

items being too small. Although the passing of this motion might give satisfaction to some people in the country, yet they would find that while they were crying out for bread we would be giving them a stone—something they would not be able to realise, because if this duty were taken off to-night, there would be no difference in the price of meat to-morrow. There might be a little difference in the price of frozen meat; perhaps a halfpenny a tin might be taken off it, reducing the price of the 2lb. tin to about 1s. 4d. But if we could make a reduction of twopence or threepence a pound for meat, or even a penny per pound, there might be some urgency about it. But we know that cannot be done by taking off the duty. The question may be fairly left till the end of June, when we meet again. While I give the hon. member consideration for bringing the matter forward in the moderate way in which he has treated it to-day, I think we had better get on with the special business we have in hand, and deal with this question of the meat duties during the next ordinary session. I would ask all hon. members here to let us finish the special work as quickly as we can, and then let us prorogue, to meet again for the ordinary session beginning at the usual time; and let us have the referendum of the people of this colony on the Federation Bill, as soon as it is considered advisable to do so—that is if we pass the Bill. I have no doubt this House will pass the Bill to have a referendum, and have done with it, so that we may see what the people want.

MR. VOSPER: Are you prepared to go on with the Federation Bill to-night?

THE PREMIER: I did not expect the business on the Notice Paper for to-day would be disposed of so quickly. I am quite prepared to go on with the Bill, which is simple and requires little explanation, but the Bill will not be down till to-morrow. The hon. member, in my experience of him, has shown himself to be considerate; and when a good case is put before him and an appeal is made, he is open to reason. Therefore, I ask him to accept my amendment, or to say he will withdraw his motion till we meet again next session. I beg to move

That this question be deferred till the next ordinary session, to meet in a few weeks.

MR. A. FORREST (West Kimberley): There are many members on this (Ministerial) side of the House who are inclined to follow the hon. member on this question; but if this is going to be a party vote, we will not be inclined to support him. If the hon. member wants this duty taken off in the ordinary course of business in this House, many members here are prepared to support his motion. I am prepared to support it, and I represent the largest cattle district in the colony.

MR. VOSPER (in reply): I mean to accept the amendment.

Amendment put and passed, and the motion as amended (for deferring the question) agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT.

The business on the Notice Paper having been disposed of, the House adjourned at 14 minutes past 5 o'clock until the next day.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 23rd May, 1900.

Papers presented—Question: Efficient Schools—Question: Railway Workshops, Midland Junction—Session Orders—Address-in-reply, debate resumed and concluded—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the COLONIAL SECRETARY: Regulations under Mineral Lands Act 2, Report of Education Department 1899.

Ordered to lie on the table.

QUESTION—EFFICIENT SCHOOLS.

HON. R. S. HAYNES asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, If any, and if so what, schools in the colony have been declared efficient under the Public Education Act for the reception of students holding scholarships. 2, If any applications have been made. 3, If so, by whom. 4, If any teacher of a school has applied and has been refused, what was the ground of refusal.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, None have yet been declared. 2, and 3, Applications have been received from the High School; St. Peter's College, Fremantle; Christian Brothers' College; Highgate Convent (upper school); Miss Best's High School for Girls. 4, No decision has as yet been arrived at. The Principals of the Christian Brothers' College and the Scotch College have been asked to make certain alterations in their Schedules of Instruction. It is hoped that they—or, at any rate, the Christian Brothers' College—will thoroughly satisfy the Department. The two latter schools have not yet been visited.

QUESTION—RAILWAY WORKSHOPS,
MIDLAND JUNCTION.

HON. A. B. KIDSON asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, The cost of the site for the railway workshops at Midland Junction. 2, The original estimate by the Government of the cost of the erection and completion of such workshops. 3, The present estimate of the Government of the cost of such erection and completion. 4, Whether a sufficient bottom has been found on the site of such workshops for the erection and safe and efficient working of the heaviest machinery.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, £2,000. 2, No actual estimate was made by the Government, but the estimate of the Commission which reported on the subject was £180,000. 3, New plans and designs are being submitted to the consulting engineer in London for final estimate. 4, The foundation is a good one throughout.

SESSIONAL ORDERS.

SITTING DAYS AND HOURS.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY moved:—

That, unless otherwise ordered, the House do meet for the despatch of business on Tues-

days, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, at 4:30 p.m., and shall sit until 6:30 p.m. if necessary, and, if requisite, from 7:30 p.m. onwards.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: The hour of 7:30 for meeting after dinner was slightly inconvenient to members who wished to go home. When Mr. Witte-noom was leader of the House, it was thought fit to meet at 7:45.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: And before that at 8 o'clock.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: During the whole of last session it was impossible for a member to go home to dinner. He moved as an amendment that the House resume after tea at 7:45 o'clock.

THE PRESIDENT: The Colonial Secretary would have no objection to the alteration, if members so desired. The only reason the Sessional Order was so worded was to be in harmony with the times of meeting of the other House. He would undertake, except on special occasions when it was a matter of urgency, not to take the Chair until 7:45.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: When Sir George Shenton was Colonial Secretary the House, he thought, resumed at 8 o'clock.

THE PRESIDENT: At 7:45. There was an understanding between himself and the then President that the Chair should not be resumed until 7:45. If the motion were allowed to pass, he would undertake not to resume the Chair until 7:45.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Question put and passed.

STANDING COMMITTEES.

On motions by the COLONIAL SECRETARY, Committees for the session were appointed as follow:—

PRINTING COMMITTEE.—The President, the Hon. M. L. Moss, and the mover.

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE.—The President, Hon. J. W. Hackett, Hon. A. B. Kidson, and the mover; with leave to sit during any adjournment, and authority to confer on matters of mutual concernment with any Committee appointed for similar purposes by the Legislative Assembly.

HOUSE COMMITTEE.—The President, Hon. H. J. Saunders, Hon. R. S. Haynes, and the mover; with power to act during the recess, and to confer with any similar Committee of the Legislative Assembly.

LIBRARY COMMITTEE.—The President, Hon. J. W. Hackett, Hon. H. Briggs, Hon. F. M. Stone, and the mover; with leave to sit during any adjournment and during the recess, and authority to act jointly with the Library Committee of the Legislative Assembly.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. A. B. KIDSON (West): I do not propose to take up the time of the House at any length, in debating the Address-in-reply so ably moved by Mr. Briggs. This is not the proper occasion on which to discuss the matter at length, seeing that shortly we shall have before us the Enabling Bill by which it is proposed to refer the great question of federation to the people. But the House will agree with me that it would be hard to compliment the Government on their action in this matter from beginning to end; because they have wobbled first one way and then the other, with the result—and I say it advisedly—of an extremely bad effect on this colony, not only in regard to dislocating our trade, but also in putting people against each other within our midst. Had the Government in the first instance acted with decision they could have done so with satisfaction to themselves and to the whole of the people and Parliament; but the manner in which they have acted cannot possibly commend itself to us or the majority of the people of the colony, and the effect is now beginning to be felt by the Government. They have decided now to send the Bill to the people, and, so far as we can judge at present, it is proposed that the electorate which shall have the right to vote on the question as to whether we shall have federation or not, is to be on the basis of the electorate for the Legislative Assembly. All I can say is that if the Government persist in that idea, they will come to the ground. The rolls for the Legislative Assembly are in such a disgraceful and wretched condition that the true feeling of the people cannot possibly be gathered from a vote taken upon them. Unfortunately I have been personally a sufferer from the disgraceful state in which the rolls are, and I therefore speak feelingly, and I ask the Government to seriously re-consider their decision—if such be their

decision, and I believe it is—to place the electorate for the Commonwealth Bill on the basis of that for the Legislative Assembly. Last session a new Constitution Bill was passed, whereby the franchise was given to women, and that Bill is now an act of law; and that being the case, it seems an extraordinary act on the part of the Government to exclude the women from voting on the question of federation. In passing that measure the Government agreed that women should take part in matters concerning the colony and have the right to do so, and yet now it is proposed to pass another law excluding women from voting on the greater question ever placed before the people here. But I do not think this House will allow the Government to persist in such a course; because the basis of the electorate ought to be that every adult person who has resided six months in the colony and is a British subject, should have a vote. It has been argued by some that this should not be so, because of the time which must elapse before those persons could be placed on the roll. But I feel confident that if the Government act earnestly and with firmness in the matter they can easily get over the difficulty, because it has been suggested—and it is a good suggestion too—that every person who comes forward and makes a declaration that he or she has been in the colony for six months, and is of the age of 21 years, should have a vote. The answer to that suggestion by one or two members who interjected was a query as to how it would be known whether these people were speaking rightly or wrongly. But I do not think any person would place himself or herself in jeopardy for six months in goal for the purpose of bringing about federation for the colony. Even supposing, however, that the Government persist in making the electorate for the Legislative Assembly the basis of the electorate for the referendum, the same difficulty will arise, because what is there at present to prevent people from impersonating and committing fraud in connection with the voting. Afterwards there is no redress, and the same thing precisely might happen. The only difficulty I see is as to whether the roll can be prepared so as to carry out this suggestion in the time at our disposal; but I think the

Government can do it if they put their shoulders to the wheel and work with a will. I do not propose to enter into the question of federation, because in a short time we shall have an opportunity of expressing our views pretty fully; but I say, as I have said before, that I am against federation for Western Australia at the present time, and I intend to use every constitutional means in my power to prevent the colony entering the union. I take this course on conscientious grounds, and I give credit for the same conscientiousness to other members who support federation for this colony at the present time. Personally I believe federation would have a very disastrous effect on the colony, and any step I can take constitutionally at the present time to stop the colony joining federation I intend to take. In the very excellent speech of Mr. Briggs, that hon. member was hardly happy on one point, and one point only: that was when he likened this colony to Newfoundland. He quoted some authority which described Newfoundland as a land of "cods, dogs, and fogs." All I can say is that simile does not apply to this great colony, which is certainly not a land of "cods, dogs, and fogs."

HON. R. S. HAYNES: It is a land of "sin, sand, and sorrow."

HON. A. B. KIDSON: The cases of Newfoundland and Western Australia are not parallel, and I should be sorry to think that if our colony remained out of federation it would meet with the same fate as the former. Why should it meet with that fate, when in the few years we have had responsible government we have seen our enormous leaps and bounds in prosperity? It seems to me almost absurd to consider such a thing possible in connection with this colony. Here we have vast resources which are being developed more every day, and the colony is progressing both in wealth and population, and I do not think we should, in fairness to the country, make such statements as that we are likely to go to the wall in the same way as Newfoundland. We do not in any case desire to become dependent on federation, because we are perfectly well able to support ourselves. I am a federationist myself, heart and soul; but the time has not arrived for us to

federate. When the time does arrive, however, I shall be one of the first to support the colony joining the Commonwealth. It is not necessary for me to detain the House longer. I have given my views in regard to the manner in which the voting should be taken on this question, and to do that was the principal reason why I spoke to-day. What we want is a fair vote as to the wishes and desires of the whole of the people who will have to live under the Federal Constitution; and that being the case, I do hope, as I say again, the Government will consider this matter, and take some notice of the views expressed by hon. members in the House.

HON. D. MCKAY (North): I am not going to comment at any length on the Speech of His Excellency the Administrator; on the contrary I am fully in accord with that Speech. But in passing I desire to make one or two observations. It can be gathered from Paragraph 2 of His Excellency's Speech that the Government exerted its utmost endeavours to secure better terms for this colony before entering the Australian federation; but through the unfederal opposition extended to this colony by most of the other colonies, the efforts of the Government failed. Such opposition came chiefly from those to whose markets we have contributed our millions in the past; and, not content with that, they want to secure our millions and more in the future, to my mind establishing a questionable motto of "grab all and give nothing." It can be gathered from Paragraph 3 that the Government have made up their minds to waive the undoubted loss this colony will incur in order to join Australian federation, showing a truly federal spirit which cannot certainly be said of most of the other colonies. I question very much if any other colony were situated in the same position as this colony, it would make a similar sacrifice. In speaking in this strain, I am asserting my candid opinion. I may be wrong, but until I am convinced that I am wrong I shall tenaciously adhere to my opinion.

HON. M. L. MOSS (West): The reason for Parliament having been called together earlier than usually has been the case is the result of the action of the

Council during the last session of Parliament. Mr. Kidson has thought fit to condemn the Government for the position which he thinks they have taken up in regard to this important question. I hardly think the observations of that hon. gentleman were fully justified. We ought to be fair over this question, and the facts, as I understand, are that the Government successfully carried through the Legislative Assembly the original Bill, and a Bill with certain amendments more adapted to the circumstances of this colony. It is this Chamber that is to blame for what occurred.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: We were quite justified.

HON. M. L. MOSS: The question whether this Chamber was justified I will give my opinion about presently. The Government desired the electors to express their opinion on the original Bill and another Bill suited to the requirements of this colony, but the Legislative Council in its wisdom rejected the proposal. To my mind the action of the Legislative Council was altogether outside the functions of Legislative Councilors. A Legislative Council, to my mind, exists for the purpose of checking hasty legislation.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: Oh!

HON. M. L. MOSS: Certainly not for the purpose of preventing the people of the colony from expressing their opinion on such an important question. I think it will be generally admitted that while the Legislative Council refused to send the Bill to the people, the people at the elections which have just taken place expressed the desire that the measure should be placed on the statute book, and the Legislative Council has to give way. That action in regard to this matter has, to my mind, been inconsistent, because the Legislative Council acted as a barrier in not allowing the people to express their opinion on this matter. The Legislative Assembly of this colony, which is generally designated the people's Chamber, expressed their desire that the Bill should go to the people, but for some reason there was a block in this Chamber. I agree with what has been said by Mr. Jenkins, that the action of this Chamber has been productive of a large amount of bad feeling being engendered in various parts of the colony. I am not one of

those people who think that the goldfields have brought misery to this colony or that they have done a large amount of harm. I lived in this colony in 1891 and I have lived here ever since, and if hon. members will take a retrospective glance they will see that in 1891 the population was between 40,000 and 45,000 persons, and the public revenue was under half a million of money. The transformation which has taken place has been due to the discovery of gold and the development of the goldfields.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: They were not bad times either.

HON. M. L. MOSS: They are not bad times. The population to-day is about 170,000, and the revenue is over two and a half millions. Perhaps if hon. members will reflect and be fair they will see that we have every reason to congratulate ourselves that gold was discovered, and that so much has been done on the Eastern goldfields to send the colony ahead. Consequently I am not like our hon. gentleman, who spoke the other day and said that this is a question of the goldfields against the rest of the colony. It is nothing of the kind. A great amount of dissatisfaction existed in Perth and Fremantle, and my election is an expression of opinion in the Western Province. So far as the hon. gentleman whom I replaced is concerned, there is no man throughout the length and breadth of the colony who could say a word against him. He was a member of the Legislative Council for years, and during that time he gained the respect of every one with whom he came in contact. But that gentleman to whom I am referring, voted against the Bill going to the people, and he has had to pay the penalty. That is a good indication of what the feeling is in the West Province. To my mind it is not a question of the goldfields against the rest of the colony, but if you like, it is more a question of the populous centres of the colony against the rest of the colony. That is the fairest way to put the matter. Mr. Whitcomb says that it is altogether opposed to constitutional precedent to refer the Bill to the people, but it is good enough for me that a precedent has been made by other parts of Australia. That is sufficient for my purpose. I want to see the people of this colony have the same right extended

to them of expressing their opinion on this question, and the precedent which Australia has made in this respect is sufficient for my purpose, if there is no precedent previously existing of an important question being submitted to the people by referendum. I think it would be unbecoming of the Legislative Council of this colony not to allow the people of Western Australia to have the same right as the other colonies have had.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: What about New South Wales?

HON. M. L. MOSS: With regard to the question of referring the Bill to the electors of the colony, I am in accord with the remarks made by Mr. R. S. Haynes. It would be a farce to send the Bill to the people on the rolls as they exist at the present time. I have no desire to give any great number of statistics on this question, but I may say that at the recent election which I contested I had returned to me from one portion of the West Province, North Fremantle, out of 250 post-cards, 73, and I have taken the trouble to go over these post-cards since, and in many instances I find that the people on the roll are dead, and in a large number of instances the post-cards were returned because the people were not known to the post-office officials, and consequently are out of the district. In many instances the names are duplicated on the roll, which gives a much greater opportunity for double voting and personation, which has been mentioned by Mr. Lukin. In my opinion the suggestion thrown out by Mr. R. S. Haynes ought to be adopted. Every adult of full age who has been resident in this colony for six months should have the privilege of exercising a vote on this important question. If this is not done, the greatest farce would be perpetrated in sending the Bill to the people on the rolls which exist at the present time, and which are recognised as being in a disgraceful condition. And the rolls which are in a disgraceful condition are those referring to the more populous parts of the colony. In the districts away in the North, where the number of electors is small, the bulk of the people will be found on the rolls; but in the populous portions of the colony there are hundreds of people who are off the rolls

who should be on them. There is one matter which hon. members are probably aware of, that there are a number of people on the rolls by virtue of their ratepayers' qualifications. And many of these persons possess freehold qualifications; but in view of the neglect and apathy which exist they get on the roll on their ratepayers' qualifications. Many municipal councils declare a rate, and make it payable in two moieties, and the failure to pay the second moiety causes the name to be struck off the roll. How we can expect to get the voice of the people in circumstances of that kind is a mystery to me. During my residence in the colony the electoral registrars up to the present time have never called on people to prove their ratepayers' qualifications, but now throughout the length and breadth of the colony notices are being given to people to prove their qualifications. People do not bother themselves about getting on the roll; there is a lot of apathy in regard to it, and the Government have not made it compulsory as yet on a Government officer to see that people are on the rolls; as a consequence, hundreds are not on the rolls to-day.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: Thousands.

HON. M. L. MOSS: There may be thousands. I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that at the present time there are thousands who ought to be on the rolls but are not. To my mind the proposal in the Governor's Speech to submit the Bill to the people is unwise, and not in the best interests of the people of the colony. If we want to submit the Bill to the people, we do not want to have a fraction of the public voting, but the whole. I think those gentlemen who see fit to oppose federation should be fair in regard to this. It is a matter on which the people should express their opinion. Do not let there be any subterfuge; do not let it be said that Parliament decided that this matter should be voted upon by the electors on the present roll, which would be unsatisfactory. When the Bill is submitted, if no other member will move an amendment on the lines thrown out by Mr. Haynes, I shall be prepared to do so. I do not propose to detain the House further at the present time. I shall have ample opportunity of expressing my opinion later on, but I could not let this opportunity pass without expressing

my opinion about the action of the Legislative Council in the past, because that is the main reason why I occupy a seat in this Chamber at the present time.

HON. J. M. DREW (Central Province): As this is the first occasion I have had the honour of addressing the House, I hope both the President and the members will show me every indulgence. It appears to me, the question we are called on to consider is not whether it is advisable for this colony to enter federation or whether it would be injudicious to do so. If that were the subject of debate I should certainly proclaim myself as opposed to federation under the Commonwealth Bill, because I consider the measure bristles with dangers to the progress and prosperity of the colony. We are, however, called on to debate no such question. What we have to discuss is whether we shall allow the people of this colony to exercise the franchise on this question, or whether we shall attempt to rob them of their undoubted birthright. The electors on the roll, I may say, are only a portion of the people of the colony.

HON. C. SOMMERS: A small portion.

HON. J. M. DREW: A very small portion. There are about 30,000 names on the roll, a great many of which appear on the rolls for the different districts, and it is my firm conviction that, in consequence of plural voting, not more than 25,000 people are really represented on the roll. The adult male and female population of the country is about 90,000, and I fail to see how we can justify any attempt to deprive 65,000 adult persons of the right of expressing their opinion on the question of federation. There are special reasons why we should not adopt the course which has been adopted in the other colonies. In this colony we have an Electoral Act which would seem to have been devised specially to prevent people from getting on the roll, and to remove the names of persons already on the roll.

HON. C. SOMMERS: You are not far wrong.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Which Electoral Act?

HON. J. M. DREW: The old Electoral Act. There are thousands of people, not only in the mining districts, but in the agricultural districts, who are not on the roll, and there are hundreds in the Geraldton district who have never been

on the roll, and never will be, because it takes an expert lawyer to fill in the form of application in accordance with the Act, or, at any rate, it takes a person with special knowledge to perform that duty. Any little informality causes a claim to be rejected, and the result is that a great number of people are disfranchised, and if the Commonwealth Bill goes to the people, will not have an opportunity of recording a vote. It is my conviction that federation under this measure would be a serious disadvantage to Western Australia; but I may be wrong, and anyhow I am not going to pit my opinion against the opinions of others who claim to represent some 90,000 persons in the colony, and who may be able to form a better judgment on the question than I individually. Some people say we should refuse to consult the people in the matter; but to say that is to argue either that the people are deficient in intelligence, or that they are dishonest—that they are political conspirators bent on ruining the colony, and while entitled to the franchise are not to exercise it. I cannot conceive any reason or pretext to justify such an unwarrantable calumny on the people of this colony. The people may approve of the Bill if it be remitted to them, and the result, as I said before, may be disastrous, but far better our material interests should suffer than we should deal a blow at political freedom. We can only strive to deprive these people of their rights; we could not succeed for any length of time. This House, if it attempted to restrict the liberties of the people in dealing with this question, would soon pave the way to its own inglorious extinction. I very much regret that the Government have not made provision to have the Bill remitted, not to the electors alone, but to every man and woman who is 21 years of age, is a British subject, and has resided in the colony for six months.

HON. W. MALEY (South-East): I am in favour of federation and of the Commonwealth Bill being remitted to the people, because I look on the latter as peculiarly a people's measure. I remember some 10 years ago I attended a conference on federation in the Town Hall, Melbourne, as a representative of the Australian Natives' Association in this

colony. On that occasion we, the Young Australian Party, drafted a Bill, and that Bill has practically been adopted as the Commonwealth Constitution of Australia. That was the first popular convention on federation, and it has been my duty and my pleasure to watch the progress of the measure, though it has not been my privilege until now to take any further part in its discussion. I may say I am returned here by the property-owners of the district I represent. I was supported in a peculiarly strong and forcible manner by the largest property-owners in the district, gentlemen who possess, perhaps, the largest area of freehold land in the colony; and these gentlemen are not at all afraid of taxation, or that their property will be dissipated or lost, nor are they afraid of any of the contingencies such as have been pointed out as bogies by those who opposed the principle of federation. I do not consider this the proper stage to discuss the question of federation fully. I should like, of course, to see the Bill go to the people, and when I say to the people I mean to the adult population of the colony. At the present time, under the new Act, there is no one practically on the roll. The new Act is in force, and yet it is not in force, and if there were an election to-morrow the old roll would be the one practically in use. Some method will have to be adopted, as already suggested by Mr. Haynes, to overcome this difficulty, and I am positive that when the Bill does go to the people it will be accepted as the salvation of this colony. Some gentlemen, with perhaps some show of reason, if not with sound reason, hold that agriculture and all industries appertaining to the cultivation of the soil will be killed outright by federation. I have been engaged in agriculture off and on for something like 25 years, and I can say that so far as those industries are concerned, the farmer will be in no worse position under federation than he is to-day, because the duty he is supposed to receive now does not go into his pocket. That, unfortunately, is the truth of the whole matter. If a duty could be put on to encourage agriculture without encouraging something else to counterbalance the benefit I would myself probably say it was reasonable to oppose federation; but I have examined the question from the standpoint of one

concerned in the growing of wheat and the cultivation of the soil, and I can say the farmers in the district I represent received my expressions of opinion everywhere enthusiastically, and they have returned me here as a proof that they are prepared to accept federation at the present time. In the Kataning district there has been more progress than in any other district. There is all the work of clearing to be undertaken, and men are facing difficulties which they know, because they are experiencing them to a greater extent than those, say, in the York district; and they have sent me to this House, I take it, as an act of protest against what has been said in support of the food duties.

HON. A. P. MATHESON (North-East): If one dealt with the Administrator's Address simply as it stands in print, there would be very little to say. I am cordially in agreement with Mr. Moss—on whose speech I desire to congratulate him—when he differs from those hon. members who, like Mr. Kidson, are inclined to condemn the Government for their attitude at the present time in having called us together.

HON. A. B. KIDSON: I did not condemn the Government for that.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: I understood Mr. Kidson to say he was unable to compliment the Government on their change.

HON. A. B. KIDSON: I referred to the attitude of the Government all through.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: Their change of attitude.

HON. A. B. KIDSON: What I said was that I was unable to compliment the Government on their attitude all through the question.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: Their "Jim Crow" attitude.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: I quite understood that Mr. Kidson's remarks included the change of attitude by the Government at the present moment.

HON. A. B. KIDSON: I did not mean that; you misunderstood me.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: I am sorry if I have misinterpreted the hon. member.

HON. A. B. KIDSON: Perhaps you will apologise?

HON. A. P. MATHESON: I do; I say I am sorry if I have placed an inter-

pretation on the hon. member's words which was not meant, but which I submit was a construction of which they were capable.

HON. A. B. KIDSON: To some members, perhaps.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: It seems to me the Government, in adopting the course they have, are deserving of every praise. There is no doubt they have had to resist an almost overwhelming influence on the part of their old supporters to prevent their doing exactly what they have done. But we should not place ourselves above the position of welcoming the sinner; in fact, a sinner, as we know—

HON. A. B. KIDSON: You admit the Government are sinners.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: I admit it.

HON. A. B. KIDSON: That is all I said.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: We ought to welcome those sinners on their reclamation, and their present position is more worthy of praise than that of people who have not sinned in this matter. I had certainly expected, and I think every person who lives in the colony had expected, that when the Administrator's Speech came to be debated we should have found members of the Government to the front in explaining what had taken place since Parliament last met, and the reasons which have led them by degrees to this extraordinary change of front.

HON. F. WHITCOMBE: They cannot.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: The hon. member says they cannot.

HON. F. WHITCOMBE: Not satisfactorily.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: But we and the country had a right to expect that both in this House and in another place the members of the Government would have explained the reasons which have led them to this extraordinary change of front. But what do we find? No member of the Government, so far as I can ascertain, has said a single word in explanation, and we are therefore obliged to fall back on the Speech of the Administrator, and on a number of documents which at the same time were laid on the table of the House. I propose this evening to deal shortly with those

papers *seriatim*, and with the general position in which we find ourselves to-day; because that is the only way in which we can clear ourselves before the public hereafter for the position which I hope we shall take up. This is the more necessary because of the enormous misapprehension which prevails in the country as to what has taken place on this subject in the past. Even Mr. Mosely in speaking this evening fell into an error which is very generally shared in the country. But before I go into that question I just want to deal in passing with the question of the body to whom the referendum shall be made. I cordially agree in principle with what has fallen from Mr. R. S. Haynes and other members of this House when they say that the existing rolls—the rolls as amended at the Revision Court on the 15th May—should not be taken as the roll of the people to whom the question of federation should be referred. That position is an extremely simple one. The roll, amended on 15th May, forms the basis of the new electoral rolls of the colony, and from last Friday—I speak subject to correction—on which day the new Constitution and new Electoral Act were gazetted, it is within the right of any person who has been six months in the colony to make an application to have their name inscribed on the new roll, and when that name has been on the roll for six months he or she becomes an effective voter. That seems to me a matter of simplicity itself. Let any person who has had his or her name put on the roll prior to the referendum—say 10 days—be entitled to vote on this question. I think it would be impossible to carry out the suggestion as to electors' rights being given away freely to everybody.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: You can only vote once on an elector's right.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: It is true you can only vote once on an elector's right, but it would be just as easy for a person applying for an elector's right to apply to have his or her name put on the roll.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: There would be a difficulty in making it up.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: There would be no difficulty, because the rolls have to be made up under the new Act. According to the Constitution Act which

has just come into force, a name which has been placed on the roll is not effective until it has been there six months. Let us make the name effective for voting purposes on the question of federation if it has been placed on the roll any date prior to 10 days before the voting day. If members look into it they will see that it is an eminently feasible way of dealing with this question. Names have been put on the roll recently, and I myself know that 50 names were put on the Perth roll yesterday. People have to make an application, and in due course they get a receipt for that application.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: Does not the applicant have to designate the block of land on which he is resident?

HON. A. P. MATHESON: No; you may live in a tent and yet be entitled to have your name put on the roll if you have been in the colony for six months.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: Or in a boat.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: I suppose a boat moored within territorial waters would be sufficient.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: People get a receipt. Would not the production of the receipt be sufficient to enable the person to vote?

HON. A. P. MATHESON: The hon. gentleman misses this point: that only those people who now apply to be put on the roll would get a receipt and there would be hundreds of people who would not get a receipt. But to return to the sequence of events which led up to the present position. Mr. Moss fell into this slight error; he imagined that in the Legislative Assembly a Bill was submitted and approved of for a referendum of the Bill as amended by the Premiers defining the constitution as adopted by Australia, and the Bill as mutilated by the Select Committee, so that these should be submitted to the people.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: Improved.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: Mutilated. This is not the case. In the Legislative Assembly there was a mere expression of opinion asked for and it was given, certainly in the direction indicated by Mr. Moss. In the House here exactly the same thing occurred, only in a different sequence. The House first of all was asked to express an opinion that the Commonwealth Bill as adopted by

the other colonies should be referred to the people, and that was negatived. Mr. Whitcombe then moved that no Bill be referred to the people, and that was negatived also. The Colonial Secretary then moved that, in the opinion of the House, both Bills should be referred to the people, and that also was negatived. Finally Mr. Hackett's suggestion that in the opinion of the House the Bill as—he did not use the word “mutilated,” but I do so—should be referred to the people, was also negatived. I submit that this House was perfectly in order, and justified in expressing any opinion they thought fit on the subject, and as long as the matter rested there nobody was to blame. But unfortunately the Premier of the colony did not see fit to prosecute the business in the way he should have done, and in the way I contend he was bound to do by his pledges given in Melbourne, at the meeting of Premiers. When the Premier was asked by Mr. Leake if he intended to bring in a Bill for a referendum of both Bills to the people, following out the resolution passed in another place, he said he was not prepared at present to do so. That I maintain is where the difficulty first arose. There is no doubt in my mind that if the Premier had brought in a Bill in another place, as he was no doubt bound to do, authorising a referendum of both Bills to the people, that Bill would have been carried, and it would have come in due course to this House, and that stage having been reached, I agree with Mr. Moss that this House would have grossly exceeded its powers if it had negatived that Bill. It is important that this should be understood.

HON. R. G. BURGER: Are you setting yourself right?

HON. A. P. MATHESON: I am setting myself right before a number of people who think I am wrong. It has been put to me this way: It was said to me by a member in another place, “I can thoroughly understand that you were annoyed when you found that both Bills were not referred to the people, but you adopted an entirely wrong course in agitating for separation. In doing so you alienated a number of people, myself included, from you. We would have been prepared to back you up. You should have immediately commenced an

agitation against the Upper House." This proceeded from a member of another place, and showed the general misconstruction which had been placed on the position. We who desired the referendum of both Bills were not prepared to commence an agitation against the Legislative Council as a body, as that body had only done what they were entitled to do in expressing an opinion. The Council were not placed in a position in which they could have refused to pass the Bill. I believe the Government were thoroughly convinced that if such a Bill had come to this House it would have passed, and I think very few members of this House would have dared, in face of public opinion as it then stood, and in face of the fact that another place had carried the Bill, to oppose such a measure, but the Government did not bring it forward. The next step in this matter was a most astounding one. In this House, at any rate, a motion had been brought forward that communications would be commenced with the other colonies with the view of ascertaining if our amendments would be accepted. Such a motion was negatived by a large majority of votes. No motion to that effect was brought forward in another place. But the House had scarcely risen a fortnight when we find the Premier and another gentleman—his *fidus Achates*—hurrying off to the other colonies in pursuit of health.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Who was the *fidus Achates*?

HON. A. P. MATHESON: It is not necessary to indicate that more distinctly.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: Why do you ask?

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Because I am in doubt.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: I have no desire to gratify the curiosity of the hon. member.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Prurient curiosity.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: In the pursuit of health we find the Premier and this gentleman wandering as far as Queensland and interviewing the Premiers and postal authorities of all the colonies, and we heard little of what they did, or of what happened.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: There was nothing to tell.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: But we gathered that in every colony they visited, except Queensland, they found that the Governments confirmed the statement made in this House that it was absolutely impossible for the Governments of any of the other colonies to consent to an alteration of the Bill without another referendum.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: That is all moonshine.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: I am sure you are romancing about the matter altogether.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: That is what the public gathered, and I can understand the hon. member and the Colonial Secretary rising in their seats to contradict me; it only intensifies my declaration that on such an occasion those who know should have risen to explain what did happen, and Parliament and the country would not have been left in the dark in these matters.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: We prefer you to explain what did not happen.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: The hon. gentleman would evidently like to put me in a corner, but the more he twits me with inaccuracies the more he lends to my arguments that a member of Parliament should not be put in a position of being inaccurate by the withholding of information which the public have a right to expect. The views which I express are the views which have been expressed in the whole of the Press of the colony, and if I am inaccurate I am inaccurate with the whole of the colony. Now to proceed. We find later, on the return of this deputation—

HON. J. W. HACKETT: What deputation.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: This deputation, this pleasure party, the Premier and his *fidus Achates*, that no further light was thrown on this matter.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: You are doing it now.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: The hon. gentleman one moment says I am not, and the next that I am. Either I am, or I am not. Later on, as I have said, we had delegates from this colony sent to England, and to the amazement of the whole colony we suddenly heard that Mr. S. H. Parker, Q.C., had been deputed to go to England and watch the progress of

the Bill. Very little information was given to the country as to what Mr. Parker was to do, until at last, at the meeting of Parliament, the first of the papers with which I propose to deal was laid on the table of the House. In this paper we find serious and most startling statements. The instructions to Mr. Parker were, I presume, given by Sir John Forrest at the instigation of the Cabinet—the “Cabinet,” the “Ministers,” the “Government,” or whatever you choose to call them.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: Does the Premier consult the Cabinet?

HON. A. P. MATHESON: Clause 4 of Mr. Parker's instructions, referring to the Legislative Council, says:—

there is no doubt but that it would have approved of the Bill as amended by the Joint Committee of both Houses if it could have been assured that the amendments would have been accepted by the Parliaments of Eastern Australia.

I should really like to ask the Colonial Secretary—and I hope if he speaks at all on the subject he will address himself to this particular question—what grounds the Government had for supposing that any such Bill would have passed through this House if we had been sure the amendments would have been granted. I say most emphatically there was a very large number of hon. members here absolutely opposed to those amendments, and if those amendments had been granted, or any indication given that those amendments would have been granted, their opposition would have been intensified rather than decreased. There were in addition a large number of gentlemen in the House who were absolutely opposed to federation in any sense, and those gentlemen would have voted against the Bill just as they did when the matter was referred to us before. The malcontents would have doubtless voted against the Bill, and the position would have been the same as it was.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: It is doubtful.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: The hon. member says it is doubtful, but I have no doubt in the matter. In Clause 5 on the instructions the statement is made again:—

the Government is of opinion that Parliament could be induced to forego the other three

amendments recommended by the Joint Select Committee.

A most peculiar question is raised when we find the Government coolly stating that there would be no difficulty in getting Parliament to forego the other amendments recommended by the Select Committee. We must remember that the suggestion that the referendum should be made was thrown out in this House mainly through the efforts of certain members of the Joint Select Committee, who said that every one of those four amendments was absolutely essential. We were told that nothing else would suit the country, and that the country would be ruined if those amendments were not secured. Yet we find the Government absolutely instructing their representative, in defiance of Parliament and their Select Committee's recommendations, that he should drop three of the amendments. Really I think we are entitled on this point to an explanation; and the country was entitled to expect that some member of the Government at any rate would have explained why they were satisfied these amendments were unnecessary. To myself it comes as a source of gratification to find that at this stage the Government have come to the views I have always expressed, but it is not a satisfactory position in which to leave the matter; and the Government should undoubtedly be prepared to give an explanation of what has induced them to alter their views. Either the Select Committee was what I have always maintained it was—an elaborate farce—or the Government were grossly exceeding their powers in instructing the delegate to waive three of the recommendations of the Select Committee. Clause 6 of the Instructions emphasises the position I have already raised. That clause speaks, and speaks in italics, of “*the one amendment*” required by Western Australia. But Western Australia required no amendment, and I say so without fear of contradiction; and that was the reason the opinion was expressed that the Bill should not be referred to the people. Every one in the House knew that Western Australia was in favour of no amendment, and members were therefore afraid to let the Bill go to the people for their decision; and yet here we find the

Government, who pride themselves on their accuracy, and who presume to question the accuracy of small details in statements made by other people who are opposed to the Government policy—we find the Government speaking of “*the one amendment*” required by Western Australia.

HON. D. MCKAY: How did the Government know?

HON. A. P. MATHESON: As the hon. member says, how did the Government know? It was a grossly misleading statement made in a public document. Now we reach Clause 8, and Clauses 8 and 9 together are most interesting as the House will very soon realise. This document is dated 17th February, 1900, and it so happens that on or about that date a letter signed “A West Australian M.P.” appeared in the Press in the Eastern colonies, and was commented on most unfavourably by that Press. In particular, and this is a most noticeable point, the Press on the other side called attention to the most peculiar nature of two arguments. It is a most remarkable fact that these two arguments which were never brought forward in this House, and never appeared in print side by side in this colony, to the best of my belief, here appear side by side in Clauses 8 and 9 just as they did in the letter of “A West Australian M.P.” The discovery that the statements in Clauses 8 and 9 do not correspond is not an original discovery, because as I have stated my attention was called to it by the Eastern Press. Clause 8 takes exception to the double tariff, and says that the effect of Clause 95 would be of little good to the people of this colony. It reads:—

You will, I am sure, take every suitable opportunity of pointing out the exceptional and abnormal conditions of Western Australia, which were fully admitted by all the financial authorities at the various Conventions, and are conclusively proved by Clause 95 finding a place in the Commonwealth Bill. The effect of this clause was not clearly understood or realised at the time, but it has since been ascertained that its operation would be of little or no advantage to the people of this colony. It would result in our being subjected for five years to an annual change of tariff, and also in our having two tariffs for that period, and it is certain the one applicable to goods entering the colony from the mother country, and from other places beyond the limits of the Commonwealth, would be much higher than our existing tariff, thereby placing, during

those five years, large additional taxation on the people of this colony. Instead, therefore, of being a relief it would prove a burden.

To prove a burden to the people of this colony could only be in one way, namely, if it must entail increased taxation; and with increased taxation there would be an increased revenue, therefore on that showing, federation was going to bring in for five years increased revenue. The paragraph says the taxation would be higher than under the existing tariff, and during that five years there would be additional taxation on the people, induced by it, therefore instead of being a relief it would be a burden. This is the only construction that can be put on it, that the customs revenue would be increased and there would be no deficit. In the very next clause following the letter of “A West Australian M.P.” we find the Government bewailing the tremendous loss of revenue which is estimated by the Government Actuary to be £300,000 a year. A man like Mr. Parker, a lawyer, a Queen's Counsellor, a man accustomed to weighing words by the hair, is instructed in printing, or in writing probably, to represent this colony in England with two such divergent statements in his instructions as these two are. In one we find an enormous burden on the people, in another there is going to be a loss of revenue amounting to £300,000 a year. That is in the document proceeding from this most accurate Government. Then the Government later on congratulate themselves on Mr. Holder's motion in reference to the pledge given by him to pass a Bill through the South Australian Parliament for the construction of a railway from Kalgoorlie to Port Augusta. We have frequently pointed out—and there is no harm in repeating it to the House—that for three or four years the Government of South Australia have been willing to facilitate such a railway. What the Government of South Australia are not prepared to facilitate is the construction of a railway from Kalgoorlie to some other point than Port Augusta.

HON. D. MCKAY: It was not open to them to refuse.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: This matter was considered in the Select Committee. Mr. Morgans had drafted a proposition suggesting that the Government of South Australia should be asked to give some

sort of pledge, which Mr. Holder has now given, but the motion was never put. The motion was twice amended to get the terms more equivocal than they were before, but the motion was never put. The people who were instigating the motion of Mr. Morgans found that the Government of South Australia were prepared to give the pledge, and that one grievance would then be swept away. As I said before, the Government, in the Speech from the Administrator, allude to the four amendments, but there is no indication given as to what means were taken to secure the amendments. Three of the amendments recommended by the Select Committee have been thrown over. Having brought the position of affairs to that date it became necessary to go back to some slight extent, to the date on which Mr. Leake, in another place, received a reply from the Premier that he did not intend to submit the Bill authorising a referendum to another place. Consequently an agitation instantly started through the goldfields, and also at Albany, for separation. I do not desire to enter lengthily into the reasons which led to the agitation, except to say that if the people of these districts had not absolutely despaired of bringing the Government to the position in which they are brought to-day, very likely that agitation would never have started; but it was in absolute desperation.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: It is going on yet.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: The hon. member should not say it is going on yet: it is quiescent at the present moment, and if the hon. gentleman votes in a proper manner I do not think it will burn with any ardour in the future.

HON. D. MCKAY: The wind has been taken out of their sails.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: The hon. gentleman is perfectly at liberty to say that, but he must also remember that if it had not been for our sails and the wind that blew them forward, the Government would not have been able to deprive us of the wind now. If we had not started this agitation we should not have been sitting here to-day. I do not think the hon. member is prepared to deny that. If he does he is extremely rash. Even Professor Nicholas, who was instigated at an afternoon tea-party to stand for the North-East Province as a candidate, made

that one of the planks of his platform, and he was instigated by the Government to stand.

HON. D. MCKAY: It did not do him much good.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: No; because everyone saw through it. He stated as one of the planks of his platform that the agitation was responsible for the position of the Government, and that the Government were now prepared to yield to the demand for a referendum. The people of Albany sent in a petition to the Queen, and that petition in due course went before the Premier and his Cabinet. The Cabinet thereupon drafted a report which has been placed on the table of this House, and to my mind it forms, with the petition from the goldfields, an essential part of the Administrator's Address. I propose to comment briefly on the petition, and the remarks made on it by the Cabinet. First of all the petition is headed "We, Her Majesty's most loyal and dutiful subjects," and it is signed at the bottom by these subjects. The Cabinet comment on it as follows:—They say:

I submit also that this petition is not based on any solid foundation. It is not alleged even that there is any ground for complaint, except that it is desired to enter the Australian federation.

There you have it, at that date, that the Government of this country were absolutely obtusely blind to the fact that there could not be a greater ground for complaint than that the people had been refused the referendum. And until a few weeks ago the Government were absolutely blind to that point. One cannot help wondering how they came to see that the deprivation of the right of referendum was the biggest cause of complaint that could be found, and the only deduction that can be drawn is that those to whom the petition was addressed had called the attention of the Government to the fact that the position in which they found themselves was an untenable one. I regret Mr. Hackett is not in his place to tell me I am wrong, or no doubt he would have done so. The remarks of the Cabinet go on to say:—

An examination of this petition from the people of Albany will show that nearly all those who signed it reside within the town of Albany, and at the Denmark timber station. They have no right, therefore, to speak for

any larger area than that in which they reside, which forms a very small part of the 8,300,000 acres referred to in the petition, the population of which they purport, without authority, to represent.

The position is this. With the exception of the people living in this small district, the rest of these eight million acres are almost uninhabited, and it is certain the Government were perfectly well advised on that point. They know perfectly well that the statement, though absolutely the truth, is misleading, and though they say that eight millions acres are not represented by the people who sent in the petition because they do not live scattered over those eight million acres, the fact remains that they do represent the people living over those eight million acres. To prove that the statement is correct I will give these figures:—In Albany there are 800 voters; in the Plantagenet district there are 587 voters; and over one-third of the Plantagenet district—the most populous part of the Plantagenet district—is outside of the proposed separation district. In Nelson, which also forms part of the area, only six voters can be found in that part of the district. That gives 1,393 voters on the roll, and of that number 200 at least are to be taken off for duplications, which brings the number down to only 1,193 voters in that district, in which we obtained signatures amounting to 1,745. Now, I think that is a most excellent record, and it makes the attitude of the Government a particularly absurd one. It is possible for the Cabinet to say they had no time to examine the rolls in the way we did, but if they submit these statements to Mr. Chamberlain they must substantiate them. To say that these people have no right to speak for a larger area is a farce. Take the case of the member for East Kimberley. That hon. member has 93 voters in his electorate; and would the Government be prepared to say that he is not entitled to speak for that portion of the area in which there is no population? In that case he would not represent any portion of this area at all. These 1,745 people are to all intents and purposes the entire population of this district.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: How many ladies signed the petition?

HON. A. P. MATHESON: We treated them as the adult population.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Because the women were not on the roll.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: No doubt they were not on the roll, but there are 1,745 against 1,193. That is the extreme difference. Then the petition went on to say, in Paragraph 1:—"We" (that is to say the undersigned)

are unanimously in favour of adopting the Federal Constitution Bill recently passed by the other five colonies of Australia.

There was a simple statement of fact about which no intelligent person could take exception. What is the comment of the Government upon that? They say,

This statement is not correct, as the population is not unanimous in regard to the matter.

I submit to this House, what has the unanimity of the population got to do with the question of the signatories to the petition? It is another instance of the inaccuracy of the Government in dealing with the matter, and the manner in which they go out of their way to discredit the petition by glosses. The next paragraph of the petition was this:

The Government and Parliament of the colony have refused to allow the said Commonwealth Bill to be submitted to the vote of the people.

I submit that is absolutely correct. The Government and Parliament had both of them, in the sense that Parliament consists of both Houses of Parliament, refused to allow the referendum to be made, and the Government, as represented by Sir John Forrest, declined to bring in a Bill in another place; and therefore this statement in Clause 2 of the petition, that "the Government and Parliament of the colony have refused to allow the Commonwealth Bill to be submitted to the vote of the people," is substantially accurate and a fact. What of the Government say in their criticism? They say,

This statement is not correct, as the Legislative Assembly was in favour of the Bill being referred to the people, but the Legislative Council was not in favour of it being referred.

The Legislative Council were not in favour of the Bill being referred to the people, and the Legislative Assembly expressed the opinion that they were in favour of two Bills being referred to the people for their option, but the Assembly declined to agree to the petition of the Federal League that the Bill should

referred to the people. If necessary I could give the reference in *Hansard*, page 2117, in case any hon. gentleman is prepared to cavil at my statements. It goes on to say—

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Who drafted the petition?

HON. A. P. MATHESON: A committee, and I had a large hand in it. I am prepared to say that in defending the petition I am defending to a large extent my own work upon it. This statement is absolutely correct, and the comments of the Government to a gentleman not so well posted as members of this House are, I cannot criticise in the language I should feel inclined to use. The third paragraph of the petition was as follows:—

A petition to your Majesty is now being prepared by the inhabitants of this colony residing on the Eastern goldfields, praying your Majesty to grant them separation with responsible government, and we earnestly desire to be included in the territory of the proposed new colony.

That was a simple statement of two facts which stand beyond controversy. The inhabitants of the Eastern goldfields were praying for separation, and the majority of the inhabitants of the Albany district were desirous of participating in the new colony. What is the comment of the Government? To my amazement, I find they have not said the statement is not correct, as they have of other two statements, but they make a piteous appeal. They say,

It is to be regretted the petitioners did not frankly give the sole reason why the people of Albany have prepared and signed this petition.

Who are the Government that they should speak of "the sole reason," and so on? Then the Government go on to speak about some "parish pump" affairs—a jetty, and a few other things, which would be about as intelligible to Mr. Chamberlain as hearing that Mr. Alex. Forrest and Mr. Petherick, the Town Clerk, were not on good terms, or something of that sort. These little local matters affect members of the Government materially themselves, but have no influence whatever in the minds of the people of Albany in reference to federation. Yet we find this gratuitous statement brought in, that because the people in Albany did not get a "parish pump" they desire separation. If the people

had felt in that way they would have said so.

HON. E. McLARTY: The local affairs had a great deal of influence.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: It is extraordinary that in this House, where members are supposed to rise above such feelings, "parish pump" politics are paramount: members cannot disabuse their minds of the idea that everybody is to be bought. Perhaps it is Bunbury which requires an esplanade, and it is said that Bunbury ought to have it because it has not got one: that is the logical reason given.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: The Bunbury people would not want an esplanade if they had one.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: That reason appears in print as spoken by Mr. Hackett.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: It is not in any statement I am responsible for. It must have been an Opposition newspaper you read.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: The hon. member should remember that all constituencies are not guided by these motives, and in this matter of federation "parish pump" influences were, as far as possible, left out of consideration at Albany. I grant it is possible a certain number of people may have signed the petition who had also very strong feelings on the subject of harbour works; indeed that is very likely, because there are many complaints made against the Government in Albany. But people in Albany were not prepared to ask for separation simply because they had a grievance: they were actuated by a very much higher motive, which the hon. member (Mr. Hackett) cannot appreciate.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: You do not believe that, although you say it. Get on to sober fact.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: Then the petition reads as follows:—

No constitutional method of carrying into effect our desire for federation is open to us other than the one for which we now pray.

And I can conceive of no other constitutional method open to the people of Albany than the one they adopted; and it is a method for which there are any number of precedents. Petitions have gone home from all parts of Australia, some of which have been successful and

some of which have failed, all praying for separation for reasons given in the petition. Now, what is the comment? The comment of the Government is most glaringly inaccurate: it is as follows:—

No constitutional means have been tried with a view of obtaining what is required.

I repeat that, because it is worth listening to: "No constitutional means have been tried with a view of obtaining what is required." The comment goes on—

When the matter was before Parliament a few months ago, out of six members—

Mark these words—

out of the six members representing the districts of the petitioners in the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly, four were opposed to the Commonwealth Bill, and voted against it.

There is a definite statement of a definite fact; and let us realise what really happened. The Upper House representatives of this province were Mr. S. J. Haynes, Mr. Crowder, and Mr. Piesse; and the Lower House representatives for the three districts included in the petition were Mr. Hassell, Mr. Leake, and Mr. Speaker, the latter of whom represents Nelson. What happened? Mr. Haynes voted for the referendum, and so did Mr. Crowder, but Mr. Piesse voted against it; so that you have one member who voted against the referendum in the Upper House. In the Lower House Mr. Hassell was absent, and did not vote at all. I subsequently asked him whether he was opposed to the referendum, and he replied "Certainly not; but I was shearing." I asked him the question intentionally, because I was perfectly prepared for some hon. members in the House to say Mr. Hassell did not vote because he did not like to vote, and stayed away on purpose.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: Mr. Hassell was not in favour of the referendum.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: He was in favour of the referendum. It is not necessary to say that Mr. Leake, who represents Albany, voted for the referendum; while Mr. Speaker, in virtue of his position, expressed, so far as I am aware, no opinion at all, and certainly did not vote. In contradistinction to the absolute statement of the Premier, or the Cabinet, that four members voted against the referendum, we find that really only one member out of five so voted. This document went home to England

from the Government, and not from a few people.

HON. C. SOMMERS: Not from "agitators?"

HON. A. P. MATHESON: Not from "irresponsible agitators," which I think were the Premier's words—"agitators" who might be excused if, in the absence of accurate public documents, they made a few mistakes in statistics. The Cabinet who sat down and carefully considered and conned over every word in this document, and in the face of what we know to be the truth, placed before Mr. Chamberlain a statement that four of the representatives of the district voted against the referendum. To that extent our case has been prejudiced but fortunately the damage is not irremediable, because Mr. Chamberlain's attention can be called to *Hansard* and other documents which the Government will, at considerable expense, have to send home for reference. The next paragraph which is extremely short and is the final one, reads as follows:—

Your petitioners humbly submit that the port of Albany, which is within the boundaries of the territory they propose shall be separated from Western Australia, is an important strategic position, both for Australia and the Empire at large, as shown by the fact that its present defences have been provided for by Your Majesty's Imperial and Colonial Governments, and that it is desirable, in the interest of the Empire, and especially of Australasia that it should be within the boundaries of Federal Australia, and its defences under the control of the federal naval and military authorities.

The comment of the Government is as follows:—

The defences of Albany are, at the present time, maintained by all the colonies of Australia, so that what is desired is already in existence; besides which, the Government has always favoured additional fortifications at Albany, and has twice urged the Imperial Government to establish a naval base there.

Surely the petition was sufficiently explicit. What was the position at the time the petition was signed? The Government and the Parliament of Western Australia had, I repeat, refused to refer the Commonwealth Bill to the people, and the people were therefore in the position that, so far as they could see, they were going to be denied any access to the Commonwealth. It was felt in Albany that it was most essential the

fort and waters of the harbour should be controlled by federated Australia, and so long as these remained annexed to Western Australia they, under the terms of the Act, were part of a foreign country, and would not be within the boundary of the Commonwealth. It would appear as if the Cabinet were incapable of reading, or of taking in a plain idea when they do read.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: And yet they took such pains!

HON. A. P. MATHESON: That is a galling point, and the hon. member is quite right.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: That is a galling point.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: It is a galling point; and even now it is a matter of wonder to me the Government should not understand a clear thing like that. But it only shows their absolute incapacity: it does not show weakness, because it is impossible to amend Clause 5.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: We cannot go with you.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: I never expected the hon. member to go with me, though some day perhaps he may. The comment of the Government is that what is desired is already in existence; that is to say, they maintain that at this date the Albany district is within the federal boundary and "under the control of the federal naval and military authorities," simply because the Government have always favoured additional fortifications for Albany, and have requested the Imperial Government to establish a naval base there.

At 6:30, the PRESIDENT left the Chair.

At 7:30, Chair resumed.

HON. A. P. MATHESON (continuing): To continue my remarks about the Albany petition, the Cabinet sum up their statements by saying that in their opinion the petition is unreal and absurd. To reply to that statement, I can say that nothing can be more real than the feelings held by the people of Albany in regard to that petition. To such a degree have the people been exasperated by the refusal of Parliament to allow the Bill to go to the people, that I may say it is my

absolute conviction that if to-day the people of Albany had the option of becoming a Crown colony, they would willingly return to the position they were once in. They would willingly welcome it. And I say this after having sounded the people of Albany on the question. When they were offered from London the opportunity of being separated from this colony at the time this colony received self-government, the people of Albany were persuaded by inducements from Perth to decline the offer; and if members would take the trouble to sound the people of Albany, they will find that I have not exaggerated in this respect. I will now deal with the petition from the goldfields, and I am obliged to do so very shortly on account of the understanding arrived at before tea. Practically the gist of the comments of the Premier are contained in the first three lines, and they are:

The whole of the assertions contained in it are unfounded, and a tissue of misrepresentations.

All I can say in reply is that it is a catch-penny reply, taken from the Perth penny papers. Hon. members may have seen it in the *West Australian*, practically the same words, no doubt. I have not seen them myself, but I recognise them as being used by Mr. Morgans in dealing with the petition at a banquet. I would remind the House that assertions of this sort coming from Mr. Morgans are the last to be taken as facts. I would also remind the House that in dealing with the figures which I published on federation, Mr. Morgans made an absolutely similar comment, and withdrew it with apologies during the sittings of the Select Committee. I say without fear of contradiction that if Mr. Morgans analyses the figures in the report, and the assertions one by one carefully, he will find a substantial basis of truth in every one of them.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: He lives in Albany.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: Mr. Morgans lives in Albany, yes, but this is the goldfields petition. The chief matters commented on by the Premier are three. First of all the population and voters; next railway matters; and last the capital expended. I propose to deal with each of these matters. The Cabinet say: "In taking the population of the Eastern

goldfields at 80,000, 28,000 signed the petition, which is a very small number." In reply to that, I should like to quote what I believe is an accepted fact, although I cannot vouch for it, that the Uitlander petition from the Transvaal, about which the British Government are now at war, was signed by only 21,000 people, out of a population of 214,500 Uitlanders. These figures are taken, and they can be referred to, from *Hazell's Annual* for 1900. I have not been a resident of the Cape, and cannot therefore guarantee them. In East Coolgardie, 28,000 adults out of a most scattered population, many of whom it has been unable to reach, out of 80,000 people signed the petition; and the Cabinet go on to state, on the second page, that, according to their statistics, the population of the goldfields should not be put at more than 60,000. Here we have in this the startling result that out of a population of 60,000 one-third have signed the petition.

HON. J. E. RICHARDSON: Nearly one-half.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: Very nearly one-half, I should say. I think that a startling evidence of the depth of feeling. And to go further than that, the depth of this feeling is shown in the recent election there. It is a popular delusion on the coast that the desire for separation for federation is only felt by the working miner and the riff-raff; this has been frequently stated on the coast—I do not think it has been stated in the House, but it has been stated. But what has been the result of the election which was carried out on the basis of separation for federation against federation simply? The miners on the goldfields returned Mr. Sommers by 819 votes to 282.

HON. F. WHITCOMBE: He had a long start.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: That has nothing to do with the matter. Because a candidate came early into the field will not make people vote contrary to their principles. Mr. Morgans, who is quoted in this pamphlet as the apostle of the anti-federalists, and as a person opposed to the movement, has actually had a vote of no-confidence passed in him by his constituents, but the Cabinet did not mention that. They do not say that in

his constituency Mr. Morgans is politically discredited. That is a fact which hon. members in this House cannot get behind.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: What about the dinner there?

HON. C. SOMMERS: Which he paid for.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: We must deal with public political facts, not private matters. The Cabinet go on to state that—

There has been no disposition shown by Parliament to unduly limit representation.

One of the complaints of the people of the people of the goldfields is that dual representation is absolutely denied them. I ask the House to consider these figures—not the figures stated by the *West Australian* in respect to other figures given some time ago, not figures from old returns or on the basis of the old Electoral Act, but figures on the basis of the existing state of affairs. We have in North-East Coolgardie 3,374 voters with one representative. In East Kimberley there is one representative to 92 voters and of these voters of East Kimberley, on the best information obtained, over 80 per cent. are non-resident and dual voters. That is to say, they are gentlemen who vote in other parts of the colony as well as in East Kimberley; therefore if what we all desire, the single vote, is adopted in East Kimberley, there would be only about 20 people to vote.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: What nonsense.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: It is an absolute fact, and if the hon. member will buy the list he will see it.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: There are more than that number on one station.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: The majority of the people are dual voters, and are not on the roll there.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: What roll is that? How can it be the roll under the new Act?

HON. A. P. MATHESON: It is practically the roll under the new Act because the constituency was reinstated, and that is my very point. When the Government brought in a Bill joining the two Kimberleys together, the House took upon themselves to reinstate East Kimberley as a separate constituency; therefore it carries the old roll, which was revised on 15th May.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: The new Act was not in force on the 15th May.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: The new roll will be taken from the old revised roll.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: That makes a very different roll of it, though.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: The hon. member does not understand the position, evidently.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: I cannot understand the hon. member.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: There are 3,374 voters on the North-East Coolgardie roll, and the House refused to split up that electorate; but they split up the two Kimberleys, which have a total population of about 300 voters. The Assembly went further. In Sussex, Nelson, and Wellington there is an electorate with a block list of 1,117 voters.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Under what Act?

HON. A. P. MATHESON: Four constituencies were made from these three, and not content with these four constituencies being in solid blocks, the new constituency was treated as if it were the County of Cromarty, in Scotland, and constituted of a little bit here, and a little bit there, and a little bit further on; not because the people should be represented, but because all the miners should be taken out of the three electorates, so that the pastoral districts should be represented instead of having three mining members returned, which would have been the case if four members had been given to these four constituencies as they existed. Therefore the Cabinet say that no disposition has been shown by Parliament to limit the representation. Suppose we consider the question on the basis of population. From the Cabinet's own figures, out of a population of 170,000, there are 60,000 on the goldfields, which amounts to nearly two-fifths of the population. That is on the figures given by the Government; and taking the voters' roll, out of 40,000 voters nearly two-fifths signed the petition. We had a voting power of 15,768 on the roll at the end of last year, and two-fifths is 17,000, a difference of 2,000. In Mr. Owen's report the expenditure allocated to the goldfields districts is in nearly every case two-fifths, and in the Customs Report laid on the table a day or two ago, out of £7,000,000 of exports, the exports from the goldfields are £5,500,000; and out of those exports the amount

applicable to the Eastern goldfields is a little over three-fifths. And yet what representation have the goldfields in Parliament? What representation does the Premier apparently advocate as just? He says—although these are not his exact words—that the just representation is one-fifth, and in this House under the new Constitution Act we have that proportion instead of two-fifths. Why should two-fifths of the voters of the colony be denied popular representation? In another place, there is exactly the same proportion, namely one-fifth, or ten members instead of twenty. I give this credit to the Cabinet, that they have qualms, and are constrained for the first time to show signs of weakness and say—

At first sight it may be thought that to give the people on the Eastern goldfields only one-fifth of the representation in both Houses is not quite equitable, seeing that about one-third of the population reside there.

They cut it down to one-third, and then follow with excuses. Obviously it was perfectly clear to the Cabinet when they dealt with this question that they could not have a weaker case, from their point of view.

HON. C. E. DEMPSTER: You want the mining interests to dominate the whole country.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: I simply ask for fairness, and that is all the petition asked for; and the Eastern goldfields do not get fair treatment, or the petition would not have been drafted or signed. Now we come to the question of finance, and the complaint of the goldfields is that money is spent on the coast unnecessarily and unjustifiably, while money that should be spent on the goldfields is not spent. I cannot deal at length with all these matters, but there are two or three salient points I would like to pick out as examples. Of course, these are not the only examples, because the list might be stretched out to any extent. As one example, I should like to take the construction of the Goomalling railway, and describe it as an absolute waste of money, pure and simple, as is admitted by every thoughtful man in the district.

HON. R. BURGESS: Nonsense!

HON. A. P. MATHESON: It is admitted by every thoughtful man there

that the money earned on this railway will not pay for axle-grease.

HON. R. G. BURGESS : Who says that ?

HON. A. P. MATHESON : Men of intelligence.

HON. R. G. BURGESS : Give us names.

HON. A. P. MATHESON : I will bring no names up, though the hon. member may say I say so, if he likes.

HON. R. G. BURGESS : You have not been there.

HON. A. P. MATHESON : The result will prove the truth of my words, exactly as was proved in the case of the Greenhills railway, which was a pure waste of money chucked into the sand.

HON. C. E. DEMPSTER : That is all you know about it.

HON. R. G. BURGESS : It is not sand.

HON. A. P. MATHESON : It is.

HON. R. G. BURGESS : Hon. members should not run down the country.

HON. A. P. MATHESON : I am not running down the country, but I will say that on the Greenhills railway route it is sand pure and simple. Then what do we find when the Minister of Lands goes into the Bunbury district ? We find him stirring up the people to agitate for a new railway line through the Williams district to carry coals at a loss, at a rate of a halfpenny per ton. The Minister of Lands is undoubtedly the most intelligent member of the Ministry, but he went to the Bunbury district and, according to the newspaper reports, called on the people there to stir up their members to go to Parliament and insist on the line being built, and told the people that if that were done the Government could not deny the request. These are the words the Minister used, and yet it is said that no money is spent on the coast which is not justifiably spent. Take the case of the Bunbury harbour, and here I have Mr. Hackett on his own ground. We all remember when the Loan Estimates were before the House last year, the very eloquent defence that hon. member made of the Bunbury harbour works. Perhaps that was quite right, seeing that Bunbury is in his district ; but the hon. member in his advocacy went a little farther than he had any right to do.

HON. J. W. HACKETT : Can you quote my speech ?

HON. A. P. MATHESON : The speech to which I refer is on pages 2951-2 of

Hansard, if hon. members care to refer to it. The hon. member, and also the Colonial Secretary, said these works had received the sanction of the Engineer-in-Chief, and as I was astounded to hear that, I turned up the report. What does the Engineer-in-Chief say ? I think that to-morrow I will give notice of a motion for that official's report to be laid on the table of the House, and it will be found to be a most startling document. The Engineer-in-Chief says that by no possibility can the accumulation of sand, which is rapidly turning the harbour into a golf links, be stopped. The Engineer-in-Chief does not mention golf links, but he says the accumulation of sand cannot be stopped except by dredging, and until a summer is spent in the work it cannot be known whether that course will be efficacious. The Engineer-in-Chief states that some person recommended him to make a hole in the middle of the breakwater to let the sand run out, and it would be interesting to know who that intelligent individual was. The Engineer-in-Chief, however, gives technical reasons why that suggestion would not work, pointing out that the sand would go round and come in by the other end, or something of that sort. And in the face of all these facts the goldfields people are denied the railway to Esperance. The Cabinet go on to say that the railway to Esperance would not pay, and that it is a fraud and merely a political cry. I say here, in my place in this House, as I have said before, that the railway to Esperance would pay ; and if the Government will allow a railway to be built there, I am prepared to find the money to build it. I had the money offered to me in England to build the railway if I were allowed to do so, and that without any concession of land, but simply on condition that the same rates should be charged there as are now charged on the Government railways, the understanding always being, of course, that the Government rates are not lowered elsewhere to anything like a halfpenny per ton. I would like to deal shortly with the question of the railway freights, though I am not going into particulars as I should have liked to do, seeing that I have all the documents here, commencing with the complaint of Mr. Mackenzie, the then Mayor of Kalgoorlie, when the schedules were altered. Mr.

Mackenzie showed that while freights in the various classes were not altered, goods were removed from one class to another in such a way that the charges were increased on certain articles. Goods were moved from Class 2 to Class 1, and had to pay an increase of freight amounting to 43½ per cent.; articles were removed from Class 3 into Class 2, and had to pay 80 per cent. more; and, further, articles were moved into Class 3, and had to pay 37 per cent. more. The rates, as I say, in the various classes were not increased, while the rates on the articles were; but that point the Commissioner of Railways carefully avoids in this document. And there is another point. The Commissioner of Railways makes a great feature of the fact that the railway freights of this colony are no higher than those of South Australia; but he entirely overlooks the fact that the railways in this colony were made for a fraction of the money the lines cost in South Australia. In the latter colony the construction of the railways cost £7,500 a mile, while here the cost has been £4,700 per mile, or nearly 50 per cent. less; and under these circumstances it is preposterous to suppose the Western Australian Government are justified in charging an equal rate for the same goods. Therein lies the crux of the whole question. Turn to the report of Mr. Davies, the General Manager of Railways, and to the report of a speech made by him at some picnic spree the other day, and it will be seen that the coal and timber, now being carried for next to nothing, to foster industries in the coastal districts, are being carried at a loss; and on page 7 of his report for 1899, he emphatically says that while the reduced rate of a half-penny per ton prevails these lines cannot pay. But what do we find as to the goldfields lines? We find the goldfields lines defraying this loss, and providing for the interest on the whole of the other lines of the colony; and yet it is said the goldfields lines are not taxed on account of the low rates charged for coal and wood. We on the goldfields do not want the coal or the wood at those low rates, but are prepared to take what we want at the standard rate. We do not want these cheap things shot on to us, however much that may be to the advantage of the coastal regions. I do not blame the

traffic managers and other officials who want to gain favour with the people on the coast. It is only natural that the Government should foster those industries in which their friends and connections are interested; indeed, it may often be right to do that, but from the point of view of the goldfields it is obnoxious. It is "abhorrent"—that is the word—that we should be taxed for the benefit of the coal and wood producers.

HON. C. E. DEMPSTER: You say nothing about the cost of supplying the engines with water on the goldfields lines.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: Then there is the question of the special tax; because these preferential railway rates are without a doubt a special tax on the goldfields. The fact that these goods are carried cheaply does not affect the price to the residents of the coast, because they have a small railway carriage, but the incubus of the special rates falls on the people of the goldfields. The goods have to go 350 miles inland, and if this tax levied to promote the coal and wood industry is to be fairly apportioned over the colony, let it be put on in the form of duties at the port, and not levied on the pockets of the people on the goldfields. The Premier goes on to talk about the dividend tax, which is a dividend tax to all companies except gold-mining companies. Under Section 5 it will be found that to gold-mining companies this is a tax on undeclared book profits; and as I have before pointed out to the House, this is a scandalous injustice we feel most deeply. I have merely skimmed the inaccuracies contained in the Government report which was sent to Mr. Chamberlain; indeed, I have not been able in the time at my disposal to half deal with the subject, or prove half the inaccuracies in the figures.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Never mind; you have dealt with the matter very exhaustingly—I mean exhaustively.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: But one thing I want to say is that the petition, so far as the figures are concerned, was based on a report obtained for this House by Mr. Dempster. We had no reason to suppose that report was not accurate, because it was a Government publication which we accepted in good faith. If, later, the Government were prepared, as they have shown themselves to be, to

introduce a so-called expert to recast all the figures in their prior publication, the goldfields people are not to blame, for the blame must lie on the hon. gentleman who represents the Government, and laid the paper on the table of the House as an accurate return.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. G. Randell): I am not concerned to follow Mr. Matheson in his lengthy speech to-night, because his remarks are to a large extent beside the object for which we have met, which is to consider whether the Commonwealth Bill shall be referred to the electors, or to the people, whichever phrase we like to use. I take it that the hon. member's lengthy indictment of the arguments which have been used by the Government will receive its nemesis in due course; but I, at any rate, cannot pretend to follow the hon. member through all the mazes of his remarks, and shall not attempt it. An opportunity will be given, no doubt, if it be thought desirable, to review the construction which he has put on these various matters, and I have no doubt a full and sufficient answer will be given to his statements. As to the question before the House, it is well known I have all through been in favour of the referendum. Long before the question came into this House or into another place for discussion, I said that it appeared to me, however much I was opposed to federation, it was desirable the people should be able to express an opinion on the question.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: You were not always opposed to federation.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: No. For a little while I wandered from the right path, as Mr. Burgess understands it; but I have already explained in the House why I did so. I think the reasons I gave were really good, and sufficient for any reasonable man, at any rate, and I take the hon. member to be one. The hon. member has changed his opinion sometimes, and he will allow other members to change theirs. I have always said it is desirable that the Bill—that is what I am in favour of—should be referred to the people to say “yes” or “no” upon, or to vote for if they consider it proper. All that has been said in regard to the action of the Premier is beside the

mark. The action which has been taken in this matter—although the Premier has been misrepresented in the other colonies, and in this colony—was in the best material interests of this colony, and has been a very earnest and honest effort to obtain the desires of the Select Committee, approved of by a large number of the people of the colony. If knowing as we do that under the provisions of the Bill we were likely to suffer in many directions in our agricultural and manufacturing interests, and the general interests of the colony, I think any one who holds the reins of power, or represents the people of the colony in either House, would have been false to his trust in not trying to obtain the best terms for the colony. The Premier endeavoured to obtain the desires of the committee, and there were very reasonable grounds for believing at one time that he would obtain what was desired, for there seemed to be an indication in the other colonies that we would gain our point, because newspapers of influence in the other colonies were in favour of granting our request, and one colony was with us. If we had stood shoulder to shoulder, as we should have done, we would have attained our ends; but a section of the people of this colony was opposed to the amendments. It was entirely owing to this that the Governments of the other colonies treated us in the way they did. It is to be regretted we have not stood out on all sides earnestly for concessions which we thought and believe still to be reasonable, and in the interests of the public. I have always regretted that we did not permit the Bill to be referred to the people on a previous occasion when we had an opportunity of doing so. If that had been done, a great deal of the exasperation or indignation might have been saved. I know for certain that a large number of people would have voted against federation, but they resented the Bill not being referred to them for their opinion. The Government should be absolved from all blame in the matter, for in this House and in the other House the Government voted for the two Bills going to the people. Mr. Matheson said it was the duty of the Premier, after this House rejected the measure, to reintroduce the Bill. I am quite sure he has no grounds for saying

that would have been a constitutional course.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: I said, introduce a Bill.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: That really means the reintroduction of the Bill. Taking into consideration that the hon. member did his utmost to effect a combination against the two Bills, even if the Government had the power to introduce a new Bill for the House to pass, probably the Bill would have been defeated.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: I did not make any combination. I was in favour of the two Bills.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The hon. member was in favour of federation.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: I seconded your motion that the two Bills should be referred to the people.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not know that I need labour that point. We are called together now for the purpose of considering whether the Bill should be referred to the people; that is the Bill which has been referred to the Imperial Parliament, and the Bill that will be amended by the Imperial Parliament in some directions. I understand that there is a consensus of opinion that the Bill should be referred to the people, but I am not sure whether we shall be able to secure our ends. I believe that if we had secured the tariff for five years, that would have satisfied us. I believe that if the Secretary of State had had a little stronger back, we might possibly have secured that; but as in everything else, numbers prevail: when Mr. Chamberlain found that three colonies, Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia, as far as they could refused justice and right to this colony following the usual course of events in the political world the Secretary of State could not see his way to back up our endeavours. In these circumstances it became imperative for the Government to ask the opinion of hon. members of the Legislature, which they have done. Instead of being charged with vacillating and "Jim Crow antics," I think the Government ought to be congratulated. There was no hope—and the papers we have before us show it—there was no further prospect of our obtaining

our desires; therefore the Government have asked Parliament to consider the question of referring the Bill to the people. Some hon. members have said rather hard things, but I must say that Mr. Moss has very fairly put the matter before the House. Instead of the Government being blamed, they should be congratulated on the course taken. It only now remains for Parliament to say whether the Bill should be referred to the people or not, and it only remains for Parliament to say on what conditions the Bill should be referred. Although the Enabling Bill has been introduced to Parliament with certain features in it, when the Bill is considered by hon. members of both Houses it will remain for Parliament to indorse the provisions of the measure or effect amendments in it if they can do so, and so pass the measure. There is certainly considerable weight to be given to the suggestion made by Mr. R. S. Haynes, and which has been reiterated by several members. I may say, without breach of confidence, that the point raised has received consideration, and the result of that consideration is that it is not so easy to carry out the idea as the hon. member thinks. I only say that my own personal sympathies are in that direction, but we have to be very careful what course we pursue. It is not only necessary for us to pass a resolution, but it will be necessary for legislation to be introduced. There will have to be a special enactment, so that it shall not touch the present electoral law. If a special measure of this kind interferes with our present electoral law, and is not passed for one special purpose, the Bill will have to be referred to Her Majesty the Queen for her assent. It is desirable if we enter the federation to do so as an original State, and we must not take any steps that will hinder that consummation. We must be very careful how we move in this direction. That we should have an expression of opinion from the people on a question of this sort commends itself to everyone. It is true that the electoral college—if I may use the word—is small as compared with the total population of the colony. We have admitted women to the franchise, and we have liberalised the constitution to a large extent. If it were not that the time is pressing it

would be as well for us to wait until the new electoral rolls could come into operation ; but that is out of the question, and we are driven back to the other course, special legislation on the subject. I am not prepared to-night to say whether that can be accomplished or not. If members are desirous of doing this, an earnest effort should be made to meet the wishes of the House. I do not think I need say more on that point, but I may repeat that this question received the consideration of the Government some time ago, but so many difficulties presented themselves to the minds of the members of the Cabinet that very little progress was made in that direction. A Bill, in accordance with the precedents established in the other colonies, has been introduced, but in the other colonies the referendum has taken place on their existing electoral rolls.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: They have one-man-one-vote there.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: We are pretty much on an equality with them. That brings me to the question of the electoral rolls, and some serious charges have been made to-night in regard to them. Mr. Moss put his finger on the real blot—the apathy and indifference of the electors themselves. I know several persons who have received notice that their names would be struck off the roll if they did not prove that they had a right to be there. That is the blot in the old Act, and which to a certain extent is continued in the new Act, that we are dependent to a considerable extent on the action of the municipalities and the roads boards of the colony for the making up of the rolls. The names are taken from those rolls, and if the names disappear from the municipal rolls they disappear from the electoral rolls; but a notice is sent to the person whose name is struck off, so that we have to guard the interests of the electors of the provinces or districts. The electoral registrars are required to give notice to those persons whose names drop off the municipal rolls. I have reason to think that in every instance notice has been sent, or in nearly every instance: there may have been cases, of omission. I have had an opportunity lately of inquiring into certain cases, and I have found that notices have been sent to the gentlemen, and no reply received

from them. Following out the lines of the Act, the electoral officer is in duty bound to strike the names off the roll. From my personal experience in Perth I know that a large number of intelligent men moving in society, are so indifferent that they have to be hunted up again and again to make out claims. I hope hon. members acquit the Government of any interference with matters connected with the Electoral Act. The duty in connection with the electoral rolls is committed to the officers who have to carry out the work, and to see that the names of those who claim votes are placed on the rolls. If the Electoral Registrar finds that names are struck off the municipal roll, the names are struck off the electoral roll, and notice is given to the person so struck off. In this way would-be electors may not have been assisted, but I trust that has not been the case in many instances. Under the new Constitution Act, the rolls will be much enlarged, and, as I have said, the method of admission will be much simplified and liberalised. I believe we may congratulate ourselves on having an Electoral Act as liberal as any that prevails in other colonies. The hon. member mentioned, I believe, that in some of the colonies policemen were employed in making up the rolls.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: Policemen used to be employed in New South Wales, but I hear that is not so now.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I think such a practice most objectionable.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: It is done in South Australia, under a special section.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: Any one would think an intelligent man and a resident of these colonies would be so seized of the importance of having the right to vote at elections that he would take proper care to have himself put on the roll. Some reference was made to what I believe was described as “stuffing” the rolls, but I think that remark did not apply to the Parliamentary rolls, but to the municipal rolls, and that the hon. member who referred to this had in his mind ratepayers who had been struck off because they had not paid the second instalment of their rates. That has occurred, I believe, and is most objectionable, and I think illegal, though it is not a question for me to deal with now. Taking all the circumstances into con-

sideration, this House should realise that the Government have done all in their power to have this Bill referred to the people; and I believe that in the judgment of every independent person, and of everyone who is not prejudiced by party or some other influence, they will be acquitted of having dealt in such a manner with the Bill as to prevent its being referred. It has been my earnest desire that the Bill should go to the people or to the electors, whichever may be decided; and if the people of the colony are determined to federate, I am not one to place any obstacle in the way, beyond that I shall vote against federation when the time comes. I say, advisedly and seriously, that it is not my intention to vote for federation, although I think it is only right and just that the people should give a vote on the question. I do not think I need say any more. If I were to attempt to follow Mr. Matheson it would take me much too long, and, besides, there is not the slightest necessity to do so on this occasion. The Enabling Bill will no doubt reach us from another place in a short time, and hon. members will have full opportunity for discussing the various clauses, and deciding what is best in the interests of the country. I only hope we shall take into consideration this serious and most important step—a step which cannot be retraced—with a deep sense of the consequences which are likely to ensue to this country. Possibly some of us are mistaken in thinking federation will be disastrous, while others on the other hand may be mistaken in thinking it will be of great benefit to the country and start us afresh on the high road to prosperity and wealth. Both sides may be mistaken, and possibly we may arrive at a middle course which will be acceptable to the inhabitants of this colony. I would like to say one word in reference to the enlargement of the franchise. I do not think for a moment that any member of the community who calmly and quietly reflects can think of pitting the man or woman who has been in the colony for six months, against a person who has his all here, has his property here, has been here for years and understands the interests of the colony, and can possibly form a very good judgment as to what is likely to affect its prosperity. That is the reason we cannot have voting on

a population basis pure and simple, because we must recognise every interest in this great country, and must have no preponderating influence by the gold-mining or any one industry; but we must have a representation of all the wealth, intelligence, and interests throughout the colony. That is almost a truism which every hon. member will indorse; and for a moment to think that this country should be governed by a number of members who come from one industry—say the gold-mining industry, which I think has been hinted at to-night by Mr. Matheson—would, in my opinion, be destructive of the best interests of the colony, would retard its progress, and probably end in its ruin.

Question—that the Address-in-reply be adopted—put and passed.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 8-22 o'clock until the next day.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 23rd May, 1900.

Address-in-reply: Presentation—Paper presented—Question: Public Holidays, to restrict (altering a Notice)—Privilege: Aspersions on Legislative Assembly by a Member (Geraldton)—Federation Enabling Bill, second reading (moved)—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY—PRESENTATION.

By arrangement, Mr. Speaker and hon. members proceeded to Government House, to present the Address-in-reply to His Excellency the Administrator; and, having returned,