

## ADJOURNMENT.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY moved that the House at its rising do adjourn until the 17th October.

Put and passed.

The House adjourned at 8:55 until the 17th October.

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*Legislative Assembly,*

*Tuesday, 3rd October, 1899.*

Midland Railway Company, Joint Committee, extension of time—Constitution Acts Amendment Bill, Re-committal; Amendment, plural voting, Points of Order, Division; also, Schedule 2; reported—Dentists Act Amendment Bill, second reading—Agricultural Bank Act Amendment Bill, in Committee, Clauses 1 to end, reported—Adjournment.

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

## PRAYERS.

## MIDLAND RAILWAY COMPANY, JOINT COMMITTEE.

## EXTENSION OF TIME.

MR. ILLINGWORTH asked the indulgence of the House to extend the time for bringing up the report of the Joint Select Committee. He moved that the time be extended another fortnight. It had been impossible to get a meeting of the committee, so many of its members being engaged on other committees.

THE PREMIER: This committee had been in existence a long while, and he would like to know whether anything had been done. If the committee had set to work, he would be glad to consent to an extension of time; but if nothing had been done by the committee, it would be well to discharge the order. Was there any hope of the committee being able to sit?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The committee would be able to present a report in a fortnight.

Question put and passed.

## CONSTITUTION ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

On motion by the PREMIER, Bill re-committed for amendments in certain parts.

## RECOMMITTAL.

Clause 23—Qualification of electors:

MR. LEAKE (Albany), in accordance with notice, moved that in Sub-clause 1, all words after "registered" be struck out.

MR. VOSPER: Was it competent to deal with other clauses prior to this one?

THE CHAIRMAN: Not now, no notice having been given.

MR. LEAKE: The object of the amendment was to abolish plural voting. The Bill as drafted recognised what most people would admit was a pernicious practice, which had prevailed in this country far too long, a practice whereby one man might exercise a vote in each one of the 44 electorates in the colony; and the object of the amendment was to put a stop to this, and to affirm the principle that it was sufficient for one person to have one vote. The amendment aimed at the abolition of plural voting; but if that were thought by the majority of the committee to be too drastic a proposal at present, he would be prepared, by way of compromise, although he was in favour of the abolition of plural voting—

THE PREMIER: Had the hon. member always been of that opinion?

MR. LEAKE said he would be prepared, by way of compromise, to permit one person to have one vote for his manhood or residence, and another vote for his property; but, in any event, the elector should be asked to say for which portion of the country he would vote. This question was considered in a casual way during the progress of the Bill in Committee, and an amendment was sprung on the House, when few members were present, and without the proper notice or consideration which an amendment of such importance required. The difficulty was to find any justification for maintaining the principle of plural voting;

and he trusted the majority of members were in favour of abolishing the practice, and that there would no longer be attempts made to perpetuate a principle which had been recognised as pernicious, and which ought to be abolished, if not already abolished, in all the Australian colonies. The amendment, if carried, would affect many members of the House, who had a vote in perhaps a dozen or so electorates; and, speaking for himself, he had a property vote in several electorates which he had never visited, though he was not singular in that respect; and it was not fair or right that he should have an equal voice in the return of a member for an outlying district which he had never visited, as compared with the man who resided or carried on his business in that district. The member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest) no doubt had a vote in every one of the 44 electorates.

MR. A. FORREST: No doubt the hon. member would like to have the same privilege.

MR. LEAKE: That was not so. The same remark as to plural voting applied to the Premier.

THE PREMIER: No. He was a poor man.

MR. LEAKE: No doubt the Premier had a vote in nearly every electorate.

THE PREMIER: No.

MR. LEAKE: The same remark applied, though perhaps not to the same extent, to other hon. members, and there was no doubt that plurality of voting was in vogue.

THE PREMIER: In England.

MR. LEAKE: Plurality of voting was carried on to a great extent. The amendment did not aim at the abolition of what, for want of a better name, was known as distant voting, but merely to abolish plural voting; and this was the time to do that. It was only by an oversight that this matter was not referred to with greater emphasis when the Bill was going through Committee, or in the second-reading debate. If the Constitution Bill were not amended in this respect now, there would not be another opportunity perhaps for four or five years, or till the end of the next session, or whenever the Constitution Act came up again for amendment. All hon. members, and particularly those who claimed

to be imbued with anything approaching democratic ideas, could not vote against the amendment.

THE PREMIER: So-called democratic ideas?

MR. LEAKE: Those "so-called democratic ideas" which at times, when it suited the occasion, the right hon. gentleman endeavoured to assume. Hon. members had heard it said that the Premier had attempted to pose as a democrat, and with that idea had introduced certain proposals into the Governor's Speech.

MR. A. FORREST: When did the member for Albany become a democrat?

MR. LEAKE said he did not know when he became a democrat, but he had always had an idea that what was fair for the majority of the people was fair for all. He must confess, however, that if the member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest) and his colleagues and supporters carried on the tactics which they had introduced lately, or had attempted in this House, they would rapidly make a rebel of him. The Constitution bristled with anomalies, and the practice of plural voting was anything but what it should be; and if in any respect it were possible to ameliorate the disadvantages under which people existed at present, so much the better for all concerned. It was not necessary to enlarge on this subject at great length. Whether the caucus of Government members held this afternoon had in view the possibility of this proposal for the abolition of plural voting, he did not know; but it was gratifying to see the Government benches were filled, so that when the division bell rang, members would be seen flocking in on the other side and, as usual, following their leader. However, there was a determination to have a vote on this question, and he sincerely trusted that when the time came a majority would be found in favour of the amendment. He desired to explain that the amendment was put in the form for striking out certain words in the clause, with the idea of testing the principle; because, if the amendment were carried, it would necessitate the recasting of this and several other clauses.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): It was evident the hon.

member only intended to test the principle, and had not given the matter much consideration, because it was clear that if he had fully considered the effect of the amendment, he would have moved it in such a form as would have been final, for the purpose of giving complete effect to it. A member acting as the hon. member had done in this case could not expect to succeed in carrying his amendment, and probably the hon. member would be disappointed if he did succeed. Recently the hon. member had taken what might be called a "democratic" course, in advocating ideas that were foreign to those he had held in previous years; though it was quite reasonable a man should change his opinions, for we all changed sometimes, and he (the Premier) knew he had changed opinions in his lifetime. While it might be said that a man who never changed his mind had probably no mind to change, there were high examples in British history of men having changed their views at different periods of their lives; and that was perhaps the case of the hon. member. The fact that he had changed his mind by becoming ultra-radical—

MR. LEAKE: In what way had he changed his mind?

THE PREMIER: Had the hon. member always been in favour of one-man-one-vote?

MR. LEAKE: Yes; he thought so.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member was not quite sure of it. He was developing in a direction foreign to that which he had taken years ago, especially when he talked about becoming a "rebel." In his youth the hon. member was not known to have had very "rebellious" ideas; but some allowance must be made for an hon. member who was trying to be equal to his opportunities. The hon. member talked about plural voting being a pernicious practice. Well, the world had got on very well under this pernicious practice during a long period; and if it were a question of age, this pernicious practice was much older than the practice which the hon. member desired to introduce. Experience had shown the working of the existing practice in history; but the hon. member could not point to any experience with regard to the practice he now desired to set up. The new practice might possibly prove to

be a better system; and in the next few hundred years it might be said the beginning of the prosperity and advancement of this colony dated from the introduction of the new practice. But this great benefit that was anticipated could not be assumed as a fact, because there was no experience at present to warrant the assumption. The present system which the hon. member condemned as pernicious had existed a long time in the old country, where a man who did not possess or occupy a house had no qualification to vote in an election, and where the man-in-the-street who had got nothing was not allowed a vote.

MR. VOSPER: He had a vote if he was a lodger.

THE PREMIER: Yes; but, if he was not a householder and was not a lodger, he could not vote. This system having existed so long in England, he (the Premier) was somewhat tempted to say that if it was good enough for old England, Ireland, and Scotland, it could not be very bad for Western Australia. However, the hon. member believed now in his new-found doctrine that it was almost a crime to possess property, and that the only persons who had any wisdom were those who had got nothing. *Vox populi* was a common cry, and it was wonderful to find how often *vox populi* was right, as no doubt it often was right; but he (the Premier) could not believe that a man who was possessed of nothing had got all the wisdom, and that the man who had got property should be regarded as having no wisdom. In reality, the man who had nothing was in a very difficult position to do right, for it was too often found that a man possessed of nothing was more subject to temptation than one who had some possessions. He (the Premier) would not go so far as to say the poor were bad because they had nothing; yet he was not prepared to say the possession of property was disadvantageous to anyone. He would go farther, and say the man who possessed property would have a greater interest in a country than the man who possessed nothing. It was often argued that so long as a country possessed all that a person had got, whether large or small, whether something or nothing, it was just the same to that man so far as his interest in the country was concerned. He (the Premier) was not prepared to

admit this doctrine, for a man who had nothing in a country might easily leave it, and was not likely to be so much attached to it as one who had something. The hon. member had not gone far enough in his amendment, because he allowed that a person might have more than one vote for electing members of the Legislative Council, but would not allow a person to have more than one vote for electing members of the Legislative Assembly, and would confine the vote to those persons who resided in the particular electoral district. So long as our system was that of representation in Parliament by districts, it seemed not unreasonable that persons who had interests in more than one district should have a voice in the representation of each of those districts in which he had an interest. If the hon. member were to recommend that the whole colony should be one electorate for the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament, perhaps under different qualifications for each, then he (the Premier) could understand that the principle of one-man-one-vote should apply; and, theoretically, that would be an excellent system, but in practice it had to be abandoned, and the country had to be divided into electorates. Each electorate returned its member, and the persons interested in that electorate were supposed to elect the member. It did not seem unreasonable that if a person had an interest in a Northern district, for instance, just as he had himself an interest in the Ashburton district, though he regretted to say it was not free from encumbrance, therefore he ought to have a voice in electing a representative in Parliament for that district. It did not seem unreasonable that a person should have not only a vote as an individual, but a vote for the property or interest he possessed in the district. If electors were asked the question, he believed nine out of ten would say it was only reasonable that a person who owned property in a district should have a voice in electing the representative of that district; although if 10,000 men were got together, they might possibly regard the question in a different way. Scarcely a member in this House would say, if taken individually, that a man who had large interests in a district should not have a voice in electing a representative for that

district, but should have a voice only in the district in which the individual resided. The march of democracy was going forward, and in a few years we might have the principle of one-man-one-vote, and, consequently, the principle of one-woman-one-vote; but he (the Premier) was not prepared to admit that this colony should advance in an experimental way at a terrific rate, trying even to get ahead of other places in Australia; and unless there was great necessity—it was said that necessity knew no law—he did not see why we should rush along at this rapid rate and try to get in advance of the older colonies of Australia. New South Wales had had responsible government for over 40 years, Victoria for nearly as long, Tasmania for about 40 years, and Queensland had had self-government since she separated from New South Wales; yet it was only now, after all these years of self-government, that New South Wales and Victoria had adopted the principle of one-man-one-vote. South Australia had it from the beginning, yet he did not know that South Australia was any better off for that. Take Queensland, one of the greatest of the colonies in Australia and one of the most promising: she had not got the principle, and was content to have the same constitution as we had in this colony. Then why this desire to bring the colony into the front rank in regard to such matters? This colony differed very much from any other colony in Australia, in its immense area, its varied climates and interests; and there was no reason why the system of voting should be changed from that which had been in existence so long in most of the Australian provinces, and which at present obtained in Queensland and Tasmania and in the mother country. It was curious that hon. members should think this fetish of one-man-one-vote was a panacea for all the evils of society. No one really believed that one man was as good as another. Almost every man who earned his bread and supported his family could recognise numerous instances of men who were not equal to him, and who, in that man's opinion, ought not to have the same voice as he in the conduct of public affairs. There were many men in the country whom none would trust with a single penny.

MR. WILSON: Such people should not be allowed to vote at all.

THE PREMIER: Would the hon. member prevent them from voting?

MR. WILSON: Yes; if they could not be trusted with a penny.

THE PREMIER: There were thousands and tens of thousands in Australia who did no work, who slept in the open air, and who were a menace to society; yet those persons, it was said, should be made equal in voting power at Parliamentary elections to the best and most virtuous law-abiding men in the community. It was very well to make such demands on the platform, for the purpose of gaining a few votes, but no one really believed in the justice of the principle.

MR. GREGORY: Such men had no votes now.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member (Mr. Leake) did not believe in the principle any more than he. Unfortunately, under our system of Government, all hon. members were more or less amenable to the desire to please their constituents, the desire to get votes from this and that source, the temptation to advocate things in which one did not believe—

MR. LEAKE: Did the Premier admit that he himself did so?

THE PREMIER: That was the case with the hon. member; and such a member afterwards went his way, and broke his solemn promise to his constituents. The hon. member need not be reminded of the pledges he had broken when he sold the people at Albany, after they had first elected him, for he well remembered the fact.

MR. LEAKE: What?

THE PREMIER: The hon. member well knew what he meant. The hon. member had been elected to this House by one vote, and afterwards proved false to the pledges given to his constituents. One would not blame the hon. member too much.

MR. LEAKE: No; for the Premier did so himself.

THE PREMIER: But the hon. member's conduct showed what people would do who lacked "backbone," and who were opportunists: when they were found in a tight place and in difficulties, then it became apparent of what stuff men were made, for such a man could not stand up and tell the public honestly

what were his ideas, and refuse to conform to popular clamour. At a public meeting, someone would ask, "Are you in favour of one-man-one-vote?" and the candidate would reply, "Yes; I think I am"; though well knowing in his heart that he was not. As time went on, that failing would undoubtedly be the downfall of parliamentary institutions, through people who knew better not being plucky enough and manly enough to utter their honest opinions. There was no pressing necessity for this change. The trend of public opinion in Australia was no doubt in this direction; but the change was not required in this colony, and there was much to be said against it. Moreover, the hon. member's only object in moving the amendment was to gain a small, paltry, party advantage.

MR. LEAKE: Which advantage would not be gained.

THE PREMIER: It would be easy for him, if made of the same mettle as the hon. member, to grovel before this popular feeling and to profess himself in favour of this principle, because it was in force elsewhere and had recently been made the law in Victoria. He (the Premier) would not do that; and he believed the people of this colony would respect just as much one who gave his honest opinion on this matter, as they would the man who suppressed his opinion or who had no opinion whatever, and spoke and voted as desired by his supporters. If in three or four more years public opinion continued to grow on similar lines, the matter could then be considered. Personally, he believed that the general opinion of thoughtful people in this country, of those who were endeavouring to build it up and to make it a great colony, was against this proposal. Victoria had been able to withhold the privilege of one-man-one-vote for many years, as had Queensland up to the present.

MR. LEAKE: Victoria had granted the privilege.

THE PREMIER: Only recently; and in New South Wales, until within the last few years, the system of voting was the same as our own, as it was also in Victoria until a few days ago. When the Constitution Amendment Bill was passed, this colony would be in advance both of Victoria and of New South Wales in regard to female

suffrage; and if, while giving women a vote, hon. members felt themselves unable to grant one-man-one-vote, nevertheless, seeing that female suffrage was to be found in none of the other colonies save in South Australia, this colony would have no reason to be ashamed of the non-progressive character of its legislation. In Victoria the Legislative Council had thrown out the Women's Suffrage Bill, and if our Constitution Amendment Bill passed in the Upper House, as it doubtless would, this colony would be more advanced, from a progressive point or socialistic standpoint, than either Victoria or New South Wales. Though it was not always wise to give advice, he would say to hon. members: Let there be some stamina in this House, and do not support every new idea put before Parliament, on the plea that such idea was democratic. If legislators in other colonies had not shown some stamina, those colonies would have been much further advanced on the road to ultra-democracy than they were now. The statesmen of those colonies, notwithstanding all the influence surrounding them, had had some opinions of their own, and had taken an independent stand; and that example should be followed here. Let hon. members have opinions of their own—not second-hand opinions.

MR. VOSPER: Why not have one-man-ten-votes?

THE PREMIER: Let each search his own mind, and then point out what, in his opinion, was the right path to pursue. If that were done, Parliament could not go far wrong; but if hon. members were only desirous of taking up this or that idea because it was ultra-democratic, or would give them greater influence with a certain class of people, or for any other personal object, then the colony would find itself left in the lurch in the end, and, worse than all, members of Parliament would feel that they had not acted a worthy part. He hoped the amendment would not be carried.

MR. MORAN (East Coolgardie): During the whole course of his public life he had been a firm and consistent supporter of one-man-one-vote, and he was so still. In this country, with a bi-cameral system of parliamentary government, there were a popular House and also a House for the protection of the

interests of property; and, according to the Constitution, it was generally understood that the Lower House represented the people of the country, or represented heads, while the Upper House existed for the revision of popular legislation. The Opposition and the Government were probably fairly well satisfied with and proud of this colony's Upper House. That House had been liberal and broad-minded, and had never blocked any good legislation, so far as he knew; and, further, it had always been foremost in supporting the progressive public works policy of the Government. It was well that, by the Upper House, the colony should be protected against hasty legislation affecting the permanent rights of property; and having a people's House and a House representing property, it was wise to keep them distinct; preserving the Lower House as the popular Chamber for the representation of the people, and knowing that there was always an absolute protection against hasty legislation in the fact that such legislation must pass through the Council. If there were only one Chamber the matter might be different, for there would then be no distinct representation of the rights of property; but as such a system did not obtain, it was unnecessary to say more on that point; though were the system of government uni-cameral there would be much more justice in the argument for plural voting than there was under the present system. Again, the rights of property were powerfully represented in municipal councils in this colony. It was difficult to distinguish between the rich and the poor, for a man who was rich to-day might in this country be poor to-morrow, and a poor man had a good chance of becoming rich. Legislation could not make men perfect. The man who slept in a park could not be forced to sleep indoors if he preferred the former method, nor could a spendthrift be compelled to hoard up his savings. As the Premier had said, legislation could not make men equal; but legislation could give men equal opportunities in respect to the popular House, and that was the amendment proposed to-day. Even with regard to municipalities, there had lately been on the goldfields an attempt to abolish plural voting, whatever that might mean, for it was difficult.

to see what plural voting meant as applied to municipalities, as in each municipality every ratepayer had his fair share of representation; and he would venture to say that those who would support one-man-one-vote in the Legislative Assembly would not follow out that principle in municipal affairs. A municipality existed for the benefit of its own district, and to give rights to the people resident there; and there was no analogy whatever between a municipality and this Assembly, which was the only popular House in the colony; and therefore plural voting meant that one man might have nine or ten votes in returning representatives, whereas each municipality was distinctly a local body, existing for the protection, the government, and the good administration of property in its district. There was therefore no analogy between municipalities and Parliament. Further, he would not give his allegiance to any movement which would deprive an absentee property-holder of a municipal vote. He had always held that there should be manhood or womanhood suffrage, especially where there was the bi-cameral system of government; and the whole trend of thought and education had been towards that end. When federation became accomplished, the highest Government on this continent would be found affirming the principle of one-man-one-vote; but he did not want to take an undue advantage of that argument. It could not be said there was homogeneity in the United States, as between the Congress franchise and the States franchise; but the fact that under federation there would be one-man-one-vote must have its effect. He had a great respect for the Premier and his opinions, and was sorry to differ from the right hon. gentleman on this question. The Premier deserved a great deal of credit for speaking his honest opinion, and was quite right when he said we could not make men equal by law. At the same time, law could give equal opportunities to all men, and he (Mr. Moran) hoped the system of one-man-one-vote would become law in Western Australia. It was inevitable that this would have to be the law sooner or later, and it would be just as well to have it sooner than later, and, in any case, to pass such a

law would only bring us in line with the other colonies. The Premier, with the Conciliation and Arbitration Bill, was an advanced socialist, and it was difficult to see he should stumble at such a reform as one-man-one-vote. Whilst there was a bi-cameral system of voting in this colony, he (Mr. Moran) would always be a supporter of one-man-one-vote for the popular Chamber.

**MR. KINGSMILL** (Pilbarra): One was at a loss to understand the attitude of the Premier on this subject. If politics were a science, there ought to be the same advance possible as in other sciences; but if everybody took the same attitude as the Premier had taken, how could there be any advance? The Premier had said that it was only latterly New South Wales had enjoyed one-man-one-vote; but New South Wales had not for many years enjoyed telegraphy, steam, or the telephone; and why should there not be the same advance in politics as in other sciences? The member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) had put the matter in a nutshell, when he announced his intention of supporting one-man-one-vote so long as we had a bi-cameral system of Government. The Upper Chamber provided protection for the rights of property, and the member for Albany (Mr. Leake), in not extending his amendment to the Upper House, had shown he was as anxious to protect the rights of property as anyone could wish him to be. There were one or two expressions used by the Premier which might have been left unsaid, particularly when he practically accused the supporters of the amendment of voting simply from what might almost be called the dishonest motive of wishing to catch votes.

**MR. MITCHELL**: That applied all round.

**MR. KINGSMILL**: That was one of those interjections which really no one knew how to answer, because it was an interjection utterly and totally irrelevant. The Premier might at least have given the supporters of the amendment credit for some honesty of purpose. It was only lately that he (Mr. Kingsmill) had been engaged in politics, but he had been led to believe for years that the Lower House should represent men, and the Upper House, if necessary, should represent

property. He would support the amendment.

MR. ILLINGWORTH (Central Murchison): It was scarcely necessary to say he intended to support the amendment, having already moved in the same direction when the Bill was in Committee. Members were well acquainted with the reasons he gave for the action he then took, and these reasons had been repeated by the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran). Whether rightly or wrongly, the Legislative Assembly under the British Constitution was supposed to represent the manhood of the nation, and lately the Premier had gone so far as to propose that it should represent the womanhood. He (Mr. Illingworth) was at a loss to understand on what basis it was desirable that one member of the community should claim to cast 10 votes while another member of the community could only cast one. This question of one-man-one-vote was no new question with him.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member did not have one-man-one-vote in Victoria in his time.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: This was a question which had been before him for the last 25 years, and he had never heard an argument of any force against the principle of one-man-one-vote. No argument had ever been advanced to show that one member of the community had an inherent right to vote 10 times, while another could only vote once; and the argument as to the representation of property had its complete answer in places where property was represented in an Upper House. In the municipality, property was represented according to its value, and the man who had the most property had the most power, on the basis that he paid the more taxes. But the man who had £1,000 or £10,000 invested in business had surely as much interest and stake in the country as a man who had the same amount of money invested in property. A man might have his money invested in machinery, and have as much actual interest in the country as a man who happened to possess houses and land. Why should a man who possessed machinery worth £10,000 be compelled to be satisfied with one vote, while a man who elected to invest his money in houses and land be given a

vote for every piece of land and for every house he owned? The Premier was unfair when he suggested that this was a question of rich and poor. That was not the question, because it was not wealth that was represented in plural voting. A man, for instance, might have all his wealth in shares, but that share property did not give him increased voting power. A man might have his money invested in merchandise or in machinery, but that investment gave no plural votes: it was only the man who happened to have his wealth in the shape of land and property who got increased voting power. There was really no answer to the question as to why the man with land and property should have more votes than the man who had invested his money in other directions. If it were said that the possession of property gave a man a greater stake in the country, the complete answer to that, if it were a true proposition, which it was not, had been given by the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran), namely, that the property-owner had his representation first of all in the municipal council, and then in the Legislative Council. There had always been some unfairness in the representation in the Legislative Council, for he could not quite see why a man who did not happen to have land and property should not have the right to vote for the second Chamber. If it were admitted that the sacred right of property, which was simply land and houses, was to enable a man to vote 10 times, whilst his neighbour only voted once, then the representation of the man with the landed property was in the Legislative Council, which possessed the power, if it chose to exercise it, of vetoing the legislation of the popular Chamber. If the sacred right of property were attacked by the popular House, that sacred right was conserved and preserved by the representation in another place. It might be said that, consistently, we should argue that the Legislative Council should be on the same basis as the Legislative Assembly; but all that was asked in this amendment was that those who voted for representatives in the popular House, in which all men were supposed to be equal, should have an equal vote in electing the representatives they sent to Parliament. How hon.



members could consistently vote against the proposition was beyond his comprehension. He did not care to reply to such arguments as that hon. members who supported the amendment were only trying to catch the popular vote.

**THE PREMIER:** That was a little misrepresentation.

**MR. ILLINGWORTH:** That argument had been used, and the Premier should know that members who supported this principle were just as honest on the question as were those who opposed it. Members on this (Opposition) side claimed an equal desire to do what they believed to be right in the interests of the nation.

**THE MINISTER OF MINES:** (Hon. H. B. Lefroy): The amendment was not necessary. It was unfair and inequitable that a man who owned property in a district which returned a member to Parliament should not have a vote in the election of his representative. Some hon. members seemed to imagine that the Legislative Assembly was not elected to represent property as well as people, yet those very members who urged that argument would probably be the first to say there should be no taxation without representation. The people of this colony did not vote as one constituency in the election of members for this Assembly; but if the people did vote as one constituency, he would say that a man should not have more than one vote. The people returned members for 44 separate electoral districts represented in this Assembly, and he considered that the man who paid taxation on his property in a district should have a voice in electing the member who was to represent that district in Parliament. The owner of property in a district paid the bulk of the taxes.

**MR. VOSPER:** In what way?

**MR. KINGSMILL:** What taxes did he pay?

**THE MINISTER OF MINES:** He had to pay taxes on everything he used. The squatter, for instance, had to pay taxes on everything he used on a station. The mine-owner had to pay taxes on all he used. He (the Minister) did not believe in single voting, and he affirmed that this House did and ought to represent property. What was property but the accumulation of labour? Some hon.

members seemed to imagine this House should only represent individuals, and should not represent interests. Capital was simply concentrated labour in a small compass, and that accumulation ought to be represented in this House just as much as individuals should be represented. He hoped the majority in this House would support that view. It had been said that the present system was pernicious; but he wondered how it became hurtful or pernicious to a country. We knew that countries had prospered under plural voting, and he was at a loss to know how any hon. member could satisfy himself that plural voting had been injurious to any country. He believed that many electors in Western Australia did not understand what the question of plural voting was, in reality; and in many cases, if electors were asked whether they considered a man should have more than one vote, those electors would say "no," but if asked further to say whether a man who had a valuable property in a district should have some voice in electing the representative for that district, those electors would say, "Certainly he ought to have a vote for property." Many electors believed that the plural voting meant dual voting, that a person had more than one vote for one district; that he voted not only as an individual, but had another vote as an owner of property. If the question were put straight to electors, he believed a majority of them would say that a man who owned property should have a vote for it; and if those electors were ambitious and desirous of accumulating property, he believed they would say that the owner of property ought to have a vote in that district, in addition to voting as a resident in it. This Assembly made laws to govern municipalities, and why should a person who had property in a municipality not have a vote in electing the parliamentary representative for that municipality? Property should be fully and amply represented in this House. The Municipalities Bill which came before the House this session showed how necessary it was that property should be represented in this Chamber. The member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) had asked, why should one man have a vote for manhood and also be able to vote 10 times over in other districts in which he

did not reside, but where he had interests? The fact was that a man who had property did not vote 10 times in any one constituency, but voted in different electorates where his property was situate.

**MR. ILLINGWORTH:** That man returned 10 representatives to this Chamber.

**THE MINISTER OF MINES:** The representation of the interests of this country was most material to the country's development, and those persons who owned industries in a district, and were responsible for the working of them, should have a voice in the election of their representative in Parliament. A man who owned property in the Northern part of this colony, for instance, might have spent enormous sums in improving and working that property, and why should he not have a vote in electing the member who was to represent that district in Parliament? He (the Minister) believed it was a mere cry, to advocate one-man-one-vote; and he hoped the people of the country would thoroughly understand this question.

**MR. VOSPER** (North-East Coolgardie) congratulated the Minister of Mines on the academic address he had given on the science of political economy, more particularly in regard to the first part of it. According to that Minister, property was the accumulation of labour; but the definition might be extended, for property was the accumulation of labour contributed by many persons, and by some means concentrated in the hands of one. Apparently the hon. member was anxious that political power should follow on the same lines, that the man who had the most property should also have the most votes. In the evolution of modern commerce, the tendency was for wealth to be concentrated.

**THE MINISTER OF MINES:** Both capital and labour were necessary for its production.

**MR. VOSPER:** True; but the hon. member suggested that we should continue to "grease the fattened hog," and that a man, because he was wealthy, should have all the political power. That was a transparent fallacy. The Premier had denied that the practice of plural voting was pernicious, and had defended the system firstly on the ground of its antiquity. True, it was antiquated; but, like

many other antiquities, it had become absurd. If the respectability or the value of a principle were to be measured by its antiquity, then, as feudalism was older than plural voting, as autocracy was older than feudalism, and anarchy older than autocracy, as fingers had been made before knives and forks, and as primitive man eschewed the use of clothes and used paint instead, then if antiquity constituted a proper basis of respectability and usefulness, it would be proper to revert to a condition of anarchy, and for men to paint themselves in all colours of the rainbow. That argument was, of course, the *reductio ad absurdum*, but it showed how ridiculous it was to defend an institution simply on the score of its antiquity.

**THE PREMIER:** Old age counted for something.

**MR. VOSPER:** True; it generally meant ruin, and decrepitude, and senility. If old age were the one thing needful, then the more decrepid a political institution became and the less chance it had of holding itself together, the more should people endeavour to preserve it! Many institutions, political and otherwise, had outlived their usefulness, and the work of the reformer was to clear the country of such antiquated rubbish, thus preparing the way for something stronger and better.

**THE PREMIER:** It was unnecessary to go too fast.

**MR. VOSPER:** Yes; but there would be no frantic haste in adopting one-man-one-vote. The Premier had said there was no experience to guide hon members; but on the contrary, there was the very respectable example of one of the greatest powers in the world, the United States of America, where it was a fundamental principle of the Constitution, laid down over a century ago, that one man should have one vote and no more. The utility of the principle was amply shown when one considered what would have happened if a property vote had obtained in America—if such men as Rockefeller and Jay Gould had been allowed votes in proportion to their property.

**THE PREMIER:** They could only have voted once in one district.

**MR. VOSPER:** But in the States one man had no more than one vote.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Whereas a man voting in 10 different districts returned 10 representatives.

THE PREMIER: No; he took part in returning them.

MR. VOSPER: Had the single vote not been incorporated in the American Constitution, a man like W. K. Vanderbilt could have controlled the vote for a large portion of the States.

THE PREMIER: A millionaire could do so now.

MR. VOSPER said he would answer that presently. The framers of the American Constitution had foreseen and provided against this danger. He would not deal with the argument that wisdom was not equally distributed; but the poverty-stricken might sometimes possess as much wisdom as the wealthy. There was a vast difference between genius and that vulpine sagacity which enabled a man to grope in the gutter and pick up every stray sovereign. It was not the wisest man who most readily accumulated property. The more selfish, ferocious and unscrupulous a man was, the better opportunities would he have in the race for wealth; and a genius like Edison or Lord Kelvin had not one-tenth of the chance of making money as had a man like Jay Gould. It was not the most worthy citizen, but frequently the most unworthy, who acquired wealth. Was a great artist or author to be left without a vote, while another man had the voting power forced upon him merely because he happened to be possessed of more money than his less fortunate neighbour? The idea was unjust in principle and in its application. Wealth was protected by its representation in municipal councils and in the Upper Houses of this and other colonies; and, moreover, wealth had an inherent power and a protection not possessed by anything else. The Premier had interjected that men like Rockefeller and Jay Gould practically governed in the United States now.

THE PREMIER: Quite true.

MR. VOSPER: Yes; but that only proved that wealth had an independent power of protecting itself apart from the franchise.

THE PREMIER: Such men, in addition to being wealthy, were also voters.

MR. VOSPER: And, moreover, the votes given to property were in many cases given practically to the banks. A wealthy man commanded so much influence and had such power over his neighbours' minds that there was always a kind of bias, perhaps unconscious, in favour of a man with a good coat. Such a man was amply protected by the power and consideration arising from the exercise of his own beneficence or benevolence, and there was no necessity for Parliament to go out of its way to confer special facilities for the protection of property. The argument that the mother country had not adopted the principle was beside the mark, for the Constitution of Great Britain had its origin in conditions altogether different from anything known in the colonies. That Constitution arose out of the feudal system, and the first recognition of parliamentary government was in conferring the franchise, not upon individuals, but on corporate bodies. The shires and the boroughs were the first to return members, such members being not representatives of individuals, but members for corporations; and so far was the principle carried that members of Parliament could then sue the corporations they represented for their salaries during the time they were employed in Parliament: hence many shires and boroughs declined to return members because of the expense entailed. The individual did not then receive the slightest consideration in the Constitution, and even to-day in England, as in most European countries, the individual was not considered, but was looked on simply as a member of a corporation. In the colonies, however, circumstances were vastly different. Here were paper constitutions devised by the Imperial Parliament, and here were no corporate bodies entitled to parliamentary representation: our municipalities were created by Parliament, whereas in the old country municipalities had generally been the creators of Parliament. If the democratic principles of the Australian Constitutions were to be observed, it must be recognised that the individuals represented in the Legislature were free and equal, and they could only be free and equal when enjoying the right of one-man-one-vote. As for the argument with regard to taxation, as a matter of fact

every individual contributed to the taxation of the country. It was useless to say that only the wealthy contributed, because the practice of wealthy men was invariably to endeavour to pass on the burden of taxation to those less fortunate. If the grocer were taxed, he charged more for his goods; the landlord in similar circumstances would raise the rent of his tenants; the employer paid his taxes by charging them to the consumer, or by reducing his workmen's wages; so no matter how the political edifice was built, its weight must rest ultimately upon the foundation stone, the proletariat; and the superstructure suffered relatively little compared with the foundation. Then, seeing that every man paid taxes directly or indirectly, and that all taxes must be raised from the class standing lowest in the social scale, surely the source of taxation should also be the source of representation. If the principle of no taxation without representation were right, surely all who were taxed should be entitled to be represented. Moreover, by the expenditure of the moneys derived from taxation, the wealthy man, though he contributed proportionately less than the poor, received the greater amount of benefit.

MR. GEORGE: Who were the wealthy men in Western Australia?

MR. VOSPER said he was not speaking of Western Australia particularly. A railway, road, street, canal, or water scheme could not be constructed without benefiting someone, and the wealthy man benefited more than anyone else. Society had to spend more for the protection of property than for individual protection, and, consequently, the wealthy man contributed by far the smallest share of taxation, and got the largest amount of benefit. Then, why should he be entitled to more political power than his neighbour? The argument was as devoid of justice as it was illogical. He had been surprised to hear the Premier say he had known some tens of thousands of idle men throughout Australia, who constituted a menace to the continent. The right hon. gentleman's experience must have been unfortunate, for he (Mr. Vosper) had never had the privilege of meeting tens of thousands of men who had never done any work, and never would do any. Where did they exist?

If such people did not pay taxes, they must live on those who did pay; and certainly a mere vagrant, who was a burden upon society, should not receive a vote. On the contrary, Parliaments had passed laws to imprison such people, thus enabling them to live on the taxes, so that such people had no chance of having a vote. If such a law were carried out to its full logical extreme, such class of men could not exist, and the Premier must have been exaggerating when he said there were 10,000 men of that condition. At any rate, there were no men of that class in this colony representing anything like the number mentioned.

THE PREMIER: Not in this colony: he meant in Australia.

MR. VOSPER: No member in the House would see the propriety of enfranchising men who were in the habit of travelling, and seldom stayed long enough in one place to secure a vote.

THE PREMIER: They did not take the trouble to secure a vote.

MR. VOSPER: Such men were not keen politicians, except round the camp fire or in the public-house bar: they did not worry about politics or anything else. The Premier was a delegate at the Federal Convention, and if he there voted in favour of one-man-one-vote, it would be hard to justify his present position. That Convention was composed of the leading statesmen of the colonies, who deliberately voted for a clause containing the principle of one-man-one-vote.

THE PREMIER: The Federal Convention were against one-man-one-vote in 1891.

MR. VOSPER: The years 1891 and 1899 were as far asunder as the poles. One of the chief ornaments of the Federal Convention was the Premier, who did not take the trouble to vote against the principle of one-man-one-vote then, but was now prepared, along with his supporters, to both speak and vote against it.

THE PREMIER said he was against one-man-one-vote at the Convention, though he forgot specially what took place.

MR. VOSPER: Then it was a matter of such indifference that the Premier could not remember what took place, but, at any rate, he did not speak or vote against one-man-one-vote.

**THE PREMIER:** Each colony was a single electorate for the purposes of the Convention, whereas there would be 44 electorates in this colony.

**MR. VOSPER:** If under federation the same system were pursued as in this colony, a man who owned property in each State would be able to vote 75 times, whereas he was only able to vote 44 times here.

**THE PREMIER:** In this colony there was a much more local form of government than there would be under the federation.

**MR. VOSPER:** Quite true.

**THE PREMIER:** In a municipality a man could have four votes.

**MR. VOSPER:** No fault was being found with that principle. The difference between a Parliament and a municipality was that the municipality was only a corporate body, and the ratepayers who elected the councillors were looked on as shareholders, organised for the purpose of looking after a certain town; while parliamentary government was on a different basis altogether, controlling what purported to be a nation in which the people were not regarded as shareholders in the same sense.

**THE PREMIER:** What about people who did not pay their rates in the municipality?

**MR. VOSPER:** It had already been pointed out that although the landlord was supposed to pay the rates, he took good care to take those rates out of the tenant in the form of rent, so that the proletariat or the working classes, who were at the bottom, were those who paid the taxes. The wealthy man always had means of passing taxes on to those who were not so wealthy, and those who paid the biggest portion of the taxes got the least benefit from them.

**THE PREMIER:** But the wealthy people imported capital.

**MR. VOSPER:** A man did not get an extra vote because he held, for instance, Boulder shares, and the principle of plural voting did not give any more consideration to capital than it did to labour. The principle of plural voting was entirely illogical from beginning to end.

**THE PREMIER:** There must be something in plural voting, or it would never have lasted so long.

**MR. VOSPER:** It had already been pointed out that plural voting was a remnant of the feudal system, and of the days when Parliament was elected by corporate bodies.

**THE PREMIER:** The country had not done so badly under plural voting.

**MR. VOSPER:** There were examples of countries doing exceedingly well under despotism: he knew of one country where that was so; but of course that was no argument in favour of plural voting.

**THE PREMIER:** What country was that?

**MR. VOSPER:** Mexico.

**A MEMBER:** And Western Australia.

**MR. VOSPER:** Yes; Western Australia might be said to be under a despotism, although we had something of a simulacrum, or copy, or shadow of constitutional government. He urged on the House to demand the system of one-man-one-vote. At the last election and since, every progressive body had voted in favour of that principle, and it had already been adopted to a large extent by the other colonies. It was said that the principle had only lately been adopted in Victoria; but, as a matter of fact, the principle was adopted in that colony over 20 years ago. In the Constitution Act of Victoria, which was amended only the other day, there was a section which laid down that in elections of members for the Lower House, a man should vote only once. But, unfortunately, that was a clause resembling Clause 41 of the Commonwealth Bill, which had been interpreted to mean that a man could vote only once in one electorate, and consequently the principle of one-man-one-vote was lost. In the Governor's Speech in Queensland the other day there was promised a Bill providing for one-man-one-vote.

**THE PREMIER:** The Queensland Governor's Speech he had read to mean exactly the opposite.

**MR. VOSPER:** When reading up some federal matter he saw the Speech, and the meaning he attached to it was what he had described. If it were contended that the system of plural voting should be continued on account of its antiquity, he would point out that there was at least one system of voting in this colony which could not claim that virtue, namely, the system of proxy voting.

THE PREMIER: Not proxy voting: it was absentee voting.

MR. VOSPER: So far as he knew, there was no system of the kind in any of the other colonies.

THE PREMIER: In South Australia.

MR. VOSPER: There was the system of distant voting in Western Australia.

THE PREMIER: Absentee voting.

MR. VOSPER: But the system was more generally called proxy voting, and there was nothing at all parallel to it in any other colony, or in any other country in the world, not even South Australia. In South Australia a person was given a right to vote at a distance; but in this colony the system meant that if a man had property in 44 electorates, he could record a vote in each electorate. Here the privilege was confined to the man who held property, and was not given to the residential voter as in South Australia. Surely there was something unjust and anomalous about this, and it was an abuse of which this colony had a complete monopoly in the whole British Empire.

THE PREMIER: If a man were given a vote, he ought to be given the means of exercising it.

MR. VOSPER: Then why not give it to the residential voter as well as to the property owner?

THE PREMIER: Property was there, and it did not move, whereas the man might move.

MR. VOSPER: Then it was the property that had the vote, not the man?

THE PREMIER: Certainly.

MR. VOSPER: Then he would conclude his remarks by reciting a short story told over a hundred years ago by Benjamin Franklin, when this question was under discussion in Congress in America, as illustrating how the property vote worked out. Benjamin Franklin told Congress that at one time a man named John Smith was possessed of an ass, and because of the possession of that property, had a vote. It happened that on the morning of the polling day the ass died, and John Smith consequently lost his vote; so that it was the ass which possessed the vote, and not John Smith. The question before the House was whether votes should be given to men or to bricks and mortar, and he

(Mr. Vosper) thought that "asses" had had control of the country long enough, and it was time to put an end to the system.

At 6:30, the CHAIRMAN left the Chair.

At 7:30, Chair resumed.

MR. SOLOMON (South Fremantle): Plural voting had become the more obnoxious, because the new Electoral Bill provided for female suffrage; and it would then be open to a wealthy man, besides having his plural votes, to exercise 12 or 15 other votes; for if a wealthy man had a family, every member over 21 years of age might have plural votes, and such a family might exercise a number of votes prejudicially to those who had only a single vote. This question had agitated the public to a considerable extent, and now that Parliament had an opportunity, it should put an end to the agitation by passing the amendment which had been proposed. This was a fitting time for expunging plural voting; and if the amendment were carried, other portions of the clause could be amended consequentially afterwards.

MR. WILSON (Canning): From his standpoint, this was a question whether it was right or wrong to have plural voting; and he unhesitatingly affirmed that ever since he had taken any part in public affairs in Western Australia, he had always supported the principle of one-man-one-vote, for the Lower House at any rate. He did not approve of one man having a dozen or more votes for electing representatives to this Assembly. The Lower House in any country under self-government represented human beings first, and property next, if it were thought necessary to represent property in that House. Members of this Assembly were not here to legislate for property, and for property only. The Premier had admitted that the amendment was travelling in the direction favoured by public opinion, yet he had twitted the mover for bringing forward the amendment. All government in Australia was by the people for the people, and public opinion could not be ignored. There were many arguments in favour of property qualification, and he would not object to what was called on

the other side a "vote for thrift"; that a man should have not only a vote as a resident, but also a vote for his property, or what was called a vote for thrift. This would apply not only to the wealthy classes, but to the working men. As to some people being impecunious, lazy, vagabonds and rogues, we should rather look at the question as affecting the trading community, and certainly they were entitled to an equal say in the election of members sent to this House, as compared with those voters who claimed to represent property. To show how unfair it was even from the standpoint of wealthy men, suppose he (Mr. Wilson) had accumulated £50,000 and invested it all in his electorate, that property would entitle him only to one additional vote, the property being all in one electorate; but suppose his neighbour had accumulated only £20,000, and invested it in different electorates, £100 here, £500 there, and so on, that neighbour might exercise votes sufficient to influence the election of every member sent to this House. This example proved that the system of plural voting was inequitable, from the standpoint of the wealthy classes as well as from that of the working men. We must keep abreast of the times, and, as it was admitted that this was one of the advanced movements of the day, and as our delegates to the Federal Convention all supported the abolition of plural voting under the Federal Government, we here should also endeavour to advance with the times, and if the principle was good for the Federal Government, it was equally good for the administration of Western Australia. A man who had all his stake in the country, whether much or little, had just as much interest in the country, even if he had only his manhood and his labour, as had the man who accumulated wealth and invested it in the country. Indeed the working man who had only his labour had really more stake in the country, especially if he had a family, than had the man who accumulated property. The Premier had charged the mover of the amendment (Mr. Leake) with insincerity, and had said this action was intended merely to catch the votes of the people: but the same might be said for the vote the Premier gave in favour of women's suffrage, because it was only necessary to turn to the Premier's speech

last year to find the right hon. gentleman opposing that movement, though he spoke in favour of it this session and carried it through this House. No doubt the Premier had good reasons for so doing: but the desire to catch votes was more apparent in his action in regard to the female franchise than it was in this amendment. The argument of the Minister of Mines regarding taxation had little force, because all were agreed that there should be no taxation without representation, but none could agree with the Minister that station-owners, factory-owners, and mine-owners paid the taxation of the country. As shown by the Government accounts, the bulk of the taxation was derived from the customs, and amounted to some £6 per head.

**THE PREMIER:** To about £5.

**MR. VOSPER:** That was bad enough.

**MR. WILSON:** The bulk was derived from the customs. It was the people employed on stations and in mines and factories who paid the taxes of the country; they at least paid as much as their employers; and therefore every man in the country was entitled to an equal voting power at Parliamentary elections. Even admitting that wealth should have the greater power at such elections, the principle was unworkable and was not carried out now, because wealth might be invested in many different avenues. For instance, who was to have a vote for a mine? The proprietors of our mines were distributed throughout the world, and their wealth was represented by scrip. How could such men be given a vote? The tendency of the arguments of the Government supporters had been to show that the only men in a country who should have the plural vote were those who had their money in land and house property.

**MR. HIGHAM:** Such property could not be shifted.

**MR. WILSON** said he owned a few allotments of land; but if the man investing his money in land were entitled to a plural vote, then he who invested in bank shares or in a mine, or who took up Government stock, should have the same privilege.

**MR. HUBBLE:** The cases were not parallel.

**MR. WILSON:** Such a man had as great a stake in the country as he who

put his money into a sheep station; but the present law was inequitable, therefore abolish it. The system of one-man-one-vote was the most equitable that could possibly be devised, and he would give it the same hearty support as he had publicly manifested during the three or four years of his political life in the colony.

MR. HOLMES (East Fremantle) supported the amendment. All were agreed on the necessity for a Legislative Council to protect the interests of property; but every man in the country should have an equal power in electing representatives to the people's House. The Premier, who was fond of Biblical quotations, would remember the widow's two mites which were all she had. Every man who came to live in the colony, no matter how small his interest, should have some voice in the administration.

THE PREMIER: Every such man could vote.

MR. HOLMES: But they were limited to one vote, while a man with property in different parts of the colony might have as many as 50 votes by the Bill now being forced through the House with the object of keeping the present Ministry in office. At present he (Mr. Holmes) had no less than 15 votes, which was a matter for the consideration of the Government benches, seeing that the votes would be used against the Ministry. Unfortunately, there were not many such property-holders among the Opposition. By the Bill, a man who invested £2,000 amongst 20 different electorates might have 20 votes, while he who invested £20,000 in one electorate would have only one vote; yet this was called property representation! With the House as at present constituted, argument was almost useless; in fact, as he had stated on the Address-in-Reply debate, the Government had better say exactly what they intended to do, then carry their measures, and prorogue Parliament.

MR. VOSPER: Government by phonograph.

MR. HOLMES: It was deplorable that such legislation should be forced through the House without consideration, by members who had made pledges which they failed to carry out. However, it was useless to attempt to influence the automatic machinery opposite. Hon. members on the Government side had

received their instructions this afternoon. He did not envy Ministers the laurels with which they were now crowning themselves, for the day would come when they would have to answer for their deeds. The object of the clause before the Committee was to stifle the voice of the people; and this want of confidence in the public had much to do with the tardy progress of the colony. There was no sympathy between the Administration and the people; the Government would not take the public into their confidence; the country was being run in a high-handed manner, and the people were ignored. No national prosperity could be expected till people migrating to the colony knew that they would have a fair share in the administration. Surely it was not honourable for Ministers to represent people whom they were afraid to trust; and this clause, which gave the older and wealthier sections of the community an unequal and overwhelming voice in the affairs of the country, would do much to keep Ministers in their present position; and that was why the Government clung so closely to the plural vote. He would support the amendment.

MR. GREGORY (North Coolgardie): The Premier had stated he was afraid that this rush of democratic policy would tend to the downfall of parliamentary government.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member ought not to misquote. It would be better to not misrepresent what had been said.

MR. GREGORY: But if the people of the country were given every facility to place themselves on the roll and were given votes, that would tend more towards the downfall of the Forrest Administration than of parliamentary government. The Premier had spoken warmly against the principle of one-man-one-vote, though it would appear that at the Federal Convention, when in the midst of statesmen and democratic politicians, he never said one word against the principle. The Premier at the Convention voted in a division.

THE PREMIER: On this question?

MR. GREGORY: In regard to plural voting.

THE PREMIER: When?

MR. GREGORY: At the Sydney Convention, when the question was being



discussed as to persons voting in several electorates, in no case did the Premier speak in any way against one-man-one-vote.

THE PREMIER: Would the hon. member give the page in the *Hansard* reports of the Convention to which he was referring?

MR. GREGORY: Page 456. The principle of plural voting, aided as it was by absentee voting, which allowed a man to sit in his office in Perth and vote perhaps in every electorate in the colony, was most pernicious. There ought either to be an amendment made in the Electoral Act compelling every elector to vote personally, or the right to vote in more than one electorate ought to be abolished.

THE PREMIER (referring to the Federal Convention debates): What the hon. member had quoted was just the opposite of what he (the Premier) had said at the Convention.

MR. GREGORY said he did not think he was wrong in his reference to the Premier's attitude at the Federal Convention. It had been pointed out that in municipal government, a person had a right to more than one vote; but a municipality was simply a corporate body who agreed to rate themselves, and in such a body it was not right that a person who did not pay rates should have a right to say how the money should be spent. But the Legislative Assembly had to make laws for the populace as well as for the propertied people, and every man who had to pay a portion of the taxes had a right to an equal voice in saying who should be sent to represent him in Parliament. The propertied classes had a second vote in electing members to the Legislative Council, which members were quite able to protect the interests of property in Western Australia. The present Bill, with its pocket boroughs, unequal representation, plural voting, and absentee voting, was a most pernicious measure, and every effort should be made to block it.

MR. GEORGE (Murray) rose to simply say he would support the amendment, because he believed in the principle of one-man-one-vote. The question did not need argument, for with him it was a matter of conviction. He believed that

every member had made up his mind on the question, as he had.

MR. EWING (Swan): This question had been discussed at considerable length, both in the House and on the hustings, and he supposed every member was committed one way or the other. At almost every place he spoke at during his canvass of his electors, he was asked the question whether he was in favour of the principle of one-man-one-vote, and on every occasion he told the electors that he was. There was nothing in the argument that the ownership of land qualified a man specially to vote either intelligently or otherwise. If he were satisfied for a moment that the fact that a man was possessed of a certain amount of landed property was a direct evidence of his ability to exercise his vote intelligently on any political question, he would without doubt vote in favour of plural voting. But surely the question that had to be considered was whether the qualification placed on the exercise of the vote was one which would enable those persons who were best qualified, to have the largest stake and interest in the affairs of the community. Had it ever been suggested on the Government side of the House, or from the hustings in this or any other colony, that the mere fact a man was the owner of property made him better qualified to intelligently vote on a political question? It was almost always admitted that the mere fact of ownership of property, which was very often acquired in a hereditary way without any special effort on the part of the person acquiring it, was no distinct evidence that the person holding the property was best qualified to exercise the right of voting. If the ownership of property was always the direct consequence of individual effort and intellectuality, and individual merit and labour, there might be a great deal in the argument that the man who owned property had proved himself by the ownership of that property, a man better qualified than his fellows to exercise the suffrage.

MR. HUBBLE: That was the rule without the exception.

MR. EWING: One failed to see any force in that interjection, because it could not be said the mere ownership of property was any evidence of ability to well and properly exercise the franchise.

Everybody must admit that if the ownership of property depended on individual merit, or was a consequence of a higher intellectuality, there would be a great deal in the argument which had been used. But what were the facts? Did we not find in nine cases out of ten that a man who was fortunate enough to have a large amount of property, derived that property from his father or some relative? In some cases, no doubt, the accumulation of property was the outcome of individual effort, but it must be remembered that the ownership of property was usually the result of other people's labour. This ownership of land, independently of the vote which it carried, conferred the great power of the purse, which was quite strong enough to protect men of property. It must be remembered that the amendment only applied the principle of one-man-one-vote to the Legislative Assembly, property being represented and protected in the other House. If there were only one House of Parliament in the country, instead of the dual system, it might be argued that hon. members should be careful to give property some representation; but, as a matter of fact, every law had to pass the Upper Chamber, and that Chamber was elected on a property qualification. Surely that ought to be sufficient protection to property owners, who had large influence in municipal matters, an influence which was the direct outcome of the ownership of wealth and power. It would appear that the only class of property worthy of consideration was landed property; but when the Premier was speaking it struck him (Mr. Ewing) that there was a great deal in what was said about the banks and mortgagees. In very many cases persons had mortgaged their property in full to the banks and other financial institutions in the colony; and if the person who had the greatest interest in the land was to have the vote, why should the nominal owner of the land get that vote, when as a matter of fact the bank was the owner of the property? Why not apply the principle to its full extent, and say that if the banks owned half the landed property in the colony, the banks should have an equal say with the people in the election of representatives?

MR. VOSPER: How would it be to have a House of mortgagees?

MR. EWING: Perhaps that would be a solution of the difficulty. It was an absurdity, no doubt, but it was an absurdity to which hon. members were led by the arguments of the members on the Government side of the House. If those arguments were sound, why not give the banks the larger number of votes, and also give shareholders in financial institutions a large number of votes? If, as he had said, there was anything in the argument, the Perth Land and Discount Bank, which had a mortgage on a good many people in the community, ought to have a large number of votes. These mortgagees had a distinct interest in the welfare of the colony; and if wealth and ownership of property were the only guide, then let the pawnbrokers, mortgagees, banks, and financial institutions rule the country. But he hoped the day was far distant when we as a Legislature would approve of a principle which would lead to that absurd conclusion. The principle that had always actuated this and other democratic communities was that in the Lower House or popular House there were to be the representatives of the people, and of the people only. The idea was that a man had to vote according to his political principles, and that one section of the community should not be given the power to dominate over another. Power was given to the Legislative Council to protect and safeguard vested interests, but why should property ownership be given the same power in the Assembly? Could any hon. member urge a reason? He had listened in vain to the arguments of the members on the Government side of the House, and not once had he heard a reasonable or rational argument why representation in the Legislative Assembly should be based on a property qualification. Admitting for the sake of argument the right of the property owner to be represented in the Legislative Assembly, there should surely be drawn a line between the man who held an allotment worth £70 or £80 and the man who owned property worth half a million. If the principle was right that a man should have political power in proportion to the property he owned, was it right to say that the man owning an allotment of land worth £70 should have the same power in the community as the

man who owned land worth half a million? If hon. members were prepared to advocate the principle of plural voting they ought to carry it to its logical conclusion. He thought he had made a mistake in saying "logical conclusion": it ought to be "illogical conclusion," seeing that any conclusion to which such arguments could lead must be absolutely illogical. There was only one principle that could be recognised in a Legislative Assembly, which was supposed to be composed of representatives of the people, and the principle was that the right to vote was a man's birthright, and was not affected or qualified in any sense by the ownership of property. If the advocates of dual or plural voting would for one moment urge the adoption of a principle which would enable those who were best qualified to exercise the franchise, the point might be argued with some reason. There would be some reason in saying that men with a certain amount of education and learning could best exercise their votes in the interests of the community; but it could not be contended that political rectitude was a direct result of the ownership of landed property, of so many acres of sand. Therefore he would support the amendment, believing that it embodied, as far as the Lower House was concerned, the only true principle on which the right to vote should be given, and on which representation should be based.

MR. LEAKE (in reply): Having waited anxiously to hear what arguments could be used against the amendment, he had heard no argument so far. The only member who had spoken against it was the Premier, and he (Mr. Leake) would not condescend to term his expressions as "arguments," because what he remembered of them was simply all abuse of the member for Albany, who for some reason had managed once more to raise the ire of the right hon. gentleman, merely because he (Mr. Leake) had voiced the opinion which had a firm hold of the people of this colony. He was impressed with the fact that if members of this House were true to the pledges which they made in public, this amendment would be carried. Certain hon. members were known to be in favour of the amendment, but they would not be here when the division bell rang, and no

doubt that was the result of the caucus meeting held this afternoon—that was the understanding that had been come to. If there was anything in prediction, he would venture to say the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans) would not appear in the division this evening; the member for West Perth (Mr. Wood) would not appear; the member for Perth (Mr. Hall) would not appear; and we would not be likely to see the member for South Murchison (Mr. Rason) when the division-bell rang.

MR. GEORGE: He was outside.

MR. LEAKE: They were all outside, and they would not be in when the division-bell rang.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Then they had paired.

MR. LEAKE: They could not have paired, unless it was arranged with the whip on this (Opposition) side of the House, and when he told hon. members there had been no pairs arranged with the whip on this side, we knew the remarks of the Attorney General were on a par with other observations he made. Most hon. members were known to be in favour of the amendment, but certain hon. members on the Government side of the House would not vote against it. This was dragging down the name of Parliament to the lowest level imaginable. In no part of Australia had the name of "Parliament" or "member of Parliament" been dragged in the dirt to the extent it had been in recent years in Western Australia. That insatiable desire to support in office at any price the Government which could make the highest bid for the vote of each member of each constituency—that was what it came to.

THE PREMIER: That was out of order.

MR. LEAKE: One could not be out of order in anything one said in this House. It was difficult, with justice, to rule a member out of order in this House. [MR. GEORGE: Hear, hear.] And particularly when we were dealing with the tactics pursued by the right hon. gentleman opposite and those of his colleagues, a policy which had been one of flouting Parliament and flouting the constituencies for years past. He, for one, was nearly sick of it, and many hon. members had a similar feeling. We were told we should have a liberalised constitution under this Bill. One of the first ideas of

liberalism was an extension of the franchise, and certainly the abolition or curtailment of the plural vote; but no attempt in that direction was made in the Bill. The only attempt which could be called "liberalism" was the increase of members in both Houses of Parliament; but of what avail was that to the constituencies, if the property qualification was maintained? We had members returned by this iniquitous process of plural voting, and we knew that at the next election we would have many of those members now on the Government side declaring in favour of the abolition of plural voting; yet, as was usual when it came to a question of a test vote, they were afraid to appear in the division. If there was one advantage that would result from the abolition of plural voting, it would be the abolition of those pocket boroughs it seemed to have been the desire of the Government to maintain under this Constitution Bill. Under a liberalised franchise, this sort of thing could not exist, and there was no doubt that constituencies such as that of East Kimberley, for instance, were maintained in this measure by the existence of this plural voting, because a large proportion of the voters on the roll were landholders who did not live in the district, and had never been there; men who acquired property at the time of the Kimberley "boom," and had been forced to retain it because they could not get rid of it; and although there were about 92 electors on the roll, those names did not represent anything like the number of residents who were entitled to vote. It was a crying shame and a scandal to this country, that such a thing should be allowed to exist. The right hon. gentleman plumed himself on this little handful of power which he most jealously guarded and retained. He (Mr. Leake) admitted the force of the argument used by the right hon. gentleman, that all men were not equal; but when once we recognised that equality by giving men a vote, there was no right, by a sidewind, to introduce again an element of inequality by means of plural voting. To show that he seriously recognised the principle that all men were not equal, he would place in juxtaposition the right hon. gentleman with the member for South Murchison, the member for the Murchison, or the member for Sussex,

and we could see that neither of those members was equal mentally, physically, or in any other way, to the right hon. gentleman, who would outweigh them easily. There was not much force in that argument, but it appealed for the moment to the sense or the absence of sense of some hon. members. He did not think a principle of this kind could be advanced by adopting a policy of scolding, that the right hon. gentleman assumed on an occasion of this kind; and perhaps it would be more satisfactory if we were able to thresh questions out on their merits. As pointed out by the member for Central Murchison, in retaining this property qualification we recognised only one class of property, namely land, and why should a vote be given for £100 worth of sand and not for £100 worth of sugar? That was putting the argument in a concrete shape, and one which could be grasped if not appreciated by the right hon. gentleman opposite. We realised how absurd it was to recognise this land qualification as entitling a person to vote, when on the other hand a person with £10,000 invested on mortgage in a constituency did not obtain a vote.

MR. VOSPER: A property vote which was not a property vote.

MR. LEAKE: Yes; and he would appeal to hon. members to say honestly—he did not say whether they would have the mental ability to do it, but could they honestly oppose this amendment? If they could, then even honesty in this Parliament would require reformation. It would be interesting to see to what extent hon. members could be carried in their blind idolatry of the leader of the Government, on a question of this kind. Were we fighting for public rights or for individual rights? We were fighting for public rights; and the sooner Parliament set its face against anything but true principles, the better for the country at large. We had the Commonwealth Constitution approved by the whole of the Australian people, and therein the principle of this amendment had been recognised; and how could we in this House say that only in the States the more restricted franchise should be recognised? The right hon. gentleman himself had already recognised this principle, in approving of the Commonwealth Bill and in committing himself to its

adoption ; and the right hon. gentleman, as a member of the Joint Select Committee on the Commonwealth Bill, had not asked for any alteration in this direction. Therefore, how could he consistently deny to the State that which he approved for the whole of Australia ?

**THE ATTORNEY GENERAL** (Hon. R. W. Pennefather) : The member for Albany had made use of an observation which he (the Attorney General) rose to correct. The hon. member had said, with regard to the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans) having paired on this amendment, that he could not have paired. The member for Coolgardie had assured him (the Attorney General) that he had paired.

**MR. LEAKE** : With whom ?

**THE ATTORNEY GENERAL** : The hon. member's assurance was taken as sufficient, and no further question was asked. When the member for Albany, on being informed to that effect, gave almost the lie flatly, as he did without qualification, the hon. member was not justified in doing so.

**MR. JAMES** : But ought not pairs to be arranged with the whip ?

**THE ATTORNEY GENERAL** : Pairs were not always arranged with the whips. The speech of the member for Albany on this question had been a consummate piece of acting ; and it was not easy to understand how the hon. member could ever have chosen another profession, instead of following that for which he was so admirably fitted by nature, because he had been endowed with features which stamped him as an actor of the highest quality ; and even in the very tones of voice with which he addressed the House on a subject from which his heart was absent, there were "tears in his voice" pleading for the man who had only one vote. It was as well to tear down the veil that hid this acting face, and show the stern reality behind it.

**MR. LEAKE** : Why did not the hon. member do so ?

**THE ATTORNEY GENERAL** : The hon. member interjecting, though sitting securely in a select coterie, surrounded by some half-dozen unanimous followers, should not imagine that he voiced the opinion of the whole country, for he would, perhaps, discover some day that

such was not the case. To hear the phrase, "this pernicious and disgraceful system," applied to the present mode of voting, one would think that the present system was an innovation ; but the hon. member, in addition to passing severe strictures on Government supporters, and sneering at them in a manner unbecoming to one who hoped some day to lead the Parliament of the country, had asked questions which he himself could easily have answered ; such, for instance, as "Why should a man possessing a piece of landed property have an extra vote, while a man possessing shares or personal property does not receive that privilege ?" The hon. member, as a lawyer, well knew the history of the plural vote, which could be traced downward from the Middle Ages. Land had that privilege, because the landowner was bound to the land. He was not "here to-day and gone to-morrow."

**MR. LEAKE** : The argument did not apply to-day.

**THE ATTORNEY GENERAL** : Therefore the legislature gave landowners certain privileges because they were tied to the soil : they were not people who came to exploit the country and then leave it. The distinction made between real and personal property was that the real property was irremovable, while personal property followed its possessor, and therefore required no special representation in Parliament. The hon. member could have answered his own question.

**MR. LEAKE** : Yes ; but he would not have given that answer.

**THE ATTORNEY GENERAL** : Perhaps not.

**MR. LEAKE** : The grounds were as false as the hon. member's arguments.

**THE ATTORNEY GENERAL** : The proposition that one man should have only one vote could not be logical unless the whole country was thrown into one electorate. Where a country was split up, as was this colony by the Constitution Act, the member for an electorate represented not only the people but the district itself—the land within the district.

**MR. LEAKE** : Then the Minister did not approve of the provisions of the Commonwealth Bill ?

**THE ATTORNEY GENERAL** : Therefore the representative of an electorate

represented two interests, the interests of individuals and the landed interests.

MR. VOSPER: In other words, of individuals and of certain others who lived on those individuals.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Land was represented in the Upper House.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: That might be another argument; but in this colony municipal government was not so strongly developed as in other colonies.

MR. GREGORY: But "pocket borough" representation was very strongly developed.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The hon. member who had just interjected was a man of omniscient prescience, often making remarks without being careful as to their truth. This evening, for instance, that hon. member had made a statement, had held up a book, and had pretended to read something which the Premier had said at the Sydney Federal Convention; yet when the hon. member had been asked for the page, and when the page had been turned up, it had been found that the expression put into the mouth of the Premier was not warranted by the printed report. Yet this was the hon. member who interjected in a debate! When the hon. member again made a statement, one hoped he would be careful about its truth before asserting it as a fact.

#### POINTS OF ORDER.

MR. VOSPER rose to a point of order. The Attorney General had charged an hon. member (Mr. Gregory) with having falsified a quotation, and with having stated a deliberate untruth. Was that justified, and should not the Minister adduce proof of the charge?

THE CHAIRMAN: The Minister had simply indicated a misquotation.

MR. GREGORY: And had said that he (Mr. Gregory) had declined to give the number of the page, which was untrue.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: No; he had said that the hon. member (Mr. Gregory) had given the number of the page, but that no such statement as that imputed to the Premier was to be found thereon.

MR. VOSPER said he understood the Attorney General to say that the hon. member had not been careful about the truth, and had deceived the Committee.

THE CHAIRMAN said he did not think the Attorney General's observations were sufficient to make him out of order.

MR. GEORGE rose to a point of order. He asked the Attorney General to read the passage in question. If the statement the Minister had made about the hon. member (Mr. Gregory) were correct, that hon. member should be drummed out of the House.

MR. LEAKE: The statement had only been made by the Attorney General.

THE CHAIRMAN: The Minister could use his discretion as to whether he would read the passage.

#### DISCUSSION RESUMED.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: A wonderful punctiliousness was observable in the course of debate, particularly when a point had been made against members who had been adducing statements which they pretended were unchallengeable, and which were shown to be far otherwise. The member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) also, had he only reflected, would not have asked why the distinction between the landed proprietor and the man with no land should obtain at the present day. A knowledge of constitutional history would have shown the hon. member the origin of the distinction.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The Attorney General was now misquoting.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: If this innovation were to be made, it should be done with due deliberation; but by the manner in which the amendment had been moved and supported, it was evident that it had been proposed with a view of obtaining a party vote, and with an ulterior object. Whatever the motive, it was apparent that it was not sincere.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest), in speaking again, trusted he would not be led into any discourtesy.

MR. LEAKE: Oh, the Premier was never discourteous!

THE PREMIER: Sometimes one was carried away and spoke unguardedly. Hon. members on the Government side, exercising their rights and privileges in voting, did not deserve, and ought not to be subjected to, insult from the Opposition. None would deny that the member for Albany (Mr. Leake) had been very insulting to-night to Government supporters, who had their own

opinions and would doubtless exercise their votes conscientiously. Hon. members opposite would do the same, as was their right.

MR. A. FORREST: But the Opposition had all the intelligence.

THE PREMIER: It did not appear to him that the hon. members on the Government side were less honourable or less respected than those opposite.

MR. LEAKE: Then the Premier must be very blind.

THE PREMIER: Possibly; but in his opinion hon. members on the Government side compared very favourably with the side led by the hon. member in every respect, whether in intelligence, in capacity, or in respectability. The hon. member (Mr. Leake) need not laugh, for his laugh was insincere and theatrical. Why should hon. members call each other names and use disrespectful language? If he chose, he could tell the hon. member one of the reasons why the present Government held office, but to do so would not be polite.

MR. LEAKE: The Premier need not spare him.

THE PREMIER: Well then, it was because the country distrusted the hon. member and those with whom he associated. The colony was afraid of the hon. member, and was not prepared to trust him. The people considered they had better "bear the ills we have than fly to others that we know not of." The hon. member had accused him (the Premier) of increasing the number of members of Parliament; but he (the Premier) had divided the House in regard to the increase in the Council membership, and had been beaten by one vote; and the hon. member was one of those who had advocated the creation of a new electorate in the Southern part of the colony.

MR. LEAKE: On conditions; merging others into one.

THE PREMIER: And another Opposition member had proposed that the mineral district in the South-West should have separate representation, for which suggestion he (the Premier) was not responsible.

MR. LEAKE: But the Premier supported it.

THE PREMIER: But the innovation had been suggested by the hon. member

interjecting, and proposed by the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper), and it met with general concurrence in the House.

MR. LEAKE: That had been done on the suggestion that two other constituencies be amalgamated.

THE PREMIER: In a letter recently addressed to the mayor of Coolgardie, he (the Premier) had pointed out that there was nothing very inequitable in the late redistribution of seats. Much had been said about pocket boroughs in the North, but that part of the colony, including the Gascoyne, comprehended one half of the territory of the country, and by the Bill would be represented by five members, one of whom was the member for Pilbarra (Mr. Kingsmill), a goldfields representative. And the member for East Kimberley (Mr. Connor) also represented a goldfield, which, though sparsely populated, was administered by a warden, and therefore that hon. member might be termed half a goldfields member—(MR. CONNOR: Three-fourths)—though he also represented a squatting district. At the outside there were only four pastoral representatives for the whole of that large district, representing one-half of the colony—two members for the Kimberleys, one for Roebourne, and one for the Gascoyne. Would any man say such representation was too great for that immense territory, which used to have two additional members?

MR. LEAKE: This was a discussion on plural voting.

THE PREMIER: Then why did the hon. member talk of pocket boroughs?

MR. LEAKE: Two wrongs did not make a right.

THE PREMIER: Some hon. members knew little about the colony, and did not even know the territorial limits of the constituencies. So-called "pocket boroughs" were very few in number, seeing that this large territory had only five members. The member for North Coolgardie (Mr. Gregory) had said that he (the Premier) had voted in some division on this question at the Federal Convention in Sydney; but the hon. member had been unable to point out how the vote had been cast. As a fact, he (the Premier) had never voted on that question, and had he had an opportunity of voting, would not have voted in the way

indicated by the hon. member, who had—he would not say intentionally—misled the House. The hon. member's statement was untrue. What had been said at the Convention was with reference to one-man-one-vote—

MR. JAMES: No; the Premier had then been speaking with regard to two votes in one electorate.

THE PREMIER: The Convention report read: "Provided that the Parliament may not enact that any elector shall have more than one vote."

MR. JAMES: The question had then been whether a man should have two votes in one electorate, and subsequently the Premier had said that would be worse than one-man-one-vote.

THE PREMIER: At all events, the few words he had uttered clearly showed that he had not been in favour of any restriction, and that he had maintained that, when this colony was divided into electorates for the purpose of electing the Federal House of Representatives, people who were entitled to vote in any one district should exercise their vote, and that a man should not be restricted to one vote; so the hon. member (Mr. Gregory) was absolutely wrong in his rendering of the quotation. Probably the hon. member had not read the passage carefully, and had come to a wrong conclusion concerning it. In dealing with this question of divisions at the Federal Convention, it must be remembered that the Senate were to be elected by each colony as one electorate, and therefore there could only be one-man-one-vote, while in the colony of Western Australia there would not be more than five divisions; and he did not object to the principle, or did not remember objecting specially. A majority of the members of the Convention were in favour of one-man-one-vote, though the Convention were not unanimous by any means on the subject; and in view of that majority it was of no use wasting time by moving amendments which could not be carried. He was not the only one, because there were many other members of the Convention of the same view as himself; but they accepted the principle of one-man-one-vote, seeing there was a majority in favour of it. All he could say was that never in the Convention did he express himself in favour of the

principle of one-man-one-vote, and if the member for North Coolgardie (Mr. Gregory) looked at the *Hansard* report of the debates, he would never find a speech of his (the Premier's) in favour of the principle, because he did not make statements to-day and forget them to-morrow. He must reiterate that there was no innovation in the clause now before the Committee. There was no desire on the part of the Government to give any privilege to anyone which was not possessed now, but all that was provided for was to allow people to retain privileges which they already possessed. That was a very different thing from giving people concessions or privileges which they had not at the present time. What the Government said was, "We will leave matters as they are, and as they have been ever since Western Australia has been a colony." Hon. members of the Opposition, on the contrary, said: "We will take away from people privileges which they now have." Possession was nine points of the law, we were often told, and we must be very careful before taking away from people what they already possessed, whether it was property, a right, or a privilege. It would be a very different matter if the Committee were engaged in framing a constitution for the first time, and were laying down what privileges the people were to have. As a matter of fact, the people had these privileges at the present time, and they always had them; and the Committee must be careful to go slowly and cautiously before we took away from people any right or privilege they had enjoyed for many years. Members of the Opposition said: "We do not care for your rights or privileges: we will pull down; we will take away from you, not courteously even, but in a high-handed manner, and we will insult you at the same time we take the privilege away from you." That was the tone adopted towards the people of the colony who possessed this privilege, and it was the tone adopted towards members of the Committee who were not doing any injury to anyone, but were trying to leave things as they were at present. Had he ever endeavoured to take away a privilege which any person possessed? Had he not endeavoured, in the whole course of his political career, to



give privileges instead of taking privileges away? Who gave the manhood suffrage vote? Was it the hon. member for Albany (Mr. Leake)?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The member for Albany was not in the House then.

THE PREMIER: If the member for Albany had been in the House, he would have voted against the proposal. It was himself (the Premier) and members on the Government side of the House who enfranchised the whole of the people in the colony.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: But the people had not been able to vote yet.

THE PREMIER: At any rate, the Electoral Bill had passed through Committee in one evening, and no doubt would be satisfactory to the members of the Opposition and the people of the colony generally. It was the present Government who gave the people the franchise.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: There had never been any other Government.

THE PREMIER: The present Government had not been forced to extend this privilege at the point of the bayonet, but had extended it of their own accord.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: There had only been one Government in this country.

THE PREMIER: And the reason that there had been no other Government was that the people would not trust the leader of the Opposition. It was time there was plain speaking. The people were afraid of politicians who went off at a tangent and did the things which were done by members of the Opposition. Who could trust the leader of the Opposition (Mr. Leake) after his harangues during the last week? When he spoke of trusting the hon. member, he meant politically and not personally, and that hon. member had done more damage to himself with the people of the country, during the last 10 days, than he had during the whole course of his political life. The chances of the member for Albany ousting the Government were less now than years ago.

MR. LEAKE: Try a dissolution.

THE PREMIER: When the Government went to the country they were always returned to power again. The last two seats had been wrested from the Opposition, and the Government would wrest more seats if they had the chance.

MR. LEAKE: What did those seats cost?

THE PREMIER: They cost nothing: not one penny.

MR. GEORGE: What did they cost the country?

THE PREMIER: There was a mean insinuation! Just as if he bribed constituencies, or resorted to means of that kind.

MR. GEORGE: The Premier ought to pay no attention to such insinuations.

THE PREMIER only wanted to point out once more that there was no desire on the Government side of the House to take anything from anybody: they were unwilling to take away that which people had possessed for years and years. The time might arrive when it would be necessary to take away this privilege, but that time had not yet arrived.

MR. GREGORY, in speaking again, desired to make an explanation, but assured the Attorney General he was not making this explanation on account of the charges made by that hon. member, because he (Mr. Gregory) could afford to treat with contempt any charges made by the Attorney General. The Attorney General had been heard many times in the vituperative strain, and members of the Opposition could really afford to treat him with contempt. The explanation was made in reply to the Premier. He (Mr. Gregory) must admit he had made a mistake in regard to the Premier voting at the Convention in favour of one-man-one-vote. He (Mr. Gregory) was reading on the question of the representation of the Senate, and had not noticed an amendment which occurred later, and if the Premier looked at page 416 of the Convention debates in *Hansard*, he would see what was meant. In regard to the House of Representatives in Clause 30 of the Federal Bill, the main question seemed to be that, in choosing members, each elector should vote only once; but an amendment was moved that if an elector voted more than once, he would be guilty of a misdemeanour. That amendment, however, was negatived without a division. Discussion ensued with regard to a further amendment, and the Premier then said:

I cannot follow the hon. member, Mr. Carruthers. He seemed to urge that if a man exercised his vote, and if some months after-

wards another election took place, he should not be allowed to exercise his vote, although he might be on the roll in another electorate.

The whole of that tended to show that at the Convention the Premier did not in any way raise his voice against, or attempt in any way to oppose, the principle of one-man-one-vote.

THE PREMIER: The point had already been settled in Adelaide, when he was not present. There had been divisions on the question, and there was no use in dividing again.

MR. GREGORY: What it was desired to point out was that the Premier did not raise his voice in favour of plural voting.

MR. VOSPER, in speaking again, said he had listened with interest and pleasure to what had fallen from the Premier on the decorum that should be observed in the House, and he deemed it well not to allow the debate to close without making some further observations on the point. He would call to the recollection of the Premier that the personal tone, which he was sure everyone regretted, was raised by the Premier charging the leader of the Opposition with having "sold" his constituents; in short, the Premier accused the member for Albany (Mr. Leake) of deliberately betraying those who elected him to the House. Surely the Premier could not justify language of that kind, and he would be the last one to attempt to justify it.

MR. LEAKE: Nobody took any notice of these charges.

MR. VOSPER preferred to take some notice of the matter, because he really thought that kind of thing was going too far. He was himself accused occasionally of making wild statements both in print and in speech, but accusations had been made of which he would not like to be guilty. He referred particularly to the Attorney General, because whatever the Premier had said he had atoned for in his speech since the adjournment of the House. The Attorney General, however, was in the habit of throwing accusations broadcast all over the House, and in his last observations he had accused the member for North Coolgardie (Mr. Gregory), not of making a mistake, but of absolutely falsifying a quotation, and deliberately attempting to deceive the committee. The last few words of the

Attorney General accused the member for North Coolgardie of an "ulterior motive, and not sincere in that."

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The words "ulterior motive" were never made use of.

MR. VOSPER was prepared to leave the matter to be decided by the *Hansard* report. The last few words which fell from the Attorney General were "ulterior motive, and not sincere in that."

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The member for North-East Coolgardie must not attribute words which had never been used.

MR. VOSPER said he wished to accept the Attorney General's repudiation of the words; but, at the same time, he must say his sense of hearing led him to suppose that the hon. member did use those words; in any case, the *Hansard* report next week would show. When homilies on the behaviour members should adopt in the House were heard from the Premier and others, members should at least have the privilege of profiting by example as well as by precept, and the Premier ought to do something towards keeping his refractory Attorney General in something like order. The Attorney General sometimes hurled his accusations broadcast like the discharge from a Gatling gun.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The charges must have told on the member for North-East Coolgardie, to make him so hot.

MR. VOSPER: The Attorney General had not had the privilege of attacking him (Mr. Vosper) for some time in the House, nor had one had the honour of replying to the Attorney General; but when it did come to a verbal duel, he (Mr. Vosper) thought he could take care of himself.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: That was very likely.

MR. VOSPER protested against the kind of language indulged in by the Attorney General; language which could only be described as rhetorical sewage.

Amendment (Mr. Leake's) put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes ...	15
Noes ...	20

Majority against ... 5

AYRS.  
Mr. Conolly  
Mr. Ewing  
Mr. George  
Mr. Gregory  
Mr. Holmes  
Mr. Illingworth  
Mr. James  
Mr. Kingsmill  
Mr. Leake  
Mr. Moran  
Mr. Oldham  
Mr. Solomon  
Mr. Vosper  
Mr. Wallace  
Mr. Wilson (Teller).

NORS.  
Hon. S. Burt  
Mr. Connor  
Sir John Forrest  
Mr. A. Forrest  
Mr. Hall  
Mr. Higham  
Mr. Lefroy  
Mr. Locke  
Mr. Mitchell  
Mr. Monger  
Mr. Pennefather  
Mr. Phillips  
Mr. Piesse  
Mr. Quinlan  
Mr. Robson  
Mr. Sholl  
Sir J. G. Lee Steere  
Mr. Throssell  
Hon. H. W. Venn  
Mr. Hubble (Teller).

Amendment thus negated, and the clause passed.

#### Schedule 2:

On motions by the PREMIER, the schedule was amended as follows:—  
Beverley Electoral District: strike out the word "Hill" at end of description, and insert "Granite Rock" in lieu thereof. Also, Boulder Electoral District: insert the word "late" before "gold," in lines 1 and 2. Also, Gascoyne Electoral District: after "Mount Lionel," in line 11, strike out the word "and," and insert "thence north to said summit." Also, after "Mount Rica," in line 13, insert "and Mount Darnell." Also, Kalgoorlie Electoral District: strike out "140," in line 3, and insert "54" in lieu thereof. Strike out "66 links," and insert after "chains" the following words: "along said centre of street; thence 133° 30' 12 chains 75 links along the south-western side of Cassidy Street; thence 223° 30' 15 chains along the north-western side of Campbell Street; thence 133° 30' 20 chains 70 links along the south-western side of Russell Street; thence 223° 30' 71 chains 50 links along the north-western side of Bourke Street." Also, strike out the words "95 chains 51 links," in line 3, and insert "about 62 chains." Also, Menzies Electoral District: strike out "of Mount Gibson," in line 5, and insert "from trigonometrical station K83" in lieu thereof.

THE PREMIER explained, with reference to amending the boundaries of Kalgoorlie electoral district, that the alteration was necessitated by the original description taking in some land which, at that time, it was supposed the municipality intended to include; but it was since found that the municipality did not include it; therefore, the desire of

the municipality and of the Government was to make the municipal boundary and the electoral district boundary identical, and consequently the boundary as originally described in the Bill would be contracted a little.

Schedule, as amended, agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

#### DENTISTS' ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

##### SECOND READING.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. W. Pennefather), in moving the second reading, said: This Bill has been introduced at the request of members of the Dentists' Board in this colony, with the object of amending the principal Act in one or two material particulars. It is proposed, in paragraph 2 of the Bill, to amend the principal Act by reducing the term which was necessary in order to qualify for local registration. Under the principal Act, the limit for which a dentist has to practise dentistry before admission in this colony is seven years; and that time is reduced in the Bill to four years, this being the first material alteration. The next is that Section 11 of the principal Act is hereby repealed, and this refers to the appeal which lay from the board to the Minister: for by recent experience it has been found that the mode of appeal has not only caused the board much expense by reason of a later appeal having to be made afterwards to the Supreme Court, when deemed necessary, but the members now desire, and the Government do not see any objection to it, that the appeal should be made directly from the Dentists' Board to the Supreme Court. The next two clauses are mainly for the purpose of facilitating the proof of registration under this Act. Clause 7 contains a provision by which the board are enabled to raise sufficient funds by levying a license fee annually on the members of the Dentists' Association, and a fee of two guineas is to be charged. I am informed that the members of the association are agreeable to this, because they will be able to raise a fund by that means to defray all their administrative expenses, without calling on the Government to assist them. I beg to move the second reading.

MR. VOSPER (North - East Coolgardie): There is only one point in the

Bill which I think will require amendment or consideration in Committee, and that is in Clause 7, in regard to the annual license fee. The clause provides that if a member of the board fail to pay the fee, he may be struck off the roll; and that appears to be an arbitrary proceeding to take, because a man happens to be unable to pay two guineas. I see it is provided in the latter part of the clause that the board may restore the name to the register on payment of arrears and of such fine as the board may impose. I think it should be made mandatory on the board to restore the man to his position on the roll, if he pays after having got into arrear with the fee, because such failure may be caused by illness, by bankruptcy, or other misfortune; and it does seem a bit curious that the board should have power to strike a man completely off the roll and deprive him of his means of livelihood, simply because he has failed to pay a fee of two guineas. The rest of the Bill seems to be all right.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

#### AGRICULTURAL BANK ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

On motion by the COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. G. Throssell), the House resolved into Committee to consider the Bill.

#### IN COMMITTEE.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Mortgagor to keep fences, etc., in repair:

MR. MITCHELL: What necessity was there for requiring that a man should keep the fences in repair, seeing that the security for the loan was the land itself and not the improvements?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. F. H. Piessé): Though fences did not form a portion of the improvements on which the bank advanced money, yet they must necessarily be kept in repair, for badly-fenced property would not be good security for a loan.

MR. JAMES: Though property should certainly be kept in thorough repair, such a provision should not be inserted in the Bill, but rather in the mortgage deed; for if in the Bill, it might be inferred that similar provisions not in the Bill had no

effect. Either put all such provisions in the Bill, which could be done by adding another schedule containing a model form of mortgage, or omit all such provisions.

MR. MITCHELL: Seeing that advances were made only upon land cleared and cultivated, and not on fencing, it was clearly unfair to make the repairing of fences compulsory.

MR. LEAKE: As the object of the Bill was to encourage improvements, how could it be unfair to compel a man to make his improvements efficient?

MR. MORAN: The hon. member (Mr. Mitchell) was referring to the Greenough district.

MR. LEAKE: Oh! In that district there were no fences.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The last speaker could not have visited the Greenough district recently. The provision in the clause was absolutely necessary for the sake of the intending borrower, for the Bank would not advance money except on well-fenced land.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 4—Amendment of 58 Vict., No. 21, Sec. 5:

MR. PHILLIPS: How would the Victoria district share in this grant of £100,000 extra to the Bank? Only a few pounds had hitherto been spent by the Bank in that locality.

MR. WILSON moved that the words "two hundred thousand pounds" be struck out, and "one hundred and fifty thousand pounds" inserted in lieu thereof. As the Bank had taken five years in which to expend the £100,000 already granted, the Committee would hardly be justified in granting a similar sum, which would probably take another five years to spend, until the operations of the institution had gone beyond the experimental stage. At present the repayments of principal had hardly commenced, as the Act provided that such repayments should begin five years after the Bank's inception, which five years had just expired, so that repayments would probably begin next year. Better see how rapidly the principal was repaid before the Committee committed itself to further expenditure, over which Parliament should have complete control. An extra £50,000 would be quite sufficient, in addition to the £100,000 already granted. If expectations with regard to moneys already

lent were fulfilled, Parliament would willingly grant still further supplies.

MR. MONGER: On the second reading it had been clearly shown that a majority of the Committee favoured the Bank. The amendment was sure to be negatived.

MR. ROBSON opposed the amendment, for so far from limiting the Bank's operations, they should be extended. In the Victoria district, containing one quarter of the agricultural land of the colony, during the last two years only some £200 odd had been distributed. He reminded the Minister of his promise to send a "live" land-agent to Geraldton.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS: It had been acknowledged in this House, and throughout the country, that in the past the Agricultural Bank had done a great deal of good, and there was no reason why the proposal to grant another £100,000 should not be passed. With regard to the remarks of the member for the Irwin (Mr. Phillips), it was rather an old story now to say that his district had been neglected. There was no reason why the operations of this Bank should not be open to every district in the colony, and he could not help saying, in defence of the Government, that the district represented by the hon. member (Mr. Phillips) must have neglected itself and its opportunity. He would take care, so far as he was concerned, that the local paper had an advertisement when this Bill was passed and money was at his disposal for the purpose, intimating that applications would be received at all times from settlers. There might be special reasons in the hon member's district why people had not taken advantage of the Agricultural Bank; and the hon. member would know what he meant without further reference to the matter. At any rate, he would put this little matter right, so that the charge could not be brought again in the Assembly that the Government had neglected the Irwin or any other district in the colony, which complaint everyone knew was not true. He hoped the member for the Canning (Mr. Wilson) would allow the Bill to pass without further objection.

MR. MORAN: Although supporting the Bill heartily, he admired the principle which had urged the member for the Canning to move the amendment—that

was, if the circumstances just now were ordinary. We were on the eve of perhaps a very mighty change in Western Australia, and it was wise that all legislation that passed this session should undergo close scrutiny, when we considered the legislation in conjunction with the fate of this country whether for bad or good.

MR. GEORGE: The country was all right.

MR. MORAN: We should express our desire as a Parliament and a people to do all we could under the Bill to assist the agricultural industry, and assist the country; and, as far as he was concerned, he thought Western Australia in the future would have to enlarge its sphere of operations in this respect. Parliament had a plain duty before it, for if this country entered into the bonds of federation, we should devote while we could our energies to the clearing and cultivation of the national estate of Western Australia. There were lines on which the Parliament might achieve the same ends which other countries had achieved by protective duties, and these lines would follow through State aid and State work almost the State nationalisation of lands. The lands should be cleared by the money of the country, so as to place the agricultural industry in the same position that years of bonuses and State aid in the other colonies had done for their agricultural industry. One reason for supporting the Bill was that he believed the present manager of the Agricultural Bank was a tried and trusted servant, and was doing his work well: one wished to mark strongly the appreciation of that officer's efforts. He hoped the Parliament would never for a moment lose sight of the great question of building up in Western Australia an agricultural industry equal he hoped to that of the neighbouring colony of South Australia. We might lose our chance if we did not do it now. There was no check in the Commonwealth Bill, and nothing he should think would prevent the colony from assisting in all national works which might be undertaken. The best possible result would accrue from the policy the Government were now pursuing.

MR. GEORGE: The member for the Canning (Mr. Wilson) had good reasons for suggesting the amendment he had

made to reduce the amount now to be granted to £50,000, and one thought perhaps we might find one of the best reasons that would appeal to hon. members in the statement made by one hon. gentleman who was noted for his inaccuracy. He referred to the member for Bunbury, who, in his position as Premier and Treasurer of this colony, made a statement the other evening on the second reading of the Bill that the money was lent by the Savings Bank to the Agricultural Bank at five per cent., and a few minutes afterwards the Premier stated that it was three-and-a-half or four per cent.

THE PREMIER: Five per cent. to the men.

MR. GEORGE: The hon. member was out of order in interjecting when not in his place. If he (Mr. George) were permitted to refer to *Hansard*, he was sure that *Hansard* would support him when he said that the Premier in his speech said that five per cent. was paid by the Agricultural Bank to the Savings Bank.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The money was borrowed at three-and-a-half per cent., and lent at five per cent.

MR. GEORGE: The Premier stated that the Agricultural Bank borrowed from the Savings Bank at five per cent. Afterwards, when the member for Albany (Mr. Leake) was speaking, the Premier, forgetting his previous words, interjected that three-and-a-half or four per cent. was charged to the Bank.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: That was a mistake.

THE PREMIER: The mistake was not his (the Premier's).

MR. GEORGE: Then *Hansard* did not take it down correctly.

THE PREMIER: They often made mistakes, like other people.

MR. GEORGE said he had more faith in *Hansard* than the Premier had. The Premier had his own way of turning figures to suit himself.

THE PREMIER: The sense of the thing was clear enough.

MR. GEORGE: The object he had was not to oppose the operations of the Agricultural Bank, but he wanted to point out an inaccuracy on the part of the Premier. It had been stated that it had taken several years to lend the

£100,000 voted to the Agricultural Bank under the original Act, and it was now proposed to give another £100,000, presumably to be lent out in the next year. No provision was made on the Estimates for carrying out this work, and we knew that so far as the manager of the Bank was concerned, he never lent money unless he had personally inspected the land and knew all about it. It had taken a number of years to lend the first £100,000, and if another £100,000 was to be lent within 12 months, provision should be made for a staff of officers to carry out the operations of the Agricultural Bank.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: It was not proposed to lend the money in 12 months.

MR. GEORGE: Then if not, in the name of goodness, why should not the amount of money that it was necessary to spend within 12 months be voted under the Bill, and the Government could come to Parliament again for another vote?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The Government did not want to keep coming to Parliament over this matter.

MR. GEORGE: Members were sent to this House that they might keep a sharp eye on the funds of the country, and the only way to do that was to examine and criticise; but he was afraid the criticism would be cut short this session by orders from the Premier.

MR. WOOD: Was the hon. member under orders?

MR. GEORGE: Did he (Mr. George) look like it? If the hon. member (Mr. Wood) looked in a looking-glass, he would see the sort of man who received orders from the Premier. Members carried out their duty by criticising the Estimates, and although he did not wish in any way to impede the operations of the Agricultural Bank, because he believed it was one of the best departments of the State, he thought £50,000 was quite sufficient to expect the manager of the Bank to lend during the coming 12 months, unless his staff was increased. He knew the Premier could authorise an increase of the staff of the Agricultural Bank and bring down the amount in an Excess Bill; but there had been no assertion by the Premier that this was to be done. If £50,000 were lent before the expiration of 12 months, it was a per-

fectly easy matter for the Premier to advance any further sum that was required.

**THE PREMIER:** Oh, no.

**MR. GEORGE:** The manager of the Bank did not lend money until the improvements were carried out; until fencing was finished the manager of the Agricultural Bank did not part with the cash; and if the money was lent for improvements, the manager of the Bank had the right, and Parliament expected him, to see that the fences were erected. He would not oppose the grant of the £100,000, but the member for the Canning had good reasons for moving his amendment.

**MR. LEAKE:** The amendment would be supported by him. Why should we grant another £100,000 when there was no possibility of the amount being spent in the next four or five years, or at any rate during the life of this Parliament? If anything was to be granted, let sufficient be allowed to last until the next Parliament assembled, and if more money was required, let the new Parliament grant it. He did not know where the money was coming from. We had not been told.

**THE PREMIER:** Yes.

**MR. LEAKE:** Where was the money coming from?

**THE PREMIER:** The Savings Bank.

**MR. LEAKE:** It was wrong to take the money from the Savings Bank, and apply it in this way. The Savings Bank money should be invested in such securities as could be realised at once. Supposing there were a demand for this money in the Savings Bank, how did the Premier think he could get the money at once, or within a reasonable time? He presumed the £100,000 already obtained had come from the Savings Bank, although it was stated when the Bill was originally introduced that the £100,000 would come out of loan money; and now it was proposed to take another £100,000 from the same source.

**THE PREMIER:** Why did not the hon. member (Mr. Leake) oppose the Agricultural Bank Act.

**MR. LEAKE:** If it were possible to oppose the Act, he would be glad to do so. There was no reason why he should not enter his protest.

**THE PREMIER:** The hon. member opposed anything.

**MR. LEAKE:** Anything that ought to be opposed.

**THE PREMIER:** That was everything.

**MR. LEAKE:** The majority of matters the right hon. gentleman had been proposing to the country ought to be opposed by everybody. For instance, there was very little good in the measures introduced during this session. We owed £2,000,000, and yet we did not know how we stood. The Premier might know, but he had not condescended to tell us; yet he told us he was going to borrow this £100,000 from the Savings Bank. It was not the proper thing to get the money from the Savings Bank, because the money deposited in the Savings Bank was practically at call, and consequently should be invested in what were known as liquid securities—those securities which could be realised at any moment. If there were, unfortunately, a run upon the Savings Bank, the right hon. gentleman would find himself in a position of not being able to pay the debt.

**THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS:** That was not correct.

**MR. LEAKE:** We must remember that the money was borrowed for a term of something like 10 years, and how could we be justified in borrowing money from an institution which was liable to have its money called up on demand? The Savings Bank might call upon the Agricultural Bank to pay on demand, and if the money were not available, one or other of the institutions would go to the wall, and in such an event the Government must be forced to borrow money from other banks or obtain it by way of loan. It was not an advantage to experimentalise in the way the right hon. gentleman proposed, particularly having regard to the present state of affairs.

**THE PREMIER:** Not for one moment did he think the hon. member (Mr. Leake) was doing more than talk for talking's sake; and not for a moment did he suppose the hon. member would get support in this matter. The Agricultural Bank Act was passed in 1894, and it went very slowly at first, but now we had reached the end of the £100,000 authorised at the time the Act was passed. Following out the arguments of the hon. member, we only ought to have allowed so much a year, say £20,000 a year, but

the Act allowed a total expenditure of £100,000. The policy inaugurated had worked satisfactorily, in the opinion of those who had given it attention and knew anything about it, and the policy should be pursued continuously. The Government asked for another instalment, which would last, he supposed, for two or three years. If we were experimentalising or afraid, or if the results were unsatisfactory or we were dissatisfied, he could understand why we should be loth to do more, perhaps, than give a year's supply; but it was acknowledged throughout the length and breadth of the country that the Agricultural Bank Act was one of the very best Acts ever introduced into the colony. It was working well, and was part of the land policy of the country; and what reason was there to say we should not provide more than £50,000?

MR. WILSON: Fifty thousand pounds was quite sufficient, was it not?

THE PREMIER: In his opinion, it was not sufficient. The Government did not want to come to Parliament every year. The member for the Murray (Mr. George) had tried to represent him as saying the Government paid the Savings Bank five per cent. for the money obtained. The hon. member held up *Hansard*, but unless *Hansard* had been revised by the member who made the speech, the report could not be said to be more accurate than the member's own recollection; and even if he (the Premier) had made an error in speaking, the facts were plain. The Government lent to the agriculturist at five per cent., borrowed at three-and-a-half per cent., and paid the Savings Bank depositor three per cent. Those members who opposed the proposal had no faith in this institution; and they would not believe the Bank manager nor himself (the Premier,) nor the Minister of Lands, nor others—they would not believe that the Agricultural Bank Act was one of the best measures ever introduced into the country. If they did believe it and knew the good work it was doing, and that we got twice the value for our money in the improvements made, they would not hesitate to allow the policy to be continued. As to other colonies—very democratic colonies, which some members were always desirous of referring to—what were they doing to

assist the farmers? They were borrowing money to repay mortgages, and to lend to the agriculturists at a cheaper rate than that charged by the financial institutions. Instead of paying perhaps five, six, seven, or eight per cent., farmers obtained money from the Government at four or five per cent., the Government advancing sums at that rate to encourage and assist the agriculturists. The Government of Western Australia were doing nothing of the kind. All we were doing was to lend money for improvements; and no money was to be lent until the work was done or commenced, and this help was limited to advances for clearing, cultivating, and otherwise improving the land. He (the Premier) had watched the institution closely for the last four or five years, and saw that it had been well and carefully managed. There had been no losses, but the institution had been a great success, and that fact was acknowledged throughout the length and breadth of the land. One could not go into a farming district without seeing the good work done under the Act: and all the Government were asking was that the policy which had been carried on for the last five years should be continued, and not be continued with a niggardly hand. There was no doubt whatever as to the advantages of the Bank, which was one of the foundation-stones of land settlement in the country. Those who were opposed to the Bank had no faith in it or in the good work it had been doing. He was surprised at the member for the Murray (Mr. George), who represented a constituency of farmers, throwing obstacles in the way of money being advanced to those who were developing the land resources of the colony; and he was sure that the member for the Murray would not get a majority in the House to agree with him.

MR. GEORGE asked what he had done to deserve the censure of the Premier.

THE PREMIER: The member for the Murray was attempting to limit the amount to be advanced to the Agricultural Bank.

MR. GEORGE: The Premier's memory was failing him.

THE PREMIER: The leader of the member for the Murray was absolutely against the Bank and its operations,



though it was hard to say whether the member for the Canning (Mr. Wilson) or the member for Albany (Mr. Teake) was leading the Opposition. However that might be, if the Agricultural Bank, which had been a great success, were to be interfered with, great weakness would be shown. He himself had great faith in the Bank, because he knew it had done good work, and would yet do good work all over the country; and the least that Parliament could do was to give the institution another term of existence, similar to that which was given to it by the original Act.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS said he could not understand the timidity and distrust exhibited by some members in relation to this Bank, because nothing could be more disastrous to the country than to place a check on the operations of the institution. It was true that with £25,000 the Bank could carry on; but he could give good and sufficient reason why it would be a mistake to limit the advance to £25,000, or even to £50,000. The colony was being advertised abroad, and endeavour made to attract population; and one feature of the advertisement was that every man landing on these shores, and taking up land, could get financial assistance. If it went forth that the Agricultural Bank had only £25,000, or one or two years' money at disposal, and that the Minister of Lands had to run the gauntlet of the House every time he required a shilling, would such a course be likely to stimulate the great work of production? There was no institution in the colony, or out of it, doing such good work on such sound principles and with such good security. Speaking in round numbers, he believed he was quite within the mark when he said that for the £98,000 advanced by the Bank, the Government held security over half a million pounds' worth of property, besides the additional advantage of the clearing of the land. That was the absolute state of affairs at the present time, and confessing that the Bank might be carried on with £25,000, it was from one point of view strange that the Committee should be asked to trust him with five years' money, instead of money for one year. But he had given the best of reasons why the Lands Department should be trusted

with this £100,000, and there was the guarantee of what had been done in the past. Not a single loss had been made, but the institution had been worked at a profit; and did he want another argument in favour of the measure he would remind hon. members, and they would recognise the truth of the statement, that it was just possible there would be what some of them would call a disaster, namely the adoption of federation staring us in the face. Some people went so far as to say, though he himself did not say it, that federation would bring great disaster on land settlement in this colony; and if that were so, an effort ought to be made to minimise that result. Every year hon. members were furnished with a report of the transactions of the Bank, and every detail was placed before them, except, of course, the names of borrowers. He asked members with the fullest confidence to withdraw their opposition to this clause, and he ventured to say that when he submitted the annual report, they would have no reason to regret the trust they had placed in the Government.

MR. GEORGE denied the accusation made by the Premier, that he (Mr. George) was throwing obstacles in the way of the Bill; because all that he endeavoured to do was to show that a matter of this sort required a little consideration. Hon. members were here for the purpose of discussing matters, and not for the purpose of listening to tirades of abuse from members on one side of the House or the other; and if, when they came to discuss a matter, they were simply to be told they had no interest in the country, the best thing they could do would be to clear out of the House and leave the business to a dictatorship. He (Mr. George) recognised no leader but himself, and did not intend to. If he voted on the side of the Premier, he (Mr. George) would no doubt be a white-washed angel, but he would have fallen in the estimation of honest men; and he intended to do his duty to the country.

MR. MITCHELL expressed the hope that the amendment would be withdrawn, because after all if this £100,000 were given to the Government, it would be lent out on the security of land and improvements. In speaking before on this question, he had been under the impres-

sion that the only improvements considered were clearing and cultivation, but he found now that fencing and well-sinking were also taken into account; and for the mistake he had made he was to blame. Unlike some members of the Opposition, he did not attempt to throw any mud, because he saw no cause. During the short time he had had the honour of a seat in the House, he had cultivated an admiration of the member for the Canning (Mr. Wilson), for the lucid manner in which he laid his opinions before the House, and also for the fairness with which that hon. member said those hard things which were, perhaps, necessary in Parliamentary life. People who threw abuse across the House might have no more sense than to do so, but it ill became a lawyer or a gentleman to make use of expressions which had been heard. He cast back such accusations for what they were worth, in the teeth of those who made them.

MR. JAMES: And they were worth very little.

MR. MORAN: Let the hon. member (Mr. James) keep his own house in order.

MR. JAMES: Having always supported the Agricultural Bank, the interjection was meaningless. The expenditure of the proposed increase of capital would extend far beyond the life of the present Parliament. Although he sympathised with those who hesitated to support that increase, he yet maintained that as this extra £100,000 would be entrusted to a man like Mr. Paterson, hon. members could have complete confidence in its wise investment, though the clause undoubtedly required careful consideration.

Amendment (Mr. Wilson's) put, and a division called for by the mover.

THE CHAIRMAN: There was only one voice.

Amendment negatived on the voices, and the clause passed.

Schedule and title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and report adopted.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

THE PREMIER: Hon. members having agreed not to sit on Wednesday evening, and Wednesday being a bank holiday, a half-holiday having been also granted in the Government offices so that civil ser-

vants might attend the opening of the Industrial Exhibition in Perth, it would be well that the House should not meet at all on Wednesday. He moved that the House at its rising do adjourn until Thursday afternoon.

Put and passed.

The House adjourned at 10:46 p.m. until the next Thursday.

## Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 5th October, 1899.

Appropriation Message, Supply—Papers presented—Questions: Midland Junction Workshops—Question: Canning Jarrah Railway, Purchase—Sunday Labour in Mines Bill, first reading—Shunting and Dredging for Gold Bill, first reading—Motion: Australian Contingent, Transvaal—Motion: Draft Commonwealth Bill, Joint Committee's Recommendations; debate on Bill and Amendments, first day—Message: Assent to Bills (4)—Adjournment.

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

#### PRAYERS.

#### APPROPRIATION MESSAGE, SUPPLY.

A Message from the Governor was received and read, recommending an appropriation of £250,000 out of the consolidated revenue fund for the service of the current financial year.

Ordered, that the Message be considered in Committee of Supply at the next sitting of the House.

#### PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the PREMIER: 1, By-laws of the municipal council of Leederville; 2, Meteorological Observations, Perth Observatory, etc., 1898.

Ordered to lie on the table.