

THE PREMIER: All sorts of items for which no amount had been passed by the House.

MR. LEAKE: In every department there was a big vote for incidental expenses: altogether the amount must come to £40,000 or £50,000. He found: incidental expenses Lands and Surveys, £4,500; Minister of Mines, incidental expenses, £4,000; Geological Survey Department, incidental expenses; and the items went right through the Estimates. He moved that the item be reduced by £4,000.

THE PREMIER: This was the usual vote. It was a regular "omnium gatherum." Every vote which was not passed by the House and which came to the Treasury was paid out of this amount. If the sum was large, a new heading was made. It had been customary for members to call for a return as to how this money was spent, and the items were easily supplied. He had no objection to a return being made out, if required. It was no good asking for the item to be reduced, because last year the amount was overdrawn to the extent of £3,000, and this year we would have to do our utmost to keep the amount within £8,000.

MR. GEORGE: This was a kind of Government petty cash account. There was another item which appeared on the Estimates frequently, foreign telegrams and stationery; and the Committee must not forget that two or three years ago the item of foreign telegrams and stationery was made to cover the purchase of a theodolite and other things. It was just as well to draw the attention of hon. members to the fact, because many of them had not been in the House more than a couple of sessions. There was not much use in pressing the proposal for a reduction of the vote to a division, but it was quite right that the House should be given some information, especially when the Premier confessed he practically knew nothing about the matter. The Premier had expressed his willingness to lay a return on the table, but if that had to be done, the Estimates would have to be put on one side for the time being.

THE PREMIER: Did the Auditor General not say anything about this matter?

MR. GEORGE: No doubt the Auditor General drew attention to it, but all the

Premier could do was to worry the Auditor General until he applied for a pension, and no man would have more earned his pension than the Auditor General.

On motion by **MR. LEAKE**, progress reported and leave given to sit again.

ADJOURNMENT.

On motion by the **PREMIER**, the House at 10:42 adjourned until the next evening.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 8th November, 1899.

Paper presented—Land Act Amendment (private) Bill, first reading, select committee City of Perth Tramways Act Amendment Bill, first reading—Fisheries Bill, third reading—Municipal Institutions Bill, order lapsed—Motion: Draft Commonwealth Bill, tenth day, debate concluded, Amendment negatived (Division), motion passed—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the Chair at 7:30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

PAPER PRESENTED.

By the **PREMIER** (for the Commissioner of Railways): Report of Railway Department, 1898-9.

Ordered to lie on the table.

LAND ACT AMENDMENT (PRIVATE) BILL.

Introduced by **MR. JAMES**, and read a first time.

On motion by **MR. JAMES**, Bill referred to a select committee, consisting of Mr. Illingworth, Mr. Rason, Mr. Robson, Mr. Wood, and the mover; to report on the next Monday.

CITY OF PERTH TRAMWAYS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Introduced by the MINISTER OF MINES (for the Commissioner of Railways), and read a first time.

FISHERIES BILL.

Read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

MUNICIPAL INSTITUTIONS BILL.

ORDER LAPSED.

The House having resolved into Committee to further consider the Bill,

MR. A. FORREST (in charge of the Bill) moved that the Chairman do leave the Chair. He said his intention was to withdraw the Bill, and this mode of procedure would have that result. At this late period of the session it would be useless to proceed further with the Bill, because he was informed that even if the Bill passed through the Assembly, it would be impossible for the Legislative Council to discuss the Bill and pass it this session. In South Australia, when a Bill had passed through one House it could be taken up at the same stage in the next session; but here the Constitutional practice was different, and all the work of an unfinished Bill had to be done over again in the next session. Under these circumstances, and seeing the session was drawing to a close, he submitted the motion.

Question put and passed. The Chairman left the Chair without reporting to the House, and the order lapsed.

MOTION — DRAFT COMMONWEALTH BILL, JOINT COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS.

TENTH DAY OF DEBATE.

Debate resumed on motion by the Premier (5th October), for referring to electors the Bill as amended at the Conference of Premiers, and the Bill as amended in the Joint Committee's report.

MR. CONNOR (East Kimberley): At this late stage of the debate, after the question has been so fully handled by members of both sides of the House, there is not much left for me to say; but it is the duty of every member in the House who, for the time being, represents the people of the country, to express his opinion. When the movement in favour

of federation took form before the last Convention, I was an ardent federalist, and expressed myself as such. At that time I thought the great and glorious idea of a united and federated Australia was one of the finest ambitions that a man could assist in achieving; but there are practical difficulties which arise after the glamour has somewhat worn off, and I must confess that since the Federal Bill has been submitted and adopted in the other colonies and brought in here, I changed my mind. There are still, I am sorry to say, people in this colony who hold the idea I held then, namely the idea of federation at any price, and it is a pity that this should be so. It is unpatriotic and unwise for any man to make up his mind to do that which is not logical and not right, simply for the purpose of satisfying such an idea as that contained in this scheme of federation. I propose to give a few of the reasons why I have changed my mind. The first reason, and I think it is an important one, is that this country is not developed to the extent necessary to benefit by federation. We have not the population we should have before we join the other States, and our representation in the Federal Parliament will be so little, and so little thought of, that I am afraid our representatives might as well be at home. There is another and very sufficient reason, even if it were the only one, which it is not, and that is the loss of revenue we will sustain under the suggested federation. If we, in ten years from now, join the Commonwealth of Australia as a State, we will be just in time, because by then this country will have developed to such an extent that we may have a representation equal to that of any of the other States, and be able to hold our own in the Federal Parliament. If, as is suggested by federalists at any price, we lose from our revenue some £230,000 per annum, I can only say that must have a very deterrent effect on the development of this country, independent of its agricultural or manufacturing interests. Such a loss must have a very bad effect on the public works policy, which is most important, seeing that we require more money to be spent per head of population in this direction, than any of the other Australian colonies. At present we can afford

the expenditure; but federation would to a large extent cripple our power to carry out public works. I also hold that federation will be the means of to a great extent damaging our credit. If we go to the London market for a loan after we have joined the Commonwealth, we go with a second mortgage to offer, the first mortgage being held over this colony by the federated States of Australia, who will claim prior call on our purse, and we should not be in such a good position as we are at the present time. The agricultural population of this colony must be hurt under the suggested federation, because they will have to compete with the greatest State-aided industries the world knows. Our agricultural population will have to compete with Victorian industries, which have had bonuses for a great number of years, and on the fostering of which thousands of pounds have been spent. The price paid for the fostering of these industries has been fully justified in Victoria, because that colony can now compete with us, and put us out of the market if we allow their goods to enter this colony free of duty. That argument, I think, is sufficient in itself against federation for this colony, because if bonuses have done so much for Victoria, what would they not do in a new country like this, where there is plenty of space for development for some years to come. We here ought to have the same privilege of giving bonuses to foster industries as has been exercised in Victoria. There is another industry which hon. members in favour of federation at any price say will not be affected, but which I say will be affected, and that is the important coal industry, just springing into existence at Collie. We have been told that the Federal Inter-State Commission will fix railway rates to suit this colony; but I do not believe the Inter-State Commission will. I give that as my opinion, and until it is absolutely proved that such rates will be granted to us, we have no right to trust other people to that extent. We all know that Newcastle coal, if brought to Fremantle and carried by railway at the same rate as is charged for Collie coal to the goldfields, will compete very seriously with the local article, if it will not be the means of stopping the development of the industry

altogether. With the great distance from here to the goldfields, and the high rate which forms such a large proportion of the cost of the article landed there, Newcastle coal-owners would be placed on almost the same footing as those engaged in the local industry. Coal must come to Fremantle or Perth, and the cost of the freight from Collie to Perth and Fremantle is very nearly the same, or not much below the freight from Newcastle to Fremantle. According to legal luminaries in the House, we should lose absolutely the control of our Postal Department, and that is a most important matter, well worthy of consideration by the people of the colony, both inside and outside the House. This colony is so large, and our population so scattered, that we require more extensive works, and more money laid out in connection with the upkeep and laying down of telegraph lines, than do the people in any of the other colonies. Then comes the question whether the other colonies with a population of 4,000,000 will not say, in regard to Western Australia with a population of 170,000 or 200,000, "Are we going to allow those people to get any more per head to develop their works or lay down telegraph lines?" I think they would say "No," and that is a very serious matter. Some one in South Australia—I believe it was the Premier of that colony—intimated there might be a possibility that he would allow us to have a railway connecting Western Australia with South Australia. But he spoke without any responsibility or any mandate from the country or Parliament; and if we are to take his private word, and that is to be sufficient, we are very easily pleased. We are told about reciprocity with the other colonies, the good-will and national feeling that exist, and all that sort of thing, and while on this subject I may mention a matter that occurred within I think the last fortnight or so. Any member who follows the telegrams from the other colonies will have seen there was a movement on foot to test the right which this House had to make and impose a dividend tax. That is the reciprocity we will get, if we enter Federation without having hard-and-fast lines so that we will be safe in joining. That is the way in which we shall be treated in

larger matters. When the time comes for us to join federation under this Bill the Federal Parliament, although not having certain matters under their control, will still possess sufficient power to be able to turn the "screw" on in some way when they want to interfere. They will find means to interfere with more things than are set forth in the Bill. Then we have the opinion of Mr. Coghlan, who is, I think, the greatest authority in this matter. I said I could not find anything new to say, but I consider it my duty to refer to these things to show they have not lapsed, and that we do not forget them. Besides the authority of Mr. Coghlan we have also that of some of the greatest statesmen who went to the Convention. It is not necessary for me to give their names, but they say that it would not pay this colony to join federation at present. The other colonies want Western Australia to join simply, as the hon. member for the Ashburton (Hon. S. Burt) said last night, to "collar" our markets. I know what the feeling of a large section of the people in New South Wales has been since the vote in regard to federation was cast, and I tell you that, if the question of federation again came before that colony, there would be no federation for New South Wales. A great many who voted for federation are now very sorry for it.

MR. VOSPER: The usual reaction.

MR. CONNOR: Yes. A great many reactions have taken place. There is the reaction of some hon. gentlemen who attended the Convention as representatives of this colony, but did not do very much when they were there, and came back and said they were not going to have Western Australia made the dumping ground for all the rubbish of the Eastern colonies. I venture to say that before another two years are over there will be another reaction on the part of one hon. member, who will wish he had not gone so far in this particular business as he has done. Another hon. member comes to the House and urges that because a lot of people went from this colony to the Conventions at Adelaide and Sydney, we have no right to refuse to join federation. I myself was an ardent federalist until I found that federation would not suit this colony. The gentleman to whom I refer says that no matter

what was done or not done, we must join federation at any price because, as I say, a number of gentlemen went from this colony to Sydney and Adelaide. That is not statesmanlike, it is not politic, and it is not common sense. The stand taken on the goldfields in connection with this matter is a very strong one, and the people on those fields form a large proportion of the population of this colony. I am sorry to have to say it, but with them it is not so much a question of federation or no federation, as it is a question of getting rid of the people at present in power in Western Australia. That is what I gather from them. If you say to people on the goldfields, "Will you tell me one single benefit the country will derive from joining federation?" they cannot tell you anything. I say to people there, "Why do you want federation? We get railways built and the country developed. Tell me the reason." They have no reason to give, and, if they had, they would not give it. Another way in which federation will seriously affect Western Australia is this: it will cripple the borrowing powers of individuals, companies, or trading concerns. I am speaking as far as I know, and at present the Adelaide, Melbourne, or Sydney investors will not lend sixpence on the best freehold rent producing properties in this colony. They say "We cannot at present," and, if asked why, they reply, "Oh, you are going to join federation. We are not going to lend you money when we know that as soon as you join the federal movement your colony will go to the wall." That is the feeling amongst men who have money, and who think most. I do not intend to oppose the motion, for this reason, that there is no other before the House. I am rather sorry to have to say it, but if a motion were brought before the House to strike out both of these Bills, so that there should be no Bill sent to the people, I should support it, although it is not fair to the people to say so; still, I consider I have a right to do what I deem best for this country at present, and my opinion is that it would be better if both these Bills were done away with and not sent to the people at all. If both Bills go to the people, and the people are satisfied with the second of them, and the other States are willing to admit us, I suppose we will have to follow

that lead; but in my opinion it will be a bad thing for the country to do so. I hope that if the two Bills come before the people, and they accept the Bill as amended by the Select Committee, the other States will not agree to the amended Bill when it comes before them, and then we cannot join federation.

MR. HARPER (Beverly): It is usual, when any great change is proposed in our private, commercial, or public life that will bring about any great alteration in the circumstances of the people, to ask those who are intimately concerned their views on the matter, and that is the course I consider should be taken in this matter of federation. In this House it was proposed to do that by means of the Select Committee. Those who were in favour of federation said, "No. We do not want any evidence. We do not want to send the question to a Select Committee. We do not want any information in the matter. We want to send the Bill to the people." Fortunately that opinion was not indorsed by this House, the question being sent to a Select Committee, and the people consulted were those representing public finance, agriculture, manufactures, and trade. If you take the evidence adduced before the Select Committee, you may fairly say, in the words which fell from the hon. member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth), that it was entirely against this colony entering the federation. But those who have been urging federation say, "Never mind those opinions. Do not take any notice of them. Send the Bill to the people. We tell you that this evidence is worthless. Follow us. We are the people who can tell you what is good. Never mind what those interested in the matter concerned say."

MR. VOSPER: "Open your mouth and shut your eyes."

MR. HARPER: That has been the policy all through. I cannot for the life of me see where the wisdom of that policy is. If these gentlemen are asked this question, and it has been asked over and over again: what are the benefits we are to receive from federation? and they give no answer; and if evidence is produced to show that enormous injuries will accrue, but they say "Never mind; do not believe them: follow us blindly," I think their line of action must only

produce their own downfall, because the common sense of the people after a time must make them say, "If these men cannot answer those questions, and cannot rebut that evidence, surely they are unsafe men to follow." The member for Albany (Mr. Leake) made his position very distinct. He opposed the Bill being sent to the Joint Committee; and when it was suggested in the Joint Committee that evidence should be taken, he moved that no evidence be taken. That showed, to my mind, that he feared the evidence, that he thought it would damage his case to have evidence; and I think he was justified in that fear. The member for East Perth (Mr. James), although not a member of the Joint Committee, has exhibited from the first a sublime contempt, which few people can rival in this House, for anyone who holds a different view from his own. When he first began his crusade in favour of federation, with a very high hand indeed, he considered that he was leading the whole population, with banners flying, to follow his views to a successful issue; although those views were totally different from some he had enunciated a short time previously. For this change in his views the hon. member has up to this time failed to give us a reason, and that fact seems to me to put him in an extremely weak position. If a man alters his mind after taking up a certain position, it is surely his duty to explain to those who follow or who may wish to follow him, why he makes the change; but up to the present, so far as I have been able to ascertain, the hon. member has not said one word to show what reasons have brought about this change in his mind; and in a matter like this, when a person cannot give his reasons, I say it is a wild act to follow him. The member for Wellington (Hon. H. W. Venn), who is an extreme enthusiast in this cause, has said a good many things which to my mind are very strange. He informed us the other night that not to federate would bring a great calamity upon this country. That is a bald statement, but the hon. member has not made the slightest attempt to show us where the calamity comes in. If he believes that our standing out of federation will be a great calamity in view of the drift of public opinion during the last few

months, it is surely incumbent upon the hon. member, it is surely a serious duty devolving on him, to show us whence this calamity will come and how it can come; and so far, the hon. member has made no attempt to do this. He furthermore said everyone admits that if we do not join the federation now we shall by and by be forced to join. I certainly demur to that statement. I can see nothing to force us to join, if we do not wish to do so. I think it is absurd to say that if it does not suit us to join we shall be compelled to come in whether we like it or not. But the most astounding statement of all I heard the hon. member make was made here the other evening, when he informed us that by joining the federation, the progress of this country would be magnified ten times. Well, that is an extraordinary statement in the face of the pronouncements of all the leading financiers of the Eastern colonies to the effect that, under federation, this country must suffer enormously in its revenue; and to make such a statement in the face of those opinions, and the face of the evidence produced before the Select Committee—for the hon. member to set up his opinion against the opinions of all those authorities and to say that the progress of this country would be accelerated tenfold, is I think a most absurd statement, and one the hon. member should justify. Another statement made by the same hon. member (Hon. H. W. Venn) was that if we stand out of federation there will be a combination against us, and we shall find ourselves in an untenable position. This is also a statement which requires justification. I cannot in the least perceive its truth. It is a contention that is justified neither by history nor by any process of reasoning which presents itself to my mind; and I should be very glad indeed if the hon. member would inform us how he draws his conclusion. It must be very evident to all that the wave of enthusiasm which started some months ago, headed by the member for East Perth (Mr. James), has by a natural process been slowly exhausting itself.

MR. JAMES: Refer the Bill to the country, and the electors will show you whether that is so.

MR. HARPER: Yes. Of course you can say that.

MR. JAMES: Yes; test the question.

MR. HARPER: But I prefer to believe in the common sense of the electors of this country.

MR. JAMES: Hear, hear. Refer the question to them.

MR. HARPER: I am convinced that common sense is regaining its sway over the people. They were led away into a wild flight of imagination by the hon. member and others; but what has told against him and those who are with him is that the questions he and his friends have been asked they cannot answer, do not answer, and say they will not attempt to answer. That state of things cannot go on indefinitely. The common sense of the people will lead them to say, "Well, if these men will not answer those questions, their case cannot be good."

MR. JAMES: Therefore refer the question to the common sense of the electors.

MR. HARPER: The electors will have plenty of time to give their views on federation in the proper constitutional manner. Perhaps these considerations with regard to the influence of common sense on the electors in this country do not apply so much to the goldfields electors as to the people in the more settled parts of the colony. On the goldfields, the conditions are very peculiar; they are conditions which perhaps people in general do not notice. If we take the goldfields people as represented by their local Press, and take their aspirations as depicted in their local Press, we must look on those people as being extremely arrogant, selfish, and cruel; but if we take the goldfields people as we find their representatives in this House, and as we meet them in everyday life, we find they are people of large intelligence and of large capacity, and with regard to their members in this House, men who are ready to look with a reasonable eye, and with a fair and just eye, upon this and upon other questions which come before them. But I say, if we take the goldfields population as represented by the local Press of the goldfields, we cannot arrive at a true appreciation of the character of that population. I will point out an instance of this. If a referendum had been taken three years ago on the Eastern goldfields as to whether or not the goldfields people would accept the Coolgardie water scheme, then, judging by the goldfields Press,

I should say that we should not have had a vote in favour of the enterprise. But would that be so if such a referendum were taken to-day? [A MEMBER: Yes.] An hon. member says "Yes," but I do not think he knows much about the subject. The nature of the occupation in which the bulk of the goldfields people are engaged is one which produces great excitement: the miners live almost for one idea, that of getting gold. Many of them are cosmopolitan in their instincts: they do not care a straw for the country in which they live, and will do just what the prejudices of those surrounding them and of their local Press encourage them to do. When the member for East Perth (Mr. James) was urging this campaign with that fluency and volubility by which he is distinguished, and with that confidence which he assumes, I recollect hearing him say on one occasion, "We do not care a straw whether the farmers support us or not: we can carry it without the farmers. Of course we would sooner have had their votes; but we do not consider them at all." I wonder how the hon. member feels now with regard to that subject.

MR. JAMES: I said nothing of the sort. I rise to a point of order. I said nothing about not considering the farmers. I said the question could be carried without them, but I would rather have their support.

MR. HARPER: The hon. member informed the meeting he was addressing—I heard him myself—that he did not require the farmers' vote to carry federation.

MR. JAMES: That is quite true.

MR. HARPER: He said he would prefer the farmers' votes, but that he was entirely independent of them. Well, does he think so to-day? I think we should look at this question as it affects the people whom we should most consider; and what section of the people should we most consider? I think the people we should consider first, second, and probably third, are those who in the future will have to earn their living out of the resources of this country. Those are the people we must consider—those who are born perhaps with health and strength and with nothing else. If we ask those people—I am not speaking now of the goldfields people, because they are a shifting population, but of those who

have to seek their living in the permanent industries of the colony, and who should therefore be first considered—if we ask the agriculturist, the manufacturer, the local trader, the local financier, we shall find one and all will tell us that if this colony join the federation, we shall largely weaken the resources of the country and seriously reduce the opportunities of the colony's wage-earners. And the consequences of federation are not only for us to-day, not only for this generation, but for the generations which will come after us. If we do not preserve to future generations, to the fullest extent, the opportunity of earning their livelihood in this country, we shall injure not only the present generation but the future of the State. One remark I should like to make with regard to the contention of the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth). The other night, and on several occasions, I understood him to say that the object of a federal tariff was to preserve and extend the trade between the colonies at the expense of those outside the colonies. I think I do not misquote him in saying he stated that as the main object of federation. And he previously informed us that federation would not have much, if any, effect upon the prices of those commodities on which the taxes were imposed. I hope I do not misquote the hon. member: that is what I understood him to say.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I do not remember saying anything of that sort.

MR. HARPER: I think those statements can be found in *Hansard*; and, in addition, the hon. member quoted one or two instances. If that be his contention, he entirely contradicts the position he has frequently taken up in this House, which is that the effect of a duty on goods is not only to increase the price of the article by the amount of the duty, but furthermore that the person paying that duty makes a profit on the duty.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That is it.

MR. HARPER: Well, those two sentiments will, I think, be found in *Hansard* as coming from that hon. member, and I cannot see how he can reconcile them.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I only made one of the statements—not the other.

MR. HARPER: If the hon. member only adheres to one statement now, he

must admit that the imposition of the duties which we expect under a federal tariff, with the object, as he says, of encouraging trade, must have the effect of raising the prices of commodities.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Just so.

MR. HARPER: One position taken up, and strongly taken up, by a number of hon. members who have spoken in favour of federation, is that we can trust the politicians of Eastern Australia to give this colony fair play. That may or not be so: politicians are creatures of circumstances, and are just what the electors choose to make them. They will have to obey their constituents, even though the orders they receive may be against the interests of this colony.

MR. VOSPER: As a class, politicians cannot trust themselves.

MR. HARPER: Many people, in considering this matter, seem to miss the point that it is not the politicians we have to consider; it is not the representatives of the people who will have the main power to injure us: it is the traders. It is a notorious characteristic of all men that if you give them an opportunity of making profit, they will make it, no matter who suffers. The position of the traders in the Eastern colonies under federation will be that, having the capital and the power to combine, and having the position, they will be enabled to entirely control the trade of this colony, to the detriment of those who live here and who have to pay the taxes. The traders in the other colonies can form a combination in regard to any industry, as is notoriously done in that great federated instance which is so often quoted to us, America. They can combine and entirely prevent anybody except those within the charmed ring from interfering in certain trades. This is so notorious in the United States that I believe something like 60 of the main industries of the country are entirely in the hands of rings, and trusts, and combines; and the United States Parliament during the last seven or eight years has been trying to curtail the power of these trusts, but so far the Parliament has been powerless. This is one of the objects that is moving in regard to federation: it is the capitalist who desires scope for the use of his capital: he requires to control all the industries of the country. While we are segregated States, capital-

ists cannot do that; but once we become federated, capitalists will have supreme control, and there will be no power of overcoming them. This is so important that I think we should review the question most carefully. It is one of the strong points against federation. We may, by representation in Parliament, alter laws which are unsuitable to us; but once we join the federation we make a cast-iron law, by which the trader has complete control, no matter what Parliament may do. Federation under these conditions appears to be more like spoilation than federation. We shall be giving the power to people who care nothing but for their own welfare, people who wish to make themselves rich at the expense of others. It is impossible that we, as a State, will be happy in federation if this kind of thing goes on. It will be only federation in name, and there will be a feeling of wrong-doing existing amongst us. We who are opposed to federation are taxed by some hon. members with having no faith in our country. That is a travesty of truth. We have faith in the country and in ourselves, and those who wish to join federation have no faith in themselves. The federationists say they want to be under the wing of other people, and do not feel competent to control the destinies of this great country. But so far we have controlled the country fairly successfully: we are not afraid of the future, and if the other States combine against us, we are quite prepared to hold our own. This instinct of standing aloof is one of the brightest traits in the British character: it has made the British race.

MR. LEAKE: As a race.

MR. HARPER: To be able to stand alone and fight their own cause. The hon. member opposite (Mr. Leake) said, "I fear"—that has been the burden of his song—"if we do not join as an original State, we may suffer." I do not care: we are better able to manage our affairs than we can be as a paltry five members protesting against the will of 75. The evidence which has been produced before the Select Committee, and the evidence which has been given by all those who have earned a name as financiers in the Eastern colonies, added to a deep and earnest reflection on this subject, has produced in my mind a strong conviction that

the very worst course we can pursue at the present time is to adopt federation; and I, to the utmost of my poor power, shall use every endeavour to oppose it. In furtherance of that, I beg to move:

That all the words after the word "should," in the last line but one of the resolution, be struck out, with the view of inserting the following words in lieu thereof: "not be referred to the vote of the electors, as neither of them sufficiently protects the interests of Western Australia."

MR. A. FORREST: I second the amendment.

POINT OF ORDER.

MR. WILSON (Canning): I would like to ask your ruling, Mr. Speaker, whether this amendment is not a direct negative on the motion before the House, therefore out of order.

THE SPEAKER: I think the amendment is in order.

DEBATE CONTINUED.

MR. LOCKE (Sussex): To begin with, I may tell hon. members I am not a federationist, at any rate not an enthusiastic one; but I would like to say a few words with regard to the amendment before it is put to a vote. It appears to me that the object of forcing federation on the colony at the present time is more a political move than anything else. If there is any necessity to send the question of federation to the people, the course we have always adopted when there has been a difference of opinion, to dissolve the House and send the question to the people through the members, is the right one. I think that course would meet with the approval of all parties. I do not think there is any likelihood of there being an overwhelming majority in favour of federation in those circumstances. It appears to me if the question is sent to the people, we shall get a lot of newspapers on the goldfields trying to lead a crowd of people who do not know what they are asking for, and who have never taken the trouble to find out. Every hon. member knows that if one goes round with a list, except it be a subscription list, he can get the name of every one he meets to it. On the goldfields the other day I was almost persuaded to sign the petition myself. It was put before me in almost every public-

house I visited. These lists are handed round to every one who enters these places: I suppose they are offered a dozen times to some people who are asked to sign the papers; and ninety-nine times out of every hundred the people do not take the trouble to find out what the papers are about: in many cases the petition was signed without the people knowing what they were signing. I have seen this kind of thing in little country places like we have down in the South-West. People will sign both for and against, in many cases, and no doubt a great many people on this referendum will sign both for and against. I do not think the referendum is a fair way of finding out the feelings of the people. My opinion is that if the question was sent to the people of the country by a dissolution, there would be level-headed men contesting the election on both sides, and these men would put the case before the people, and in that way we should get a very accurate idea of what the public of the colony want. It appears to me that federation is a goldfields cry, although there are one or two members belonging to the settled parts of the colony who are in favour of federation. One or two members have said that they are in favour of sending the Bill to the people, but they do not believe in the Bill. That appears to me to be a funny kind of politics, and I think if a member went to the country on that kind of statement he would lose his seat, while the man who was not in favour of federation would be most likely to be elected. At any rate, if members went before their constituents, we should find out whether the people were favourable to federation or not. And, after all, what is the question? In my opinion, the question before the goldfields people is not federation at all. On the one hand we hear these people say they will have separation and will institute a colony of their own, and on the other hand they shout for federation; whereas one aspiration is as distinct from the other as anything could possibly be. The fact is that this cry is created by the Press on the goldfields, and by agitators—I do not know what to call them except political agitators.

THE PREMIER: They poison the atmosphere.

MR. LOCKE: These men go amongst a crowd of goldfields diggers or alluvial miners and say, "Vote for federation: it means breaking up the meat ring." No doubt the Press and the agitators convince those people, who do not know anything better, that there is a "meat ring." I myself do not believe there is a "meat ring;" but if there is, there can be just as strong rings under federation as at present. In fact, I believe that even in America there are rings, and that is a federated country, which is often held up to us as an example. The idea of "bursting up the meat ring" is a fallacy which has been instilled into the people who have not sense enough to understand or do not take the trouble to find out the truth. The next idea, I am sorry to say, is to oust the present Government; the idea apparently being that, if the Government cannot be ousted in any other way, they shall be by means of the federation cry.

THE PREMIER: That is what the Press says.

MR. LOCKE: No doubt if any other Government were in power, and there were no other possible means of getting that Government out, the goldfields people would federate again, the agitators being against the powers-that-be, whatever those powers are. But I am inclined to think there is a sort of "slump" in federation at the present time, and that all this enthusiasm in East Perth is "fizzing out" a bit. I cannot help it if I do not explain the matter properly, but I think that is just what has happened. The federation "slump" has set in, and will continue for a time, and if we could postpone union for four or five years, or for any term, I fancy the enthusiasm would be found on the other side. The people in Ireland at the present time would be very enthusiastic if they could get home rule; and if the people here realised the position better, the enthusiasm here would also be on that side; and if federation be put off for a time, I, at any rate, would not be very frightened as to the opinion of the general public. I believe in home rule: we have got it now, and have prospered under it for some years, and, personally, I am satisfied to stick to the present condition of affairs. It has been suggested by several enthusiasts that if we do not get federation now, we will never get it on the same

terms as are now offered. But what terms are offered to us? Those wise men of the East some time ago told us we could not join them on equal terms, and it was suggested that they should give us £300,000 or £400,000 per annum as a sort of bonus for taking our country from us; but we did not see our way to accept the offer. If those wise men of the East decide we cannot meet them on even terms, or on the terms as suggested in the Bill, has it ever been explained by any member, even by the member for Albany (Mr. Leake), how we can do so? The other day the member for Albany said that if we do not federate now, the other colonies would not take us in by and by; and one gentleman on the Government side of the House asked what advantage there was in joining the Commonwealth as an original State. The reply to that by the member for Albany was, "Oh, do not be foolish," or words to that effect; but he did not tell, nor has anyone told, what the advantage is of joining as an original State. We have had the evidence of actuaries and experts, but they have all told us what we would lose, not one of them mentioning any item in regard to which we would receive a benefit, except in the shape of enthusiasm at East Perth and a big flag. But, as I said, no doubt the enthusiasm is settling down, and the union-jack is big enough at the present time to cover us. I hope members on both sides of the House will hesitate before they vote in favour of sending this Bill to the people—a Bill which no one, with the exception perhaps of the East Perth enthusiast, honestly believes will be of advantage to the settlers of the country. Some members will vote for the Bill because their constituents want it, and other members will vote from other motives; but they must all realise that this colony, for some years to come, will be put back if we federate. If members really think federation would be a disadvantage to the colony, why do they not vote accordingly, and throw out the Bill? Though I never were returned to the House again, I would vote against federation, if I were of opinion that it was not a good thing. The member for the Canning (Mr. Wilson) said the other night that we had not the courage to throw out the Bill; but I do not believe

that yarn. I hope members to-night will have the courage to, at any rate, attempt to throw the Bill out: at least I will, and I hope I shall have some supporters. If I had to stand alone I would battle until I was the laugh from one end of the country to the other, before I would vote against my conviction that federation, at the present time, is not a good thing. If, however, the House decide that the question shall be sent to the people in the slipshod sort of way as proposed, I hope those against the Bill will reach the people first, because there is a good deal in that. I have not heard it suggested whether there shall be a certain majority to decide the question, or whether it shall be left to a bare majority. But I think that consideration for the majority of settlers in this end of the colony—

MR. ROBSON: Which end?

MR. LOCKE: In the settled portion, the South-West.

MR. ROBSON: What about the settlers in the unsettled portion?

MR. LOCKE: The member for Geraldton can speak afterwards. I would like to know now whether it would not be possible to fix a majority, because I believe that if it were realised a bare majority would carry the question, people would not support the proposal to send the Bill to the referendum. The member for West Perth (Mr. Wood) the other night said he was going to support sending this Bill to the people, although he knew federation was not a good thing for us, and that if we had to federate we would make the best of a bad bargain. That is not much of an argument, because, if we are bound to make a bargain, we had better make a good one. I think I did ask the member for Albany what we were going to gain by federation, and if he has the opportunity, I hope he will answer the question. We realise that we shall lose a lot, but nobody either inside the House or outside has yet suggested that we are going to gain anything.

MR. LEAKE: Read the Premier's speech in May last year.

THE PREMIER: I did not say we were going to gain anything.

MR. KINGSMILL: The Premier is the only authority that appeals to the member for Sussex.

MR. LOCKE: I think some member said that the Premier at the Federal Convention was in favour of federation, and, therefore, it was a foregone conclusion the House would agree with him. But that is not the position I take up, because whatever the Premier said, we have a right to say "no;" and if that is the only argument in favour of federation, it is a very lame one. It is unfortunate we have not a full House when the division on this question is to be taken. There are several members sick or away, and I do not see that it would make any difference whether we divide to-night or next week, seeing that there is plenty of business to go on with in the meantime. But it appears to be the intention to push the House to a division to-night, and I suppose I must abide by their decision. At the same time I would like to raise my voice against deciding such an important question as this in a sparse House: it would be much better if every available member were present. If that is impossible, and it is the intention of the leaders on this question to force a division to-night, I hope members will at any rate hesitate before they commit the country to a bad bargain, which would bind us for all time. It would be better to hesitate, and wait and see how the other colonies get on under federation. No one has ever told us what we will lose by not entering as an original State. I do not think we would lose anything, but that we would gain. I have much pleasure in supporting the amendment, and I hope it will be carried.

MR. DOHERTY (North Fremantle): It seems to be a growing custom in this House for members who intend to vote upon a national question like this to give expression to their opinions. I, for one, would have preferred the custom not to be carried out in its entirety, because, after the many able speeches I have heard on this subject, I approach the question with a great deal of diffidence. Notably one able speech, which I think reflects a great deal of credit, especially upon the anti-Billite side, was that delivered by the hon. member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper). The lucid manner in which he analysed that Bill and placed it before the House, puts him in the foremost rank

of the anti-Billites, and he deserves the greatest credit from all members of the House, and also I think from the people of the colony. It is a great pity, so far as the country is concerned, that his speech was not printed and sent broadcast, because it was one of the ablest ever made in this House on this particular subject. Day by day we are asked why we should not enter federation, as the other colonies have joined this union. But we do not run on parallel lines, and I will give a cursory glance over the reasons why other colonies should join and we should stay out. We have in the first instance Queensland. Queensland went in for federation on an antagonistic vote by the North against the South, the people in the North standing somewhat in the same position as the people on our goldfields. They are antagonistic to the South, because they think the southern people are concentrating all the works and manufactures in the South of the country, and are not doing justice to the North. The people of the North of Queensland think federation would be better at any price than the Government carried on in Brisbane. Queensland has a sugar industry, and will be able to pour thousands and thousands of tons of sugar into the various colonies free of duty. We have again New South Wales. New South Wales is practically superior to all the colonies in her trade. Not only has she a large wool industry from which she receives a large revenue, but she has also her surplus stock, and she is independent of the other colonies. Victoria necessarily would join federation, because in Victoria they have at the present day sufficient machinery and works to supply a population four times as great as that already in the colony, and it is only natural that she should wish to get a market in New South Wales, Queensland, and Western Australia. We also look at South Australia. Broken Hill helped her to retrieve her lost fortunes, and when Broken Hill probably declined somewhat, Western Australia opened out, and she had the market of Western Australia in her hands. Now come the great reasons why Western Australia should not join, and I have pointed them out before in this House. The hon. member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) last night gave a kind of direct negative to the

speech of the Attorney General (Hon. R. W. Pennefather). He said we should only lose £330,000. Of course the House looks to a certain extent upon the hon. member for Central Murchison as a financial authority, but I think his figures are simply on the surface. If you put three and three together, he can make six of them, or if you put six and six together, he can make twelve.

MR. LEAKE: He could not make more.

MR. DOHERTY: But he never looks beyond, and does not see what the six may develop into, or what might be lost. The hon. member says that we will only lose the £300,000 that we derive as revenue from the Eastern colonies; but he must remember that when we have protection against the outside world, the amount of goods imported from over the sea will drop to a half exactly.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Is it exactly a half?

MR. DOHERTY: I should say about a half.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I am glad the hon. member is accurate.

MR. DOHERTY: My assertion is about as accurate as your statements. When we have against the outside world a 40 per cent. duty (which will be the recognised tariff in your pet country, Victoria, where you were such a protectionist), the falling off in the imports from the outside world will, I think, be one-half. The revenue, instead of being £1,000,000, will drop to £225,000, and in place of losing, as some people say, £300,000, we should lose £775,000. We cannot possibly carry on the Government of this country if we lose such an immense amount as this. If hon. members want the figures, I am perfectly prepared to give them. We derive £400,000 from the intercolonial trade, and £600,000 from the oversea trade; and there will be a dead loss of the £400,000; the £600,000 will be reduced to £300,000; and then we give a quarter of that to keep up the Federal Government, 2,000 miles away. That reduces the total down to £225,000, or a loss of £775,000. I repeat that what we should lose under federation would be not only £300,000, but three quarters of a million, and people have not considered this. A gentleman whom I suppose you have all heard of, Mr. Burke, the leader of the alluvialists, said before

an audience that the Bill recognised the sovereign right of the people. These persons are ignorant of the Bill. Let them read Clause 51, and note what is going to happen: let them read that clause and find out what there is for this Parliament to do. There is not a single item that we can legislate on, regarding which they cannot override us. And let them read Clause 109, which is a beautiful clause. I wonder where our members were when such a clause was introduced into the Bill. These people talk about a democratic Bill, but the Bill is simply got up to overrule the smaller States.

MR. GEORGE: It is an erratic Bill.

MR. DOHERTY: It is erratic: it simply means murder and suicide to this colony. The clause says:

When a law of a State is inconsistent with a law of the Commonwealth, the latter shall prevail, and the former shall, to the extent of the inconsistency, be invalid.

What power has the State? The Federal Parliament will have all the power. There is not even a Dog Act on which the Federal Parliament cannot legislate—such a measure as that introduced last session in reference to dogs wearing collars—the Federal Parliament could even override a measure of that kind. Again, what will federation do? Will the population we have now remain with us? No; it will go to the centres of industries, and the industries will certainly not be with us, but with the other colonies. Our population must necessarily go, and I think that if there is one thing the Government have a right to do, it is to look forward to the growing population, the rising generation. Probably the people who are men to-day do not require the same care as those growing up into manhood; and if the Government will not look forward with a view of employment being found for young people, our sons and daughters will be left without employment and will have to go elsewhere, our population thus decreasing. I cannot point to a greater example of population and industries going down, if local government is taken away, than my own country. People who have studied the history of Ireland will find that such men as Grattan fought to their dying day, and were carried into the House of Parliament in Ireland to fight against the Union. Men like him, of great intellect,

knew what the country would lose by the abolition of self-government. Again, O'Connell fought against the union. The country was excited, and it was found that population were decreasing and trade going from them. O'Connell fought for the love of his country and for the right of his own State to rule itself. Then we come to the movement in 1848, and find men like Mitchell and Martin and others who preferred to take up arms and fight for local government. In 1865 had the feeling died out? No; we find that in that year there were men prepared to die for their country. They were only a handful of men, but their deeds were noble. In 1880 we found men like Parnell fighting for the starving people of Ireland. The population went down from 8,000,000 to 4,000,000; and here in this country, where we have everything to make us great, we are asked to do voluntarily what my country was forced to do. Voluntarily we are going to cast away our livelihood, our homes, and all that people have fought for in the old country for years and years. And who are the people most in favour of federation to-day? I am sorry to say they are my own countrymen, because most of them whom I meet say they want federation—I am sure I do not know why.

MR. GEORGE: They are "agin the Government."

MR. DOHERTY: Against the Government? It may be so; but I know that countries with greater opportunities than this colony have been killed by the want of local government. There are no possibilities to which we cannot rise; there is no population which we cannot support; and yet in these circumstances we are prepared to hand over our government to people who are antagonistic to us, to people 2,000 miles away from us, who can control every department of our State, and can leave this Parliament with nothing to do. If we want a diabolical plan to ruin the country, there is no better plan than the proposed Inter-State Commission. The powers of that Commission are so great that they can even prevent our building a small railway; they can even control the rates charged on our railways; and we have no power whatever left. Why, under federation the municipality of Perth will have more power, financially, than this House of

Parliament! I cannot understand the feeling of those who favour federation, having before my eyes the example of Ireland, where for years people fought to retain their rights and privileges of self-government. And what is the tendency throughout the world to-day? It is as far as possible to encourage local government. What is the London County Council for but to give local government to the people, and not to take it from them? Yet, here to-day, we are prepared to submit to a Government 2,000 miles distant! We are a small community; we shall have those larger States against us. It is no use saying that their sympathies will go with us: there is no sympathy at all. Their idea will be to draw from us every ounce of blood in our bodies: if we die, that will be our look-out, while if we survive, the process of blood-drawing will go on the longer. When a man makes his home in Western Australia, he should feel some attachment to that home; some patriotism should arise within that man, and his ideas with regard to Western Australia should be bound up with the prosperity of the country. His object should be to protect the colony, and to make it as great as, if not greater than, the other provinces of Australia. I do not wish to labour this question. If we were not prosperous, I should say, join the federation, because then any change might be good; but surely to-day our finances are strong, our gold output is extraordinary, our timber trade is increasing, our coal industry, one of the great industries which creates manufactures, is going ahead; every industry to which we can point is flourishing. Our gold, copper, and other minerals necessary for the development of a State are plentifully found within our borders; and I say, let us rest content with our present condition, and if it be necessary that this Commonwealth Bill be wiped out, I say let this House do so. If there be any danger that the people, who are not sufficiently educated as to the end and tendency of the Bill, will be likely to accept federation, then I say we have a right to decide that the Bill shall not go to the people. Because, after all, what is our position in this House? What will be the advantage of a seat in Parliament if we are ruined? I say if all our prosperity is to be taken from

us, it does not matter whether we sit in this House or not. It is said that the people have, and should have, sovereign rights. I say, certainly: let them possess those rights if they are intelligent enough to exercise them; but we do not go to the man in the street for advice on points of law, nor do we go to the man in the street for advice on financial questions; yet that is what we are about to do here; and I say, if we think there is any danger of this Bill being carried by the people, let us have the courage in this House—do not throw the onus on the Upper House—to throw out the Bill, against which my vote will certainly be cast.

MR. GEORGE (Murray): I certainly cannot support the amendment proposed by the member for Beverley (Mr. Harper). My reasons are few, and I shall try to give them as briefly as possible. I think the people of this country have a right to pronounce judgment on a matter which affects their homes and their livelihood and the future of their children; and although the hon. member who has just spoken has stated, and stated rightly, that the members of this House have no right to give way to the judgment of the man in the street, still at the same time there is not a single member in this House who has been returned to Parliament on the question of his attitude with regard to federation. The question of federation or no federation never cropped up during any of the recent elections; on this question the people have not made their voice heard on the hustings; and although it is perfectly true that we are returned here to use our judgment and experience and such skill and ability as we have for the benefit of the country, still on so momentous a question as this I think the voice of the people has a right to be heard. And we must remember that the general question of federation has been before the country now—perhaps in a desultory fashion for part of the time—for nearly ten years; and federation has been “in the air” during the last two years, and I think it would be wrong indeed for us to refuse to the people the right to vote upon a question which affects them all. I think the better plan, and the best plan for this colony, would be to make federation a test question; to have a general election.

Let us go before the people as federalists or anti-federalists—no half measures, if you like: let us go straight against or for the Bill, and give the people a chance to say, by the men they return to Parliament, what their wishes are. However, so far as I am concerned, I shall not vote for this amendment of the member for Beverley (Mr. Harper). As a member of the Select Committee which sat to consider the draft Commonwealth Bill, I must say the report of that Committee commends itself to my judgment. I think it is a fair, honest, and just report, and I cannot see how it would be possible for me or for any other member of that Committee to do otherwise than vote that both the Bills should go to the people, and that by the verdict of the people the question should be settled and we should be judged. I am quite aware that, even with the amended Bill, we shall probably have a set-back in Western Australia for some little time; but I have sufficient confidence in the country to believe it will only be a temporary set-back; and as checks are useful to us in our private life, so checks in the life of a nation are useful. They cause people to fall back upon their own resources, to find out what those resources are, and to go forward more determinedly than they would in the flood-tide of prosperity. I am not afraid of any of the threats which have been used, or which are said to have been used on the goldfields, about separation and the rest of it: those threats are so much ordinary "tommy-rot" uttered by agitators, paid or otherwise, and they will not prevent hon. members from voting for what they think is right. I am quite sure that on this question all of us are prepared to freely voice our own opinions—to meet our electors and the rest of the people of the colony, man to man and face to face. As I have said, there is no necessity for me to go further into the question of the Bill. I have given my opinions to the House at quite sufficient length on previous occasions, but I feel it incumbent on me simply to state, in as few words as possible, that my intention is to vote for both Bills being sent to the people.

MR. CONOLLY (Dundas): I will only crave the indulgence of the House for a few moments, not desiring to debate this great question from all possible

standpoints. I should like to state that I consider this question has already been sufficiently debated in this Chamber for every hon. member to have decided as to how he shall vote; and I do not think if we debated it for another fortnight, one single individual vote in this Chamber would be diverted. Still, it would not be right on such an important question, it would not be fair, for any representative in this Chamber to deliver a silent vote; and therefore it is my intention, in as few words as possible, to explain the reasons and the object I have in taking the attitude which I intend to take on this question. From the amendment moved this evening by the member for Beverley (Mr. Harper), it appears to me that he has for his main object to prevent the people of this colony expressing their views on one of the most important and far-reaching questions that has ever come before the people of the Australian colonies. In this question is involved a constitutional principle, and I have been disposed to agree with the Premier and other hon. members who have said that in the strict sense of the word a referendum is not recognised either by the British or by our own Constitution. But I should like also to state that, had the people in this colony previously had a reasonable opportunity of expressing their views on federation, probably at this great crisis they would not have demanded a referendum so warmly or with such vigour. Had the Government of this colony in the first place adopted the proper constitutional course, in allowing the representatives of this colony at the Federal Convention to be selected by the people, probably to-day the people of this colony would not be crying out so loudly as they are for the right to vote on the question of federation itself. The people feel, and feel with reason, that they have had, as it were, a muzzle placed over their mouths from the beginning to the end of this great federal question, ever since Western Australia has taken a part in the discussion.

THE PREMIER: Oh, nonsense!

MR. CONOLLY: They cannot help but feel that, sir.

THE PREMIER: When have the people ever had this privilege before in English history?

MR. CONOLLY: I grant the truth of what the Premier says regarding the constitutional aspect of the referendum, but I also wish to point out to the Premier that the people of this colony had a right to elect their delegates to the Federal Convention, and that right was not granted. [MR. VOSPER: Hear, hear.] I say that the referendum may be an unconstitutional mode of proceeding; but the fault lies with the Government.

THE PREMIER: Such a right could have been given by an Act of Parliament, and in no other way.

MR. CONOLLY: Of course an Act of Parliament should have been passed to permit the people to elect the Convention delegates.

THE PREMIER: Why did you not pass it?

MR. CONOLLY: Why did not the Government introduce it? It appears to me the question is perfectly simple. Every one of the Eastern colonies sent their representatives to the Federal Convention after they had been elected by the people.

THE PREMIER: Queensland did not. Queensland introduced the same Bill as we did, and it was thrown out. We followed Queensland.

MR. VOSPER: A bad example to follow.

MR. CONOLLY: But Queensland granted the people the referendum as to whether they should or should not enter the federation; and this is my reason at the present moment for giving my vote in favour of allowing this Bill to go to the people. I say it should go to the people in a straightforward and reasonable manner, and that is why it is my intention to support the motion of the Premier, for I think that motion embodies a fair and straightforward way of sending the Bill to the people, and I intend to support the motion as it stands on the Notice Paper. But I cannot and do not see how any hon. member, taking into consideration the attitude which the Government of this colony have hitherto taken up with regard to federation, can attempt to close the mouths of the people of Western Australia on this great question. It has been said in this House that the goldfields population are strongest in advancing their claims to a voice in this matter; and it seems to me that the

goldfields people have a certain amount of reason on their side. Why do the goldfields electors demand so warmly that this question be referred to them? For this reason, and no other, the goldfields people feel, and they have reason to do so, that their great industry is not sufficiently or adequately represented in the House.

THE PREMIER: You tried to give them less representation the other night.

MR. CONOLLY: Not in this House.

THE PREMIER: You tried to throw the Constitution Bill out.

MR. CONOLLY: I want to point this out, as the aspect from which I view it, and it is a fair and reasonable argument in favour of the attitude which the goldfields people have taken up. Questions have been frequently raised as to the great dangers federation will cause to arise in this colony. It appears to me that both sides—those who support federation and those who oppose federation—are taking up very extreme views on this matter. Those who oppose federation have declared in a sweeping manner that federation is going to bring about unlimited ruin to Western Australia; in fact the evils and the ruin that are to come to the colony appear to them to be almost overwhelming. Those in favour of federation appear to take up almost an extreme attitude on the other side. My opinion may not be worth much, but it is the opinion on which I intend to act, that this colony may possibly have a slight drawback during the first few years of federation, but ultimately Western Australia will forge ahead and stand on a sounder footing than ever before. I do not think that federation is going to bring about all the trouble or the ruin that has been prophesied for it; nor do I think it is going to bring about the sudden prosperity which is claimed for it. With regard to the farming industry I would like to say a word, and as a goldfields member I regard this industry as of the greatest possible importance to any country. Who is there who has watched the progress of the farming industry during the last two years and has not come to a fair conclusion as to the manner in which the industry is progressing? Only a few days ago I was speaking to one of the largest farmers in this colony, an old

Western Australian farmer too, and that gentleman told me that owing to the reduced prices which farmers were getting for their produce, a great deal of the acreage which the gentleman had before placed under cultivation had been allowed to run fallow this year. This gentleman told me that it did not pay him to till and cultivate the ground owing to the reduced price of produce. That surprised me, and I tell hon. members why: however great the fall in prices of produce may be, these prices are splendid compared with what farmers in the Eastern colonies obtain for their produce. If the farmers of this colony cannot supply the immediate market at the prices now ruling, how can we look to the farmers of this colony to supply the people at anything like the prices which the farmers in the Eastern colonies obtain? How will people be able to obtain cheap living on which the whole of the industrial prosperity of any country depends? It seems to me anyone who has watched the progress of the farming industry in Western Australia can come to but one conclusion, that with the excellent prices and the inducements the farmers of Western Australia have, in a few years they will not only have caught up to but will have overstepped the demand at their doors. This appears inevitable whether we join the federation or not. I cannot see that there is any great danger to be apprehended from federation as far as the farmers are concerned, and to my mind the aspect from which they are viewing this question is based very largely on prejudice. There may be some reason for opposing federation on behalf of the manufacturers. To my mind this aspect of the question is probably more serious than any other. Undoubtedly manufactures in their early stages do require some assistance, some slight protection; but here again I maintain that when the population of this colony increases and the markets increase in proportion, our manufacturers, whether engaged in native manufactures or branches of manufactures in the other colonies, will find that it will pay them to establish themselves here; but they will never do so until we get cheap living, and, as a consequence, a cheaper rate of wages, such as is paid in the other colonies. On these two questions, in my opinion, depends the future

of the manufactures in Western Australia, cheaper living and, as a consequence, cheaper cost of production. I would like to say a few words as to the amendments which have been recommended by the Select Committee. To my mind, and I think it must appear so to every reasonable mind, the amendments which have been suggested are intelligent, reasonable, and moderate in every sense of the word; so reasonable and moderate that I cannot conceive that those in authority in the Eastern colonies, who undoubtedly have a great desire to see a federated Australasia, will raise any severe opposition to them, and it is for this reason that I shall support the Premier in his motion. To my mind, the amendments are almost beyond the scope of controversy, and in every sense of the word they are reasonable. With reference to one of them I would like to say a word. In reference to the transcontinental railway, it has been repeatedly stated in this House, I do not know why, that South Australia is absolutely antagonistic to the transcontinental railway being constructed from Fremantle. I have never found any authority for that expression of opinion.

HON. S. BURT: South Australia will not let the steamers come here.

MR. CONOLLY: The steamers do not wish to come here, and will not come until the harbour is properly made. When the Fremantle harbour is completed I do not think South Australia will be able to stop the steamers from coming here. I am quite sure none of the Eastern colonies will appear antagonistic to Western Australia.

THE PREMIER: I will place some correspondence on the table in a day or two, and you shall see for yourself.

MR. CONOLLY: It will be of great interest to myself and to other hon. members to see that correspondence, but I do not know any reason why South Australia should be antagonistic to the transcontinental line. Granting South Australia is antagonistic to it, for the sake of argument, is South Australia the only colony to settle this question?

THE PREMIER: It is the only colony that has power under this Bill.

MR. CONOLLY: And supposing South Australia used that power in an antagonistic way, that colony would have

a most uncomfortable time in the Federal Parliament. I do not think South Australia would use the veto, because it will not be of any advantage to Western Australia to federate without being connected with the other systems of railways in Australia.

THE PREMIER: Then why not put it in the Bill?

MR. CONOLLY: There may be some extraneous reasons; but assuming that South Australia is opposed to the transcontinental line—

THE PREMIER: We do not say that.

MR. CONOLLY: It has been reiterated in this House, and the Attorney General last night stated (he did not say, was antagonistic, but there was no doubt the sense was there) that South Australia was strenuously opposed to the transcontinental line. South Australia has the right of veto, but that colony may not consider it to her advantage to use that veto, and as I said before, South Australia might find herself in a very difficult position if she used that veto contrary to the wishes of the rest of Australia.

MR. DOHERTY: Supposing South Australia used the veto.

MR. VOSPER: Let the Parliament of South Australia pass a resolution saying that that colony will not oppose the transcontinental line.

MR. CONOLLY: There has been a question raised with regard to the curtailing of the power of the State Parliaments; and I do not speak from my observations or experience in Western Australia, for my experience is not confined to this colony, but it always appears to me that the Australian colonies have suffered from over-legislation. If some of the State Parliaments are a bit curtailed, it may be for the benefit of the colonies themselves. It appears to me that this, as it were, clipping the wings of the individual Parliaments will be a benefit in many ways to every one of the colonies.

MR. DOHERTY: Why?

MR. CONOLLY: Because I think they over-legislate for the people.

MR. DOHERTY: But there will be double legislation then.

MR. CONOLLY: Only a moment ago when the hon. member was speaking, he said he would curtail the powers of the

Parliaments. Therefore how will there be double legislation?

MR. DOHERTY: There will be the federal laws and local laws.

MR. CONNOR: What country would that suit?

MR. CONOLLY: Australasia. Another question I would like to raise, and it is one that was eloquently referred to by the Attorney General last night, and this is probably the initial question that prompted federation in the minds of those who originated it: I refer to the question of defence. It was a disappointment to me, and it was with some regret that I heard a Minister of the Crown of this colony declare the views on this question which the Attorney General did last night. For a Minister of the Crown in any of these colonies to declare as his opinion that these colonies should remain totally inactive, that they should shirk the responsibility which undoubtedly is cast upon them, and should continue to cast the responsibility of defence of Australia on the old country, seems to me an argument which is unworthy of any Britisher in any part of the world. It certainly did not come well from a gentleman occupying the responsible position of Minister in this or any other colony.

THE PREMIER: You misunderstood him.

MR. CONOLLY: I will tell the House in a few words what the Attorney General said. He said it was useless for us to delude ourselves with the idea of defending Australia adequately with the troops we could raise here.

THE PREMIER: No, no. He said the troops could not be sent here.

MR. CONOLLY: He said that undoubtedly Australia would have to depend on the British fleet.

MR. DOHERTY: And the British fleet is a jolly good thing to depend on.

MR. CONOLLY: But if we depend on the British fleet, it is just as well we should contribute to its support a little bit. The policy advocated appears to me to be a policy of shirking our responsibilities.

MR. VOSPER: We contribute every year to the support of the British fleet.

MR. CONOLLY: What do we contribute? Western Australia does not

contribute enough to pay for the coal of a battleship steaming out from Europe.

MR. CONNOR: We can give them the coal.

MR. CONOLLY: But you will want to be paid for it.

MR. DOHERTY: What about the trade we give the mother country?

MR. CONOLLY: What about the trade we give the mother country! Can hon. members point to any of the colonies which will trade with England, if it can trade with any other country? The colonies go where they can get things cheapest, and when they see an opportunity of raising a prohibitive tariff against the mother country, they do so on every possible occasion.

MR. CONNOR: Is that a federation argument?

MR. CONOLLY: That is what the other colonies are doing at the present time.

MR. CONNOR: It is not a federation argument.

MR. CONOLLY: The hon. member ought to use his ears, which are given to him to listen with. It is my intention to oppose the amendment of the member for Beverley, for the same reasons that I intend to support the motion of the Premier. It is my sincere wish that this Parliament will not avail itself of the power, which it may or may not possess, of preventing the Bill going to the people, and thus deprive the people of the one and only opportunity they have had of expressing their views on the question of federation.

THE MINISTER OF MINES (Hon. H. B. Lefroy): Up to the present I have preferred to remain a listener, but now that we are about to close this debate—or these debates, because we have had many various amendments on the original question—I feel it incumbent on me to give my views. The question more immediately before the House at the present time is the amendment of the member for Beverley (Mr. Harper), to the effect that the Bill be thrown out altogether. I am not prepared to go so far as the hon. member, but prefer rather to take a middle course, and submit the Bills as proposed by the Premier. Most hon. members, before they come into this House, have made up their minds on any great national question likely to be discussed,

or, at any rate, have received some distinct mandate from the electors on the subject. No important questions before the House in the past have ever been so little discussed by the people of the colony as this, the most important, I think, we have ever had to deal with. If the question had been raised at the last general election, and members had been led to express their views and individual opinions, we would probably have had representatives returned to the House pledged either for or against federation. The question, however, was not submitted to the people, because it was impossible to submit it without the most mature consideration. I may start by saying that I am an ardent federalist, and believe most emphatically in the union of Australia. I believe it is the destiny of this great continent to be united as one great nation; but under the conditions that have been offered to us by the Bill, as passed by the Convention and amended by the Premiers, I do not consider this colony at the present time is in a position to enter the union. One may very well take up the position of an ardent federalist in the very strongest sense of the word, and at the same time, before entering into a union, reserve to all the parties concerned the right to agree on the conditions. I have no desire to turn up the pages of history in dealing with this matter, but prefer to give my vote on what I have heard in the House. We have had no mandate from the electors on the question of federation, which has never been discussed generally throughout the length and breadth of the colony. I think, therefore, it is the duty of hon. members to listen most carefully to the debates, and form their decisions on these debates, on their own views, and on their own reading of the Commonwealth Bill. The debates have been most interesting and instructive, and many hon. members have shown a great amount of care in considering the matter. We owe a debt of gratitude to hon. members who have taken such a deep interest in the question, and we owe a debt of gratitude to the members who sat on the Joint Select Committee, both from here and another place, who gave so much time to the investigation of the subject. From a perusal of what took place at the sittings of that Committee, and on looking over

the attendances of members at the meetings, I have come to the conclusion that the Committee approached their labours with a full feeling of responsibility, a fuller feeling of responsibility than is usually exercised in regard to matters which come before select committees. I notice that members were most regular in their attendance; and although the labours of the Select Committee have been belittled by some, by whom the report of the Committee is not considered to be an accurate report on the evidence presented, it was possible for every member to call for any evidence he desired. In looking over the names of the witnesses examined, of which there are some 40, I see they were all men who may be regarded as having a stake and a large interest in the country; and a large majority of them were gentlemen whose opinions would carry weight with the bulk of the members of this House. Amongst the witnesses were merchants, manufacturers, operatives, vigneron, newspaper editors, agriculturists, bank managers, and I should say representatives of every industry in Western Australia. On the evidence of these witnesses the Committee drew their report, and in that report, to which there were no dissentients, the Committee came to the conclusion that Western Australia would suffer very materially by accepting the Commonwealth Bill as now presented. The Committee reported that if the colony entered federation under the Bill as presented, the prices of many articles for some time would be increased to the consumer. The Committee also came to the conclusion that a majority of the witnesses were of opinion that the removal of the customs duties would have the effect of injuring, and in some cases ruining, the infant industries of the colony. The committee were of opinion that the sliding scale for the reduction of the customs duties should be abolished, and that if we entered into federation, the colony should have the option of fixing a uniform rate of duties for a given number of years. The Committee also decided that authority should be given by the Bill for the construction of a railway to connect the capital of this colony with the railway systems of the other States, as without railway communication the people of Western Australia would continue to be separated from the

rest of Australia by over a thousand miles of practically unoccupied country. The Committee stated that they had approached this subject with a desire to report as favourably on the Bill as possible, and I firmly believe that was the case. The majority of us are, I think, federalists at heart: we are all of opinion that unity is strength, and I am distinctly not one of those who consider the British Empire is strengthened by the separation of the many units of which it is made up. The units of themselves may be useless, and unable to defend themselves or the Empire, but when these units are brought together, like the bundle of sticks, the Empire politically and in every other respect is strengthened. Although I desire this colony should federate as early as possible, I am of opinion that under the conditions offered to us this is not the time we should enter into union without some special conditions being attached to the agreement. I consider that Western Australia is not ripe for the change on the same terms as the other colonies have accepted. We are not the youngest of these colonies, but we are the least in point of numbers and development, and I think every member must admit that our circumstances greatly differ. For years we suffered from the want of knowledge on the part of persons in other portions of the world. We were here in Western Australia isolated and unknown. At the present time that cloud, so to speak, has passed away from us, and the atmosphere is cleared. I think Western Australia is visible at the present moment to all parts of the civilised world, and that to the British Empire as a whole this colony is one of the most interesting sections of the Empire. As I have said, we are not suffering from the want of knowledge on the part of people throughout the world, but we are just as cut off from the outside world and the rest of Australia as we were 20 years ago, our means of communication being no better, except by sea. The same expanse of ocean separates us, but we cannot alter that. The same extent of desert separates us, but we are gradually creeping across that vast desert with two rails of steel, and it is my desire to see those two rails extended across the continent, or at any rate for Western Australia to be in a position

to know that she has some hope of being allowed to extend these rails across her own border to meet the system on the Eastern side of Australia when she may desire to do so. There is nothing new that I can possibly express to the House with regard to this matter, but I feel very strongly that there should not be the possibility of our being denied the right to connect this country with the rest of Australia. We have heard a good deal of the feeling of brotherhood that exists between this part of Australia and the rest. I think that feeling is probably just the same as exists between other persons, between brothers even, in the time of peace. Generally in times of peace sections of the community desire to get out of each other as much as they possibly can. I admit that if such a thing as attack from without came upon Western Australia at the present time, the whole of Australia would unite in one great effort to protect Western Australia; but I could not trust Eastern Australia to protect the industries of Western Australia in the same manner. I consider that the industries of this colony require nursing at the present time. Although, as I said before, we are not the youngest colony of Australia, we are the smallest in point of numbers, and we have been so for a very great length of time. Without numbers no country can be great, and there can be no encouragement given for the formation of manufacturing industries and the establishment of many agricultural industries that make a country great. Now, with the influx of population, persons are turning their minds and their hands to many things which they felt it was impossible to turn them to with advantage before, and therefore I consider that these industries require protecting at all events for a period. For my own part I shall be perfectly satisfied that these industries shall be protected for five years, but I am not prepared to agree to enter into federation at the present time without that right. Those are the views which will move me in voting in the manner I propose to do on this subject. I consider that my feelings with regard to federation are just as strong as those of any member of the House; but in my opinion the time has not come for the union to be

consummated under the conditions that have been offered to us. It is said that the other colonies will not agree to these amendments. If the other colonies do not agree to these amendments, then we must wait until such time as they can agree to them or to such terms as we may desire to accept. I am not prepared to throw out the Bill altogether, and as this question has never been before the people, and there appears to be no opportunity of placing it before them at a general election before it is likely to be sent for the opinion and confirmation of the Imperial Government, I think it is necessary for us at the present time to come to an emphatic decision one way or the other. I am afraid that the people of the Eastern colonies are not so anxious for the general welfare of Western Australia as many members of the House seem to think they are. When that very question of the mails calling at Fremantle was mooted only a short time ago, the other colonies I think at once declared, "No; we shall object to the mails calling at Fremantle, if our mails are delayed one hour or half an hour." If that is the spirit we are likely to have in the future, all I can say is that federation is not likely to be that which I think it ought to be and I believe it will be when Western Australia is prepared to join. I am not afraid to enter into federation upon the terms proposed by this Select Committee, but I am not prepared, after a careful consideration of the Bill as it came from the Convention and as amended by the Premiers, to agree to federation on those terms alone. I recognise fully that in this colony, amongst the 170,000 people we have around us, there are perhaps 100,000 who have probably come from the Eastern colonies. I can well understand that their feelings to a large extent must go with the people they have left behind, whom many of them hope to again live amongst some day. Therefore, in my opinion it is the duty of this House to let the people of the colony have an opportunity of judging between the two Bills—the Bill as submitted by the Convention, and the Bill with the amendments suggested by the Select Committee. I hope and think that when this matter comes before the people, they will duly consider it. I believe they will not act in the hasty manner in which some hon. members

seem to think they may, but that they will consider what is best for Western Australia; and that, when the question comes to the vote, if it does so, they will think deeply and vote well, as they have always done in the past.

MR. VOSPER (North-East Coolgardie): In addressing myself to the amendment, I regret I shall be unable to give it my support; and I should, therefore, if I were going to vote at all, vote in favour of the motion moved by the Premier. Having, however, already arranged to pair on that point, my vote will not appear on the division list, so I rise now principally for the purpose of giving my reasons for opposing the amendment brought forward by the member for Beverley. In the first place I think it is eminently desirable that a referendum should take place on this question, and not so much because the matter has been referred to the public in the other colonies, as because in this colony we have, so far, had no opportunity of hearing the voice of the people. In no way have the public, except by newspaper expressions and by means of petitions and various public meetings, had an opportunity of expressing their opinions with regard to federation. There has been no election on the subject. This Parliament has issued no mandate to deal with it either one way or the other. By the passing of the Constitution Bill, in which we have just corrected anomalies which exist, it is acknowledged that Parliament is to a large extent unrepresentative of the people, and certainly if the Parliament be unrepresentative of the people, how much more unrepresentative of the people have been those who were chosen as delegates to go to the other colonies to consider this subject? And just here I should like to say it is my desire heartily to indorse what the member for Dundas (Mr. Conolly) has said on that head. I cannot but think, whether it was the right of the people of this colony to have that power or not, that as a matter of expediency, as a matter of political convenience, it would have been well had the Government been content to follow the example laid down by the other colonies, by allowing the delegates to proceed to the Eastern colonies on the strength of a popular vote. Had that been done, many errors which this Parliament now finds itself

called upon to correct in the eleventh hour would have been corrected in the first place. We should have had a settled policy laid down for the guidance of the delegates; the question of federation would have been canvassed throughout the length and breadth of the land; and it must be obvious that, by having these men sent to the Conventions clothed with an authority derived direct from the fountain head of all authority, which is the people at large, those delegates would have been able to enforce their terms in a much stronger way than was done at the Convention. In fact—and I think the Premier will bear me out here—I believe that sometimes the delegates were treated at the Conventions as being unrepresentative; that they were not regarded in any sense as being representatives of the people of Western Australia; and that fact must have interfered to a very material extent with their strength; while their lack of knowledge of the feeling and of the requirements of the people of this colony with regard to federation must have very severely handicapped them in the debates which took place. It is not very pertinent to inquire at this stage how the mischief occurred: the fact remains, in spite of three Conventions and one Premiers' Conference, that we find the Commonwealth Bill, however suitable it may be to the Eastern colonies, is altogether unsuitable to the necessities of this colony. The fact remains that after all that was known and understood by our delegates, they came back to us with a Bill which is just as unsatisfactory as the original draft. The attempts they made in the direction of remedying the Bill only resulted in imposing an additional burden upon this colony; and now, at the very last moment, we find ourselves in this Parliament obliged to discuss the possibility of amendments being introduced by the Imperial Parliament, or consented to by the other colonies for our especial benefit. As to the fact that I am not in sympathy with the member for Beverley (Mr. Harper) in his proposal that no referendum should take place, perhaps I am wrong in saying that I cannot sympathise with him: though I cannot agree with him, I can to some extent sympathise with him in his attitude. We have been repeatedly told in the course of this debate that hon. members should

be willing to take the responsibility of throwing out this measure. With that doctrine I in a certain sense entirely agree, for if I were in the position of the member for Beverley, I should be found voting for his amendment; but I should like to point out, also, that if there be a grave responsibility in denying the referendum, there is likewise a grave responsibility in granting it. It is true that the referendum is something which is yet untried; it is new to our political history; it is foreign to our Constitution. [MR. HARPER: Hear, hear.] And further, by bringing about a referendum on this occasion, we shall be establishing a precedent which may be used for good or ill in the future; and I know very well—in fact, it has been generally admitted by advocates of the referendum in the Eastern colonies—that certain politicians may reasonably say, “The fact of our Constitution having been based on the referendum is an indication that the referendum will in the future be used as a final means of settling political questions.” It is not for us to decide as to whether that is desirable; but the referendum may be viewed in the light of a very serious experiment for any Legislature or collection of Legislatures to carry out: consequently I sympathise with the hon. member (Mr. Harper), because I recognise that while there may be a grave responsibility in denying the referendum, the responsibility of granting it is equally grave. That being so, as one who is in favour of the referendum, and of the dual referendum as proposed by the Premier and, I believe, originally suggested by myself, I think it is incumbent upon me not only to give my reasons for supporting the general principle of the referendum itself, but also to say why I am in favour of this dual referendum. In this colony it may be said that the question of federation has assumed a form different from those forms it has assumed in the other colonies. There it may have crystallised into various shapes, but here it has hardened into a three-sided prism. We have on one side the anti-Billites, the federationists at no price; then we have the second party, the federationists at any price; and on the third side we have the federationists at a price.

MR. MITCHELL: There is a lot of federation about that!

MR. VOSPER: Just so; but I would point out to the hon. member that the term “federation” is not necessarily synonymous with “fraternity.” In the minds of some hon. members there seems to be a confusion between a federal government and a fraternal government. There may be a federation in which there is very little indeed of the spirit of brotherhood: a federation may become a bond or political alliance of an extremely irksome and awkward character to all its members. There are, in one of the best federations of modern times, the Swiss Republic, three distinct nations; and there is nothing fraternal about them, for they are bound together purely for the purposes of political convenience. However, that is by the way. But the question has come to be looked upon in this colony from three sides. In the early stages of the controversy there were only the anti-Billites and the straight-out federalists: then a third party was formed, and the result now is that we find all parties, to a great extent, split into fragments; so the upshot has been that this Parliament has appointed a Joint Committee to consider the Bill, and the Committee have brought in a report indorsing the views of the conditional federationists. Now the proposal set forth in the amendment moved by the member for the Canning (Mr. Wilson), which was lost, was practically to this effect, that although there are three sides to this question, only two sides should be heard; that the question should be a straight-out issue between the anti-federalists and the federalists pure and simple; and the third man, who was really a federalist on certain terms and conditions, was not to be allowed to have a voice in the matter. I need scarcely appeal to the sense of the House, or ask hon. members to agree with me in saying that such a doctrine is not only preposterous but unjust. Surely if it be desirable to take the voice of a community on a particular subject in respect of which that community is divided into three sections, every section of that community has a right to be heard; consequently the only way by which these sections can make themselves heard in the councils of the nation is the means suggested by the

Premier in the motion now before the House. Therefore, while I am opposed to the member for Beverley (Mr. Harper) in the proposal not to have any referendum at all, I should have been, had I been present when the vote was taken, equally as much opposed to the amendment (Mr. Wilson's) already disposed of. With regard to the question of terms for entering the federation, which terms are now under the consideration of the House, I do not now wish to urge upon the House the acceptance of those terms: that has already been ably and eloquently done, I may say from all sides of the House; but I should like to point out that, in demanding terms, Western Australia is seizing a great opportunity which has not been seized by any of the other States. I am firmly convinced that a day will come when Western Australia will be thanked by the whole of the Australasian colonies for the bold stand she is making in favour of the transcontinental railway. That is the greatest work which the federation can carry out; it is the one great public work which will do more towards cementing the various parts of this continent in a federal bond, and in creating a truly fraternal feeling in the minds of the people of Australia, than all the paper constitutions ever devised can possibly effect. That being so, I am convinced that those very persons who now oppose the desires of Western Australia, who send us coercive letters and telegrams, who tell us that we cannot get any concessions from the Eastern colonies or from the Imperial Parliament—those very politicians, those newspapers, and those people in the other colonies who at the present time are opposed to this colony's demands will be forced to recede from their position, and be among the first to thank us for fighting their battle as well as our own.

MR. LEAKE: They say you can get that railway from the Federal Parliament.

MR. MORGANS: That is doubtful.

MR. VOSPER: We have no warranty of that; and further, we have this example before us, that exactly the same thing was said to British Columbia when British Columbia stood out for similar conditions. The British Columbian politicians were, like the leading politicians of this colony, wise in their generation:

they refused to accept general assurances. They said, "No; we will trust no Parliament not yet created and for whose word no one is responsible. We will either have the conditions set forth in the Bill, or else we will not federate." In reference to our Joint Committee's conditions, so far as I have been able to ascertain, not even the most rabidly federal newspapers in the Eastern colonies have uttered a word against them: on the contrary, the Eastern Press have been unanimously in favour of giving these small concessions to Western Australia. No doubt the politicians of the East are influenced by a desire to do the best they can for the people they represent by keeping the Bill exactly as it is, and perhaps they think that by so doing they are performing a duty; but public opinion will ultimately have its effect, and those politicians will not be allowed to overlook the demands of Western Australia for the few trifling concessions for which we ask. I should like to commend to the House the remarks of the Minister of Lands when speaking on this question. He urged that there should be established in respect of this matter a community of interest between the various political parties, and that sentiment I desire to indorse, and most emphatically to support. I, when I first took up the work of advocating these conditions in this colony, might perhaps have made some political capital out of my position. The mere fact that the delegates to the Conventions, including the Premier, had not done their duty, might have been trumpeted forth all over the country. Well, the conditional federalists in this colony have neglected or declined to do anything of the sort; and why? It is not because men like myself have any particularly tender feeling—I am speaking, of course, in a political sense—for the Premier or for any of his followers: it is simply that we recognise to the fullest extent that, if this colony is to get any terms from the Eastern colonies, we must show a united front. We must not allow party distinctions or party grievances to stand in our way at the present moment. The mother country at the present time is faced with a grave crisis, is engaged in a war which, though not serious in itself, may lead to very serious European complications; and we know there are mem-

bers of the great Liberal party in the House of Commons who protested against that war, yet I cannot conceive that those men would carry their party feeling so far as to assist the Boers. And so it is with us; so it is with the conditional federalists in this colony: we cannot approve of the action of the Forrest Ministry. We may say that they overlooked their duty at the various Conventions; but it is not our business to make political capital out of that circumstance, or to denounce them throughout the country; because we all perceive that if Western Australia is to get anything at all out of the Eastern colonies, we must show a perfectly united front. That is why I am strongly in favour of what the Commissioner of Crown Lands has said the other day, of dropping as far as we can all party distinctions, and of standing out for the conditions we demand, because these conditions will be granted if only we show that we are determined to obtain them. Of course, as against that, we have the remarks made quite recently by Mr. James R. Dickson, the Premier of Queensland. He has told us once more that it is quite impossible for any alterations to be made in the Bill, and has been so condescending as to invite us, as many others have done, to come in irrespective of terms; in fact, he hints at serious consequences in the event of our refusing to do so. I have only to say in regard to Mr. Dickson that that gentleman is at the present moment governing the colony of Queensland very largely by the aid of a bad electoral law, a law even worse than that which we have in this colony, and that is saying the worst for it that can well be said; and in addition to that, there exists in Queensland what has never existed in any other colony, or in any other English-speaking country except Ireland, that is a Coercion Act. Therefore I say that when the Queensland Government can manage to get rid of its present electoral law and can govern without "faked" rolls and a Coercion Act, it will be quite soon enough for Mr. James R. Dickson and his colleagues to undertake to help in governing Western Australia. With regard to the reception of this motion on the goldfields, I am sorry to see that the goldfields Press has to some extent opposed the Premier's motion, and has adopted a most hostile

attitude with regard to it from start to finish. One would have thought that federalists, anti-federalists, and conditional federalists alike would have been glad to hail the motion as a reasonable compromise, giving an opportunity to every person who may care to do so of voicing his opinion on the Commonwealth Bill. Yet on the fields even this proposal has met with the most virulent opposition. Now I think there is a great deal to be said in favour of what the member for Sussex (Mr. Locke) advanced to-night. As a matter of fact there has been a "slump" in the federal cause; the stock has depreciated very seriously; there is a falling market; and every possible means is being used once more to boom and inflate that market. Leading articles have appeared and conferences have been held, which have led to nothing more than the expenditure of much talk. Even the petition of the Federal League, to my mind, was one of the proofs of how very shallow this movement is. When we consider that we have in this colony 162,000 persons, and of that number 40,000 reside on the goldfields, and out of that 40,000 more than four-fifths are adult males, yet in spite of that fact the petition, which was hawked around from house to house and from camp to camp, which was distributed at public meetings and carried about like a sacred thing behind a brass band which marched through the streets, which was to be found at every church door, at the door of every theatre, and at the door of every public-house—when we find the world, the flesh, and the devil combined in this matter, the petition comes here with only 23,000 signatures, and these were not derived from the goldfields alone, but from the whole of the colony.

MR. LEAKE: You signed the petition yourself.

MR. VOSPER: I am even now supporting the prayer of the petition. It is the drafters of the petition who are unreasonable: they want the referendum only on one question; they want their Bill and their Bill alone to go to the people. They want a drawn battle with the member for Beverley, but they do not want a three-cornered duel between the member for Beverley (Mr. Harper), the member for Albany (Mr. Leake), and myself. They will not allow the people on the gold-

fields who believe in federation on reasonable terms to have a say. I signed the petition, and if it is any information to the House, I will tell them that I signed it twice. I did not desire to sign it twice, and I do not desire that my action should appear unreasonable. The first time I dropped across the petition was in a stationer's shop in Perth, and I signed it. Afterwards my constituents sent me a copy of the petition with a request that I should sign it, and I did so. Where I join issue with the federal party is that while they are so anxious to bring the whole question before the country, they say that no other question shall be heard: their opinion is the only genuine one; all others are spurious. I do not desire to detain the House longer on this question: it has been fairly well threshed out; but I only wish to say this, referring again to the goldfields members, that the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans), the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran), and myself have lately fallen in for national condemnation at the hands of a section of the goldfields Press. Because, it is said, we differ from 99 per cent. of our constituents on this topic, we are told we should resign. I do not know what the hon. members whom I have alluded to are going to do in regard to this matter, but I do not intend to resign.

MR. MORGANS: Nor do I.

MR. VOSPER: I do not think the journal in question is empowered to speak generally for the goldfields: sometimes it is with the people on matters, and sometimes it is not; therefore I do not think it is a reliable authority. There is one quotation which I am sure will be received and respected by this House, and it should be a guide for hon. members on this great question. This quotation is taken from John Morley's *Life of Edmund Burke*, which contains that expressive speech addressed to the constituents of Bristol. Before the speech was delivered, his colleague in the representation of that city declared himself to be simply a delegate of the people, and perfectly prepared to do anything that the people of Bristol told him to do. Burke, referring to that matter, said:

Certainly, gentlemen, it ought to be the happiness and glory of a representative to live in the strictest union, the closest correspondence, and the most unreserved communication

with his constituents. Their wishes ought to have great weight with him, their opinions high respect, their business unremitted attention. It is his duty to sacrifice his repose, his pleasure, his satisfactions, to theirs; and above all, ever and in all cases to prefer their interests to his own. But his unbiassed opinion, his mature judgment, his enlightened conscience, he ought not to sacrifice to you, to any man, or to any set of men living. Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays instead of serving you if he sacrifices it to your opinion. My worthy colleague says his will ought to be subservient to yours. If that be all, the thing is innocent. If government were a matter of will upon any side, yours, without any question, ought to be superior. But government and legislation are matters of reason and judgment, and not of inclination; and what sort of reason is that in which the determination precedes the discussion, in which one set of men deliberate and another decide, and where those who form the conclusion are perhaps three hundred miles distant from those who hear the arguments? . . . Authoritative instructions, mandates issued, which the member is bound blindly and implicitly to obey, to vote, and to argue for, though contrary to the clearest convictions of his judgment and conscience—these are things utterly unknown to the laws of this land, and which arise from a fundamental mistake of the whole order and tenor of our Constitution.

That is a quotation from a great speech made by the greatest constitutionalist, perhaps, who ever lived in Great Britain; and I do not think any better advice or instruction could be offered to the members of this House, nor could any better reply be offered to the captious critics in this House who desire to make their own consciences coincide with a passing whim of the public, or any popularity-hunter or mere demagogue who wishes to take his instructions from a mob of people assembled in any part of the goldfields or in any part of the colony. Hon. members have a duty to themselves as well as to the country, and the interpretation of duty is something higher than being swept by a gust of popular feeling; and when men are called on to decide questions of such immense moment as this, they should not be swayed by newspapers or by people who are not charged with their instruction. I would like, as a final word, to remind hon. members with that sense of responsibility which is cast on them, that the Bill is not only, as the Attorney General said, irrevocable, but to all intents and purposes unalterable. In my first speech on this question, I said it was a cast-iron

Bill, and I say so again. I say also that this debate has shown in the clearest possible manner the numerous defects in the Bill as it will affect the whole of Australia, and Western Australia in particular. I want hon. members to remember these defects are crystallised in the Bill, and will remain there practically for all eternity, and they are there in perpetuity because the process of amendment laid down in Clause 128 is so hedged about, and any amendment will be so difficult to carry into effect, that it becomes almost absolutely impossible to amend the Constitution. And that is the reason why we should support the Premier's motion; that is the reason why the House should adopt the recommendations of the Select Committee; because once the Constitution becomes law we accept it, and it remains practically unalterable. We have heard that we should trust the people of South Australia, that we should trust the Parliament of the Commonwealth to amend the Bill so as to give us the transcontinental railway; but we see in Clause 51 of the Bill what is a direct prohibition to the building of that line. The correct process is to alter the Constitution itself before the Bill becomes law, because the Bill will be unalterable.

MR. LEAKE: No.

MR. VOSPER: We require the consent of South Australia. Either we are to be dependent upon the Federal Parliament in which we have a small representation, still more are we dependent on the referendum of an unsympathetic people, or we should be dependent on the Parliament of South Australia, in which we have no representation at all. Are we not acting from common dictates of prudence in objecting to the Bill as it stands at present? It will be more sensible to try and settle the preliminaries at first, instead of joining the federation and endeavouring to obtain what we want because other parties to the contract may object to an alteration of the Constitution. I hope hon. members will realise that under Clause 128 any alteration of the Constitution has to be passed by both Houses of the Commonwealth by an absolute majority, and I have already pointed out what an absolute majority means; then subsequently it has to be passed by an

absolute majority of the electors, and an absolute majority of the States also; so, if there be a minority in three of the States, or even in two, although the majority of Parliament and the vast majority of the electors are in favour of an alteration, yet we are still blocked. If this question of a railway is raised, a combination between South Australia and Tasmania would be sufficient to prevent the constitution being altered. I listened with some gratitude and interest to the historical allusions made by the hon. gentleman who fills the position of Attorney General. He pointed out that in the old times, when democracy was the governing system in Greece and other ancient countries, the referendum was to some extent applied. There is a story told in the history of Athens—though what knowledge of classics I have is somewhat rusty—of a popular assembly who condemned a certain individual to death, and sent him away in a galley to an island where the sentence had to be executed. The very next day, however, the people were so dismayed and horrified at what they had done, that they discharged another galley to fetch the first one back, and restored the gentleman to all his honours. That shows how fickle the breath of the multitude is, and how difficult it is to arrive at a just and proper conclusion by means of a popular vote; and old Carlyle was not very far wrong when he condemned the system of government which depends on the mere counting of noses. I would like to follow the Attorney General by making one or two historical allusions, which will perhaps show how great is the responsibility on us in granting the referendum. We have the records of only one or two referendums, except the small and comparatively obscure ones to which the Attorney General alluded. One of the most prominent is that which took place under the presidency of a Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, in Jerusalem some 1899 years ago; and there, when the question was submitted to the people, the people chose Barabbas. Another referendum occurred in more recent times, which will be in the memory of many here, and on that occasion another thief was chosen. The French people were called upon to say whether they would have the republic

continued or have Louis Napoleon as Emperor; and in a vote of 6,000,000, to a minority of three or four hundred thousand the people chose Louis Napoleon. Let hon. members look back to that referendum and ask whether, in view of what took place afterwards, the vote was a wise vote, the result of mature and deliberate consideration.

MR. ROBSON: Are the French people better off now than they were under Louis Napoleon?

MR. VOSPER: I do not think they are, but I do not know of any form of government which would make the French people better off. The question is whether that vote was an act of wisdom. Who are most respected and most honoured in history at the present time—the men who were in the majority at that time, or the men who stood boldly out in the minority? Between Barrot and Oudinot on the one hand, and Victor Hugo and Thiers on the other, there is no comparison possible. Those who opposed Napoleon are spoken of throughout France and throughout the world as patriots, whereas those who supported the French army and brought about the popular election of Louis Napoleon by means of the plebiscite are unknown, or are spoken of in terms of contempt. If this Bill is carried, as it has been carried elsewhere, by overwhelming majorities, should we not take heart of grace from the facts I have just quoted? We who are in the minority can say we stood our ground; and if the public decide against us now, on their head be it: we can do no more. Depend upon it, in the time to come, when the fuss and excitement are over and federation is an accomplished fact, if it ever should become an accomplished fact, and when the inconvenience and irksomeness of federation begin to be felt, there will arise a belief that we were willing to do all in our power, in spite of popular odium, to bring the Bill into reasonable shape. That probably will be the first duty of the Administration, and I earnestly hope they will be able to do something to remedy the defects. I shall say no more to-night. I did not intend to speak at length, but I cannot help feeling that the greatest responsibility ever cast on us is cast on us now. If we do not utter our opinions now, we may not have an opportunity later. I have

said my say, and I thank hon. members heartily for the patience with which they have listened to me on two occasions, and for the very complimentary language used towards myself. That language is more than I deserve, but I may endeavour to deserve it in the future. Thanking hon. members once more, I commend the Premier's motion to them as being the only fair way to get out of the serious difficulty; and I hope and trust the decision of the people will be marked with the same care, with the same equity, with the same sense of justice, the same deliberation, the same reasonableness, and the same high sense of duty, which have marked the debate in this House on this great question.

Amendment put, and a division taken, with the following result:—

Ayes ...	13
Noes ...	16

Majority against ... 3

AYES.	NOES.
Hon. S. Burt	Mr. Conolly
Mr. Connor	Mr. Ewing
Mr. Doherty	Sir John Forrest
Mr. A. Forrest	Mr. George
Mr. Harper	Mr. Holmes
Mr. Hubble	Mr. Illingworth
Mr. Mitchell	Mr. James
Mr. Monger	Mr. Kingsmill
Mr. Pennefather	Mr. Leake
Mr. Phillips	Mr. Lefroy
Mr. Quinlan	Mr. Solomon
Mr. Robson	Hon. H. W. Venn
Mr. Locke (Teller).	Mr. Wallace
	Mr. Wilson
	Mr. Wood
	Mr. Moran (Teller).

Amendment thus negatived.

Main question (the Premier's motion) put and passed on the voices.

THE PREMIER further moved that the resolution be transmitted by message to the Legislative Council, and their concurrence desired therein.

Question put and passed.

MR. MONGER: Was it too late to move his amendment (on the Notice Paper)?

THE SPEAKER: Yes; it was too late now. The resolution had been carried.

ADJOURNMENT.

THE PREMIER moved, without notice, that as the next day would be a public holiday and the House would not meet, the House at its rising do adjourn until Friday evening at 7.30. His only reason for the motion was that the question was

one of urgency, and he desired to get on with the business.

MR. GEORGE moved, as an amendment, that the word "Friday" be struck out and "Monday" inserted in lieu thereof.

THE PREMIER: The House would meet on Monday evening, anyhow.

MR. GEORGE: That might be. He wished to raise a protest against the conducting of business, for he thought hon. members had been played fast-and-loose with throughout the session. The work had not been properly brought down, and a lot of time had been wasted. Tomorrow would be a public holiday, and there was not the slightest reason why the House should not sit to-morrow night.

THE PREMIER: The House never had done so on a public holiday.

MR. GEORGE: Members were engaged in business, and most of them had their time fully mapped out for the rest of the week. This question of public holidays was a great nuisance in the colony. The House had been sitting for several months, and what work had we done? Speaking with all due respect to the right hon. gentleman who controlled the movements of the House, he made bold to say that if there had been any intention of carrying out the business, it might have been accomplished very much earlier during the session. A lot of measures had been brought forward which were never meant to be passed, and a lot of time had been wasted.

MR. MONGER seconded the amendment.

MR. MITCHELL: The way we had been going on was absurd. The House had been sitting getting on for five months, and nothing had been done. It was time we did something. He would be willing to second a proposal to sit seven days a week.

Amendment put and negatived.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at 10:58 o'clock until Friday evening.

Legislative Assembly.

Friday, 10th November, 1899.

Land Act Amendment Bill (private). Select Committee's Report—Paper presented—Petition: Tramways Act Amendment Bill (in opposition)—Discussion of Estimates: A Notice—Annual Estimates, in Committee of Supply, Treasury Votes, Miscellaneous, Premier's Department, Division, progress—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the Chair at 7:30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

LAND ACT AMENDMENT BILL (PRIVATE).

REPORT OF SELECT COMMITTEE.

MR. JAMES brought up the report of the Select Committee on the Land Act Amendment Bill (private).

Report received and read.

MR. JAMES gave notice for the second reading of the Bill on the next Tuesday.

PAPER PRESENTED.

By the COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS: Land Selection for the six months ending June, 1899.

Ordered to lie on the table.

PETITION—TRAMWAYS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

MR. JAMES presented a petition in opposition to the Tramways Act Amendment Bill.

Petition received.

Ordered that the petition be printed, and be considered at the next sitting.

DISCUSSION OF ESTIMATES—A NOTICE.

MR. GEORGE: I give notice that on Tuesday next I will move "That the Estimates be passed *en bloc*, as the discussion in the present House is futile and of no avail."

THE SPEAKER: I cannot allow that notice to appear on the Notice Paper. It is not respectful to the House.

MR. GEORGE: There was no intention on my part to be disrespectful to the House. If it is considered so, I will withdraw it unreservedly.

THE SPEAKER: The notice certainly was disrespectful, in the wording in which it was given.