

which the land shall be placed. I rejoice that the Premier has at last introduced this measure. I have talked about it, written and preached about it for many years, and at last I have lived to see a measure brought forward dealing with these estates, and I hope to see it carried.

On the motion of Mr. LEAKE, the debate was adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 6:37 p.m. until the next day.

Legislative Assembly, Thursday, 20th July, 1899.

Question: Auditor General and Amendment of Act—Question: Goods Sheds, Fremantle—Dog Act Amendment Bill, third reading—Motion: Commonwealth Bill, Financial Clauses, etc.; to Refer to Joint Committee; debate resumed and adjourned—Trustee Investment Amendment Bill, Discharge of order—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

QUESTION—AUDITOR GENERAL AND AMENDMENT OF ACT.

MR. HOLMES asked the Premier whether, in view of the disabilities experienced by the Auditor General, as pointed out in his last annual report to Parliament, it was the intention of the Government to amend the Audit Act, as requested by that officer.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied that the matter had been again referred to the Crown Law Department for advice, and if an amendment of the law were advised, a Bill would be submitted.

QUESTION—GOODS SHEDS, FREMANTLE.

MR. HIGHAM asked the Commissioner of Railways,—1, What goods sheds it was proposed to erect on the South Quay, Fremantle; 2, When it was proposed to start building them.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. F. H. Piesse) replied:—1, Three, being each alternate one, as provided for on plan agreed to recently by the Shipping Association and the Railway Department; 2, As soon as funds are provided.

DOG ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

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

MOTION—COMMONWEALTH BILL, FINANCIAL CLAUSES, ETC.

TO REFER TO JOINT COMMITTEE.

Debate resumed from Tuesday's sitting, on the motion by the Premier:

That the Draft of the Bill to constitute the Commonwealth of Australia, as finally adopted by the Australian Federal Convention at Melbourne, in the colony of Victoria, on the 16th March, 1898, as amended at a Conference of the Prime Ministers of New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, and Western Australia, which sat at Melbourne on the 28th, 30th, and 31st of January, and the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd February, 1899, be referred to a Joint Select Committee of both Houses of Parliament for consideration; such Committee to report not later than Tuesday, the 5th September next.

MR. GEORGE (Murray): Dealing with the motion before the House, it seems to me quite unnecessary for any of us to fully discuss federation at the present stage. The time will shortly come, whether this motion passes or not, when it will be necessary for members to give to this great question the time and consideration it requires; and I do not think it well for us, on a motion of this sort, to do more than deal with a few of the points relating to the question placed before us. I take it that so far as the members of the Assembly are concerned—and I think I may go further, and say so far as the people of Western Australia are concerned—we are all desirous that at some time or other federation shall become an accepted fact; and it is simply because there are those of us who believe in taking some little time for our decision,

that this motion is placed before us, in order that some misstatements that have been made on both sides, no doubt, may at any rate be refuted, and other statements may be gone into, and if necessary supported, or, if they cannot be supported, relegated to the back ground, so that the light shed on the question of federation may be a clear one. One of the things to be deeply regretted in connection with the subject is that both sides have thought fit, on public platforms and elsewhere, to bring personalities more or less into the arena. I do not know who has been the greatest sinner in that matter, but it is just possible the member for East Perth and myself may be considered a sort of Siamese twins in regard to it. I know, speaking for myself and that hon. member, that if anybody treads on our corns we generally hit out, and I think that has been the case in connection with this subject. For myself, I have made up my mind that for the future, unless attacked, I will, as far as I am able, leave all question of personality on one side. [MR. KENNY: Hear, hear.] I am pleased to have the approval of one of the members of the party of three.

MR. KENNY: It is nearly time you had.

MR. GEORGE: I notice that the party of three are a huge personality in this Assembly, and to receive their approval will at any rate encourage me in the course I intend to pursue, if I am allowed. [MR. KENNY: Hear, hear.] It seems to me that what we have to consider at present is not so much putting federation entirely on one side, but the question as to how we really shall federate; whether we shall jump at what is offered us right away, whether it be right or wrong, or whether we shall examine the subject thoroughly and endeavour to help one another to arrive at a just decision. It is not a question of being afraid of the people. I do not suppose any of us are afraid of the people; and, indeed, no public man can be, or else he would not keep his present position. He must have a certain amount of courage to face the people and seek for election, and afterwards to render an account of his stewardship, and see whether they are prepared to elect him again or not. We are not afraid the people will judge wrongly, but in order to assist them to come to a correct decision

we want to give them the facts upon which they can form a judgment. It seems to me, judging by the speeches which have been delivered on both sides of this important question, that even members of Parliament, and those who have been to the Conventions, require considerable instruction and require to give considerable thought to this important subject. We desire the vote of the people and the vote of knowledge; we do not desire the vote of ignorance; and I say that if the Bill had been sent to the people of Western Australia even a month ago, certainly two months ago, we could not have expected to obtain as true a vote, based on knowledge, as we can now. Even now the knowledge in regard to the Federation Bill is not sufficient for us to accept as a leading guide on the question. There have been two leagues formed in Western Australia, the Federal League and the National League: each of these has its platform, and each league may be truly said to have tried to carry out its platform. The Federal League has been trying to educate the people in its way to get an immediate referendum; one of the main planks laid down being "The Bill to the people." The National League has never said anything and never intended anything about keeping the Bill from the people, but has laid down this as its platform, that its members would examine into the Commonwealth Bill and lay the results before the people who must vote on this question. Therefore both of the leagues have done good work, and the proof of that remains in the fact that wherever a meeting is called to discuss the question of federation, the meeting is largely attended by persons of both shades of thinking. The course that has been taken by both of the leagues has done much in disseminating information, perhaps more or less correct, perhaps in some instances incorrect; but the information has been given in good faith. If these two leagues with that object in view can differ, as they have differed and still do differ, does that not rather show to us the necessity for closely examining into the question and obtaining facts about which there can be no dispute? If we obtain these facts, we can debate them in this House thoroughly; and afterwards when the Bill goes to the people, for

go to the people it must, we can say that after careful research, after getting statistics and all the information possible, we have come to certain conclusions. The member for East Perth (Mr. James) on his side can then give his conclusions; I, on my side, can give my conclusions; then on the verdict of the people we may rest, and over that verdict we cannot quibble nor can we question it. I notice that a federation meeting was held at Kalgoorlie a few days ago, and one of the goldfields delegates, not a member of Parliament, speaking on the question said they had leading lights from Perth who had come to the goldfields for the purpose of educating what he was pleased to term the "goldfields savages." This of course was said for a laugh, but this man went on to say that one of the gentlemen from Perth was a lawyer of note; inferentially he said the lawyer was a leading M.L.A., and the delegate added that if all that the gentleman from Perth had said with regard to federation was all that he knew, then it was not surprising that the farmers in the South-Western district and the farmers of Western Australia really did not know what to make of federation. I do not wish to reflect on anyone who has been on the goldfields, but I mention this to mark my point. If men of the stamp of Mr. McElroy, men who hold important positions on the goldfields, state such things as these as their mature opinion and their judgment, on the speeches that have been delivered by members whom we respect and know, surely it is necessary for even the members of this House to be thoroughly educated with regard to federation. So far as Western Australia is concerned, it seems to me the question of federation until lately has not been looked upon perhaps with the seriousness which it deserves. Evidently the different Conventions at which Western Australia has been represented have had the practical points, so far as we are concerned, hidden by the glamour of sentiment. If we put on one side the practical view of the question, we are all one; we recognise the ties of race and the ties of kinship; and we feel that the floating of the British flag over our country gives us feelings which influence us more or less, and which evidently have influenced the delegates which repre-

sented Western Australia at the Conventions. From what the Premier has told us and from what we can gather ourselves, Western Australia has been outclassed altogether; not because of the men who have been our representatives, but by the preponderance of weight which lay behind the delegates from the other side. When the practical side of the question comes before us, we must be ready for the fight, and we shall not be able to go back on the step we take. Before we "burn our bridges," before committing ourselves to any system, let us have before us all the information, so as to arrive at a judgment which is right in this matter. I believe I am correct in saying this is practically the first opportunity the Parliament has had of discussing this question of federation beyond a few passing references; at any rate, not during the time I have been a member of this House has Parliament discussed the question with a sense of responsibility. Therefore, it is not unreasonable that members should ask to have a select committee for the purpose of obtaining information that we require, to enable us to come to a correct judgment. If the member for East Perth (Mr. James), and those who agree with him, will reflect, they will see that they will be doing more towards making a lasting federation, in which there shall be no bickering and no looking back, if Western Australia enters the federation in the light of mature deliberation. Supposing any one of us wished to enter into partnership with another, either in a profession or a trade, should we do so without weighing the cost and seeing that the matter was fair to both of us? Because, if it would not be fair, and if any compact was fair to one side and unfair to the other, there must soon be a separation.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Cannot we deal with these matters on the floor of the House?

MR. GEORGE: Of course we can. The question will naturally be discussed at full length on the floor of the House; but would that not be better when we have all the information before us? I make bold to say that the member for Central Murchison has not seen one half of the papers to which I could refer him; papers that bear on this question, and which require any amount of considera-

tion. There are numbers of papers, if a committee is appointed, which I should like to suggest the committee should call for. There are papers on federation which Mr. Coghlan, the Statistician of New South Wales, has prepared, and which cannot be cursorily glanced over. They are matters which a man must take home with him and study time after time, before he can get the full weight of them. It is easy to discuss the opinions of this gentlemen, just as it is easy to discuss the opinions of any one of us, or just as easy as it is to discuss the opinions which have been given by Mr. Owen, the Government Actuary here. Although we may criticise the figures of the Government Actuary, we are not able to prove to the satisfaction of the House that the Bill should be passed on the facts and figures which we have at our command. If a committee is appointed, it will have the right to call for witnesses and papers, and the papers I have referred to should be placed at the disposal of every member of the House. It should be a matter for the consideration of the Government, not the question of expense, but the question of its being right to lay before every member, no matter what it costs, the papers that bear on the subject. If members are in earnest they will go thoroughly into the question, and when the time comes, it cannot be more than a couple of months now, members will be able to fight the question. If misstatements are made by myself or other gentlemen, it will then be easy for any member to contradict them and point out where the statements are wrong. What would be more easy for me or anyone else to misquote the figures which I have here? I could quote them to suit my own opinion, if I chose; but if these papers were placed before the House, where is the man in this or in any other Assembly who would dare to misquote figures for the purpose of gaining a vote? There can be no objection to having the committee so as to call for the papers. As far as the report of the committee is concerned, it is not for the committee to give us a report of what we may call leading opinions: we would require their conclusions as to certain points, and we would require reference to the papers to prove these conclusions are based on proper figures. If we have that, we shall

have something on which to form our judgment. As far as the selection of the committee is concerned, I do not think it is material who forms the committee. Probably the leader of the Government and the leader of the Opposition could pretty well form a committee, without having a ballot. They could select men who would give fair and honest opinions. If we desire to have the truth on this subject, let us have the whole truth and not be satisfied with a portion of it. Before I conclude I should like to give a few extracts that will be of interest to hon. members. These are taken from a letter dated 26th April, 1898, and are written by Mr. Coghlan, the Government Statistician of New South Wales. In going into certain figures Mr. Coghlan quotes Sir George Turner. This is a fair abstract, as far as I can make it. Mr. Coghlan states this:

Apart from Western Australia, not one of the federating colonies has for the last five years, taken altogether, made its revenue cover its expenditure, and no sacrifice of revenue is, therefore, possible on their part.

It would take too long to read all these figures, though I hope members will get the papers and see the figures for themselves; but I find Mr. Coghlan saying:

Looking at the matter from every point of view, I do not see how the States and Commonwealth can maintain their position unless the Parliament of the Federation raises £7,800,000. Federal revenue from customs and excise cannot safely be taken at over £7,000,000, leaving £800,000 to be obtained by direct taxation. It is absurd to suppose that any additional taxation can be imposed. In Tasmania the income tax is 8d. to 1/, in Victoria 4d. to 1/4, in South Australia 4½d. to 1. Land taxes exist in all colonies except Western Australia, and their extension for federal purposes would be impossible. With a revenue of £7,000,000 and a surplus of £5,250,000, the portion coming to no colony except New South Wales would suffice for its needs, and the other four States would inevitably come to financial ruin, unless the Federal Government face the situation and levy land, income, or property taxes for federal purposes in addition to such taxes as already exist. It may be said that at least Western Australia is safeguarded by the right to impose duties on intercolonial produce for five years. With the help of these duties this colony might make ends meet for one year: afterwards its position would be no better than that of the other three provinces.

That is the opinion of the Government Statistician of New South Wales, and it

might be argued that the opinion was prepared to the order of the Hon. G. H. Reid.

THE PREMIER: No, no.

MR. GEORGE: That might be argued so, although I do not use the argument. After going through these papers, I believe the opinions there expressed are the candid opinions of an honest man. Nevertheless, it may be said that these opinions have been manufactured to order, just in the same way as it has been said the opinions of Mr. Owen, the Government Actuary of Western Australia, have been prepared to the order of the Premier here. I repeat that I do not say these opinions have been manufactured, because I believe the position of these officials is too strong, and their sense of honour too great, to allow even the Premier of a colony to, what the Americans call, "bulldoze" them in any way.

MR. LEAKE: Mr. Reid does not agree with Mr. Coghlan.

MR. GEORGE: That is possible, and I expect that Mr. Reid does not agree with the Premier of Western Australia. I am quite certain that, if Mr. Reid were here, he would not agree with me. But that makes no difference to the extract which I have given, practically without comment, and as an accurate excerpt from statements made by the Statistician of New South Wales. I mention these papers to emphasise my point that the select committee, if formed, may call for the same documents, from which every member can draw his own conclusion.

MR. LEAKE: Could we not get those papers without the aid of a committee?

MR. GEORGE: That is possible, and if so, I should be glad to see the papers here; but no hon. member has moved for them.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: They have been in the possession of most hon. members for the last six months.

THE PREMIER: Not every one of the papers.

MR. GEORGE: If the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) be correct, I am misinformed. I would like that hon. member to tell me whether he has seen every one of those papers, though I take it he has not. For the reasons which I have put before the House as well as my ability will allow, I

shall vote for the motion of the Premier, because I deem that to be my duty to the colony in which I have cast my lot. Western Australia has been a fair country to me, and is a fair country for most people if they will only work hard enough; and having cast my lot here, I am desirous of seeing the fullest justice possible given to this colony. I also want those gentlemen who differ from me to feel that this is not a question of personalities, but simply that everyone has the same honest desire which they have themselves, and which I have, namely that the people of Western Australia shall be able to judge fairly and equitably on the subject. I do not think it can be reiterated often enough that any attempts to keep this Bill from the people of Western Australia would merit and would receive the strongest reprobation from every member of the Legislature.

MR. EWING (Swan): In approaching the motion submitted by the Premier, I do so as a federationist, and as one of those persons who, whether from lack of knowledge or from lack of understanding, are unable to see that the provisions of the Commonwealth Bill do not safeguard the interests of Western Australia. So far as my ability has enabled me, I have endeavoured to master the situation, and I have come to the conclusion that our interests will not be sacrificed under the Commonwealth Bill passed and approved by the Convention. But I must realise that, while I have come to that conclusion, many others have come to a contrary conclusion; and the question that now has to be decided by the community is whether the interests of Western Australia are protected and conserved by the Commonwealth Bill, under which it is proposed we should federate. I am far from being of the opinion that the sentimental side of the question should alone be considered, and I am equally far from being of the opinion that, if federation means the sacrifice of our material interests and our commerce, and our Western Australian welfare, we are in any sense bound to join that federation. It is only after the consideration of the commercial aspect of the question that one should come to a conclusion on this matter; and therefore I approve of the motion submitted by the Premier, and will support it. My main reason for

supporting the motion is, as I have stated, that I believe this is not a sentimental question only. That it is a sentimental question to a certain extent, everybody will admit. One always has national feelings, national aspirations and hopes; but still we recognise that the community must live, and we must enable the members of the community to preserve and conserve the commercial interests of the country in which we are. The object of the motion is to enable us as members of the Legislature, and to enable the community as citizens, to judge as to whether the provisions of this Bill protect those interests. If I must admit, and I think everybody must admit, that from the Western Australian point of view we have little or no federal literature, and that we have had the matter from the commercial standpoint of this colony very little considered, then it is desirable we should call before the Select Committee the best commercial men we can find to give us their conclusions, and enable us as members of Parliament, and to enable the citizens as citizens, with proper material before them, to record their votes on a question which undoubtedly means a great deal to us, whichever way the vote may go. There is only one possible danger I see in the appointment of the Committee; but I am sure the House will take care that the motion is not made an instrument or means of delaying the measure. I believe and trust it is the intention, before this Parliament dissolves, to bring the work of the Committee to a close, and to enable this Parliament to consider their deliberations and deal with the matter. I cannot believe that the appointment of the Committee is simply a move for the purpose of gaining time, and, as I believe the Premier cannot have such a motive underlying his action, I am prepared to support him. If I thought the motion would be the means of keeping the Bill from Parliament, or from the people, I would be the first to oppose it, and would oppose it bitterly. Again, when we come to choose the gentlemen who are to form the Committee, it would be only fair and right to select persons who are going to take a broad view of the question, and will not consider it from the standpoint of finding objections in the Bill. Such considerations as the con-

struction of a graving dock at Fremantle should be far beneath the consideration of the Committee; and the suggestion that in regard to federation, the construction of this work or any other such paltry matter should be made a condition, stamps any one who makes it as a man who has not grasped the magnitude of the question with which he is dealing. That I understand to be the suggestion of the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper), and I say that is not the spirit in which to approach federation. But if it can be shown to me that there are broad features of the Bill which are really detrimental and damaging to the interests of Western Australia, I, for one, will be prepared to say amendment is required. If it can be shown that the real interests of Western Australia are likely to be sacrificed, it is the bounden duty of the Committee to see that those interests are conserved. My opinion at the present time, for what that opinion is worth, is that our interests are amply conserved in the Bill. But we can all learn, and I am sure it is quite possible that some of us, who might be fortunate enough to be selected on the Committee, might enter on our duties as federationists and return anti-federationists; because the man who will not be influenced by conditions or by evidence, or by facts brought home to him, is neither fit for his position as a legislator nor as a member of the Committee. It is absurd to say that information cannot be of value to us while it is possible the most ardent federationist may become an opponent of the Bill, and an ardent opponent on the Committee might be converted to supporting the Bill. Therefore I intend to support the motion, because there is very little information before the people of this colony as to the effect of the Commonwealth Bill on Western Australia as a colony, although in my own mind, up to the present point, I am satisfied the interests of this colony are duly and properly conserved.

MR. RASON (South Murchison): I agree with the member for the Murray (Mr. George) that as far as possible this debate should be limited to the one question of whether it is desirable or not, as a preliminary stage, to submit the Commonwealth Bill to a select committee. When any grave subject has been brought

before this House it has been the custom—and I think the proper custom—in the first place to refer the subject to a select committee, not for finality, or with a view of attempting to shirk the fullest possible debate in Parliament afterwards, but for the collection and classification of facts bearing on the issues at stake. Select committees in the past have proceeded to the work entrusted to them in a perfectly unbiassed, straightforward, and honest manner, and as a general rule the result of their deliberations has been of assistance to the House. No one will say that the question of federation is not of very grave importance, and I do not think many members will argue that a select committee appointed in consequence of this motion is likely to proceed to its labours in any less honest or less satisfactory manner than have committees on other questions in the past. Let us for a moment examine the objections that have been raised to the appointment of a select committee. The first objection was on the ground of delay; but all these protests about delay are simply made in response to the popular cry, "The Bill to the people: let the people decide." I am as anxious as any member to get the Bill to the people; but our duty does not rest with merely sending the Bill to the people. According to our Enabling Act, it is our bounden duty, it is obligatory upon Parliament to see that the Bill sent to the people shall be such a Bill as has been approved by Parliament. It is not enough to say to the people, "Do you desire federation?—that is for you to decide." It is for us to say, "Do you desire federation or not? If you answer that question in the affirmative, here is a Commonwealth Bill which will give effect to your desire: it is a Bill that has been examined by your Parliament." That, I take it, is our duty; and therefore all this cry about delay is mere empty talk. In considering the question of delay, we must not forget the fact that it is proposed that the Select Committee shall report not later than the 5th September. It has never been argued here that the House is at present prepared to consider the Commonwealth Bill. The only suggestion as to the proper time at which the debate on the second reading should take place is a suggestion which came from the other

(Opposition) side of the House, and which has been reiterated in the same quarter, that one month should elapse between the first and the second readings. Therefore, if the first reading were made an order of the day for the very next sitting of the House, and a month were allowed to elapse, the second reading would take place on Tuesday, the 22nd August. The difference between that time and the time at which the Select Committee have to bring up their report is a difference of five working days of the House, two of which are private members' days; so that all this outcry about delay resolves itself into a question of three days.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The Select Committee could not possibly report in that time.

MR. RASON: I have not to deal with a question of possibility or of probability: I can only take the motion as it stands. The motion is that the Committee shall report not later than the 5th September; therefore all this argument as to delay can, I think, be dismissed as untenable. We have heard the reasons adduced in this debate by the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth), and I am sure the hon. member will pardon me for saying that, to my mind, the arguments he used were singularly disingenuous.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: They are generally so, in your opinion.

MR. RASON: The hon. member at first disparaged the work of select committees generally; he then described this proposed select committee as a "commission," and maintained the latter description through the remainder of his speech. He also said that commissions were not all that they ought to be: he compared them to white-washing machines. If the hon. member meant anything, I take it that he meant, at all events, that the Commonwealth Bill was capable of being "white-washed," was capable of being put in a more presentable form. I am anxious not to misinterpret the hon. member, and I will ask him, is he of opinion that the Commonwealth Bill can be altered satisfactorily?

MR. JAMES: Yes; by you.

MR. RASON: I will pass over that. The hon. member then proceeded to dilate on the advantages that might be derived from a full debate on the floor of

this House. removed from all those disturbing influences which necessarily attend any large gathering of the public; and, almost in the same breath, he proceeded to urge upon the House the desirableness of taking the Queen's Hall, or some other equally commodious building, into which as many of the public as could possibly gain admittance should crowd themselves in order to hear that debate.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The fact of there being a large audience would not affect the issue.

MR. GREGORY: We once heard the Premier on the subject in the Town Hall of Perth.

MR. RASON: Reasoning of that kind is hard to follow, because it is a complete contradiction to the argument uttered by the hon. member only a few moments before. I think it was the member for Pilbarra (Mr. Kingsmill) who said he objected to the motion for a select committee on the ground that he did not see what good a select committee could do; that he did not see how a committee could obtain fuller information than could be obtained by a private member. That is the hon. member's opinion, and no doubt he is entitled to it; but I think he is somewhat wrong, and I think he will agree with me that very much depends upon the personal feeling of such a private member. I take it that most members of this House have opinions of their own in regard to federation, and, therefore, the information they would seek to obtain would naturally be such as would support their own views; and I think any member trying to obtain information apart from the Select Committee would naturally seek for such information as would be in harmony with his own view of the case, apart from any other view.

MR. KINGSMILL: The same argument applies to the Committee.

MR. RASON: Certainly; I anticipated that the hon. member would interject that remark. The same does apply to a select committee; but I take it that the Committee will be composed of men holding various opinions.

THE PREMIER: Hear, hear.

MR. RASON: The Committee will not be all of one mind, and, therefore, the efforts of one side will be counter-

balanced by the efforts of the other; and I should like also to point out that, even if the Select Committee is appointed, there is nothing to prevent any private member from also obtaining all procurable information. I think anyone who heard the Premier's speech when he moved this motion could not fail to be impressed with the belief that upon this point the Premier was entirely sincere; that his sole aim was to obtain that which is best for this colony of Western Australia. No one, I think, will attempt to deny that the Premier's sole object, his sole aim, his sole ambition, is to do that which, to his mind, is best for this colony. When we bear that in mind, when we also bear in mind that the right hon. gentleman has, far and away above all other delegates, had to fight the battle of Western Australia at the Conventions; when we bear those two facts in mind, and the right hon. gentleman himself advises us that the best course, to his mind, is to appoint a select committee; then I can hardly imagine that the House will do other than accept his recommendation, and I trust that they will accept it without a division.

MR. WOOD (West Perth): I shall have much pleasure in supporting the motion of the Premier, because I think we have everything to gain by bringing this important question of federation before a select committee which will thresh out every detail of the Commonwealth Bill, thus allowing it to be put clearly before this House, and so that each member can form a true and accurate opinion on the entire subject. Undoubtedly there is an immense amount, I will not say of ignorance, but want of knowledge, as regards the Commonwealth Bill; and I think it would take months, at all events weeks, of careful study to thoroughly grasp the subject; that is, if one took it up by himself, on his own account. But when we place it before a select committee, consisting I suppose of 10 members, each member knowing something about different parts of the Bill, then I think that will be a very great advantage indeed to this House in such a discussion of the subject; and I hope the Bill will then be put in such a form that every member of this House will be able to assent to its reference to the people straight away. In my opinion it is all

nonsense to talk about this question being delayed: there can be no delay about it, or at all events very little. So long as the Bill goes to the people before the end of the year, I think we ought to be well satisfied. [MR. JAMES: Hear, hear.] I do not think that course will show any undue haste, and I am certain that its adoption will involve no unnecessary delay. The Premier ought to be heartily congratulated upon the way in which he introduced this motion the other night. I think his statements were most patriotic and statesmanlike. I may make the same observation with regard to the reply he has sent to Mr. G. H. Reid of New South Wales. I look upon Mr. Reid's message to the right hon. gentleman as a piece of dictatorial "cheek," not only to our Premier, but to this House and to this colony.

MR. JAMES: It was a useful tonic.

MR. WOOD: I should imagine that any hon. member in this House who had been in Sydney at the time, would have undertaken to personally chastise Mr. Reid. Such an incident very nearly took place when Mr. Reid was attending the Convention in Melbourne. During this debate, the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) made some rather startling remarks as regards the effect of federation. He objected to this select committee, and thought that more good could be done on the floor of the House. Personally, I am not greatly in favour of select committees—not altogether, except on a subject of this kind; but when we come to look at it, we must acknowledge that, in discussing a question of this sort on the floor of the House, it is obvious that we cannot give that amount of time and attention to it that is desirable. As we see in the case of ordinary debates, hon. members would grow weary of the subject, and the question would be neglected. One remark that the same hon. member made the other night was with regard to the effect that federation would have on one of our great industries, that of iron-founding. The hon. member was talking about the duty on machinery in this colony being 30 per cent., and he thought that intercolonial free-trade which we would enjoy under federation would offer a great inducement to Mr. Mephan Ferguson to make his pipes here instead

of in another colony, because the cost would be very much less. Well, of course it would, as regards those pipes. The hon. member said, "Or why should not Mr. Ferguson have his steel sent to South Australia, have his pipes made there, and sent over here?" That is all nonsense. The freight on the manufactured pipes would be practically prohibitive.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That is not what I suggested.

MR. WOOD: You said, "Why not have the steel sent over there and manufactured?" Let me point out that about sixty of these pipes would fill an ordinary steamer.

MR. GEORGE: Fill the "Rob Roy"?

MR. WOOD: I mean sixty of the manufactured pipes.

MR. GEORGE: Oh, no. Do not exaggerate.

MR. WOOD: Then say a hundred. The question of freights would over-ride the duty twenty or thirty times; so that contention is no argument at all. I intend to support the motion, and I trust the result of the labours of the committee will be of advantage to the House and to the country generally.

MR. KENNY (North Murchison): I cannot do better than commence my few remarks by congratulating you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the forbearance you have exhibited during this debate. I was certainly in hope the House had rubbed off the little angularities outcropping from the recess, and were about to get to business; and the other evening, when this motion was tabled and the debate commenced, I understood we were to confine ourselves strictly to the one question whether the Bill was to be re-mitted to a select committee or not. Instead of that, I find members on both sides giving their opinions on federation; but to my mind federation is far too serious a question to be discussed on such a motion as that now before us. I would have liked every member to think the matter well over, and reserve the expression of his opinion for the general debate that ere long will take place in this Chamber, when every one of us will be expected to give his honest, outspoken opinion on the great question that affects this and the other colonies so much. I may be rather singular in my idea, but I

think our first duty is to the motion before the House, and I take it the question involved is whether it is right and proper to send important measures that come before the House to a select committee or not. Without attempting to refer to the rules in force in the House of Commons, or to go abroad at all, I think we may very well be guided by the past of our own Legislature. Of eight select committees appointed by the House last session to inquire into most important Bills which came before us, I served upon seven, although I could ill afford the time; so I think that by my action I committed myself to the principle of sending Bills to select committees. In the face of what I did last session, I fail to see how I can possibly do other than say I am in favour of sending this Bill to a select committee.

MR. LEAKE (Albany): I would like to know, before I address myself to the motion, how far members are to be permitted to refer to the Commonwealth Bill in this discussion.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is not open for members to discuss the Bill, but it is quite open for them to refer to it to draw conclusions and inferences.

MR. LEAKE: And not to deal with its particular provisions?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is not open to you to discuss the Bill, but you may refer to it.

MR. LEAKE: Then the House is deprived of one of its privileges to-day, namely, that of discussing in general debate the vast question of federation. If that be so, I will endeavour to confine my observations to the motion before the House, and I may at once tell members that I cannot support it. I do not think the course proposed a proper one to adopt at this particular moment, and I intend to give my reasons. Although I happen to be opposed to the right hon. gentleman opposite (the Premier) in what I may say, I take it that members will understand I am not acting in any party spirit, and that those members who sit on this (the Opposition) side of the House are acting entirely at their own discretion as to how they vote this evening.

MR. MORGANS: It is not a party question.

MR. LEAKE: No, certainly not; and that being so, I trust I shall be able to

convince, by my arguments, some members on the other side of the House. We have at least got an expression of opinion from the Government, and they have to a certain extent disclosed their attitude, which seems to be more or less one of opposition to the federal movement; and, moreover, actuated by those ideas, they think that in the interests of the community, discussion or determination on the subject should at any rate be delayed. We had the admission last evening from the Premier that the Bill will not suit us unless it is amended; in fact, he went on to say that we must insist upon amendment. If that be so, I am undoubtedly right in saying this discussion and the proposed reference to the select committee can have no object but that of delay. With regard to the House insisting upon amendments, I should like at once to point out the utter futility of our attempting to amend the Bill in any important or unimportant particular; for we have laid upon the table of the House telegraphic communications passing between the Premier of this colony and the Premier of New South Wales, wherein Mr. Reid, telegraphing from Sydney, says "We desire" (that is the other Australian Premiers) "to point out the absolute impossibility of any alterations now in the Bill finally settled in the Melbourne Conference."

MR. MORGANS: That might be "bluff."

MR. LEAKE: I am not prepared to suggest that the Premiers of the whole of the Australian colonies will combine together to bluff their colleague, the Premier of Western Australia. I think that in dealing with a matter of this kind, which is one of great national interest, they would take a higher ground than that; but really, if members will pause and consider the position that federation occupies to-day in Australia, they must see that it is not bluff, but the outcome of deliberate thought. As a matter of fact, the federation of certain of the Australian colonies is to all intents accomplished on the basis of the Draft Commonwealth Bill now upon the table of the House. It is outside their province to amend that constitution; and so, too, is it outside our province to amend it, and we are in this position, that we are to say and to vote "aye" or "no" upon the measure. If we vote "aye," we come

in as an original state, and if we vote "no," it will be clear we require amendments, and then the only body with whom we can discuss the terms will be the Federal Government itself.

MR. MORGANS: What about the Imperial Government?

MR. LEAKE: I think that is utterly impracticable, because if this Bill, approved as it is by the majority of the Australian colonies, comes before the House of Commons, that House will not deny to those colonies the benefits they will obtain under the Bill, in discussing some small amendment purely and solely for the benefit of Western Australia. I ask members to look at the question not so much from the point of advantage we may gain from any possible amendment, but from the practical utility of the course it is suggested we should adopt. The telegram from the Premier of New South Wales was no doubt prompted by a knowledge of existing facts, and that gentleman must have borne in mind, and indeed he refers to, the attitude of the different members of the Conference in Melbourne in February last, when there was a distinct undertaking given that there should be a reference of the measure to the Parliaments with the idea of sending it at once to the people. I contend that the form of reference suggested by our Premier was never in contemplation at the time of that Conference of Premiers. What was in the minds of all those gentlemen was to refer the Bill to the people straight away, through the medium of some enabling legislation: not to delay the introduction of such measure; not to go over old ground in discussing the first principles of federation, as this committee is asked to do, but to declare whether they are in favour of this draft constitution, whether the Parliaments are prepared to accept the Bill as a whole or to reject it. A pledge was given to the other colonies by our Premier in February last, and I have not yet heard anybody in his place blame the right hon. gentleman for what he did on that occasion.

THE PREMIER: What pledge was that?

MR. LEAKE: The pledge that you would refer the Bill.

THE PREMIER: You read it, and see what it was.

MR. LEAKE: I should have thought the right hon. gentleman knew it by heart.

THE PREMIER: I know it very well, but you want to make more of it than it is.

MR. LEAKE: Oh, no, I do not. I hope the right hon. gentleman will not accuse me of misrepresenting him. This is too serious a matter for that.

THE PREMIER: You will see what I said.

MR. LEAKE: I have the clause, which says:—

The Premiers of the other colonies are of opinion that after the people of New South Wales have accepted the Bill as altered, it should be submitted to the Parliaments of their respective colonies for reference to the electors.

THE PREMIER: Hear, hear.

MR. LEAKE: Do not those words clearly mean that each Premier undertook to introduce the necessary enabling legislation to enable the Bill to be voted upon by the people?

THE PREMIER: In the face of our Act?

MR. LEAKE: The Act has lapsed.

THE PREMIER: Oh, no; not in that respect.

MR. LEAKE: That was evidently the intention. I shall be able to point out to members in a moment that the principal object the right hon. gentleman seeks to attain can be attained by strictly following out the pledge given on that occasion. I have pointed out that we cannot amend that Bill. The Bill, if it ever comes down to this House for discussion, will come down as a schedule to an Enabling Bill; and then only will it be open to us to take the Bill clause by clause and suggest amendments. We cannot debate the Bill in this discussion, and consequently we cannot take the Bill clause by clause. If the matter is thus discussed, it will be open to members to bring forward certain definite amendments. A practical test will show the difficulties which stand in the way. Supposing we attempt any verbal alteration, or an alteration of any great principle, such as the striking out a clause or anything like that, how can that be given effect to even if the House approve of it? If the select committee does report, we must thereafter have the Enabling Bill with the Commonwealth Bill attached to it as a schedule, and consequently, by referring the Bill to a

select committee, we are only delaying that consideration for which some members are clamouring.

THE PREMIER: It will shorten the debate very much.

MR. LEAKE: Let us go straight to the matter, bring in the Enabling Bill, and discuss its conditions. We can amend an Enabling Bill, but we cannot amend a Draft Constitution Bill. That is the position I wish hon. members to understand. The only legislative measure in which we can make amendment is the Enabling Bill itself. Therein we may place terms, but we cannot place terms in a Constitution Bill. It may be that a majority of the House will say, although the Premier is pledged to take an actual majority vote of the people, we will fix the maximum or minimum vote, as the case may be. We can do that in an Enabling Bill, but we cannot discuss that matter until we get the Enabling Bill before us; consequently our action is delayed, if not burked. I think there is force in my argument, and I think members see that I am not attempting to deny discussion on the question or throw any difficulties in the way. All I want is that we proceed as quickly as possible to the consideration of this question. When the committee has reported, and there is no doubt it will report, the question before the House will then be that the committee's report be adopted or rejected. Then again we cannot enter into a general discussion of federation; we cannot then discuss the enactments of the draft measure, but we must still wait till the Government think fit to bring down their Enabling Bill. That is the difficulty we are in, and I do not shut my eyes to this possibility that the joint committee which may be appointed will probably be an adverse committee, adverse to federation; consequently the report will be against the Bill, and if the committee report against the Bill and the report is adopted, away goes the discussion of federation for twelve months or more. I am only pointing out to members that we are running the risk of being denied a discussion of the pros and cons of federation as shown by the Draft Constitution Bill. I admit myself that I am in favour of the Bill, I am in favour of federation; but I am not so blind to my country as to say that I will

not listen to arguments that may be against federation, or that I will not listen to members who have as much right to regard their interests and the interests of this country as I have, when they make suggestions; but I ask that I may be brought face to face with members in argument, that I may hear what they have to say, and members should be willing to concede to me the same right.

THE PREMIER: You will get that when the Bill comes back.

MR. LEAKE: The Premier has not yet given the House the assurance that he will during the session bring down, for discussion, an Enabling Bill, and in my opinion it will not come down. This is an attempt, and I regret to say it will probably be a successful attempt, to prevent an Enabling Bill being brought down. It is only fair that Parliament should have an opportunity of discussing an Enabling Bill, and of approving or disapproving of it. I think the proper course is to bring down an Enabling Bill referring this Draft Constitution to the people. That Bill would be debated on its second reading, and then we should have a full and general debate on federation, and possible amendments would be suggested, and our minds would be prepared for what was to come when we enter on the committee stage. If there are sufficient anti-federationists in the Assembly to throw the Enabling Bill out, well and good; they are entitled to their opinion, and let them fight accordingly; there would then be an end to the discussion, and we could then go on with our business. On the other hand, if the federationists are strong enough, we should go into committee and discuss the terms, first on which the Bill should be referred to the people, as to whether there should be a bare majority vote, and as to taking the poll, and so forth; or the majority could then declare to refer the Bill, or a certain portion thereof, to a committee for consideration. That is the proper time to have a select committee, but first of all affirm whether or not we are in favour of federation. I regret to say I believe that in this House there is a majority of members against federation at any price, but it is the fear of casting their votes on that important question that compels them to vote for a select

committee. I think there is a fair challenge to every member, there is a challenge to the people, and from the people to the Government, asking them to bring down the Bill, so that the people by a direct vote can say whether they are in favour of federation or not. If it is declared that we are not in favour of federation, there is an end of it; but if we are in favour of it, then it comes to a question of terms. Let me put one practical test, if I may, as to some possible amendment that may be proposed. I know that some members think that it should be a condition precedent that we should have a pledge to construct a transcontinental railway. To carry out this view, could that be done with greater propriety by putting a clause in our own Enabling Bill, or by putting a clause in the Draft Constitution Bill? To put a clause in the Draft Constitution Bill would be clearly outrageous and out of place.

THE PREMIER: No one suggested that, I think.

MR. LEAKE: I am possibly anticipating arguments, and I say it would be outrageous and out of place in the Draft Constitution Bill. Even supposing such a suggestion was approved by the House of Commons, there could not be put into the Constitution Bill a direction to construct a certain public work.

MR. MORGANS: But we could ask for an amendment.

MR. LEAKE: The only possible place for such a suggestion would be in our own Enabling Bill. Then the other colonies would see our Enabling Bill, the Imperial Parliament would see it, and the Imperial Parliament would say: this is a condition, a price that is asked; we cannot determine that point, we have only to determine this Bill from a pure constitutional aspect; let Western Australia discuss that with the federal authority which this constitution authorises. Then there is another fault I have to find with this motion, which I think bears out my suggestion that the object is delay. It is proposed to refer the Bill, and the whole Bill, to a select committee. There is no necessity for that. Why should this select committee thresh out this lengthy Bill, which we have seen and studied, at any rate a majority of members have seen and studied, for months passed? Mem-

bers know the constitutional provisions embodied in the Bill, and do not want to consider those provisions: it is only the question of finance which requires consideration, and if anything should be referred to a select committee it should be the financial clauses only. In support of that contention I quote from the Governor's Speech, wherein His Excellency states:

The public feeling in favour of a closer union is almost universal; and that being so, the only question which will require your careful consideration in the event of the Commonwealth Bill being adopted by the rest of Australia, is whether the Bill so safeguards our financial interests at the present time as to justify us, as prudent people, with great responsibilities, giving up to a very large extent the control and management of our fiscal policy.

So that the motion goes too far entirely; and even those members who are in favour of a reference of this matter, or any portion of it, to a select committee, should limit that direction to the financial clauses only, thus bearing out the suggestion which is recommended to the House by the Governor in his Speech. If that were done there would not be so very much objection to the motion.

THE PREMIER: Clause 51, Sub-clause 34.

MR. LEAKE: I am glad the hon. member has reminded me. That is the clause which prevents the Federal Government building a railway in a State without the consent of the State; and I need only remind the House that we could not possibly hope for any amendment of that clause—that is one of the greatest safeguards of State rights in the whole Bill. Without that, we should be in the position that the Federal Government could come and construct a railway alongside our main line, and take all our trade away.

MR. VOSPER: Could not an exception be made of the transcontinental railway?

MR. LEAKE: We are now coming back to the difficulty of putting a special public work in the Constitution Bill. The proper place for such a suggestion is in our Enabling Bill. We cannot hope by any effort of ours to amend the Draft Constitution Bill, which has passed, or will have passed, the referendum in four colonies at least, within the next two weeks. It is utterly impossible that, for

the sake of a small community like this, those colonies would run the risk of being deprived of federation, and have a fresh referendum.

THE PREMIER: The other colonies will not be deprived in any way.

MR. LEAKE: I know they will not.

THE PREMIER: I mean that this motion will not deprive them of federation.

MR. LEAKE: It is only an idle suggestion and a "red herring across the trail," when we are told we ought to have a more definite proposal made in the Bill with regard to an intercolonial railway. I do not for a moment say that, if we could get a transcontinental railway, I would not fight for it tooth and nail.

MR. GEORGE: The other colonies do not want it.

MR. JAMES: A transcontinental railway would not remove the financial difficulties.

MR. LEAKE: If we are to submit the whole of the Bill and, as has been suggested, have evidence on every principle of the Bill, when will the labours of the committee conclude? If the motion is carried, I can see a year's solid work before the committee.

THE PREMIER: Now, that is drawing a "red herring" across the trail.

MR. LEAKE: Well, I will abandon that "red herring" and give you another. It is said that the committee must take evidence; but what evidence can be given of any practical utility to the committee in their deliberations, with the exception of what is written or documentary in the shape of financial returns? There is absolutely none; and evidence is not wanted from men who are interested or opposed to the passing of the constitution. We do not want to call every elector in the colony before the select committee and ask them whether they are in favour of federation or against it; because that would be of no use, and it is a question we can decide for ourselves without evidence. We do not want the Government Actuary before the Committee, because, after all, what he could furnish is in the nature of expert opinion. We do not desire to know whether certain persons are in favour of federation or not, nor do we want evidence as to our own condition or as to what the colony produces, and so forth, because we have all that in our financial returns. If

we have not that information in our financial returns, the Premier, who is the Treasurer, must be possessed of it, and he can give it to the House just as well in the discussion on the second reading of the Bill, as he can before the committee.

THE PREMIER: The same objection would apply to every select committee.

MR. LEAKE: Not at all; because select committees as a rule are appointed to take evidence bearing on some new and important consideration after the second reading of a Bill, the idea of the second reading debate being to prepare members of the proposed select committee for the work before them. But by this motion we are denied that procedure, and that is what I object to. I ask hon. members to believe me when I say I am only asking for the usual parliamentary course to be followed, and that we should have a discussion on the general principles before the select committee is appointed to consider details. I do not want to make any unnecessary personal remarks, and I hope that what I am going to say will not be taken in bad part by the Premier; but he, as Treasurer of the colony, must have known all about the finances of the country when he was at the Convention, and he must know how the finances have changed or chopped about since the Convention, or, at any rate, since February; and it is a curious circumstance that, whilst at that Convention, with a full knowledge of the circumstances of the country, he made no suggestion for any special amendments with regard to our financial position.

THE PREMIER: You know all that took place, of course.

MR. LEAKE: I think I am fair in what I am saying.

THE PREMIER: You are leader of the Opposition and, as such, you use the argument.

MR. LEAKE: If the Premier did make such a suggestion, let him inform the House.

THE PREMIER: You cannot help being in opposition, you know.

MR. LEAKE: I am sorry I cannot help being in opposition.

THE PREMIER: Even on a non-party question.

MR. LEAKE: Surely I am not discussing this question entirely on party lines.

THE PREMIER: I do not know about that.

MR. LEAKE: If I wanted to make something like a personal observation, I could say the right hon. gentleman does not seem to be able to estimate his own revenue and expenditure, and, therefore, his opinion may possibly not be worth much on the theoretical basis of the federal finances.

MR. JAMES: The Premier stated at the Convention that this colony was going to lose £180,000.

THE PREMIER: Oh, no.

MR. JAMES: You did.

THE PREMIER: No, no.

MR. JAMES: I will give you the page.

MR. LEAKE: I can think of no other question to engage the deliberations of the Select Committee, than that of the finances. If Clause 51, Sub-clause 32 of the Bill is to be considered, it will have to be considered when the Bill is being debated. One hon. member, I think the Commissioner of Crown Lands (Hon. G. Throssell), has said we ought to have provided for the continuance of differential rates; but that is a question I have looked into, and I do not see that it is at all necessary to have such a provision; and surely it is a little matter on which we do not want evidence, and on which the deliberations of a select committee will not help us. I do not think I can advance much more in favour of the position I take up. I am against referring the whole Bill to a select committee as proposed; and if any reference is to be made, let us accept the suggestion made in the Governor's Speech, and refer the financial clauses only, and thus we shall know exactly where we are. Again I say that for the Committee to take evidence from experts, who can only express opinions, will be of no use to us. If on the other hand the evidence it is proposed to bring forward is documentary, that evidence can perfectly well be laid on the table of the House for the information of hon. members. There is nothing but delay staring us in the face, if we adopt the motion; and I ask hon. members to follow what I think is the proper course, namely, ask for the introduction of the Bill, discuss its provisions, and after full consideration vote "aye" or "no" on the constitutional principle generally; and if the Bill be approved, then will be time

enough to discuss the details and appoint a select committee.

HON. S. BURT (Ashburton): In my opinion, this is the very class of Bill that should be referred to a select committee. At the present moment, I am assuming that every member of the House has read the Bill, though I have some idea that I am going a little too far in that assumption. Hon. members can, however, judge for themselves whether I am right; but I have some little doubt whether every hon. member has read the Bill. I have read it myself very often, and I must confess that, so far as I am concerned, and with any ability I may have, I have not yet been able to master it. Almost every clause of this measure requires to be thoroughly understood, if we are going to give a vote with any intelligence and knowledge at all. It is all very well to speak of federation. We are all agreed that federation would be a good thing; and, for my own part, I hope the result of our deliberations may be that we shall see our way to seize the golden opportunity of drawing into the union. What we have to consider, however, is federation on the terms proposed; and the hon. member who last spoke (Mr. Leake) has been careful to point out that, once accepted, the Constitution Bill cannot be amended. If that be so, the question arises whether we ought to accept the Bill, and it is hoped by those who really desire to federate that we may see our way by some means or other, by toning down things to which we object and introducing others of which we approve, to seize the opportunity to federate. I see that it would be an infinite advantage to this colony could we join with the other colonies at the present moment and become one with them under this Commonwealth Bill; and we all ought to strive as far as possible, by giving and taking, to accomplish that object; but in the same way as other places have taken the opportunity to consider every point in the measure, so should we. I could quote at once from a dozen clauses of the Bill, questions on which hon. members would not be able to answer.

MR. JAMES: A select committee would not be able to give an answer.

HON. S. BURT: A select committee would be composed of ten or twenty of the most intelligent and best members we

have, and they would sit and discuss, and give each other information as to certain clauses. Assuming I were not on the committee, I could in the general debate, when the report was before the House, ask the meaning of a clause, say, under the head of "Finance and Trade."

MR. JAMES: I would reply at once, and say you had better see the Convention *Hansard* debates. It is all there.

HON. S. BURT: The members of the committee would be men whom I know and trust, and who had considered the Bill from the same standpoint, namely, the standpoint of the interests of this colony, and they would be able to give me the information I required, and refer me to clauses which would help me. I have no desire to read what somebody else has said, acting in other interests for other colonies; and I do not want to wade through all the reports of the debates at the different Conventions. I do not want to read the reports of people who were urging their own views, which are perhaps in opposition to the interests of this country; and it would be of infinite advantage to at once get information from the members of the committee, or from the report they would furnish to the House, as to the bearing of certain of the clauses. Can anyone say for a moment that this is a simple Bill that any one can read and understand?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: There is no Bill before the House.

HON. S. BURT: There is no Bill before the House now; but I am urging reasons for sending the measure to a select committee, so that, at any rate, some members of the House may be made to thoroughly understand it, and be able to give other hon. members necessary information, either in the report or by the observations members of the committee may make after they have discussed one with another the bearing of the clauses. Take Clause 87, which reads:

[During a period of ten years after the establishment of the Commonwealth, and thereafter until the Parliament otherwise provides], of the net revenue of the Commonwealth from duties of customs and excise, not more than one-fourth shall be applied annually by the Commonwealth towards its expenditure. Now on what basis is that one-fourth to be taken?

MR. LEAKE: I rise to a point of order. Shall I have the privilege of referring to

the details of the Bill in the same way as the hon. member?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. member for the Ashburton is in order, as he is referring to the Bill in order to support his argument.

HON. S. BURT: Here is a clause which says the Commonwealth may withdraw one-fourth of the customs and excise revenues of the other colonies for its own purposes. The various colonies will supply to the Commonwealth a net revenue during that period of 10 years, a different amount being contributed by each colony. Our own revenue from customs is so great, that it may be we will contribute more to the federal revenue than any other colony.

MR. JAMES: How can we possibly do that?

HON. S. BURT: Assuming that the contribution of Queensland be represented by the figure 1, that of New South Wales by 1, and that of Victoria by 1; then Western Australia will supply 2 or perhaps 3. So if the Commonwealth were to deduct one-fourth of each colony's contribution for Commonwealth requirements, that would be unfair. I presume that is the meaning of the Bill.

MR. JAMES: Oh, of course!

HON. S. BURT: The hon. member says "of course." I do not know what light other members may have received from him in regard to the Bill, but I can certainly state that so far as I am concerned, the hon. member has never thrown any light on the Bill whatever. I want information.

MR. JAMES: Some people object to be enlightened. You do not know the effect of the Braddon clause yet.

HON. S. BURT: The hon. member may think it would take a lot to educate me.

MR. JAMES: It would, on that point.

HON. S. BURT: I am speaking honestly of this Bill which is put into the hands of many members here who were not at the Conventions in the East. What are we to do with it? It seems to me to be pre-eminently a Bill which it would be wise to send to a select committee of the best men in this House.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Must we not discuss the Bill before we consent to it?

HON. S. BURT: Certainly. Let us first submit the Bill to a committee, and

we can afterwards have a general debate on the whole measure. If we debated this Bill, say to-night, a great many members here would feel themselves unable to deal with it from want of knowledge; yet those members, after reading the report of the select committee and the speeches in the House of the members composing that committee, would then be able to form an opinion of the clauses, would be able to form an idea as to whether the Bill is in the interests of the colony.

MR. VOSPER: It is a question of debating it; not a question of knowledge.

HON. S. BURT: The committee will doubtless bear in mind the great and infinite advantage of joining the federation if possible; but I say, without any disrespect, that half the members of this House have not had an opportunity of mastering these clauses, because they have as yet heard no explanation of them, and I say, for that reason we cannot explain them well to-night, and we cannot master them without talking them over freely with other members. I may say at once that I should like to discuss this Bill with the member for East Perth (Mr. James), who was at the Conventions. He might say with regard to my opinion on a particular point, "You have taken a wrong view of that: it is so and so"; and it seems to me that if we submit the Bill to a select committee, we shall obtain ample information on all the points in dispute. The very next words of this same clause to which I have been referring, provide that the balance of the net revenue, after deduction of one-fourth for the use of the Commonwealth, shall be paid to the several States. Now I ask, on what basis is it to be paid? If paid on the basis of population only, it will be very unjust to this colony. Is it to be paid in proportion to the amount contributed by each State? On which of those two bases is it to be returned, after the Commonwealth has received all its revenue—more from this than from any other colony—and has deducted one-fourth for the purposes of the federation? On what basis is it to make the refund—in the same proportion as that in which it was contributed, or in proportion to the population of the various colonies? If it is to be on a population basis, that will be an injustice. That is a matter to be talked over in committee,

and well threshed out; and the members of the committee will have no hesitation in at once pointing out from their places in the House, during the general debate, the exact application of that clause; and so we may go through the whole Bill and find similar ambiguities. I doubt whether the hon. member (Mr. James) is in a position to throw much light on the Bill, because when the Premier the other evening pointed out that one clause provides that no railway can be made through any State without the consent of that State, I do not believe the hon. member knew where to find that clause in the Bill, for he said he could not find it. Yet the hon. member at that time wanted us to rush at this Bill, and to say at once whether we approved or did not approve of it. The hon. member is asking us to vote in ignorance, but the Select Committee is going to educate us. That is the great fact. [Mr. GEORGE: Hear, hear.] And I say that when the Premier said there was a clause in the Bill providing that no railway extension shall take place through any State without the consent of that State, which proviso he declared was a blot on the Bill, I believe nine out of ten members, though they had possibly read the Bill, which I doubt, would not have known where to find that clause, because it is hidden away in this little Sub-clause 34 of Clause 51.

MR. GEORGE: The member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) pointed that out, or we would not have known it.

HON. S. BURT: Certainly; and there are other matters, too, that could be pointed out, and of which hon. members on the Committee would tell us when speaking afterwards in general debate. The only argument I heard the member for Albany (Mr. Leake) bring against this motion was that it will delay the matter; but I say that argument is answered in this way, that delay in this case is good, that delay will perfect our minds on the subject; and consequently, instead of having a rambling debate by a lot of members who have no thorough grasp of the question, we shall have a shorter debate which will display some knowledge of the subject. Members of the committee will, no doubt, have the Bill at their fingers' ends. It will doubtless also be necessary for the Committee

to call evidence as to the effect of those clauses dealing with the finances, and of those relating to the control of railway rates by the Commonwealth. Information on these points will be of the utmost advantage to members who do not themselves understand the Bill, for no subjects require a more thorough examination; and a general debate will give such members more knowledge, and will be of great service to the House and to the country generally. The question of these railway rates, and of the effect they will have upon this colony, is of the utmost importance. It is all very well to say in the debate to-night that the effect will be so-and-so; but would a member making such an assertion be able to point out exactly how that would come about—from what clause of the Bill he infers that such effect would be produced? Where are the clauses dealing with railway rates in the Bill? Some of us do know, and some of us do not. I certainly think that in dealing with a great measure of this sort, the wisest thing we could possibly do would be to remit the question to a select committee. If this Bill is not thoroughly sifted when it goes to a select committee, then I think select committees ought to be abolished. I do not like them at all as a rule, but I certainly fancy I could obtain a much better grasp and knowledge of this measure if I were to sit on that Committee, than I could otherwise acquire. If we cannot amend this Bill, as it is said we cannot, and I do not mean to say that it is very easy to make amendments, then we shall have to seriously consider that point. If the committee came to the conclusion that we cannot accept this measure, I hope they would not stop there, but would try to devise some means by which we could bring the Bill into consonance with their views. If they reported that by reason of this sub-clause of Clause 51, as to making railways through a State, the construction of the transcontinental railway would be likely to be forever prevented, and it was suggested that without an alteration in this respect the Bill would not be acceptable to Parliament—if the committee so reported, I should hope they would, and no doubt they would, go on to show some means by which that blot might be erased, either by submitting an amendment to

the Premiers of the other colonies with a view to their inserting it in their Enabling Bills, or by suggesting to this House whether there would be any chance of getting the Imperial Government, with the consent of the other colonies, to put such amendment in the Enabling Bill to be passed by the Parliament of Great Britain. But if it be found that something most material to this country has not been inserted in the Bill, then it will be for this Parliament to say whether Parliament in its discretion will submit to electors a Bill which Parliament cannot approve, and the acceptance of which by the electors it cannot advise. It seems to me that the delay will cost us nothing, that it will bring us back to this House with a fuller knowledge of this subject, and that, through the committee, hon. members will be better instructed in regard to what they are asked to do. This is no matter to be rushed at blindly. I am sure none of us wishes to do that, and I am sure there is no one in this country who will not be disappointed if this Parliament come to the conclusion that we cannot join this federation of Australia. It will be in many respects most disadvantageous to us to stand out; but, at the same time, we must weigh the advantages and disadvantages, weigh everything that concerns us in the Bill, and look at the matter as practical people. If we stand out now, it does not follow that we shall be shut out for ever; though possibly we may not in the future get such good terms.

MR. A. FORREST: We shall get better.

HON. S. BURT: Some say that in the future we shall get better; and, after all, there is no doubt that we shall, for the position of this colony differs materially from that of the others. The other colonies undoubtedly desire to exploit our markets, as well as to exploit one another's markets. [MR. GEORGE: Hear, hear.] It has to be remembered that we are by no means in the same position as the other colonies, and that point has always been conceded by them. Hon. members have no doubt read the remarks made to that effect by speakers at the Conventions, some of whom stated that of course Western Australia would join, while others stated that Western Australia was, of course, in a different position from the other colonies. Therefore, anyone

can see that countries which adjoin one another, which are divided merely by imaginary lines, as are those Eastern colonies, were from the first far more fitted to federate at any moment than a country far away from them, such as New Zealand, which is separated by the ocean, or such as Western Australia, which is separated by a thousand miles of desert. The eastern colonies talk about defending us! Where is the defence to come from? Can it be imagined that regiments of soldiers will walk across the continent from Victoria and New South Wales, or that ships will come through the Bight to our assistance when we summon them by telegram? The idea is ridiculous; and that only goes to show how, with all our desire to enter this union, we should be neglecting our duty if we failed to take every step which is open to us to thoroughly examine and understand the Bill. When that is done, I hope in my heart that we shall be able to say, "I think we see our way to federate: we only ask you to give way on a little point." So I hope the House will agree to let us go to work at once in a select committee. I do not think the process will take long, because we shall only require to take evidence on the clauses relating to railways and to the finances. I am sure a quiet talk in select committee, one member with another, among members of both Houses, will have the effect of making us better able to deal with the subject when we come back to our places in Parliament.

At 6:30 p.m. the DEPUTY SPEAKER left the Chair.

At 7:30, Chair resumed.

MR. JAMES (East Perth): The attitude taken up by those members who have addressed the House upon this question is that we are to keep as free as possible from any discussion upon the merits of the Commonwealth Bill or any of its clauses, and I propose to follow that attitude as far as possible, and not refer to any of the provisions of the Bill; but I should like to say that, when speaking on the Address-in Reply, I pointed out I did not think that an opportune time at which to address the House on the question of federation generally. The same

limitation is placed upon me now, and I should be glad if members would be generous enough to realise that I have never yet had an opportunity of expressing my views in the House, and they must not for one moment think that, because I have endeavoured as far as possible to keep my observations within the limits of the debate on the question before us for the time being, I have no views, or that I am not perfectly able to justify the views which I have expressed on public platforms and in the Press of the colony. I should like to point out to the member for the Ashburton, who stated, in answer to an interjection of mine, that I had thrown no light upon the Bill, that the reason is that I have not had any opportunity. If questions are asked me I shall be glad to answer them, but I was alarmed to hear a gentleman occupying so prominent and respectable a position, as does the member for the Ashburton, ask a question regarding the clause well known as the "Braddon blot." It struck me at once that if a member so prominent as he is was in doubt on such an elementary question as that, the state of ignorance amongst members must be so dense that no discussion of this Parliament or any committee of this Parliament could enlighten our darkness. I understand, however, that the hon. member was not putting the question as one upon which he required to have doubts removed, but simply supposing that it might be put by some imaginary member. I hope no question so elementary as that would be put by any member, because the Federation Bill is not a new thing. We have had an opportunity of discussing it amongst ourselves, and of following the discussion in connection with it which has taken place at the various meetings of the Convention, and I think I am justified in saying the right hon. the Premier himself said on this question in 1898 that he assumed the majority of the people had a full knowledge of the broad features of the Bill. I think we have a right to assume that. But we are asked now, by this notice of motion, to refer a certain printed document to the deliberation and consideration of a committee, and the first question that naturally arises is, what is this particular document we are asked to refer? Is

there a member of the House who can tell us that? Is there a member who can say this is the Federal Commonwealth Bill?

THE PREMIER: Yes; I can.

MR. JAMES: Do the records of the House contain any official notice that this is the Bill?

THE PREMIER: Yes; it is lying on the table.

MR. JAMES: Do the records convey any official notice that this is the Commonwealth Bill as passed by the Convention and altered by the Conference of Premiers in 1899? I am doubtful if we have any official knowledge of that fact. I point this out, not for the purpose of splitting hairs, but to show how novel is the procedure adopted in this connection, and what procedure is open to us, if we want to carry on this discussion in the ordinary way and by ordinary means. The first question that one would ask himself is this: to what end and for what purpose is the Bill to be referred to a committee? I was hoping that when the Premier addressed himself to this question, he would give us some reasons for wishing us to adopt the extraordinary machinery of a special committee for the purpose of closely scrutinising the Bill and removing doubts and difficulties, or some objections which he felt so strongly that he considered this extraordinary machinery advisable under the circumstances. But if, as he contended, this committee is required for the purpose of gathering information, then on what points and for what purposes will information be sought?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Hundreds of points.

MR. JAMES: I ask what points and what purposes? No member has heard in this House a suggestion that any particular amendment needs to be inserted, or that any particular additions should be made to the Bill; and surely, when called upon to pass a motion like this, referring the Bill to a committee, we have a right to know for what object and for what purpose that reference is being made. What would be the position of this roving commission?—because there are no particular instructions from this House as to what position the committee are to take up; and when the report comes up, are we to debate the report or reject it? If it be rejected, what will be the result?

Will it be contended that, if we reject that report or if we adopt it, we shall go with perfectly free hands and free minds into a discussion of the question when the Enabling Bill comes before us? And are we to have a second-reading debate when considering the report, and another second-reading debate when the Enabling Bill comes before Parliament for consideration? What object is to be served by referring these questions to a select committee?

MR. A. FORREST: To get light.

MR. JAMES: True, to get light; but to my mind that light will not be obtained. Following the observations which have been made by the member for Coolgardie and others, that light is required not by a select few, not by the best minds which the member for the Ashburton said should be on the committee, not by the members who will be on the committee, but by the rest of the members of the House who will not be on the committee, and who will not hear the debates in the committee.

MR. A. FORREST: We will put you on the committee.

MR. JAMES: I do not think for one moment of going on the committee—be that understood. I feel that my mind is strongly made up on the question, and those other members who feel as strongly as I do on the other side, and whose minds are made up, would do well to adopt my idea and keep out of the committee, which should be an impartial body. We appear to be overlooking this fact, that the Commonwealth Bill, except for the amendments made in January of this year, was approved of in Melbourne in the early part of 1898. It was referred to and discussed in a speech by the Premier of this colony, which he made in May, 1898, when he took up the attitude that he took the Bill all in all as not being unreasonable, and excepting that he would not be able to say at once that we cannot possibly lose, but having some faith in the future of this colony he was prepared to do his utmost in having the Bill referred to the people for their acceptance or rejection. The Premier having discussed this question, and having made his first and last public utterance on the question, as far as I can see, except what he said ten days ago; in May last, having approved of the Bill, and having done

his best in the Conventions to have some particular matters attended to, said he was going to accept the compromise; and in addition to that, in January, 1899, when the matter was further dealt with at the Premiers' Conference, then the Premier—at first no doubt thinking to obtain terms for this colony, and having perhaps opposed the terms given to New South Wales—loyally accepted the decision arrived at, and signed the resolution, which shows, as far as he was personally concerned, that he approved of the amendments made at the Conference. We have the clear and emphatic utterances of the right hon. gentleman, made first before the people of this colony in Perth, and made secondly at the Premiers' Conference before the whole people of Australasia. that so far as the right hon. gentleman was concerned he was prepared to support the Bill; and I want to know what intimation we have had from the right hon. gentleman that he does not still maintain the position he took up then. We certainly have had utterances from him, but he does not tell us, as we have a right to expect he should tell us, as leader of the Government and as leader of this House, what are the particular objections to the Bill that are so great, so cogent, and so forcible, after having given eleven years' advocacy to federation, and after having given his loyal support to the Bill, that on fourteen days' notice he should cast aside those utterances, and now appear before us, if not as an anti-federationist, as a lukewarm federationist; taking up that attitude without telling us what his reasons are for making that change, and placing this aimless motion before hon. members without any guide to the members of the House, to be struggled over and fought for, it may be on the happy chance of its being rejected. The Premier, I think, has himself a great deal to blame; I might go further and say has himself entirely to blame, if it is a blame, but I say it is an honour in which he ought to glory. There are a number of people in the colony who are federationists, and who are strongly attached to federation. I, myself, whatever may have been my misgivings when I came from the Conference, the misgivings which I expressed in Sydney when I said that federation might place disabilities on the agricul-

tural population of this colony, and tend to check the development of the soil, had my doubts removed on the point by the cheery optimism and by the cheery remarks of the Premier in the Convention of 1898; and you can imagine the way I felt when I heard the Premier, to whom I owe most in forming my opinions on the federation question, turn round. I had followed the Premier in the attitude he had taken up and the manner in which he had dealt with this question up to the time he had spoken in this House about ten days ago. I shall pass away from that question with this observation: if I am wrong in my advocacy of federation, if it is thought I go too far in my advocacy of that cause, I can point to a speech of the Premier for every statement I have made on the platform and in the House, and I can find satisfaction in that speech and in the full federal spirit which the Premier displayed, and in the utterances which he expressed. Being the Premier of this country, and therefore the leader of this House, the duty is cast on the right hon. gentleman, I submit, quite apart from the resolution which he agreed to in Melbourne, of introducing this question for the proper discussion of the House. He certainly was not bound by virtue of the resolution to introduce the question as a party measure, but as leader of the House he was bound to introduce it, and have it properly and adequately discussed. I regret that the first expression which fell from the right hon. gentleman should have been one of direct appeal to the members who are opposed to federation to exercise their independence and reject the Bill. His appeal was not to deal with the question in a broad-minded spirit, not in the manner he suggested in 1898, to avoid parochialism and to approach the subject in a broad-minded manner; but forgetting the gospel he had preached in 1898, his first utterance in the House after the speech of May, 1898, in Perth, and after the Premiers' Conference of 1899, was a direct appeal to all the strongest anti-feeling in the House and in another Chamber. As leader of the House—I am not referring to the right hon. gentleman as leader of the Government—the Premier was right in saying that federation was not a party question; but as leader of this House surely we have a

right to expect from the right hon. gentleman some explanation of the reasons which prompted him to depart from the advocacy of the cause and the position he had taken up till about ten days ago. If an ordinary member changes his mind, those of us not occupying high, responsible and dignified positions, the matter might be passed over; but when the right hon. gentleman, occupying a position of great respect from those sitting behind him as well as those on this side of the House, and having connected himself with this movement for months and months and years and years, having preached the gospel of federation, as he has correctly said since 1888, and telling us in 1898 that his expressions of ten years ago were his expressions to-day, surely the hon. gentleman ought to give us some explanation and some reason for changing the attitude which he so long and so continuously had taken up on this subject. The right hon. gentleman endeavoured to avoid the responsibility that is cast on him by virtue of the resolution carried in Melbourne, and I regret that in doing so he was somewhat inaccurate in saying that Tasmania and South Australia were so eager to enter into federation that they were not prepared to defend the smaller states when dealing with the amendments which were made at the Premiers' Conference this year. What right had the hon. gentleman to say that the representatives of those colonies were more eager for federation than the members for this colony? It is a question of opinion for all of us. The people of this colony, an overwhelming majority, are as anxious for federation as the people of South Australia or Tasmania. It is those people who hold the reins of power who are not eager for federation; and if that is not so, why should there be any difficulty in giving the people those rights which have been enjoyed in South Australia and Tasmania, giving them the right to determine whether the Commonwealth Bill shall or shall not become the law of the country. If the Government can trust the people, trust them in a practical manner by giving them the opportunity which the sister colonies have had.

MR. A. FORREST: Sell the country to Victoria.

MR. JAMES: I think we ought to avoid as far as possible any technical objections. First of all the Enabling Bill does not exist. The Enabling Act provided that if the Commonwealth Bill, as passed by the Convention, was adopted by New South Wales then it should be submitted to our local Parliament for approval; but the Convention Bill was not passed in New South Wales, therefore the Bill lapsed.

THE PREMIER: That is a technicality.

MR. JAMES: It is technical to this extent, that the Premier says he departed from referring the question to the people because the Commonwealth Bill was not passed by the people of New South Wales. I say the Bill does not exist. The right hon. gentleman says that is a technicality; I meet a technicality by a technicality. Why deal with cobwebs like that? Why should such a thing stand in our way? I was saying we had the right to expect from those who suggest this unusual course some reasons why it should be adopted. They should place before the committee which is to be appointed some concrete instances in which this Bill would work harshly on the colony. Their attention ought to be directed to certain parts of the Bill, so that we should not lose the value of their efforts by the committee having to cover a wide area. This discussion that has taken place with reference to the motion before the House has given an ample opportunity to the right hon. gentleman to tell us, and those gentlemen who sit behind the Government or on the Government benches, to what extent this Bill should be considered when referred to a select committee—what parts are sufficiently important to be referred. For instance, no one for a moment would think that the question suggested by the member for the Ashburton (Hon. S. Burt) as to the effect of the "Braddon blot" should be referred to the committee. The Premier could tell us in three words what the "blot" means.

MR. DOHERTY: You tell us.

MR. JAMES: I have told the House before, and I tell the House again, that if the Bill as it stands were submitted to the people I would vote for it. I have no objections or conditions, and if the rest of the members agree with me, why in the name of common sense refer a

Bill of which we approve to a committee in order to find out difficulties? What are we to refer the Bill for? I understand from the Premier that he has altered his mind, although I certainly think that this question is far too important, and has been far too long a time before him, to justify him in changing his mind suddenly. I extremely regret the sudden alteration; and I am satisfied that his attitude is one which does more justice to his heart than to his mind, and that his recantation is one he will very soon recant. I have too great a personal respect and admiration for the Premier to think that he is going to ally himself with the parochialists of the colony.

THE PREMIER: You do not show your respect in the interjections you make, at any rate.

MR. JAMES: I have endeavoured in every possible way to show the respect which I entertain for the Premier.

THE PREMIER: You have not done it yet.

MR. JAMES: This is the second time I have addressed the House on the question, and on the first occasion I did not say a word about the Premier. When I have referred to him I have simply referred to his public action and public attitude in the House, and these surely are proper subjects of criticism. I do not carry these discussions into the regions to which the Premier carries them.

MR. DOHERTY: What about the Brad-don blot? You said it could be explained in three words.

MR. JAMES: If these objections had been raised before, we should have been able to ascertain more definitely whether they were of sufficient importance to justify the extreme and unusual measure of the proposed inquiry. Why should we depart from the ordinary practice of the House? Why should there not be a second-reading debate, after which, if necessary, we could refer the matter to a committee? I fail to see—although I may be wrong—that the procedure suggested by the motion will carry out the object of the mover. I fail to see how hearing evidence *in camera*, as it were, and then having a record embodied in a report of several hundred printed pages, will throw any more light on the question than can be thrown on it at present; and we are surely all agreed as to that,

whether we support federation or oppose it. But we want as much discussion as possible; and no one is anxious that the Bill should be referred at once to the people. We are only anxious that the House should commit itself to refer the Bill to the people, leaving the time to be fixed, so long as that time be not too far off to allow this State to enter federation as an original State if it so desire. Realising that we want the fullest possible information on all the important questions—and I think the Premier, if I rightly judge what he has said, will agree with me that the most difficult question is that of the finances—the point we have to consider is: does the procedure suggested by the motion promise the most beneficial results? Are we likely to have the most beneficial results from a discussion which takes place, not before all the members of this House—not before those who will not be on the committee, and therefore will not be open to be converted from anti-federation, or *vice versa*? Are we likely to have the most beneficial results from a discussion which takes place not before the whole House and the whole people of the colony—so far as the speeches of this House are reported—but a discussion in a committee, where most of the valuable information will be gained by other people in that conversational discussion usual in dealing with questions in committee, and such discussion and information as cannot be embodied in the dry details given in printed records? Do hon. members not agree that very few people, indeed, read the reports of select committees? It is only the enthusiasts who read such reports.

A MEMBER: We are all enthusiasts.

MR. JAMES: On this question, if enthusiasts want information on all points, except perhaps the financial question, there are ample stores available in the records of the Convention debates. And even on the financial question, if they look at the debates, they will find speeches by the Premier, supported by statistics prepared by the very actuary who now produces an entirely different report and conclusions. If persons are enthusiastic, they can find there the best information; and I say, without the least want of respect to hon. members, that no committee of this House could throw any more light on the subject than

can be thrown by a perusal of these debates. We must realise that we have in this colony men as well able to deal with the federal question as many members of the Convention.

THE PREMIER: In this country they are not so interested.

MR. JAMES: But surely there are men here sufficiently able to deal with the constitutional question as to the larger and smaller States?

THE PREMIER: I mean that they are not so interested in the financial question.

MR. JAMES: Therefore, the Premier agrees that if information is wanted on the constitutional part alone, it can be found in the printed records of the Convention. The enthusiasts—and I am glad to hear we are all enthusiasts on one side or the other—can find already prepared in those records, a more valuable mine of information than either a committee or the whole of the House could discover or collect. If we have to deal with the financial clauses, then I say unhesitatingly that the Premier is the best authority in the colony on the question, for he is the man who has thought and discussed it most, as Premier and Treasurer of the colony for nine years. He fought out the financial question in 1891, and realised then that it was a knotty one; and he afterwards discussed it at the Adelaide, Sydney, and Melbourne Conventions. Believing as I do so strongly in federation, I say that if the Premier would express to us his financial difficulty, and tell us what are the objections, dangers, and weaknesses he fears, there is no man in the colony to whom I would listen with greater pleasure, and to whose dictum I would pay greater respect. There is no man in the colony entitled to speak on the question of the finances with the authority of the Premier. We hear from him that he spoke of some alteration of opinion in the Convention, but I am not going into details.

THE PREMIER: I wonder what it was.

MR. JAMES: It was when you were dealing with the financial question.

THE PREMIER: I had a hard struggle to get any terms.

MR. JAMES: You put your view before the Convention; but I do not want to go into details. I only wish to say that if hon. members want informa-

tion as to the effect of the financial clauses of the Bill on the finances of this colony, they can read the debates, and find there expressions of opinion by the Premier, the man most qualified to go into the matter. I urge the Premier, who has submitted this motion, to let us know his difficulties and doubts, and by what force of circumstances he has been compelled to change his mind; and then, although I may not agree with him, I should none the less feel that he had made a bold and vigorous attempt to justify his position, and that we had had an expression of opinion by the man best qualified to judge. I do not attach very great importance to statistics; but, without saying for a moment that a statist is a man to be bought and sold—

MR. DOHERTY: Like a lawyer.

MR. JAMES: Without saying a statist is a man to be bought and sold, we all must realise—and I think I have heard the Premier express an opinion to exactly the same effect—that if there be a statist who is a conscientious federationist, and another statist who is a conscientious parochialist, the same set of figures in the hands of these two men will produce altogether different results; and you never know where you are.

THE PREMIER: I never said that about the statist.

MR. JAMES: I do not say the Premier spoke of federationists or anti-federationists, or that he used that particular illustration; but he will agree with me that statistics depend very largely on the gentleman who makes them. It is wonderful what can be proved by the figures and the various reports we had at the Conventions. It is important in this connection to note that Mr. Owen was at the Conference, and prepared the figures on which, no doubt, the Premier's arguments were based; and I am certain that the statist did not then produce the figures he has now produced, or I think the Premier would then have taken the position he is now taking.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Owen had not the sliding scale before him at the Convention. The conditions were not the same.

MR. JAMES: Surely the Premier realises that the sliding scale does not alter the fact as to what will be the result at the end of the five years.

THE PREMIER: No.

MR. JAMES: The statist gave his figures as to the result of the five years, after making allowance for the gradual reduction of duties; and the fact that the sliding scale was not before him does not alter the bulk of his figures or his deductions from them. I am not qualified myself to discuss the figures, but this is not so much a question for a statist as for a financial man, who may be the Premier or any man with a knowledge of finances. Although I may agree with the figures to a certain extent, disagreement arises when the statist ceases to be a statist and becomes a prophet or a financial authority. If Mr. Owen's report be taken, it will be found that directly he begins to discuss and to draw deductions, which only a man of financial or commercial knowledge can draw—directly he goes outside the authority of mere dry statistics, he introduces an element of doubt, and gives us the right to say he is no authority at all. While he is dealing with figures we can respect him as a statist; but when the Government Statist says, for instance, that under a uniform tariff we in this colony will import half of our sparkling wines and half of our cigars and cigarettes from Victoria—though I would like to know how much sparkling wine you can buy in Victoria when you are there, or how much tobacco is grown in that colony—when he tells you that, it is obvious he ceases to deserve the respect due to him as a statist, and that he has gone out of his province and become a prophet, and a disastrously bad prophet at that.

MR. VOSPER: Nine-tenths of our cigars and cigarettes come from Melbourne now.

MR. JAMES: True, they are made in Victoria, but not of Victorian tobacco; and that is the whole point.

MR. VOSPER: They are not of tobacco either.

A MEMBER: Cabbage leaf.

THE PREMIER: Tobacco is grown in Queensland and New South Wales.

MR. JAMES: It will be a great number of years before Australia can produce anything like enough tobacco to meet the demands of Australian people; and even if the production did overtake the demand, people have a peculiar way of paying large prices for what they believe to be a good imported cigar, though they do not often get it: and there never will

come a time when there will not be a large importation of foreign cigars. But this remark of the Statist is, after all a detail, and I only point it out to emphasise the fact that we have had an expression of opinion from the Premier as to the financial clauses of the Bill. We had an expression of opinion at the Conventions, an expression of opinion in May, 1898, and another indirect expression of opinion in his silent acquiescence in the resolution of January, 1899. We have not yet heard from the Premier—and when I say this I hope the right hon. gentleman understands—

THE PREMIER: The resolution of 1899 does not deal with the finances.

MR. JAMES: What I want to put before the House is that the Premier, having expressed an opinion in 1898, and having—

THE PREMIER: Well, what about it?

MR. JAMES: You have got it all here, under the head of "financial considerations," in your speech; and if I go into that, I go at once into the question of federation. It is not fair to refer to that. The position which the right hon. gentleman then took up was this, that having to take the financial provisions all in all, he was prepared to accept the Bill as it stood, and to give the right of its final acceptance or rejection to the people. In January, 1899, when the Premier's Conference was held, there was no weakening of that resolution, no sign that there had been an alteration in opinion, nothing at all to lead the people of the colony, or those of us who, up to that time, had been relying upon his guidance, and upon his cheery and whole-hearted support of federation, to believe that there had been any alteration in his point of view.

THE PREMIER: It would take something to lead you, I think.

MR. JAMES: When I say "whole-hearted" I do not mean that he is so enthusiastic in the cause as I am; I do not expect him to be. He has responsibilities cast upon his shoulders that do not rest upon me; but I believe he would be sorry indeed to think that a man occupying an independent position in this House, an ordinary member, should curb the expression of his opinions in the same way as a man who occupies the position of Premier, or who holds a portfolio, is bound to do. There are responsi-

bilities upon such a man that do not rest upon a private member; but, making allowances for those responsibilities, I say he was a strong and warm advocate for federation. That was the impression he left upon me, and upon other people who took an interest in the federal cause. Now as against this expression of opinion from the right hon. gentleman, we have never yet heard from him what are the real objections he has to federation; and we must remember that, in connection with a question such as this, high and dignified offices carry with them very great, heavy, and burdensome responsibilities; and if, in connection with such an issue, a man occupying a high position realises that a mistake has been made, then I say he should put the burden upon his own shoulders, and let us know what that mistake is, and not merely say "I have made a mistake, and now I want this select committee to find it out, so that in subsequent years I can throw the responsibility for rejecting the Bill upon an unknown committee." He should take the burden upon his own shoulders; and if he would let us know exactly what are his objections, and what terms he wants, this debate would be considerably facilitated, and the object both sides have in view would be materially assisted. No one for one moment has said that this Commonwealth Bill should be at once referred to the people. You constantly hear members take up that attitude in this House, you constantly see that statement made in the Press—that is one of their favourite misrepresentations on the point. There never has been a time when that idea has been expressed as the wish of the federalists in this colony. We have been anxious, and we are still anxious, that the question should be referred to the people—

MR. VOSPER: There have been a good many resolutions passed to that effect.

THE PREMIER: I think such resolutions are passed every day.

MR. JAMES: There never has been any serious demand, or any suggestion made, that this Bill should be at once referred to the people without discussion in this House, or in the Press, or on public platforms in this colony. I certainly have never heard such a demand in the course of my advocacy of this particular question. Although I am still

anxious that the Enabling Bill should be introduced and this question settled, I am by no means anxious that this referendum should be pressed with such undue haste, that those who are opposed to federation may feel that they have not had an opportunity of placing their views before the electors of this colony. That is the object I have in view, and I submit that the one question for this House to consider is: is this Bill to be referred at all? Is the Commonwealth Bill, as laid on the table of this House, to be submitted to the electors of this colony for their acceptance or rejection? It is idle to talk about amendments; it is idle to talk about conditions; because directly you insert the amendments, and directly you insert the conditions, then the electors of this colony have no opportunity of saying "yes" or "no" to that Bill as it left the Convention, or as it left the Premiers' Conference. There are some hon. members—the member for the Murray (Mr. George) in particular—who, though opposing federation, believing that it is not opportune at this particular time, are none the less in favour of this Bill being referred to the people—[**MR. GEORGE:** Hear, hear]—and I wish there were more members like that hon. member who, although opposed to federation, realised that this is a question that ought to be dealt with and determined by the people. I regret to say that the hon. member is in a minority, and a minority of one, on that point. [**MR. DOHERTY:** No.] Well, I am glad to hear it; and I propose to give the hon. member who has interjected an opportunity of proving it presently. I wish, however, that important statement had met with a more vehement denial. Then if the question for consideration is, is the Bill to be referred to the people at all? if we agree it ought to be referred—

MR. DOHERTY: With amendments, you know.

MR. JAMES: Oh! Now you are qualifying it. You are "a federalist, but—." I think so. If this Bill is to be referred to the people, it is the Bill itself that must be referred or no Bill at all. An amended Bill will not be the Federal Bill; it will not be the Bill by the acceptance of which we have a right to enter as an original State into the federation. If it be not the Federal Bill,

it might as well be a copy of the *West Australian* newspaper.

THE PREMIER: As you know, the Bill has already been altered.

MR. JAMES: True; it has been altered at the Premiers' Conference. I am talking of the Bill as so altered, and the right hon. gentleman knows that before it was altered it was rejected by New South Wales, and upon that rejection the Commonwealth Bill, as a Commonwealth Bill, dropped out of existence. A renewed effort was then made at the next general election, and I think the Premier knows the result of that election—how it stimulated the federal cause in that colony, and made very strong federalists of people who had before been strongly anti-federal; and the result of the general election in New South Wales was to make the Parliament of that colony realise that the public of New South Wales meant to have federation; and they at once determined to set their heads together to see on what terms federation would be accepted by the other colonies. The Parliament of New South Wales was perfectly within its rights at that time, because the people had refused to accept the Bill then in existence; and hon. members must recollect that, unless some Australian Parliament had moved in the matter, we should not have been where we are to-day.

THE PREMIER: Are we to be bound by the action of the Parliament of New South Wales?

MR. JAMES: We are not necessarily to be bound by their action. I want to do here what is being done in Queensland, in Victoria, and in South Australia.

MR. EWING: In New South Wales, too, they gave the people a chance to vote on the Bill.

MR. JAMES: I eliminated New South Wales because the Premier might well say that its own Parliament modified the Bill before referring it to the people; but they did not do that in Queensland, they did not do it in Victoria, nor did they do it in Tasmania. That Bill, as amended by the Premiers' Conference, has been referred to the people of those colonies unaltered. The other Parliaments of Australia have referred the Bill to the people of those colonies unaltered. The Parliament of South Australia has referred the Bill to the people because

Parliament approved of it, and we should refer it to the people because we approve of it.

THE PREMIER: That is all we ask.

MR. JAMES: I want this Bill brought before the House for the purpose of seeing whether we are going to approve of it.

THE PREMIER: You do not want this House to have anything to do with approving of it.

MR. JAMES: I want this House to discuss the Bill.

THE PREMIER: And approve of it?

MR. JAMES: The question is whether the Bill is to be referred to the people: that is the main question. We must admit that if we make amendments and alterations, then we do not refer the Bill to the people; we do not give the people an opportunity of saying whether they will accept that Commonwealth Bill or not.

THE PREMIER: Then we are to have no discussion?

MR. JAMES: Oh! of course, we can have a discussion; but there is a great number of questions on which members of Parliament have not got a discretion. I have seen members of this House conscientiously opposed to a principle, and yet, because a great majority of the people behind them were in favour of the measure, they voted for it. Such hon. members acted honestly as public men, and they ought to have so acted. They forfeited their discretion in deference to the wishes of their constituents. If we are agreed that the Bill ought to be referred—and we are all agreed on that—then we are also agreed that the question of federation or no federation ought to be determined by the people; that is, if I may judge hon. members by their expressed opinions in this House. If so, then why should those same people who have the right to say, and who ought to be given the opportunity to say, that we shall or shall not federate, be debarred from considering whether the terms in the present Bill are good or bad? Why should we fix the terms? If we do that, we shall be making an idle mockery of the reference of the Bill to the people; we shall be imposing our own opinions on the electors.

MR. DOHERTY: Are we to impose on them the opinions of the people of New South Wales?

MR. JAMES: I have heard hon. members say in connection with this debate, and also in speaking of federation on the Address-in-Reply, that we want information for the purpose of enlightening the public, of educating and assisting the public. [SEVERAL MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] I am glad to hear those signs of approval; but what in the name of common sense is the good of educating the people if the people are not going to have a chance of using their votes? What is the good of discussing or pointing out that amendments are needed, if you are going to insert the amendments, and not leave it to the people's discretion to say whether amendments and additions are necessary? If this committee be appointed, it will collect evidence for the purpose of doing what? Not for the purpose of showing the electors what is necessary, but for the purpose of showing this House what is necessary. How in the world can anyone say, if this be the result, that your object is to collect information for the enlightenment of the people? It is nothing of the sort. That evidence will be collected for the purpose of justifying the rejection of this Bill, and of declining to send it to the people. If any machinery or any means can be adopted for the purpose of obtaining the fullest possible information on this question, and for assisting the Premier—and there is no man in this colony who would be listened to with greater respect than he on this question—then I should cordially support that machinery, and should insist on such steps being taken; but that is not the object, and will not be the result of this discussion.

THE PREMIER: Do not be in such a hurry about it.

MR. JAMES: I do not want for one moment to hurry on this referendum.

THE PREMIER: Well, let the question be discussed and considered.

MR. JAMES: I want it discussed early, and I also want it discussed in open Parliament; and I want to point out candidly to the right hon. gentleman that I am anxious to hear his opinion.

THE PREMIER: You do not want any inquiry.

MR. JAMES: I do not care about the report of this select committee—I do not know who they will be—on this financial

question; but I do want to hear the right hon. gentleman.

THE PREMIER: You will hear me soon enough.

MR. JAMES: I hope I shall hear you when you are introducing this Bill.

THE PREMIER: I am not ready yet. It is a very difficult question.

MR. JAMES: But surely if the Premier has taken up a position to which he has committed himself, and now has discovered some objections to that position, and does not know what the objections are, where are we? Surely the Premier must be seized of the facts of the case, and surely he can state those facts. Some hon. members say we ought to exercise our discretion, and to place in the Bill certain amendments, the effect of which will be to prevent our entering as an original State, at all events; and the effect of which will be to prevent the people having a right to say "yes" or "no" to the same Bill which has been, or shortly will be, placed before the rest of Australasia. And we are told we are abrogating our powers. We are doing nothing of the sort. The one supreme duty of Parliament is to represent the people; that is its supreme duty; and, if the people want federation on the terms of the present Bill, our duty is to sink our personal views so far as this House is concerned. As members of Parliament, we represent our constituents; as private individuals, we speak freely and independently. If we are convinced, as members of Parliament, that the mature opinion of this colony is in favour of federation, our paramount duty is to bow to that opinion whatever our own ideas may be, and to submit this Bill to the people.

MR. GEORGE: And *vice versa*, to explain it to the people.

MR. JAMES: Undoubtedly, the converse of the proposition is true; and as private members, as the member for the Murray says, I hope we shall take the opportunity, realising our duty to the electors, of placing before them in a clear light whatever difficulties and dangers we may see in our way. The duty is cast upon us as public men of doing our utmost to assist the people in arriving at a right and mature judgment; and again I say, if this Bill as it stands is referred to the people, if the difficulty in the way of the Premier is a financial difficulty—

THE PREMIER: It is a constitutional difficulty.

MR. JAMES: I would ask the right hon. gentleman, can a constitution provide for a Commonwealth Bill?

THE PREMIER: I think it can, if you ask me.

MR. JAMES: Is there any constitution in the world.—

THE PREMIER: We can amend our own constitution in the ordinary way.

MR. JAMES: Of course you can alter your own constitution.

THE PREMIER: And in far better ways than this, too.

MR. JAMES: That may or may not be so; but a constitution, as a rule, is altered only in answer to a direct mandate from the people. When the people of a colony or of a country want a change or demand a change in the constitution, they get it.

THE PREMIER: Yes; the people as represented in Parliament.

MR. JAMES: And are their wishes to be disregarded because this is a Commonwealth Bill, and not a change in the constitution?

THE PREMIER: In our constitution the people speak through Parliament.

MR. JAMES: Undoubtedly they speak through Parliament.

THE PREMIER: You do not want them to do so.

MR. JAMES: Pardon me, now; there the right hon. gentleman is unfair, and he knows it. There is hardly one man in this House who has been returned on the question of federation. Where is there one in the House who has received from his electors a mandate on the question? What right have we to say that on this question we represent our constituents? If we are going to recognise our constitutional position as members of the House, where is the mandate of the people? What authority have we to voice their views on this question; and it is more important in connection with this question, because the reform is not like an ordinary one that you can lose to-day and bring up again to-morrow; for, unless the electors have a chance of deciding the question, they lose for all time the chance of entering as an original State, and run the risk of having different terms offered to them.

MR. DOHERTY: How do you know they run the risk?

MR. JAMES: We have been told so?

MR. DOHERTY: That may be only bullying.

MR. JAMES: It may be bullying, but I have not found that spirit in connection with the people of the other colonies.

MR. DOHERTY: They are wrong.

MR. JAMES: There is nothing in the heavens above or in the earth beneath, or the waters under the earth, that an anti-federalist does not know better than anyone else. Members who represent important constituencies come here with the glib utterance of "The Bill to the people," but they put every obstacle in the way of having the Bill referred to the people. If they are right, they will be re-elected when they go back to their constituencies. I want to see whether they will be again returned.

MR. DOHERTY: You will find it rough enough.

MR. JAMES: It is idle to talk about abrogation of the functions of Parliament, for, on the contrary, in referring the Bill to the people we are carrying out the highest duty, for Parliament should adequately reflect the wishes of the people. We are called upon to deal with a Bill which is unique. We have before us the example of the sister colonies, who have referred the Bill to be accepted or rejected by the people, and what is good enough for them should be good enough for us. They have the same institutions, and I believe, to a large extent, they are actuated by the same thoughts as we are. If the Bill commends itself to them, why should it not commend itself to us? This is a question which should not be determined by the House, and no man who believes he honestly represents his constituents ought to be afraid to have the Bill referred to the people. I wish some persons would realise that, instead of talking so much and interjecting, the people and not this House are to be the judges. I think that in the whole of Australasia the Houses of Parliament have been re-elected since the close of the Convention at the beginning of 1898.

THE PREMIER: No.

MR. JAMES: Well, there has been a re-election, has there not, in Queensland? also in South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania?

THE PREMIER: The election in Victoria was before the last Convention.

MR. JAMES: With that exception, the Parliaments of all the other colonies have had a direct mandate from the people, and they could have brought forward terms if they had thought it necessary. When I say they could have done so if they had thought it necessary, I hope members will not think I say we have not the power to do so. We have the power; but having the power and using it are two entirely different things. The right to use and the discretion of using are entirely different; and I say that if we discharge our duties in this matter, we ought to sink our own personal views and let the electors decide on the Bill as it is printed, realising, as I realise, that if there are these serious objections, the electors will be able to appreciate them, and we can provide ample opportunity of letting those arguments sink into their minds. I understand—perhaps the right hon. gentleman will correct me if I am wrong—that the Imperial Parliament will meet in February next, and the session then opened will be that in which this Commonwealth Bill will be introduced; therefore, if we determine to have the Bill referred to the people, we shall have from the present time to January or February next for the purpose of supplying knowledge. The public can be educated, and I do not think any member, whether federalist or anti-federalist, would raise the least objection to the Government making every possible effort and spending money liberally for the purpose of placing before the electors the real facts on both sides. Personally, I should be glad to see it, and, further than that, I shall be willing for men to be paid, if necessary, for the purpose of travelling round the country and explaining the subject, so that the electors may be well informed.

MR. VOSPER: Let copies of *Hansard* be sent out.

MR. JAMES: I should be glad to see the Government make every possible effort for the purpose of enlightening the public; but why should we not introduce the Enabling Bill? What inducement will the electors of the colony have to follow the discussion in this House unless they know they are going to have

the right of exercising the vote upon the Bill? There is very great doubt upon that point in the minds of the electors. It may be a doubt that is entirely unfounded, but, when there is this doubt in their minds whether they will or will not have the right to exercise the vote, how can you expect the electors to take an interest in the discussion? Pass the Enabling Bill to show they shall have the right, and you can say the referendum shall be held in January, or, if that is not far enough off, you can make it February. Settle this doubt that has been raised up by saying they shall have the right to vote, and then at once you will give them an incentive to follow the discussion on public platforms and in the Press. This will be entirely wanting unless some steps are taken to have that question settled. First of all, this motion is misconceived, for the question to be settled now is whether the Bill is going to the people or not; and, if the Bill is not going to the people, any information obtained by a select committee will be useless. I repeat that the first question to be settled is whether the Bill is to go to the people, and I urge that, if that be decided in the affirmative, every effort should then be made to obtain every possible information which will throw light upon the question. There is ample time to enable all arguments that can be adduced on this question to settle in the minds of the electors, and let them appreciate the arguments. I believe they are fully competent to exercise judgment in the matter, and in my opinion they are on the whole a more intelligent body of electors than those in any other part of Australia. You have men who have followed this question closely.

MR. VOSPER: Six months ago you could not get an audience to listen to you on federation.

MR. JAMES: And you cannot do so now, if you go into the dry details. This House itself would be counted out, if you began to give a constitutional disquisition on the merits of the question.

MR. VOSPER: More shame to the House then. It is the duty of members to attend to a matter of this kind.

MR. JAMES: We are ordinary legislators, and we understand the ordinary meaning of an Act; but we must not be judged by extraordinary standards. Acts

relating to the constitution are encrusted with judge-made law. If those who framed that constitution, some of the ablest men of their time, had been asked if they understood it, they would have said "Yes"; but if they were to come now and see how the constitution has been interpreted, they would be astonished, and would have to admit that they knew nothing about it. You cannot expect all people inside this House or outside it to be constitutional historians or lawyers.

MR. VOSPER: Are you aware of the fact that George Washington was an anti-billite?

MR. JAMES: George Washington was what some people call a visionary young man. It is wonderful the knowledge a man acquires as he gets on in life. I understand that the member for North-East Coolgardie never was a strong advocate of Federation; but he has been a critic, and his criticism goes in one direction, and in one direction only. His criticism was so demonstrative, that he glories in the fact that in 1891 he broke up a "Bartonian" meeting by the exercise of strong logic or argument, or the use of brick-bats or something else. It shows how peculiar some people's criticisms are, when they glory in the fact that their criticism broke up a federal meeting some years ago. It is useless to throw light on the attitude of those members at the present day.

MR. GEORGE: We have not brick-bats hard enough here.

MR. JAMES: Believing that a select committee will not serve a useful purpose, that we are departing from the ordinary practice of the House, and that the result of the appointment of the Committee will be not to elucidate matters but darken them, and believing also that the best discussion we can have in connection with this question will be a discussion in the House by the members----

THE PREMIER: Very complimentary to the Committee.

MR. JAMES: The Committee would be formed of members of the House.

THE PREMIER: They would be all honest men.

MR. JAMES: I do not say they would not. I am not questioning their honesty.

THE PREMIER: I suppose they would be intelligent, too.

MR. JAMES: I am not questioning their intelligence; but you could get a better discussion by all the members of the House. What would be the good of our first asking these men to act as a select committee, and then discussing the subject when they come back and tell us their views?

THE PREMIER: We do that every day.

MR. JAMES: A select committee is appointed, as a rule, for collecting evidence, and what evidence can be collected on the constitutional effects of some of the provisions of the Bill?

THE PREMIER: On the financial clauses.

MR. JAMES: Certainly on the financial clauses; but why is not this motion limited to the financial clauses? And, in connection with the financial clauses, there is no one more entitled to speak on the question than the right hon. gentleman himself. But even if we want to enlighten the public on this question the best thing we can possibly do is to let people know they are going to have the right to vote on it, to let them know that the question under discussion belongs to them, and that it is their duty to follow this question, but unless we do give the people the vote we know they will not follow the discussion. Therefore the first question we should decide is whether the Bill should go to the electors or not. The attitude I take up is not original in this House, I follow the lead of the right hon. gentleman, and I want the House to follow the advice which he gave to the people in 1898:

Now it has been said by some of my friends that they wonder I take up the position I do in regard to this question, and I should like to explain in a few words my reasons. I was elected by Parliament to represent this colony at the Federal Convention—for what purpose? The purpose is in the statute, in these very words—"for the purpose of framing a Federal Constitution for Australasia." I attended all the meetings of the Convention; I took part in all the discussions; I voted in all the divisions, and influenced with my vote the decisions arrived at, even where the circumstances were of little or no interest, as far as I could see, to this colony; I did not say at any time—I did not say when I was leaving—that I was dissatisfied with the Bill as passed—in fact I rather acquiesced in it. I was not at the last sitting, but had I been there I would have said we had done well, and had passed a Bill which I thought would generally commend itself to the people of Australia. All through those discussions and meetings I did my very best for Western Australia.

That is quite true, and he went on :

I tried to get the fairest terms I could for the colony ; and, that being the case, I cannot make myself believe I should be acting properly or honourably if, after we had finished our labours, after I had taken part in the discussions and influenced decisions, I had to come back and say to the people of this colony that the Bill we had passed, and to which I had given my acquiescence, was such a bad Bill that I would not even allow it to be submitted to the people of this colony. (Hear, hear.) I don't think it would be acting fairly towards the representative men of Australia with whom I was associated in that Convention. Therefore I have decided to take the course of asking the Parliament of this colony, when it meets, to approve of the Bill, and submit it for the verdict of the people of this country. (Prolonged cheers.) We went there and did our best, and appeared to be satisfied. We have done the work, and my duty is that, having done what I was asked to do, and not having disapproved of the Bill at the finish, my duty is to try and obtain the verdict of the people upon it, calmly and deliberately, and when there is no other excitement. (Applause.) If any delegate from Parliament says he is opposed to federation, he should be asked, " Why did you go to the Convention ?" (Applause.) He had no right to be at the Convention and take part in its deliberations, unless he was in favour of federation. Every one of the delegates must have been in favour of federation or he would not have submitted himself for election, and I would like those delegates who are now opposed to it to explain what sort of a Bill would have satisfied them?—but instead of doing this, all I have heard them say is " It is a good Bill, and I am prepared to accept it in a few years time." But, surely, that time must not be too remote, in order to keep faith with the people of Australia. (Applause.) We may be certain that whatever difficulties surround the question at the present time—and there are difficulties—still, if we desire Federation, and in a short time, in three, or four, or five years would be willing to accept it, I make bold to say that the difficulties will not be less than they are at the present time. We talk very glibly, all of us, when we get a chance—(laughter)—about federation, and it is a common thing to hear people talk of the federation of the English-speaking race. (Applause.) But when we come to close quarters, those very persons who are so anxious to federate with the English-speaking race seem to be unwilling to federate with their own countrymen, inhabiting countries as well off or even better than we are ourselves. (Hear, hear.)

THE PREMIER: Would it not be well to give us your own speech in Sydney, after that?

MR. JAMES: I would be quite willing to give the speech which I made in Sydney,

and I am glad indeed to think that the suggestion which I made in Sydney seems to have had some weight. I am glad to know that the suggestion made by me, the youngest member of the delegation and the youngest member of the Convention, and which was scoffed at and sneered at, is now looked upon as one which should have been adopted.

THE PREMIER: It was not scoffed at.

MR. JAMES: Certainly I got no word of private encouragement or public encouragement. The doubt which I had in mind when I was in Sydney was largely removed by the way in which the right hon. gentleman dealt with the question.

THE PREMIER: That is " too thin."

MR. JAMES: It is not too thin, because I am not afraid to say that I am a federationist—I glory in it—but I say I owe to the right hon. gentleman, more than to any other individual, the fact that I have been able to overcome that parochialism which is far too prevalent in this colony, and I want to pay respect and to acknowledge the debt that I owe to the Premier. The right hon. gentleman is responsible for the position that I now take up, and I am thankful to him for the help which he gave me. I am satisfied that the Premier will in time see the error of his ways, and come back and occupy that position and hold those opinions which his better instinct and all that is noble in his nature hold.

THE PREMIER: I want to know what I have done.

MR. JAMES: I want to know what the right hon. gentleman has done; I want to know how it is that, having told us in 1898 that it was his duty to try and get the people of this colony to approve of the Commonwealth Bill, and having told the people of Australasia in 1899 that he would take steps to have the Bill referred to the people, having made those promises, so far he has made no effort to redeem them.

THE PREMIER: You wanted your way; I wanted mine.

MR. JAMES: The right hon. gentleman said in his speech on the Address-in-Reply, also in introducing this motion, that there were difficulties in the way; that he realised he had not given sufficient consideration to the question, so that he was not altogether free to carry out his promise. I do not say the

Premier was wrong in making that promise. I realise the position in which he was placed, and I know that before he moderated his views on the question he must have realised his position and how necessary it was to take up the position he now assumes. But we have never yet had a full explanation of the reasons which made the right hon. gentleman doubt the strength of the position which he formerly took up. I propose as an amendment

That after the word "referred" the following words be inserted, "to the electors of Western Australia for acceptance or rejection at a date not later than February next; and that in the meantime the Bill as so amended be referred to."

MR. VOSPER (North-East Coolgardie): I do not propose to occupy the attention of the House more than once on this question, because I shall endeavour in my remarks to deal with the motion and the amendment. Before going into the subject matter of the motion, I desire to offer my congratulations to the Premier on the tenor of the reply which he sent to the Right Hon. George Reid, which was placed on the table of this House yesterday. I think it is well we should offer our congratulations to the Premier, because I feel that whatever our personal opinions may be on federation, whether we are for or against it, the people in Western Australia and the Parliament of this colony are not likely to calmly submit to dictation; and the telegram received from the Premier of New South Wales certainly savours of dictation. I think to us as a Parliament, and to the electors of West Australia as a people, it would be a lasting degradation if for one moment we admitted that a neighbouring Premier had the right to dictate as to what we should do in this Parliament. The Premier of New South Wales certainly had no right to attempt to influence this colony; and the tenor of the telegram is regrettable. Coming to the motion itself, the first question that presents itself to my mind is one that was suggested by the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) when he contributed towards the debate on this question, and that is, will the course proposed by the Government, or by the Premier, have the effect of burking dis-

cussion on the Commonwealth Bill generally? That seemed to be the hon. member's opinion, and it seems to be the opinion of those who have spoken in opposition to the proposal. I cannot share that view, because obviously, to my mind, we shall be able just as well to discuss the Commonwealth Bill on the report of the Committee when brought up, if not better. I am informed it is not the custom of the House to debate the question as to whether a report should be adopted or rejected, at great length; but in a matter of this importance custom could be well set aside, if such a custom does exist.

THE PREMIER: I do not know that such a custom does exist.

MR. VOSPER: If such a custom does exist, it might be well set aside on such an important question as federation. If the committee bring in a report approving of the Bill, then there will be an unlimited field for discussing the report and the Bill itself.

MR. LEAKE: We cannot amend the committee's report.

MR. VOSPER: But we can reject it. Whichever way the committee decide, whether for or against, obviously in discussing their decision we can discuss the whole Bill and everything connected with it. It has also this advantage, that if we do discuss this great Bill prior to the select committee being appointed, we discuss the matter in the dark. We shall be simply ventilating our own ignorance, and one of the objects of our discussion of the Bill is to enlighten the people as far as possible. What is the use of hon. members coming and expressing views which are ill-formed and half-formed, or based on insufficient data, and sending them forth to the world as the essence of parliamentary wisdom?

A MEMBER: That applies to all second readings.

MR. VOSPER: It does apply to all second readings, to a great extent, and therein the ordinary procedure may be faulty. We are now offered a better form, and asked to investigate first and discuss afterwards, a course which would save members from the awkward position of committing themselves and, after the investigation, having to change their minds. If we have a second-reading debate before the Bill is sent to the com-

mittee, what does it mean? It means that every hon. member who expresses an opinion commits himself to a certain extent, and the committal is recorded in *Hansard*, by which he may be controverted if he changes his mind; but if we have the report of a select committee before us, we will know what we are doing, and if we commit ourselves to an expression of opinion, that opinion may be worth something. Another point raised by the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) was that all the arguments for and against federation, especially in regard to finance, were based on hypothesis, and that no new facts could be elicited either by the committee or any other person. But the scientific way, where facts cannot be discovered, is to endeavour to get all data possible on which to form a reasonable hypothesis; and up to the present, no attempt has been made in connection with the Bill to place impartial data before the House and the country. All the arguments for and against are coloured by the feelings of the speakers, and, consequently, the public mind is in a state of almost indescribable confusion. People adduce arguments in favour of federation which do not apply and are outside the scope of the Bill, and, on the other hand, there are arguments used against the Bill which are equally if not more preposterous. One argument used on the goldfields, and that by a Perth lawyer, was to the effect that, if the Bill became law, it would lead to a diversion of public revenue from extravagant expenditure at Bunbury and Fremantle, to the development of Esperance harbour and the construction of the Norseman railway. If that gentleman had taken the trouble to read the Bill he would have known perfectly well that the Bill did not interfere with Esperance Bay in the slightest; and I could produce anti-federal arguments equally unsound and unreasonable. While this confusion exists in the public mind everywhere, is it not reasonable and just, both to Parliament and to the people, that we should endeavour to form some impartial tribunal, which would endeavour to ascertain the exact facts, so that the public when they are called upon to vote in the referendum—as I have no doubt they will be—may decide the question

intelligently on the strength of ascertained facts and definite evidence? Another peculiar state of affairs revealed in the discussion is the fact that hon. members come to the House and claim to represent the federationists of the colony, and all declare they want investigation, urging that the more the Commonwealth Bill is investigated the better for their view and for the federation cause. It is possible that the more the measure is investigated the more we shall fall in love with it; but, if so, why should there be such a determined effort on the part of those hon. members to burk inquiry?

MR. JAMES: There is no desire to burk inquiry.

MR. VOSPER: I am not speaking of the hon. member for East Perth (Mr. James) now, but will deal with him later on.

MR. OLDHAM: Are you speaking of the Government?

MR. VOSPER: Neither am I speaking of the Government, but more especially of the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth). That hon. member declared that he desired investigation, and at the same moment announced his determination to oppose the motion, although that motion prescribes the only possible method of arriving at a decision on the whole question. It is the only method by which we can collect evidence, because, though we might be able to summon witnesses to the bar of the House, that would be an unheard-of proceeding. A select committee is the only means yet presented of having a full and free investigation of the whole question, and yet the very members who come to the House and declare that investigation is needed are opposing the motion! I confess I am totally unable to comprehend the state of mind which could result in so strange an attitude. I will now turn to the member for Pilbarra (Mr. Kingsmill), who seems to be bitten with the mania against delay, of which we hear so much. From him, as from other supporters of the Bill, we hear that investigation, although a good thing, must not take place, and we are practically told that delay would be fatal to the Commonwealth Bill. In the name of common sense, why? Has delay ever been unfavourable to the consummation of the

federal ideal? Not at all. The member for East Perth (Mr. James) referred to my having broken up a "Bartonian" meeting in Sydney in 1891.

MR. JAMES: I do not think I did.

MR. VOSPER: I confess I did break up the meeting; and why? I will relate the circumstances so that the House may understand. At that meeting Mr. Barton, Mr. McMillan, Sir Henry Parkes, and several others attempted to thrust down the throats of the people the old Convention Bill of 1891—a more reactionary and conservative measure than which it would be impossible to imagine. Several other persons and myself in the meeting endeavoured to bring forward an amendment, having the object of framing a Bill somewhat on the lines of the existing measure. Sir W. P. Manning, who was chairman, refused to accept the amendment, with the result that a vote of censure was passed upon him, and he was removed, and another person appointed to preside, whereupon the amendment was carried; and then the gas was turned down and the audience got out as best they could. While the member for East Perth (Mr. James) says he glories in being a federationist now, I glory in the fact that I took part in the passing of that amendment. We waited eight years for federation, and year after year the popular feeling became more and more mature, and federal feeling more democratic, and at last we have a Bill that is a monument of democratic legislation. The leaders of the federationists at that time said exactly what is being said now—they wanted "the Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill"—and, if that measure had been assented to, we should now have had a constitution far more conservative than that of Canada and also, no doubt, all the blessings of federation. Consequent on the action of thousands of men like myself, the measure was put back eight years, and all will recognise that this delay has led to perfecting the Bill to a very great extent. Eight years having raised federation from that standpoint to its present standpoint, is there not a possibility that still further delay would tend to a still greater measure of perfection?

A MEMBER: We shall have to wait until the millenium.

MR. VOSPER: I am perfectly sure that if we wait till the millenium, the Bill will be much more perfect than now, but I am not suggesting any such long delay.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Our delay will not delay federation.

MR. VOSPER: That is true, but our delay might have the result of perfecting the Bill so far as Western Australia is concerned, and that is what we have to look to. The point we have to consider is whether the Bill is suitable to the interests of Western Australia. If it is not, then I unhesitatingly affirm that, while it may be the duty, and no doubt it is the duty of this House to refer the question to the people, it is also the duty of the House to do everything it can to secure its rejection by the people. One of the results of the delay which I hope for, and one reason why I advocate delay is because I think, before we can arrive at anything like a clear decision or a clear idea of the people's real opinion of the Bill, we not only require to educate them with information and enlighten them as to its provisions, objects and effects, but we also require that there should be a much extended suffrage. I am informed that there are something like 110,000 adult males in the colony, of whom, I suppose, at least, 100,000 ought to have the franchise; but under the present Act, for some reason or other, there are not more than 41,000 men on the rolls. Now, 41,000 is something less than one-third of the adult males of the entire colony, and the question which arises is: If we are going to have a referendum and refer the Bill to the whole people, shall it be referred to the people as a whole—that is to every elector who can be got on the roll—or only to the fortunate few on the roll at the present time? If delay is going to have the effect of putting every elector on the roll, and give everyone the opportunity of expressing an intelligent opinion on the Bill, I am in favour of delay, and I am in favour of delay on the broadest and most democratic grounds. Everyone in Western Australia when the Bill becomes law, will have to live under the constitution, and should, therefore, be entitled to have a voice in the framing of it, and say "Yea" or "Nay" to its adoption. Electoral reform should precede the referendum, and

that demand for reform is a very adequate reason for delay. The next point alluded to by the hon. member for Pillbarra (Mr. Kingsmill) was as to the usage in New South Wales. It was said this motion was a departure from the usage in the other colonies, where the second reading of the Bill was debated first, and then the House went into committee of the whole House. I have already pointed out that there can be no objection to that course after we have the report of the Select Committee, when hon. members would be more fortified for the debate than they are under present conditions. But what was the actual procedure in New South Wales? There a commission was appointed to inquire into the financial question. When this Bill was assented to at Adelaide the first thing Mr. Reid did was to move in his Parliament that a financial commission be appointed, and the motion took exactly the same form, if my memory serves me right, as the present proposal. I remember distinctly that amongst the members of that commission was Dr. McLaurin, a member of the Upper House; and one or two members of the Lower House, but I cannot say whether it was a joint committee or a commission.

THE PREMIER: It was a commission, and included some experts. I do not think Parliament was sitting at the time.

MR. VOSPER: At any rate, the commission was largely composed of members of both Houses. Another usage crept in in New South Wales, but which I hope will not be followed here, no matter what the result may be. After the commission had given its report on the financial clauses, Mr. Coghlan, the New South Wales Statistician, at the request of the Government, prepared reports, which happened to be a great deal more unfavourable to the Bill than those of the commission. That report Mr. Coghlan was allowed to publish up to a certain point. After the first referendum, when the Bill was rejected by the people, although practically accepted, Mr. Reid, without any mandate from the people, summoned the Premiers' Conference and the Bill was amended. Mr. Coghlan again wanted to point out that the finances were derogatory to the interests of New South Wales, but this time he was not allowed to open his mouth. His statistics

and figures were refused publication, and up to this day have never seen the light of the sun; and that was one of the means used in order to arrive at the decision of which we read in the newspapers the other day. I earnestly hope and trust that, whatever hon. members may think of the usage in New South Wales, the usage I have described will not be followed too closely here.

MR. GEORGE: We will not follow it at all.

A MEMBER: I hope we will follow their example generally.

MR. VOSPER: That is quite another matter. I hope we will not follow their example in all respects. On the one hand, I hope we will not muzzle our public officers, nor that on the other hand will we permit our Premier to use a dictatorial tone towards the other colonies.

MR. GEORGE: We never hurt New South Wales.

MR. VOSPER: That interjection reminds me very much of the story of the negro lad who was one day seen by his mother to be teasing an elephant, and she told him to leave the elephant alone. The boy answered "Oh! I am not hurting the elephant, mother." Our position with regard to New South Wales is much the same. That colony can, and will, and does interfere with us, and we have a very small chance of interfering with it. My speech to-night is almost entirely composed of references to the observations of other hon. members, a circumstance for which I trust I shall be pardoned. I have now to refer to a remark of the member for Albany (Mr. Leake), that was in reference to the question of a transcontinental railway. I may say here that I hope to follow the example generally set, of not going more into detail than I can possibly avoid. I propose to confine myself mostly to those portions of the Bill already touched upon in the debate. With regard to the question of the transcontinental railway as raised by the member for Albany (Mr. Leake), the House was told that it would be quite impossible to interpolate such a question as that in the Constitution Bill, because after all it was not a question of constitutional principle, but of a great public work; and that we could not ask the House of Commons to interfere in that matter, because that

body would simply say that this was a question for the Federal Parliament to deal with. I am quite willing to admit that the hon. member is right on that point. I do think it might be looked upon as wrong, perhaps even preposterous, for us to ask the Imperial Parliament to insert in this Bill a direct provision for the construction of such a railway; but I would point out that we need not go so far as that, and that what we are justly entitled to do is this: we may demand that this Constitution shall not prohibit the construction of that railway. That is precisely what my reading of this Bill leads me to propose to do. The 34th Sub-clause of Clause 51 reads:

Railway construction and extension in any State with the consent of that State.

The member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth), in a private discussion he recently had with me, to which I presume he will allow me to refer, suggested to me that the only object of this clause was to prevent the Federal Government building railways parallel to, or competing with, State railways already existing, and that the clause was one of the strongest safeguards for State rights. I am perfectly willing to admit that, although I cannot conceive that any sensible Federal Government would ever go into competition with a railway already constructed by a State.

A MEMBER: What about the Esperance line?

MR. VOSPER: True; the clause may be a blot from the point of view of the people of Esperance, though not from that of Fremantle, if taken in its more restricted meaning; but, at the same time, we have to take that clause exactly as it is written, and it certainly goes a great deal further than I have stated in the language of the member for Central Murchison. If it really provided that the Federal Government should not interfere with the railway policy of any given State, well and good; but it goes further and says, "Railway construction and extension in any State with the consent of that State." That simply means that, if the Federal Government desire to build a railway extending through two or more colonies, they must secure the consent of each of the colonies through whose territory that line is proposed to extend.

MR. OLDHAM: And very properly so.

MR. VOSPER: In what position does that place this colony? It means that if we want to have a railway constructed from New South Wales to Fremantle, we shall have to obtain the consent of South Australia for the construction of that line. Whether we get it or do not get it, I ask, is it a reasonable idea that this colony should have to go cap-in-hand to the South Australian Parliament, in which we have no representation and no influence, and to ask their consent to construct a railway which is vitally necessary, not only for our commerce, but for the defence of the commerce of the whole of the Australias? I ask even of the Commonwealth, is it a fitting thing that the Federal Government should deny itself a power which the Canadian Government possesses, which the Government of the United States possesses, which every federation on the face of the earth possesses at the present moment, of building railways throughout federal territory, of making means of inter-communication from seaboard to seaboard? Is it right or just that the Federal Commonwealth should so far humiliate itself as to go to a State Parliament to seek permission to do that which we should provide power in the Bill for it to do? No; I say that in seeking to get this defect removed from the Bill we are doing a service, not only to ourselves as West Australians, but to the Commonwealth generally. I say that in time to come those in this colony who stand firm in insisting upon this amendment will be recognised as wise and far-seeing statesmen, by the future historians of Australia. Coming generations will see at once that this was one of the most grievous defects of this Bill. It will be obvious that this proviso stultifies and takes away dignity and power from the Federal Commonwealth to a very large extent, that it has a very serious effect on its usefulness, and impairs its activity in many important directions. Those who stand out now will be doing a duty to their State, and will be looked upon with gratitude by posterity. What we can ask the House of Commons to do is this: we can say we do not want a guarantee from the Eastern States that this railway shall be built; we have quite sufficient faith in the merits of Fremantle as the port of

ingress and egress for all Australia; we have quite sufficient faith in the merits of the railway itself, and in the importance of our own territory, to be sure that sooner or later United Australia will build this railway; but what we do ask is that the Federal Parliament shall not be prohibited from doing that which the national safety demands. That will be a perfectly reasonable request, and one that I feel quite sure will be granted, not only by the House of Commons, but by a large majority of the Eastern colonies.

MR. LEAKE: It is rather a strong way of putting it to say "prohibited."

MR. VOSPER: Unfortunately I have not had a legal training; nevertheless I ask this: if this sub-clause were plastered up in letters six inches long upon a hoarding, what would the ordinary man in the street think of it? What interpretation can any sensible man put upon it? And after all is said and done, this clause will have to be interpreted in the Federal High Court of Justice: that Court is to be the machine by which the Constitution is to be interpreted. Suppose the Federal Government desire to build that railway, and the South Australian Parliament object to its being built, then the two parties, I presume, must go before the Supreme Court; and the South Australian legal advisers would be sure to assert that this sub-clause gave South Australia the power to refuse to allow that line to be constructed.

THE PREMIER: And no doubt it does.

MR. VOSPER: Unquestionably. I do not think any material argument has been advanced on the other side.

MR. LEAKE: That is quite right: it also gives Western Australia the same power.

MR. VOSPER: But the power is useless to Western Australia. We cannot do any damage with that power, nor can we do any good with it; but South Australia can do both, and the clause therefore gives undue power to one State, which that State ought not to possess. Another point was that the hon. member objected to this Bill as a whole being submitted to a select committee. He said: if it is necessary that we should discuss the financial clauses, or that Parliament should investigate them, it should be sufficient for the select committee to

deal with those clauses only. I should like to point out for the benefit of the hon. member and of the House, that there are many points in this Bill which, while not purely financial in themselves, may have a very serious effect upon the finances of Western Australia, or those of the Commonwealth generally, and that it is just as well that such clauses should be investigated, together with the financial clauses. For instance, there is a series of clauses which provides for the interstate commission. What effect are such clauses going to have upon our railway and general revenue? I say that anything that may effect our railway revenue must also effect our general revenue; and, surely, that question should come under investigation. Take, for example, Clause 98 of the Enabling Bill: the 98th Clause reads:

The power of the Parliament to make laws with respect to trade and commerce extends to navigation and shipping, and to railways the property of any State.

Surely here is a clause which is outside of the financial clauses, and is yet well worthy the serious attention of any committee. The clause evidently means, so far as I am able to discover—and perhaps the member for Albany will bear me out in this, as he did in my last interpretation—that the railways are to be our property, are to be built with our money; if there is any loss, we are to bear that loss; if there is a profit, we are to pocket the profit; but all our operations with regard to railways are to be controlled by a federal law. In other words, we are to be in the same position with regard to our own railways as a private company. We are to bear the same relation to the Federal Commonwealth, with regard to our railways, as the Midland Railway Company of Western Australia does to this House.

MR. LEAKE: That is not so. You have to read that clause with others.

MR. VOSPER: There is the clause itself.

MR. LEAKE: Read it with Clause 99, and also with Clauses 102 and 104.

MR. VOSPER: Just so; I will do that. I cannot see that either Clause 99 or Clause 104 very seriously affects the question. What Clause 99 says is this:

The Commonwealth shall not, by any law or regulation of trade, commerce, or revenue, give

preference to one State or any part thereof over another State or any part thereof.

But this is the point: the very operation of that clause itself may retard our railway development for this reason, that at the present moment the railway rates in New South Wales are—or, at all events, we will suppose they are—rather lower than are the railway rates of this colony. Now, here it is provided that:

The Commonwealth shall not by any law or regulation of trade, commerce or revenue, give preference to one State or any part thereof over another State—

This means that the Inter-State Commission, acting on the tripartite powers given in Clauses 103, 99, and 98, are to make such regulations as will, in their opinion, compel us to charge the same rates on our railways as are charged in New South Wales and in Victoria. They can do so; it does not say that they must do so; but remember that they can do so under the Bill.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: They cannot do so.

THE PREMIER: Certainly they can.

MR. VOSPER: I am not going into the Bill, but am only dealing with this one point. I am trying to point out that powers are given to the Commonwealth which are worthy of consideration by a select committee of the House. As far as I am able to discover from the tenor of this clause, it is possible that regulations may be made by the Federal Parliament which will be injurious to this colony, and the mere supposition of that is sufficient to justify very careful investigation of the whole subject. I am not arguing that the supposition is correct or that it is incorrect, but I myself think it is correct. All I say is that this suggestion alone is quite sufficient reason, not only for investigating the financial clauses, but the whole Bill. Of course, the hon. member also raised the bogey in relation to delay. This question of delay was raised again, and the same fear expressed: but I can only repeat that I cannot for the life of me understand why delay is feared so much. I think the Speaker will confirm my statement when I say that the forms of Parliament are designed for the especial purpose of creating delay. The one great object of Parliamentary formalism is to cause delays, so that unjust or improper legislation shall not be rushed through

without due time for analysis and consideration. What is the object of Parliament but to prevent autocratic government, or to prevent any body or any combination of persons from hastily making laws which may injure the State? The whole constitution aims at delay; and why is that? It is in order that you may not rush precipitately into bad law, or laws which may appear good at the time but may prove injurious hereafter. With regard to the constitution, we are about to take a most important step. If we enter into federation there will be no withdrawal, and in the constitution itself we are told that such is the case. Assuredly if there ever has been a reason for delaying a question there is a reason in this case. If there ever has been a measure demanding calm, grave consideration, every thought, power, and intellect that man possesses, and every form of reason that can be brought to bear, this is one. Nothing can more deserve the attention of Parliament, and the use of the whole machinery of Parliament, than the questions involved in the Commonwealth Bill: and I am glad to see that so far back as 1897, when I first came into this Parliament, I was an advocate for delay. No man was more cautious or more conservative in connection with the Commonwealth Bill than I was; and I stand in the same position to-night, and say that this House would be committing a crime against the country and against Australasia if we were for one moment to shirk our duties and to rush this question. We should be committing a crime against the public, for which the public would be very apt to punish us in time to come. That we shall federate there is no manner of doubt, but if we willingly accept a Bill which will have evil effects upon Western Australia, the very people who shout loudly now for federation at any price will be the very persons to reproach the leaders for having misled them. The blind leaders of the blind are the first to fall into the ditch, and a man's own blindness will be no excuse to the people.

MR. JAMES: You may fall into the ditch.

MR. VOSPER: Possibly I may. If, on the one side, it would be a crime for Parliament to rush this Bill through without sufficient consideration, it would also be equally a crime on the part of the

public to give an unintelligent vote on the subject. I should feel the responsibility very strong upon me when I went to the poll to say "aye" or "no" upon such an important question. I should not feel myself qualified to express an opinion upon it, if I had not studied it, and I should be very sorry to be carried away by the clamour and claptrap of a public meeting. As to personalities used in heated discussions, and reproaches hurled at people about changing opinions, we must remember that we have a vast and complex question to deal with, one of the greatest problems ever brought forward in the history of the world. A man may read the Bill on one occasion and be inclined to support it, whilst on reading it a second time he may be opposed to it; and every time he reads it he will find fresh developments which will cause him to change his mind. If a man changes his mind, and does so frequently, it is pretty strong proof that he gives deep consideration to the Bill. A man who never changes his mind never discovers his mistakes: they have to be discovered for him by someone else. I leave this stage of the question, and I come on to the subject of defence, raised by the member for the Ashburton. Of course it is customary in this House to cast some ridicule on that aspect of the question; but, still, it requires consideration, because we were told by the Premier of New South Wales the other day in Albany that the Federal Government were going to defend us to the extent of their last man and their last shilling. Offers of that kind are very easy to make, and very difficult to carry out. After all is said and done, there was not so much in that unanimous offer as appears.

MR. GEORGE: He would not shed any of his own blood.

MR. VOSPER: I will not say that, for I dare say he would do so, if called upon. But it is not so much a question of whether the Commonwealth will defend Western Australia as whether Western Australia is to be capable of defending the Commonwealth. It seems strange to say that a small colony like this should have it in its power, to a great extent, to defend the Commonwealth, but is nevertheless true. Anyone who looks at the map of Australia will see that the port of Albany is the key to the whole of the colonies. Nine-tenths of

the sea commerce comes round Albany, through the Bight, through Bass's Strait by Tasmania, and up to the eastern coast. The Torres Strait route is too intricate, too little known, and too volcanic for navigation, and the rates of insurance are higher. Everything is against that route, and in favour of Albany. It means that everything has to pass Albany. Therefore the defence of Albany is a most important point for the Federal Government. The defence of Fremantle and Albany means the defence of the whole of the Commonwealth; consequently, when they talk about defending us, we need only say to them, "Thank you for nothing." If Western Australia stands out of the Commonwealth, a serious responsibility will be cast upon us. There are only two ways of defending Australia, one being by a naval force belonging to the Imperial Government, which need not be considered, and the other is to bring men, materials, and provisions, overland from the East; and how is that to be done unless a transcontinental railway is built? The question of the defence of Western Australia does not trouble me; but I do not know how the Commonwealth is to defend itself without a base of supplies and a transcontinental railway to connect that base with the proper strategic points. There is a possibility of another route being opened which will destroy this unique position of Albany, and that is a very serious and grave responsibility. If you take Albany off the high road of commerce, its importance with regard to defence becomes a mere bagatelle. At present it occupies a commanding position on the high road of commerce, and the question of defence is an important one. Still, I am not dealing with that point now, but what I want to show is that, although so much is said about the advantage of being defended under federation, it will be of no advantage at all to us, for the natural way of defending themselves is by defending us.

MR. MORGANS: They could not do it without a railway.

MR. VOSPER: I now come to the observations of the member for East Perth, who himself referred to me briefly, and I prefer to deal—I will not say at any great length—with some of his observa-

tions. Although I notice the hon. member has accepted this motion and did not propose an amendment vitally altering it, yet the hon. member told the House the procedure was unusual. That may be; but let me ask whether the whole procedure in connection with this Commonwealth Bill has not been unusual from the very beginning? In the first place, the other colonies elected delegates from among the mass of the people, and that was an unusual proceeding. Then they passed an Enabling Bill, which was unusual; and they had three Conventions, which was unusual; and then there was the Premiers' Conference, which was still more unusual; and, if you refer to this colony, you will find that our proceedings have been even more unusual than those of the Eastern colonies, for while members were elected by popular suffrage in the Eastern colonies, ours were elected by Parliament. While they had the opportunity of deciding for or against federation, or of suggesting amendments through federal delegates subsequently at the Convention, and also had two referenda, the people of this colony had no such opportunity at all. We cannot make the proceedings any more unusual by carrying the motion which is now proposed. If we were to confine ourselves to the usual procedure, we should have no Commonwealth, for the whole business from beginning to end has been unusual. It is, in fact, phenomenal, and we have to deal with an extraordinary matter in an extraordinary way. The position at the present time is this. We are told by the Government Actuary and other respectable authorities that this colony is bound to lose a certain sum of money per annum if it goes into federation, and it has been stated that there is a probability of our losing something else, whilst on the other hand we are told by hon. members like the member for East Perth, that we are going to gain, or at all events we shall not lose. Every member gives us a fresh set of figures, and no two sets are the same.

MR. JAMES: New South Wales will lose more than any other colony.

MR. GEORGE: New South Wales is the only colony that will gain by it.

MR. VOSPER: At all events we are face to face with this phenomenon, that whereas two and two make four in or-

dinary matters, they make five, six, or seven in connection with federation.

THE PREMIER: They all said we should lose. Not a single man said we should gain anything.

MR. VOSPER: I am only calling attention to the fact that we have been adopting an unusual procedure from beginning to end, and that it will not hurt us to go on being unusual. The hon. member talks about the people of New South Wales having accepted the Bill; but the people in the other colonies have not done so. The people in Western Australia may accept it, and it is quite possible they will do so, and I recognise that in all probability I am speaking for the minority, and that perhaps I am acting against the views of the majority of my own constituents in adopting the course I am now taking; but at the same time, whatever the majority may do here, there is one important fact, namely, that in the Eastern colonies they not only had the right of saying "yes" or "no" to the Bill, but they also had the right of amendment—not the Parliament, but the people themselves. When the question was first raised in New South Wales there were persons urging the people to reject the Bill because certain amendments had not been adopted by the House, and when the second referendum took place, it was on the strength of certain amendments which were the direct outcome of a general election. Consequently there was a mandate from the people; and the amendment of the Bill at the Conference of Premiers was the result of that mandate by the electors of New South Wales. Each of the other colonies have had, or will have had, two distinct referenda; and, as the hon. member pointed out himself, they have had a general election. This gave them opportunities of discussing the Bill and amending it. But what is the position in this colony? We have here a Bill framed by people who did not represent us, because, with all due respect to the Premier and the member for East Perth, they did not represent the people. They will acknowledge that they represented Parliament but not the people generally; and, consequently, this Bill has been framed by people for whose election, and for whose action, the people of the colony as a whole had no responsibility; and the

people have never had any adequate opportunity of expressing their opinion either for or against the Bill, or in favour of its amendment. If, as the member for Central Murchison says, it is good to send the Bill to the people, it is also good to give them the opportunity of amending the Bill. If there is any good in the power of referring the Bill to the people, it surely exists as much for the purpose of amendment as for the purpose of passing or rejecting the Bill. But our position is simply this, as pointed out by the Premier himself: we are given the option of taking the Bill or leaving it. It may be that we do not want to leave it, and it may be that we do not want to take it. When the matter was discussed in the Eastern colonies it was simply a Bill, which any one could discuss, or criticise, or tear to pieces, or laud to the skies, as suited their ideas. In this colony it is a Joss, a sacred fetish, a Moloch, or a statue placed upon a pedestal for us to fall down to and worship. It is a Baal for us to set up and adore. If we do not do so, we are cast in the mire and abused. The high priest of Baal comes into the House and tells us to bow down to his idol. We are to fall prostrate at the feet of Moloch at the bidding of the member for East Perth. Federal feeling has ceased to be a sentiment, and has degenerated into a gross and fanatical superstition.

MR. JAMES: No Parliament had a right to alter the Bill before it went to the people.

MR. VOSPER: I think the fact of there being a double referendum shows that Parliament had that right, and exercised it. I may point out also that in Queensland the other day there was an amendment proposed to the Enabling Bill which was only lost by one vote, and it was the Labour party who supported that amendment. Why the Labour party here take an opposite view to the Labour party there, is one of those things I cannot understand.

THE PREMIER: There has been a general election in every colony, as well.

MR. VOSPER: In the other colonies the people have had an opportunity of voting on the Bill and of refusing it, and the Bill has been dealt with at one general election. The people of the other colonies have also had two separate

referenda; consequently they have had almost unlimited power for refusing the Bill; while the people of Western Australia have had nothing of the kind. The Government are now going to give the people the right to reject or accept the Bill. They will have the right to say "no" to this Bill, but if they want a better Bill they will not be able to say anything at all.

MR. CONNOR: In New South Wales the terms on which the Bill was put to the people were altered.

MR. VOSPER: It is said that if we are going to have a discussion in select committee, why not have the discussion openly, before the whole people, why not have the discussion here, instead of in the committee room? The report of the select committee and the evidence will be laid on the table of this House and before every member.

THE PREMIER: The evidence can be taken by the Press.

MR. VOSPER: We are told by the member for East Perth (Mr. James) that if we require this kind of information we can get it from the *Hansard* reports of the Convention debates. I ask hon. members what is the use of those bulky volumes to the general elector? In what way will they convey to him information which it is desired he shall have. The most we can give him is extracts which are published in the newspapers, and every newspaper publishes its own selections of extracts.

THE PREMIER: How do you know that?

MR. VOSPER: I ought to know. If we say the people are to search through those volumes of *Hansard*, then the Government must endeavour to distribute copies of the Convention debates through the post; and I will ask, is the Premier prepared to send out 41,000 copies of the four volumes of the Melbourne *Hansard* containing the Convention debates? And if the Premier is willing to distribute these volumes, what proportion of the public is going to read them through? On the other hand, the report of the select committee can be published by the Press, and the evidence can be taken by the Press and published day by day.

MR. JAMES: You say the Press only publish those parts which suit them.

MR. VOSPER: We can get over that difficulty by asking the Government to do

the same with the report and evidence of the select committee that they did with the Commonwealth Bill, to post a copy to each elector: in that way the elector will be influenced by the evidence given for or against the Bill, and by this means the electors of the colony will be enlightened on the question. To expect the ordinary elector to wade through the immense amount of waste paper within the covers of *Hansard* is monstrous. The report of the select committee which will be brought up will be the report of a tribunal; the committee will call evidence, and that evidence will be printed and can be sent round to the electors.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: And no one will read it.

MR. VOSPER: Then how in the name of heaven are we going to enlighten the electors? If the electors refuse to be enlightened and refuse to read the documents which are sent to them and the report of the committee, in fact if they will not read anything, what right have we to believe that the federal spirit is so widely diffused in the colony? On what basis have the electors made up their minds, and how do they know whether federation is good for them or not? It would perhaps be necessary to place them under a short examination before they were entitled to vote on federation at all. If the public are as ignorant on this question as members say they are, the referendum is the worst thing that can be adopted; but for my part I have more faith in the public than some hon. members have. I believe large numbers of the public have read, are still reading, and will still read, intelligently, all the literature they can get, of a reputable kind, on this question. I do not know that they have read all the speeches made by the member for East Perth (Mr. James), and we cannot expect the public to read all the figures which have been ladled out spasmodically by a member of another place. Anything that looks a little easier to read than a time-table or a directory will be read by the elector most readily. If the public will not read up this question, of course their blood will be on their own heads: they will have to take the responsibility of voting in ignorance; but I have more faith in the public. I believe the people on the goldfields read federation literature both for and

against the question, with avidity. I speak of the goldfields generally, and I say that if the people on the goldfields do not decide in the interests of the colony generally, they will decide in what they consider their own interests. The member for East Perth (Mr. James) wanted the Premier to give instances of any objections which had led him to make the change he has made. As far as I remember, the Premier did point out certain objections. I think the Premier put the matter very forcibly and gave some reasons which in his opinion were good enough to account for any change of attitude on the question. One more reference to the member for East Perth (Mr. James) and I have done. The hon. member has suggested an amendment of which I entirely and heartily approve. So much do I approve of it that I had very serious thought of objecting to his withdrawing a certain notice of motion from the Notice Paper a few days ago. The hon. member had a notice on the Paper affirming the desirableness of the referendum taking place at a date to be fixed. He told us then, when the motion came on for discussion, that he was satisfied with the assurance which had been given by the Premier; therefore he would withdraw the motion. If the hon. member withdrew the motion on the strength of the guarantees given by the Premier, why did he bring forward an amendment to-night? And if he was not satisfied with the guarantees then given, why did he not press the motion? But I believe the hon. member was satisfied, because he withdrew the notice of motion. Then why does he bring forward this amendment this evening?

MR. JAMES: I was misled by what the Premier said.

MR. VOSPER: You have read *Hansard* since then. I was inclined at the time to object to the hon. member withdrawing the motion. The main defect of the motion now before the House is that it does not guarantee any referendum. There should be some guarantee to the public that the referendum will take place, which would have at least the good effect of easing off the acrimony and acerbity which have been excited by the discussion. There is a feeling abroad that the referendum will not be granted, and there is an opinion amongst the public that if the referendum is passed in this House it

will be thrown out in another place. The Government have done nothing to reassure the public on this point. Once a reassurance is given on this point, the people on the goldfields will be content to discuss the Bill on its merits, which is not being done at the present time. We want to bring about a discussion of the Bill as a Bill, and not as to whether the Parliament are going to pass it or reject it. The question is tinged now by party feeling, and feeling is being fomented against the Government; but if the people have some guarantee that there will be a referendum these things will be remedied, and depend upon it then the people will investigate the Bill and come to a reasonable conclusion upon it. The people fear we are going to take away their right to say "yes" or "no" to the Bill. I urge upon the Premier and the House to give some guarantee to the public that there will be a referendum, and I am sure then the Bill will be investigated thoroughly by the public. I want to see all the ill-feeling that has been created of late swept away from the discussion. I say we should discuss the Bill in a friendly spirit; and, if possible, the Government should give the public some guarantee that the Bill will be referred to them finally. There was a doctrine laid down just now by an hon. member of this House that members were bound to sink their personal views. I think I have always endeavoured to show myself in this House a democrat; and I must say that I entirely differ from the member for East Perth (Mr. James) on this point. I am a believer in the Parliamentary doctrine laid down by Edmund Burke, when waited upon by a deputation of his constituents from Bristol, that a constituency is entitled not only to representation by its member, but also to the exercise of his best judgment. I entirely agree with Burke on that point. I think no hon. member has a right to sink his private judgment in deference to the wishes of his constituents. I refuse to sink my personal views, and I shall vote yea or nay for the Bill as I think fit; and my view of the Bill is such that I, as a citizen, may be amongst those who will say "nay" to it, recognising at the same time that as a member of Parliament I think that the Bill should finally go to the judgment of the people. As a

member of Parliament I am placed in a position of grave trust and high responsibility; and, further, I have to lay before the people and the Parliament what I think of the Bill, and if I think it is disadvantageous to the colony it is my duty to say so. If I were a mere demagogue, I should not have been found in the House making the utterances I am to-night, incurring the odium of the goldfields Press and to some extent of my constituents also; but whether my constituents stone me or thank me—I know the federal feeling on the goldfields is at its highest point—I have my duty to perform, and I must discharge it at all hazards if it cost me my seat the next day. When a man comes into this House I think he actually takes two oaths, one that he will bear true allegiance to the Queen, and one mentally to do his duty no matter what the consequence; and if I were to be thrown out of Parliament to-morrow, I should be found advocating the same doctrine and taking up the same position that I am now laying before the House. I want to be loyal to the colony that gives me my bread, and how can I be injuring the interests of the people by pointing out to them any defects which I see in the Bill, and which I cannot conscientiously overlook? I cannot see how I am acting against the interests of the people. If I were to say that I was going to vote against the referendum, the case would be an entirely different one; but when I know I am taking a great responsibility, surely I have the right to endeavour to advise and instruct the people. I should be guilty of a great wrong to the country and to my constituents if I remained silent on the way in which that instrument should be used. I believe I was elected because my constituents thought I was the best man to be elected. I have said that there are 25 men there better than myself, wanting the seat; but that is the usual change that takes place, and I believe that my constituents, and those of every other member, will find that whatever they do, we should endeavour to give them the best results of our intellectual labours in connection with a Bill of this kind. At all events, whether constituents thank their member or stone him, he has his duty to do; and for my part, short as my term may be in the House, I want to leave behind me a

record of duty or attempted duty, however mistaken my efforts may have been. I now desire to summarise the reasons why I approve of the amendment, and my reasons for voting for the motion; and I here express the hope that the Premier may accept the amendment, and thus give me an opportunity of voting for both. And in this summary I want to point out that the disadvantages of the Bill to Western Australia, if they do not outweigh the advantages, are at least more important in their effects than those which affect the other colonies. What do the other colonies get, and what does Western Australia get? Under the Bill, New South Wales gets, first of all, the capital—a very important concession. It means to New South Wales in the long run, millions of money, the opening up of a large area in the interior, and the settlement of a large population by the creation of a big city, which will act as a feeder to the railways. Then, secondly, New South Wales is given the control of the navigation of the rivers in the colony, the right to control the rivers as irrigating agents, to a great extent; and that will certainly prove damaging to Queensland and, may be, other neighbours. Next, New South Wales has the right of free entry for her cattle, coal and agricultural produce into Victoria. Then, New South Wales has the advantage of the early extinction of what is called the “Brad-don blot,” which now covers a period of only ten years; and this amendment, which was made at the instance of New South Wales, is very important to that colony, as it will re-open the whole question of the fiscal policy of the colonies. Now I come to Queensland. In that colony the employment of black, kanaka, or Japanese labour—one of the greatest blots on the escutcheon of Australia—is left untouched. This colony is given a free market for her sugar over the whole of the colonies; and when it is considered that under a uniform tariff it is probable that sugar will be heavily protected against the outside world, it will be seen that Queensland is granted a monopoly in this commodity.

MR. EWING: What about New South Wales sugar?

MR. VOSPER: That is an infinitesimal quantity, and I will undertake to say that for every ton of sugar produced

in New South Wales, at least three tons are produced in Queensland. I know both colonies as well as the hon. member, and I have done what he has never done, for I have worked in the mills and helped to cut the cane.

MR. EWING: It is not a very desirable occupation.

MR. VOSPER: It may not be a very desirable occupation, but at the same time it may be and very often is a more honourable occupation than—what shall I say—politics? I was going to say something else, but I will not.

A MEMBER: Law.

MR. VOSPER: It will be seen from what I have said, that Queensland is given a very important position under the Federal Constitution. Tasmania may not, perhaps, benefit much directly, but at the same time this is the leading fruit-growing colony, and will have free ingress to the other colonies for that and other produce, while at the same time New Zealand, with the same or similar produce, will, as a non-federating colony, be shut out. Tasmania will thus be able to capture all the markets, and that alone is a substantial advantage. South Australia has, by some strange oversight, got the lion's share of the advantages. That colony not only has the right to prohibit the construction of a trans-continental railway by the Commonwealth, but has retained the sole right of providing that means of communication. That is the effect of the clause which hon. members will have to consider, but which I purposely refrained from mentioning until now. I will explain how that state of affairs comes about. South Australia is the only colony of the whole group with a territory reaching from sea to sea, north and south; and if she is so minded she can, federation or no federation, construct a railway from Oodnadatta to Pine Creek, and connect Adelaide with Port Darwin. In fact, there has been such a scheme in hand for years.

MR. MONGER: South Australia is moving in that scheme now.

MR. JAMES: The sooner we federate and stop it, the better.

MR. VOSPER: The scheme cannot be stopped under federation, because South Australia is at liberty, even under the Bill, to take such steps as she can afford to connect Adelaide with Port Darwin,

and to divert the traffic from Fremantle and Albany towards the extreme northern port. Then in New South Wales there was a scheme for making a railway from Fort Bourke to Camooweal, and so on to Pine Creek and Port Darwin direct. This scheme was criticised by the *Sydney Daily Telegraph*, while the *Sydney Morning Herald* and federationists generally held out the scheme as one of the leading arguments in inducing the people of Sydney to vote for the Bill. It was pointed out that if such a line were constructed, the mails would arrive in much shorter time on the eastern coast, while all imports and exports would go to Sydney, with the additional advantage of a port near the back-door of New South Wales.

THE PREMIER: South Australia would block that scheme.

MR. VOSPER: What would the result of either of these schemes be to Western Australia?

MR. JAMES: The sooner we federate and prevent that risk, the better.

MR. VOSPER: It cannot be prevented.

MR. JAMES: Federation would give a chance of preventing it.

MR. EWING: These are the very grounds on which the hon. member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) at Fremantle wished to join federation at once.

MR. VOSPER: Quite the contrary; it was this very question that first suggested my doubts. I certainly did argue at one time that we should join federation to get the transcontinental railway, but I found that under the Bill this object could not be attained.

MR. JAMES: The Bill does not prohibit a transcontinental railway.

MR. VOSPER: Yes, it does; and if the hon. member would submit Sub-section 34 of Section 51 to an intelligent jury of lawyers, he would ascertain what the sub-clause meant.

MR. JAMES: How is the railway prohibited?

MR. VOSPER: By the terms of the Bill, and the member for Albany (Mr. Leake) agrees with me.

MR. LEAKE: Do not misquote me. I said a transcontinental railway was not prohibited.

MR. VOSPER: Then I misunderstood you. But I say that a transcontinental

railway cannot be constructed without the consent of South Australia. Before such a railway can be constructed, South Australia must be approached and asked the favour cap-in-hand, or the Federal Constitution must be amended; and this latter cannot be done without the consent of a majority of the Parliament, a majority of the States, and a majority of the people: no easy thing to accomplish.

MR. WILSON: We are in the same position now as to a railway.

MR. VOSPER: That is true, but here we have a Bill which practically prohibits the very work which federation was supposed to accomplish. The fact that we cannot do this or that now does not affect the question. Western Australia cannot defend itself now, but that does not affect the question of defences under federation; and in this matter of a transcontinental railway, we have to get rid of a difficulty which no argument or contradictions offered now will remove. If either of the schemes I mentioned were carried out, and Port Darwin opened for mail steamers, we in Western Australia would not get our mails until a fortnight or three weeks later than the other colonies, because the bags would have to be brought down by coastal trading steamers. This colony would, indeed, be made the back-door of Australia, and we all know it is at the back-door that the refuse is usually cast. Western Australia would become the least important of all the States, and all because members are so blind to the gross errors in the Bill, in their superstitious regard for federation, that they cannot see the defect. Surely it would be more reasonable to thoroughly understand and consider the Bill, and make amendments which will serve the interests of this colony in the first place. It would not be necessary to send an amended Bill out to the electors, because it would be very simple to incorporate the amendments in a schedule, which could be sent out with the questions:—"Do you approve of the Bill as amended at the Premiers' Conference of 1899?" or "Do you approve of the Bill as amended by the Western Australian Parliament?" Where is the necessity for argument, when here is surely a way of getting over the difficulty, and at the same time giving the people of Western Australia the same right as enjoyed by the

people of the other colonies, namely, the right to amend the Bill? I was telling hon. members a little while ago what were the advantages of the Bill to the other colonies, and now I ask what are the advantages to Western Australia according to the latest statistics? I know that in certain quarters the Actuary has been contradicted, but, until I have further evidence, I shall accept his figures. Western Australia will first of all have the right to tax herself more than her neighbours for five years—and that is a great boon, which I hope hon. members will appreciate. Secondly, according to the Actuary, Western Australia suffers a loss of £333,000 a year of her revenue. Thirdly, we shall have to hand over the control of our railways to the Eastern colonies under the Inter-State Commission; and fourthly—and this is simply a corollary to what I said about South Australia—Western Australia has the right to beg permission to build her own transcontinental railway.

MR. JAMES: Do we not save £333,000 of taxation?

MR. VOSPER: No, we do not. I will not go into that question now, but it is obvious that an amount extra will have to be paid for the upkeep of the Commonwealth, which will more than deprive us of any advantage gained by the remission of duties. At present there is something like two millions of money per annum collected in intercolonial duties, which, with intercolonial free-trade, would be lost, and would have to be made up somehow, as well also as the one-fourth of the revenue which will go to the Commonwealth. In consequence of the "Braddon blot" the Commonwealth has to raise four times the revenue actually required, and that means that we shall have a high revenue tariff, which, in many cases, will exceed the present imposts by 25 per cent. to 60 per cent.

MR. JAMES: That was exploded at the last Convention.

MR. VOSPER: I do not think it was. New South Wales has not sufficient interest in that branch of the question, and our own people have insufficient knowledge. We have in this House at the present time two well-known protectionists, one the member for the Murray (Mr. George), and the other the member for East Perth (Mr. James). The anxiety

of the member for the Murray to protect the industry represented by a factory in Wellington street is perfectly intelligible; but the position of the other hon. member, who wishes a protective duty to maintain a colony 3,000 miles away, is inexplicable from any point of view.

MR. GEORGE: I want to protect more than one factory.

MR. VOSPER: I know that.

MR. GEORGE: I am not referring merely to the Black Swan foundry.

MR. VOSPER: I think I have troubled the House long enough with these remarks. My object has been to explain the reasons for the faith that is in me. When I first stood in this House in the year 1897, I was one of the most cautious members in respect to the federal movement. As my speeches reported in *Hansard* will prove, I was extremely cautious in connection with federation. Since that time, I became a convert to federation; I became an advocate of unconditional federation. I believed that the Bill was a good Bill, a perfect Bill; but then I must confess that, like many other people in the colony, I was taking my ideas of federation at second-hand. I read leading articles and reports of speeches and lectures on the subject; I attended public meetings, and so forth; I heard long and dreary statistics droned out by the mile; and I believed that federation was all right on that account. I was also a federalist because I could not support the view taken by some of the anti-federalists on the coast, who opposed federation with the sole object of continuing the food duties. As the object of federation was to remove those duties, I was then a federalist; and as I have been an opponent of this heavy taxation through the customs, and believed that federation was to free us from that taxation, and to abolish those very duties about which the goldfields people complained, I naturally supported it. For that very reason I supported federation; but when I found that, in order to get rid of a small taxation, we were going to impose a great one; when I found that in order to get rid of a certain disadvantage, we were to lay ourselves open to a greater disadvantage, that in order to relieve ourselves of scalding water we were going to plunge into vitriol; when I found that in order to

escape from the frying pan, we were going to throw ourselves into the fire; when I found that such was to be the position of this colony in respect of the federal movement, I determined to mend my ways, and to take the consequences of so doing. The first result of my investigation, as the member for East Perth (Mr. James) will testify, was only a gradual change. The first defect I saw in the Bill was in connection with the trans-continental railway. Afterwards, when I had further pursued my investigations, I wrote to the member for East Perth, and told him I regretted that the line of cleavage between himself and myself was becoming wider and wider every day. I think the hon. member will be able to confirm that statement. So, as I analysed this Bill, I have had the conclusion forced upon me that its acceptance in its present condition would not be advantageous to the people of this colony.

A MEMBER: You will be a federationist again.

MR. VOSPER: It is obvious that I have taken the risk of considerable unpopularity, odium, and abuse, to arrive at these conclusions and to publish them; but I am determined on this, that although hon. members may look upon me as a renegade—and I have been practically described as such to-night—they will never be able to say of me that I am a demagogue. I am no worshipper of the people, simply because they include the greatest number. My reason for believing in the rule of the people is because I am convinced there is no more wise or safe or just form of government than a democracy; but it does not necessarily follow that I am always going to shout with the biggest crowd. It does not follow that I shall adopt the advice of Mr. Pickwick when he said, "When there are two crowds, always shout with the larger one." I am quite as well prepared to be in a minority after the next election at Kanowna as I am prepared to be in a minority here. Every man is morally bound to give expression to the thoughts that may arise in the exercise of his reason, and as the result of his conscientious investigations. I have come into this House with only one determination, and that is to do my duty. I have found it to be my duty to-night to criti-

cise this Bill severely—in some respects, perhaps harshly. At all events, I am prepared to abide the consequences of having done so; and I hope this Legislature will pass this motion, so that we may have a clear and impartial investigation of the Bill, and that they will also pass the amendment, so that we may have that guarantee which the member for East Perth (Mr. James), and myself and the country at large, are extremely anxious for. I trust I have cleared away some of the clouds of misapprehension and doubt as to my real position which may have existed in the minds of hon. members.

MR. MORGANS moved that the debate be adjourned.

Put and passed, and the debate adjourned accordingly till the next sitting.

TRUSTEE INVESTMENT AMENDMENT BILL.

DISCHARGE OF ORDER.

On the order for resuming debate on the motion for the second reading,

THE PREMIER said he did not intend to proceed further with the Bill; and he moved that the order of the day be discharged.

Motion put and passed, and the order discharged accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 10:23 p.m. until the next Tuesday.
