire* politicians love to dwell upon them, but the practical result has not been en-

couraging. Certainly no practical politician would dream of putting these theories into practice in this colony, especially when money is such a great consideration as it is at the present time. The hon. member himself has told us of the necessity there is for exercising great caution in dealing with our finances, for fear we may not be able to obtain any more money for public works. Yet at the same time he actually tells us we should have spent a quarter of a million on some immigration scheme, the success of which, to say the least, is very problematical. Any extensive immigration scheme in a colony like this should be gradually carried out, and very carefully managed, indeed. I think the duty of the Government is to foster, as far as possible, the nomination system, of helping colonists to bring out their own friends, who are likely to settle here and make good citizens, and of aiding our railway syndicates to settle people on their land, rather than resort to any indiscriminate scheme of immigration, at the public expense. If we were to follow the advice of the hon. member for East Perth, and bring out shiploads of immigrants to the colony at the present time, one of two things would stare us in the face. These people, when they came here, would either starve and become a great burden upon the community or they would make this colony a stepping-stone to the other colonies, at our expense. The hon. member has also censured the Government very severely for not bringing in an amendment of the Constitution Act by abolishing the property qualification of members. I do not think that the abolition of this qualification would disturb our equanimity in the slightest degree. I do not believe anyone here cares three straws about it, one way or the other. I do not think it would cause us a moment's regret if it were abolished to-morrow.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): We haven't got it now.

MR. RICHARDSON: Perhaps not, practically. In dealing with the great objection to a change in the Constitution—a dissolution of Parliament and the consequent stoppage of the public business and public works—the hon. member said it would not necessarily involve a dissolution at all. If so, I would ask

him, what good it is going to do, if it will not give the electors a chance to return other members than those who now occupy seats in the House? If it does not do that, what is he going to gain by amending the Constitution in the way he proposes?

MR. CANNING: It would affect bye-elections.

MR. RICHARDSON: I cannot think myself that the time is opportune for bringing about this change, when there is nothing to be gained by it. On the other hand, if the Government are prepared by the time the term of the present Parliament expires, and before the next general election comes on, to introduce a measure having that object in view, I think they will do all that every reasonable man can ask them to do in this matter. I was somewhat surprised at the way in which the hon. member for East Perth had narrowed down his demands with reference to this question. Formerly the hon. member posed as an extreme Radical, as the advocate of an extension of the franchise, on the "one man one vote" principle, but now he limits his demands to the abolition of the property qualification of members. I am afraid the hon. member has deserted his colors. Probably he has profited by past experience, but I fear he has deserted his old friend, the "poor working man," and changed his tune altogether.

MR. CANNING: Never!

MR. RICHARDSON: I think the hon. member has thought better of it.

MR. CANNING: Not at all.

MR. RICHARDSON: We expected the hon. member would have brought forward a resolution, not only abolishing the property qualification of members, but also introducing manhood suffrage, and possibly womanhood suffrage. But he has not. Therefore I say I am afraid the hon. member has deserted his colors. I hope the hon. member will stick to his party better than that in the future. I will say no more on this subject. With regard to the action of the Government in advancing £60,000 to the Midland Railway Company, I desire to keep my mind open upon that question until I hear Ministers explaining their action, and giving some information on the subject to the House and the country. I hope they will be able to give us such an

explanation as will afford us grounds to believe that they acted in the best interests of the community at large, and not (as suggested by the hon. member for East Perth) in the interest of a few individuals. But, looking at the question from a common-sense point of view, I think there are other points of view from which this question may be regarded, and which the hon. member for East Perth did not allude to at all. He dealt rather severely with one view of the question, which seemed to have been his trump card. He has told us that the action of the Government was contrary to all precedent and Parliamentary usage, and that no Government in a free country is allowed to spend money without the sanction of Parliament. Well, sir, in the first place, as a matter of fact we all know that Governments do spend money without the sanction of Parliament. But that does not relieve them from their responsibilities; and the cure for any action of that kind that does not meet with the approval of Parliament is with Parliament itself, which has the power to turn out the Ministry which usurps or abuses its powers. I think the hon. member rather drifted away from the real question in this case. He did not give us the correct interpretation of the action of the Government as I understand it. He spoke as if the Government had actually spent this £60,000. I take it that to expend money means to get rid of it altogether, so that you cannot get it back. But I do not think that is what the Government have done in this instance. In the first place, they have not even advanced the money; they have simply guaranteed it. But even admitting that they had advanced it, they say they have ample security. In that case it appears to me more in the light of an exchange, and so long as they have good and ample security—and I hope they will be able to satisfy us on that point—it appears to me no great harm can come out of it in any case. I do not see how the country is going to lose anything, even if this money is not refunded, so long as the security is good, and more than covers the amount advanced, which I understand it does. That, however, is a point upon which this House will require to be satisfied. Was it within the power

of the Midland Railway Company to give the Government this security, and was it *bonâ fide* security, legitimately available for the purpose? If so, I think there is a great deal to justify the action of the Government, for we cannot get rid of the fact—notwithstanding all the hon. member said about the illegality of their action and its monstrosity—that it would have been most disastrous to the country if these railway works had stopped at the time, and 400 or 500 men had been thrown out of employment when there was no other public work on hand to absorb them. I think if these works had stopped for the want of a little timely proof of confidence on the part of the Government of the colony in the undertaking it would have had a very bad effect in financial circles at home. If it had gone abroad that this great undertaking was in the eyes of the Government so rotten to its core that they would not stretch out a finger to help it, I think it would have been one of the worst advertisements we could have had to go into the money market with. It would have given the colony such a blow as would have taken years to get over it. That is the justification that I see for the action of the Government. But I shall wait patiently to hear the explanation of Ministers of their conduct and the reasons which guided them. As to the £10,000 deposit money being no security at all for this advance, it appears to me the hon. member for East Perth was somewhat “at sea” when he said that. I take it that if the Company complete their contract they will be entitled to have this £10,000 refunded, and the Government would then have no lien upon it but for this advance; so that, to that extent at any rate, it is a security for the repayment of this money. But that is only a small part of the security which I understand the Government have taken. I will say no more on this subject at present, but shall wait for the explanation which we may expect the Government to give us. With reference to the sixth paragraph of the Speech, dealing with the Railway Department, I think it was rather an oversight on the part of those who framed the Speech that they did not take some credit to themselves with regard to the price at which the tender for the first section of

the Bunbury Railway has been let. When the Loan Bill was before the House last session, and the sums set apart in the Schedule for the various lines provided for were criticised, a strong opinion was expressed, and by those who were regarded as some authority on the subject, that these estimates were altogether too low, and that we would require another loan of a million or so to complete these works. This was insisted upon so strongly that some of us began to think we had done wrong in sanctioning the loan. I took great care myself to make inquiries from those capable of expressing an opinion on the subject, and I was satisfied that the amounts set apart in the Schedule were not unreasonable, as some people led us to believe they were; and I think it would have been a great card for the Ministry if they had pointed out in the Governor's Speech, as they were able to do, that the price at which the contract for the first section of this line had been taken was very considerably under their estimate, and that we have every reason to believe that the whole of the works can be completed for the money provided in the Schedule. I think that is very reassuring. We have been accustomed to the statement that railways cannot be made under £4,000, £5,000, £6,000 or £7,000 per mile. If such had turned out to be the case, I am afraid this colony would not be in a position to have a great many miles of railways constructed. But when we find that a line of railway can be built for something considerably under £3,000 a mile, it affords us some hope that even in our position, rather cramped as we are for capital, we are still in a position to open up the country for settlement by means of railway communication, which I think will be a better immigration scheme than any which the hon. member for East Perth can place before us. These railways will not only induce population to settle along them, but will give us a better class of immigrants than we are likely to get from any immigration scheme such as the hon. member referred to. With regard to the 21st paragraph of the Speech, referring to the drought in the Northern Districts, no doubt it is the dark spot on our horizon at the present moment, and perhaps rather a large dark spot too. We can only hope

that it may be dispersed, but the losses which the settlers have already suffered cannot be dispersed; and I hope the Government, in consideration of the severe losses sustained by our very best class of settlers, right away from Geraldton, or even perhaps the Eastern Districts, as far as the Kimberley District, will consider them in every possible way, and make their burdens as light as possible. I think it would not be at all inopportune if something were done for them by amending the Land Regulations affecting their leases—not to cancel their rents; I do not think that is a legitimate way of doing it at all, but in other ways whereby their burdens may be lightened, so that when this drought breaks up they may have some security of tenure, without, at the same time, any prospect of their rents being raised. I think the history of the last few years has shown that the settlers up there cannot really afford to pay any higher rent. I think, in view of the disaster and ruin that must occur to many of them, it would be unreasonable to expect them to pay an increased rent; I think it would be quite justifiable on the part of the Government to introduce some measure that would give them an assurance that in the future they will not only have security of tenure as regards their leases, but also no increase of rent to pay. The hon. member for East Perth also expressed regret that no comprehensive measure was promised to remedy some of the anomalies of the existing tariff. I understand it is the intention of the Government to deal with this question in some way, but I am afraid that when it comes before us it will be a tough job. I think, anomalous as it is, the more we tamper with it the more difficulties we shall find ourselves involved in. If we lay ourselves out to help one class more than we do at present, we shall find that we do so at the expense of some other class, and we may find ourselves in a worse position than now. It appears to me that we have only two alternatives before us: we must either go the whole thing—one way or the other. We must either go in for what is called free trade or we must protect everybody and everything all round, and raise the price of everything, and so increase the cost of living. We must be content with a reasonable ad

valorem tariff, or adopt a drastic and wholesale measure of protection.

MR. THROSSELL: Sir, whatever may be said with regard to the general policy of the Government, as indicated in the Speech before us, I think every member of this House will heartily congratulate Ministers upon the healthy state of the public finances and the general prospects of the colony. I suppose that never in the history of Western Australia has the action of the Executive been so closely watched by everybody as the action of our first Ministry under Responsible Government, and I think that on the whole they have gained the confidence of the country at large. With regard to the guarantee of £60,000 to the Midland Railway Company, over which so much capital has been made, the question, to my mind, is simply this,—what has been the effect on the colony of this guarantee? Has it had a beneficial effect, or has it had an injurious effect? After carefully reading over the agreement laid on the table, I have come to the conclusion that the Forrest Ministry was fully justified in the step they took. I believe they acted in what they conceived to be the best interests of the colony in coming to the rescue of the Midland Syndicate. There were many blots in that contract, which were bound to have led to strained relations between the Company and the Government, and possibly to much litigation, more particularly as to the rights of the Company in the selection of their lands; and the general impression was that the Company had the best of the bargain. Take my own district and the neighboring district for instance. It is well known that the Company had laid their hands upon some of the town lots in Northam, and also in Newcastle, and upon public lands right up to the railway. Now, as I understand the matter, this right of selecting town lands has been abandoned, and with it the prospect of much future legislation. If this is one of the results of the help rendered by the Government to the Company, and the colony has been safe-guarded in the matter, as I believe it has, then I claim that this action of the Government deserves the support of every member in this House, and of the public at large. There are two subjects referred to in His Excellency's Speech which, to my mind,

are of paramount importance. The first is that of harbor works at Fremantle, and the other is the Yilgarn Railway. I do not propose to speak at any length on either of these subjects this evening; another opportunity will be afforded us to deal with them in detail. So far as the decision of the Government with regard to the starting point of the Yilgarn Railway is concerned, every member of this House, I am sure, must rejoice that the Ministry have been able to come to a wise decision in the matter. I remember that last session, when the hon. member for Beverley spoke on this subject, I ventured to say that the more it was threshed out the more clear would it become that the starting point should be the town I have the honor to represent; and I am glad indeed that the Engineer-in-Chief and the Ministry, after very careful consideration, have come to that decision. Later on in the session I am sure that facts and figures will be produced that will convince every unbiassed member that a wise decision has been arrived at. I am certain that if there should be amongst them any directors of any Yilgarn mining companies, or any member interested in these goldfields, they will heartily rejoice that such a decision has been made as will secure 16 miles less haulage, besides other advantages that will bring them larger dividends in the future, and leave them with more money for the development of the mines. I take it that the object of this railway was, in the first place, to develop these goldfields, and, secondly, to assist in feeding our existing railways, and give us a good harbor, so as to recoup the outlay upon the line. I think all these will, eventually, be secured to the country. In glancing over His Excellency's Speech, I regret that no reference is made to any proposed scheme of immigration and settlement. I ventured to say last session that while our public works would attract population to our shores, they would not retain that population here. The past eight or nine months' experience has shown us large shiploads of people coming into the colony, but very few of them, I am sorry to say, found their way to where they were most wanted, and that is the country townships. I would not support any elaborate scheme of immigration, but I believe that the nominated

system might be largely developed for the public good. If we had agricultural agencies or boards established in every country district, where people could obtain information as to the class of men required by our farmers, which information might be transmitted to a central board in Perth, to be sent home to England, say once a quarter, I believe this would secure for us all the immigrants we wanted. It is with much pleasure that I have read the very interesting report of Messrs. Richardson and Paterson, dealing with their recent visit to the irrigation colonies, and I only hope that before this session closes some practical results will follow from that report. We were all aware—all who take any interest in the matter—of the great work carried on in the other colonies, by means of irrigation; but, unfortunately, as this report states, we have no River Murray in this colony. But we have our River Swan and our River Avon, pouring their waters into the sea, while our inland districts are every year starved for the want of that precious element. Surely it would be better if some means were devised for economising and utilising this volume of water, instead of allowing it to waste itself into the sea; and I hope the hon. member, Mr. Richardson, will follow up his admirable report by bringing forward a resolution suggesting that the Swan or the Avon shall be examined with the view of their waters being made available for some system of irrigation, extending, say, from Newcastle at one end of the district to Beverley at the other. I am glad to observe from His Excellency's Speech that during the past year several Agricultural Areas have been laid out, but I think the Government do not do enough to advertise these lands. Others who have land to dispose of resort to the columns of the Press to give them every possible publicity; and I submit that the Government should do the same with their lands. No one knows better than myself the many useful men lost to the colony during the last twelve months for the want of some such system of disseminating information. They come here and find they are unable to obtain the information they want, and they leave us in disgust. Yet we say in the abstract that we have abundance of good land, and I believe we have. In my own

district I know it is so, and I know that we have lost many intending settlers simply for the want of some place where they could get the information they required. This is a state of things which should not be. Every facility should be given for strangers to examine the land at short notice, and see for themselves, and I hope the Government will take some steps to remedy this matter. On the whole it affords me great pleasure to give my cordial support to the Ministry, for I consider that on the whole they have done well for the country and deserve our confidence.

MR. PLESSE: The admirable Speech delivered by His Excellency the Administrator calls for some few remarks, and I claim the indulgence of the House while I make them. Following upon the remarks of my hon. friend the member for Northam, who seems to think that the selection of Northam as the starting point for the Yilgarn Railway will meet the desire of the Eastern Districts, I think that possibly a difference of opinion will be shown on that subject further on. The starting point that has been fixed, possibly by the Ministry, may hereafter be the one that will be adopted, but I think the time for this House to determine which will be the most useful line will be when the final surveys are completed and the report of the Engineer-in-Chief is laid before us. Possibly it may be found desirable to start from some point nearer Beverley. No doubt arguments may be brought to bear against that, because it would benefit the Great Southern Railway, which may be regarded by some people as being an advantage that benefits a private company rather than the colony itself. I think most people lose sight of the fact that this railway is in reality a public undertaking. Its success must prove beneficial to the country at large. It is part of the public estate, and a lasting thing. Those who promoted it cannot roll it up and carry it away; and I think if there are any advantages to be derived by the district through which it passes it has a right to reap those advantages. If it should be found that the line to Yilgarn can be built from a nearer point than Northam, I do not think that the interests of the port of Fremantle and of the city should

be set against the interests of Albany. There always seems to be a feeling of jealousy against the port of Albany whenever it comes into conflict with the port of Fremantle. I see no necessity for this jealousy; both are parts of the same colony, and both have equal claims upon the Government of the colony and upon this House. I therefore trust that no spirit of jealousy will be allowed to militate against the claims of Albany, or of the Great Southern Railway, in connection with this matter. There is only one other point in His Excellency's Speech I should like to make a remark upon, and that is as regards the agricultural areas that have been declared by the Government on this railway. These areas were declared last session, and the surveys were made immediately afterwards, and on the 25th of October last the term within which the sale of lands within the Hordern area was prohibited expired, and it was understood by those in the neighborhood that the Crown lands within that area would have been immediately thrown open for selection. But this has not yet been done. I understand from the Government that they have most of the surveys made and that the plans are almost ready to be issued. But the delay that has taken place has caused people a great deal of inconvenience, and to my own knowledge it has also been a loss to the country. Numbers of people come here from the other colonies with the intention of buying land, but, finding that the land is not available, they go away again, and possibly never return to our shores. What we want is the settlement of these lands; and the sooner the lands are available for the public and the Government are in a position to treat for them, the better will it be for the colony. In His Excellency's Speech we have an assurance that these areas will shortly be opened for selection, and we also have the assurance of members of the Ministry that the matter will receive their early attention. I hope that any regulations that may be formulated for dealing with these lands will be of the most liberal nature that can be formulated, because it is liberal land laws that will attract and induce settlement. We may talk as much as we like of our goldfields, and the number of people they bring to the colony. But

the population that are attracted by our goldfields, even if they are successful, will again leave us unless we offer them some inducement to settle on the land. Our goldfields may increase our floating population, but what we want is to settle an agricultural population upon the soil. We have abundance of land along this very railway upon which to settle a large population, and I should like to see the most liberal terms offered to induce them to settle. The Great Southern Railway people, who, under their contract, have had the selection of enormous areas of land along their line, have had their land open for selection for some time; but they are a private company, and in dealing with people who desire to settle on their land, they naturally desire to obtain the highest price they can for it. But the Government are dealing with the public estate, and it behoves them to do their utmost to induce people to settle on the land and become useful colonists and cultivators of the soil. After all what benefit will the population attracted to our goldfields prove to us unless we are in a position to supply their wants? At present we are importing nearly all they consume, and unless we do something to stimulate production so as to be able to supply what they need we are losing the very advantage we ought to gain by the introduction of these people. As I have already said, to my own knowledge the number of intending settlers who have come here has been numerous, but, finding that these lands had not been thrown open, and were not likely to be so for some months, they have returned disgusted to the other colonies. If we can hold out inducements to this class of people by adopting liberal land laws, we shall induce them to settle, and we shall find in them the very best class of immigrants the colony requires. The results of the labors of those who have come here and settled down are indisputably before them, and are such as ought to encourage others to settle here. Take my own district for instance. Even with the isolation in which they lived before the railway was built they were fairly prosperous, but since the railway has been constructed there is evidence every day of the benefits it has conferred upon our settlers. But the high price they

have to pay for their land to some extent hampers them; and I hope the Government will not lose any time in having the Crown lands thrown open, and thrown open upon the most liberal terms, so as to attract population and encourage settlement, without which the country can never permanently prosper. It would almost seem that the southern portion of the colony is looked upon as an alien country by this part of the colony. Legislation favorable towards the Eastern and other parts of the colony is promised, but the only reference made to Albany was an announcement that the Government proposed to order a dredger for use in Princess Royal Harbor, and other harbors of the colony,—though I believe the Government intend to do some little more for Albany. Albany is a place that is steadily growing in importance; it possesses natural advantages which nothing in the world can deprive it of, and it deserves every consideration at the hands of this Legislature. It may be said that I am speaking against the interests of people here, who would like to make Fremantle the port of call of the mail steamers. I hope Fremantle may yet be favored in some way, but, as I have said, we possess at Albany natural advantages which cannot be taken from us. No matter what is done to Fremantle harbor, it will take a long time, and we all hope to see it a success. At the same time we do not want to see the undoubted advantages of Albany abused, and its requirements neglected. It is very gratifying to find provision is being made for the extension of the telegraph line from Beverley to Broome Hill, which will favorably affect us. This has been a long-felt want, and I am glad that we have the assurance of the Government that they will push on the work as early as possible. Although it is only proposed to take it as far as Broome Hill, I hope they may extend it to Mount Barker, thereby effecting a safer and more secure line of communication, in the event of any interruption on the line between Mount Barker and Perth. With regard to the action of the Government in guaranteeing £60,000 to the Midland Railway, I do not care to make any remark at present that would pledge me one way or the other, before we have the ministerial

explanation of their action. At the same time, I think with the hon. member for Northam that no doubt the Ministry, before deciding to act as they did, took the whole matter into their careful consideration, and used their very best judgment; and when the matter comes before us again I hope I shall then have the pleasure of supporting them in their action. Before resuming my seat I would like to congratulate the Government upon the fact that many public works of utility have been carried out to a successful issue by them since this House met before. I should also like to congratulate the Director of Public Works upon the installation of this very beautiful light that we have in this chamber to-night. I think this electric light is destined to be the light of the future. I speak with some experience of its advantages, having already adopted it at my own place. I may be regarded as somewhat vainglorious, but I hope to have the pleasure of looking back to the rural township of Katanning as the first town where the installation of the electric light was made in this country. There is only one other thing I should like to mention, and that is to express my sympathy with our unfortunate settlers at the North in their unfortunate losses from the drought, and I hope something will be done to help these most deserving settlers.

MR. QUINLAN: After the very lengthy remarks of my friend the hon. member for East Perth, followed by the hon. member for the DeGrey, it will leave but a very few moments for us to express our views upon His Excellency's Speech. I shall myself deal in a cursory manner with those items which I consider most important. With regard to the question of Federation, I agree with Ministers that we should take no steps in this matter at the present time, though probably in the future I shall be a supporter of Western Australia joining in the federation of these colonies. But at present, and until we are more on a par with the other colonies as regards our manufactures and other industries, I shall object to Western Australia entering into this federation. With regard to our Loan, it has been said in some quarters that the money was raised on advantageous terms to the colony; but, from what I can learn, that was not the

case. I do not know who was to blame in the matter, but I believe the money might have been raised on better terms, for, since the flotation of the loan, we find that those who subscribed to it have at all events made a considerable amount out of it, judging by the cablegrams. The next paragraph in His Excellency's Speech, and the most important to my mind, is that referring to the question of the abolition of the property qualification for members and the extension of the franchise. It will be in the recollection of hon. members that last session I alluded to the pledge I had given my constituents on this question of the amendment of our Constitution, and it may not be out of place, occupying the seat that I now do on this side of the House, if I mention that I am here to redeem my pledge. The Ministry inform us that they do not intend at present to deal with these questions, and, pledged as I am to support the introduction of these changes, I have taken my seat on this side of the House. I agree with the hon. member for East Perth, whom I supported last session, that the time has now arrived for introducing this measure. When the hon. member brought forward a resolution to that effect early last session, I tried to induce him to delay it until the end of the session, and he was somewhat censured for his action on that occasion, and found very little support. But I think the time has now arrived when some action should be taken in this matter. It has been argued that this amendment of the Constitution Act would lead to a dissolution, and interfere with the public business, and retard the general prosperity of the colony, and I don't know what not. That is all very well for those who wish to see the present property qualification retained—it is a good excuse in that case; but representing as I do the most important constituency in the colony, and pledged as I am to this amendment of the Constitution, I cannot accept that excuse. I claim that the time has arrived for the introduction of this amendment; and if the Government will not introduce it of their own accord before long, the country will demand it. At present a large number of people of the colony have no voice whatever in the legislation of the coun-

try, and it is time the franchise were extended so as to give them that voice. I will go so far as to say that if the Ministry had included this reform in their programme this session they would have played their trump card, and made themselves the popular Ministry of the day. As it is, I think they have not the popular sympathy, nor do they command that respect which they otherwise would. I say that, with all due respect for the *personnel* of the Ministry, with whom I have quite as much sympathy perhaps as those who remain on the opposite side of the House. But they are not in touch with popular feeling when they say that the time has not arrived for introducing this measure. They must know the wish of the country in this matter, and why do they refrain from bringing it forward at the present session? Why do they want to delay it? It has been said that it will be time enough to make these changes upon the eve of the next general election. But I would point out that unless steps are taken to alter the franchise, the next election will take place under the present franchise. An alteration of the franchise and the preparation of the new electoral roll cannot be made in a day; it will take some time. And what guarantee have we that the Government will introduce this measure later on, at the eleventh hour? Why do they not do it now? Some of them stated on the hustings that they would not oppose it, and why do they do so? I shall not go so far in condemnation of the Government in some matters as the hon. member for East Perth went, but I shall state my own views without fear or favor. By placing myself in this seat, on this side of the House, I feel in a more independent position for voting for what I consider best in the interests of the constituency I represent and of the colony generally. It has been remarked by some of my friends that they were surprised at my taking my seat on this side; but I ask, could I consistently have retained the seat I did, after supporting, as I did, the proposition of my hon. friend the member for East Perth last session, and knowing as I did that the subject would be brought forward again this session, and finding that the Government did not intend to move in the matter? I say again I respect the

personnel of the present Ministry quite as much as, if not more, than some of those at their back; but they shall not have my support until they bring forward a measure for reforming the Constitution in the direction that has been indicated. There is one other matter referred to by the hon. member for East Perth which I should like to touch upon, and that is the appointment of a General Traffic Manager. When this appointment was first publicly announced, I waited upon the Premier and pointed out to him that the country was not going to tolerate this sort of thing any longer, importing men into the colony to fill good positions when we had men already in the service quite capable of filling those positions.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) : I do not think the hon. member told me that.

MR. QUINLAN : I said that local men should have the preference, and that this sort of thing should not continue. I remember it very well, for it was proposed to have a public meeting on the subject, and I asked the promoters to allow me to see the Premier first, and bring the matter under his notice. As regards this particular office, we have a man in the service who has been there for years, and who is quite competent to fill the position. Why should not men like this have a right to aspire to such positions instead of importing a fellow we know nothing about? I will not mention the officer's name; he is known to us all, and I think he was entitled to this promotion. If we had a properly regulated Civil Service, with competitive examination, this officer would have had this appointment. With regard to the bills to be brought forward this session, I hope we shall pass one to amend the Municipalities Act, so as to have the affairs of the city better managed. The existing Act is a one-horse affair, and we want a new system of rating and many other amendments, which must be patent to your eyes every day. We know a Bill has been prepared by the City Council, and I believe the Government have it now in their hands, and I hope they will let us have it as early as possible. Another bill of importance is the Yilgarn Railway Bill. I am not surprised at the hon. member for Northam saying he intends to support the Gov-

ernment to the extent he states he is, and that he approves of their action in fixing upon Northam as the starting point. I do not blame him one bit; if I occupied his position, I should probably do likewise, seeing that by this railway starting from Northam the hon. member will have a goldfield of his own. As to this question of routes, I am not going to pledge myself to either route at present; I shall wait to hear the arguments in favor or otherwise of each route, and I shall vote as my conscience dictates to me. I have no interest in either district, and my vote will be given in the best interests of the colony, and of no country town in particular. While upon the question of the goldfields, I think it is time that the Government took some steps with the view of placing a crushing plant on the fields. At present, immediately a poor man prospector discovers a promising area, he has to come into town, where he meets with the "sharks," with the result that before he can do anything for himself, he has to dispose of about three-fourths of the value of what he has discovered to enable him to work the other portion. We have seen a considerable amount of this going on for some time, and I hope the Government will adopt this suggestion and have a crushing plant placed on the goldfields, so that a poor man may have some show as well as the man of capital. With regard to the proposed harbor works at Fremantle, I shall deal with that question in the same manner as with the question of the Yilgarn railway route, and wait for further information. Owing to the controversy in the Press and the differences of opinion expressed on the subject, I am unable, at present, to make up my mind as to the Engineer-in-Chief's scheme for Owen's Anchorage, although it is now supported by Sir John Coode. But it is a remarkable fact that Sir John Coode, after personally visiting Fremantle, should have recommended a scheme that would cost about a million of money, and now recommends one that is estimated to cost only £150,000. Whatever is done in this matter, I trust the river scheme will not be altogether lost sight of. With regard to the proposed improvements on the Eastern Railway, I entirely support the Government in that, particularly as regards the Perth Station, which

is a disgrace to the metropolis in point of size and accommodation, and altogether inadequate to the growing requirements of Perth. As to improving the grades of the line, I think it might be worthy of consideration whether a line by way of Chittering Brook, as originally proposed, should not be adopted in preference to incurring a large expenditure on the present line with its heavy gradients. I am glad to hear that the Government have declared a number of agricultural areas, but I understand—though it is not said so in the Governor's Speech—that they intend to increase the price of rural land. If so, I shall oppose it. I am an advocate of people settling on the soil, but to increase the price of country land would have a reverse effect. With regard to the Government guarantee of £60,000 to the Midland Railway Company, I am not going to condemn the Government without giving them a fair hearing. I have read the agreement which has been laid on the table since Monday last, and in many respects I would go so far as to say that the Government perhaps acted wisely on this occasion. But I claim it was not the correct thing to do. It is the principle that I object to, and its forming a precedent for the Government assisting other private firms or companies out of the public chest; and when this matter comes before the House in the ordinary course I shall then probably put some questions—and I suppose others will do the same—to the Government, as to whether this amount of money had not already been expended on these works.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): No. The agreement says not. The agreement provides that it shall be expended on fresh work.

MR. PARKER: Not all of it.

MR. QUINLAN: If it is for fresh work, and to be expended at the rate of so much per month—

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): That is it.

MR. QUINLAN: And if the number of men originally employed are to be retained on the works,—if we find this is the case, then will be the time to support the action of the Government. But we want some further information. From what I can gather this amount has been guaranteed by the Government to the

Bank. It is no use for the hon. member for the DeGrey saying that the money has not actually been paid. When a man puts his name to the back of a bill he may as well give a cheque for the money; and I understand that the Government guaranteed this £60,000 to the Bank. However, I am not going bald-headed against the Government, like my hon. friend the member for East Perth. I will give them a fair hearing; and when this matter comes before us I shall vote upon it, as in all other matters, in the interests of my fellow-colonists. I have no personal animosity against the Government—none whatever; they may rest assured I am quite as much their friend on this bench, and perhaps more so, than I was where I sat before. But I feel that I have more freedom here; I am away from the whip. This is a very serious matter, this advancing of sums of money by the Government of the colony to private companies or private individuals, and I hope the Ministry will be able to show us that they were justified in their action. We are told that the avowed object was to favorably influence capitalists in London, and give them greater confidence in the undertaking; but it is a question whether, looking at all the surrounding circumstances, the action of the Government will have that result. There is nothing else that I notice of very great importance to refer to. Some contrary opinions have been expressed as to the result of the visit of the *Katoomba* to our shores, and the enthusiasm which it caused; but I think it would have looked very bad if our colony had proved an exception to the others in the way they received the vessels of the squadron; and I hope Western Australia is never going to be shabby over a few pounds in showing respect to Her Majesty's representatives, on land or sea. Generally speaking, I may say that I approve of the Government programme as sketched out in His Excellency's Speech, but the pledge I gave to my constituents upon the question of the abolition of the property qualification and the extension of the franchise prevents me from supporting it in its entirety.

MR. TRAYLEN: I rise with some diffidence to address myself to some observations upon His Excellency's Speech,

which has only been in my hands some few hours, whilst its preparation, I should say, must have been a subject of considerable arrangement with Ministers for some time past. On occasions of this kind it has been customary to offer warm congratulations all round upon the prospects of the colony, but I believe there never has been a time when congratulations had so substantial a basis to rest upon as those offered this session. We never have known a time when the immediate future of the colony was more attractive and more hopeful than it is to-day. The coming prosperity may be very much of the nature of a tidal wave. A tidal wave, however, is a very real thing when it does occur; but I am persuaded that there is in the near future a season of prosperity for us. Whether that season of prosperity may be followed by a season of great depression I am not in a position to say. Following out the views I expressed last session, I presume there will be some reaction, some depression, following upon this season of immediate prosperity. For the present, we have reason to rejoice; for the future we have reason to be careful. Without going so far as others have done in sounding the praises of the Ministry for their part in this matter, I think I shall only be voicing the feeling of a large majority of the inhabitants of the colony when I give them credit for much hard work. I believe there has never been a set of men in the Government of the colony who have worked more vigorously and with greater assiduity in their several departments than the men now sitting on the Treasury benches. The difference between their labors and the labors of those who preceded them is that between an athlete rowing and straining his whole energies and the man sitting in a pleasure boat playing with his oars for his own amusement. I feel that I may give them this measure of praise without agreeing to the full with all they have done or left undone. I sincerely believe that they have worked hard, and that they have done those things which they thought were best in the interests of the colony; and, in so far as they have done that, they deserve, and they shall have, my praise. Turning to His Excellency's Speech, I can well believe that when they had to think over the question of constitu-

tional reform it required some courage on their part to decide upon the paragraph in the Speech dealing with that subject. They must have known that there were serious objections to the retention of the present property qualification of members—although there may be something said in its favor; and they must also have known that there were strong things to be said in favor of extending the franchise and amending the electoral rolls, for they must have been aware that owing to the unpardonable bungling of the late Attorney General the state of things electoral is far worse than it otherwise need to have been, and that the consequence is that many deserving persons in the colony have no vote at parliamentary elections, owing to the clumsy and unhappy manner in which the late Attorney General expressed himself in this Electoral Act. With this knowledge before them, and knowing also the feeling of the country on the subject, I take it that it required some amount of moral courage on the part of the Ministry to decide, as they have done, not to take any steps this session in reforming the Electoral Laws and the Constitution. I can also believe that they approached another subject in the Governor's Speech with a great deal of anxiety. I refer to the subject of harbor works at Fremantle. Most people admit the necessity for improving our harbor accommodation at the port of Fremantle; and when the idea was put forward, and confirmed by a high authority, that harbor accommodation for ocean-going steamers might be obtained for £150,000, that idea, I imagine, must have been eagerly grasped at by the Ministry. Whether, however, they are justified in the good opinion they have formed about Owen's Anchorage I am not quite sure; we shall look forward to the information to be laid on the table with a great deal of interest. But it appears to me that Owen's Anchorage lacks in several of the requisites of a really good harbor. It never, of course, can possess the natural advantages possessed by Albany. There is no high land, for one thing, to afford protection to vessels anchoring there. I presume that a breakwater alone is not the only requisite necessary to make a good and safe anchorage; there should also be some

high land to afford natural protection to vessels anchoring there. Further than that—as will doubtlessly appear when the chart is laid on the table—this proposed anchorage is studded with rocks and banks, even within the basin itself. It will thus be seen that Owen's Anchorage does not offer to us all those conditions that go to make up a thoroughly good and substantial harbor; and, for that reason, I trust we shall not be allowed to lose sight of the fact that it is possible to get into the river, and that there a good and secure harbor may be made. Looking at the question of the Government and the Midland Railway, and the guarantee given, I feel that as so much has been said on this subject this evening, and seeing that it will come up again under the notice of motion that has been given, I shall not now trespass upon the time of the House, but content myself with offering my congratulations to the colony upon its prospects and to the Ministry for their labors, and expressing a hope that this harbor scheme will be most carefully thought out.

MR. RANDELL: As there seems to be no inclination on the part of members to say much more on the subject of the Address-in-Reply, I would like to offer a few observations. I think I might join the hon. member who has just sat down in congratulating the Ministry on their being able to put before the House and the country such a favorable report upon the aspect of the affairs of the colony. Only one dark cloud seems to be visible at the present moment, according to the words of the Speech, but that one is a very serious one, and it has already elicited from members here an expression of sympathy with the settlers at the far North, who are now undergoing an experience which I believe has not occurred in the colony before. I trust that the cloud that is now hanging over them may pass away, and that better times will dawn upon the industry of the squatter at the North-West and the North of the colony. We may hope, perhaps, that some good results may accrue in the future from their present troubles, and that greater efforts may be made to secure artificial supplies of water, to prevent a recurrence of the great distress and loss occasioned by the drought they are experiencing this season. I am not quite

sure that the state of things in the Southern parts of the colony are not such as also to require us to be careful. Our seasons have not been quite as good as they have been in former years, and I think the Ministry might bear this fact in mind, and that it may impress them with the necessity of care and caution in the steps they take for the development of the country, and lead them to adopt such measures as may somewhat mitigate the state of things in the Southern as well as in the Northern Districts of the colony. With regard to His Excellency's Speech, starting with the first paragraph, I think the general feeling is that the Ministry were well advised not to take steps at present in the matter of Federation. I think it has not taken a very deep hold upon the public in this colony, and my own impression has been that it is not a practical question at the present moment. Even supposing the question were brought forward, and agreed to, I think it is very unlikely that this colony could at present enter, with any advantage, into the movement. I think, perhaps, it would not be beneficial to us in the present position of the colony. We may all look forward to the time when these Australian Colonies will be federated to their mutual advantage, and we may also hope that an honest and intelligent effort to work our present Constitution to the best interests of the colony may help us rapidly to move in that direction, and to place us on a nearer equality with our neighbors as regards our population and prosperity. With regard to the floating of that portion of our loan which has been already raised, I think we must all have felt considerable disappointment that a better price was not obtained. Although the amount floated is somewhat on the line I suggested should be pursued, I must confess I was disappointed at finding so small an amount placed on the market as £250,000; but I have no doubt that, before the session advances far, we shall have an explanation from Ministers as to why they thought it wise not to go into the market for half-a-million. I think there was a general feeling of disappointment throughout the colony among those very competent to express an opinion on the matter that at least £500,000 ought to have been attempted. I do not know,

but I imagine—unless I hear to the contrary from those who had the conduct of the matter—that there was just as good a prospect of our obtaining £500,000 at the same price as we obtained the £250,000, and I am afraid that, in the present state of the money market, we may not be able to do so now; it may even prevent us from at present floating any further portion of the loan. With regard to the Yilgarn Goldfield and its railway, which occupies a very prominent position in the Speech, my own opinion was that this railway was the work of all others likeliest to promote the rapid advancement of the colony. I think there can be but little doubt that the future of these goldfields is assured; and I think there is every reason why this line should be undertaken for the development of these goldfields. As I have already said, I look to it as being one of the most likely undertakings the colony could enter upon to promote our rapid development both in population and wealth, and I trust that the matter will be as speedily as possible taken in hand, and that the necessary ways and means may be obtained for carrying it on. As to the point of departure of the railway, I reserve any opinion I may have on that until we have further information on the subject. I will only say that the decision of the Ministry to make Northam the starting point seems, on the face of it, to have been a wise decision, inasmuch as it will save a considerable amount of haulage, but until we have further information than we now possess I am not prepared to express any definite opinion on the subject. Of the bills that are promised there is one in which I take great interest. I allude to the new Municipalities Bill, which though intended at present for the City of Perth, will, no doubt, if found to work well in Perth, be hereafter adopted by other towns. I do not, however, agree with the hon. member for West Perth (Mr. Quinlan) that the bill should be passed through all its stages this session. Although the City Council may have given the bill a considerable amount of attention, I think the time at the disposal of this House for considering the various subjects embodied in it, and the little publicity it really has received, in a concentrated form at any rate, are not such as to enable either the citizens or the

members of this House to arrive at an intelligent conclusion as to what the operations of the bill will be; and this should make us pause before we attempt to pass it into law this session. I hope that the bill, after it is introduced, will not be proceeded with, but that during the recess we may have ample time for a full consideration of its provisions. I am not one of those who regard our existing municipal laws as very imperfect. I believe that if they were more carefully and earnestly administered, they are quite capable of meeting all the requirements of our city. There is one matter in the Speech to which I will merely refer now simply to state that I entirely disagree with the conclusions which the Ministry have come to in regard to it. I shall not give my reasons for this opinion at the present moment, for we shall have ample opportunities hereafter of discussing the subject in its fullest details, when I shall be prepared to state the reasons why I think that a mistake will be committed if any attempt is made to make a harbor at Owen's Anchorage, instead of effecting such improvements as we can at the port of Fremantle itself. I am glad to see that there are a number of works on the coast to be undertaken which are of considerable consequence, not only to the particular ports concerned, but to the trade of the whole colony. Any facilities we can give to our outports, North and South, for the discharging and loading of vessels, must react beneficially upon the whole colony; and I trust these works will be proceeded with at as early a date as possible. Facilities of telegraphic communication and facilities of transport are things which must help to develop the colony, and that to a certain extent will do away with the necessity which has been suggested by the hon. member for East Perth (Mr. Canning) of our entering upon any large immigration scheme. I must here say I do not agree with any of the remarks made by that hon. member on that subject. I think that a natural stream of immigration will be the best for this colony, and not a forced one. Those who come here attracted by the opportunities which may be afforded them for settling on the land and for pursuing their callings and avocations with benefit to themselves, are the people we want to attract, as our

railways extend and our lands are surveyed and made known. As to this latter point, I think, as suggested by the hon. member for Northam, steps should be taken to enable new comers to become acquainted with the country that is open for selection; and I hope that question will have the serious attention of the Commissioner of Crown Lands and his colleagues in the Ministry. With regard to the position which the Ministry have taken up on the subject of the property qualification of members, I think they have acted wisely. I am not prepared to traverse the opinion expressed by the hon. member for East Perth with regard to this change in the Constitution not necessitating a dissolution and a general election. It does seem natural to suppose that if we change the qualification of members an appeal should be made to the country, so that the electors may have the fullest opportunity of taking advantage of the change. But I do think it would be prejudicial to the colony just now, and I also think that the present qualification does not keep out any man who wants to enter this House. It appears to me there is no difficulty in obtaining the necessary property qualification if a man really wishes to get in. The present qualification only means a small cottage in Perth, or a small piece of land, and I do not think it has been shown that it is any great hardship. I think it would be a pity to disturb the present arrangements, and to plunge the country into the turmoil of a general election just when we have a large number of public works on hand or in contemplation. It would be a very serious matter to have a dissolution and an appeal to the country under existing circumstances, more especially when the practical result would probably be the return of the very same members to seats in this House that occupy seats in it now. With regard to the cry of "one man one vote"—

MR. CANNING: Question! question! There is no such question before the House.

MR. RANDELL: The hon. member need not question it, for I will leave the subject. The hon. member himself dealt on the subject of the franchise at some length.

MR. CANNING: I never mentioned the subject.

MR. RANDELL: I beg the hon. member's pardon. I find it was the hon. member for West Perth. With regard to the action taken by the Ministry as regards the Midland Railway, I am hardly prepared to follow the hon. member for East Perth on the constitutional aspect of their action, but I think it was a case in which the Ministry must be prepared to accept the responsibilities of their action. The circumstances of the case demanded prompt and decisive action; and if they arrived, after careful consideration, at the conclusion that it was in the best interests of the colony, I think they would have been false to their position if they had not done what they did. I cannot see that their action was an invasion of our rights under the Constitution in any degree. We all remember the action of Lord Beaconsfield in purchasing the Suez Canal shares without reference to Parliament; and I believe that the action of our own Ministers has been taken by other Ministries.

MR. PARKER: Never!

MR. RANDELL: I think such things have been done by other Ministries under Responsible Government.

MR. PARKER: Never!

MR. RANDELL: I think the Ministry would have been unworthy of their position, if they arrived at the honest conclusion that it was in the best interests of the colony that they should do what they did, and had been afraid to do it. I should have done it myself if I had occupied their position. I think the vote of the House in this matter must rest entirely upon the explanation that will be given us by the Ministry of their action; and I shall reserve my own opinion on the subject, whether they acted rightly or wrongly in the matter, until I hear that explanation which this House has a right to receive, and which I have no doubt it will receive. I repeat I am glad that the Ministry have been able, after full consideration, to present us with such a reassuring, not to say glowing, account of the colony and its finances.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I beg to move that the debate be adjourned until to-morrow night.

Agreed to.

Debate adjourned.

The House adjourned at 10:30 p.m.