

ber for North Fremantle (Mr. Doherty), who advocated the retention of these two constituencies on grounds different from those urged by the members who so ably represent those districts at the present time. I only rose to protest as strongly as I can against the principles advocated by my friend the member for North Fremantle.

MR. GEORGE (Murray): I indorse every word uttered by the member for North Perth (Mr. Oldham), and I think this House has never heard a meaner sentiment uttered in it than the sentiment that a constituency should be retained because it has returned members who have supported the Government, in return for favours received one way or other. I do not think the House has ever heard a more mean sentiment uttered within its precincts.

THE SPEAKER, before putting the question, said: The Constitution Act provides that there must be an absolute majority to carry either the second or the third reading of any Bill brought in for the alteration of the Constitution of the colony. I have counted the House, and I find that there are 23 members here, which number is an absolute majority. The question is that the Bill be now read a second time.

Question passed on the voices, without dissent.

Bill read a second time.

On motion by the PREMIER, the House resolved into Committee, in order to embody certain amendments *pro forma*.

IN COMMITTEE.

On motions by the PREMIER, certain amendments (as printed in the Notice Paper) were made in the Bill without discussion, for the purpose of being printed.

Bill reported with the amendments made *pro forma*.

MR. GEORGE: I think the inexperienced members of this House are entitled to a little explanation. Several hon. members have informed me—I do not know whether they have been “pulling my leg”—that this action which has just been taken means that the Bill has passed through Committee absolutely.

THE PREMIER: No, no.

MR. GEORGE: Will the Speaker kindly inform me whether this is so?

THE SPEAKER: I will inform the hon. member, if he will sit down. When a member in charge of a Bill desires to make numerous amendments after the second reading, it is a convenient form that he should move that the Bill be committed *pro forma*, for the purpose of having those amendments printed and inserted in the Bill before the Committee deals with the measure. The action which has just been taken does not take away any right of discussing the Bill in Committee. When the House goes into Committee again on the Bill, these amendments will have been printed and incorporated with the measure.

Report adopted. Ordered, that the Bill be reprinted with the amendments.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 11 p.m. until the next day.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 6th September, 1899.

Question: Agricultural Bank, Branch for Geraldton—Question: Railway Excursion Fares—Question: Railway Excursion Fares, Perth-Albany—Question: Breaksea Island Light—Mines Regulation Act Amendment Bill, first reading—Return: Railway and Telegraph Employees, Particulars—Motion: Agricultural Bank, Branch for Geraldton (withdrawn)—Motion: Lead Ore, Bonus—Motion for Papers: Vessels delayed at Fremantle—Motion for Papers: Fremantle Water Supply—Motion: Alluvial Flats, to Dredge or Sluice; Amendments—Motion for Papers: Mail Service, North—Rural Lands Improvement Bill, third reading—Roads and Streets Closure Bill, Amendment on report; reported—Municipal Institutions Bill: Motion to refer, negatived—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

QUESTION—AGRICULTURAL BANK, BRANCH FOR GERALDTON.

MR. ROBSON asked the Commissioner of Crown Lands: 1, Whether any

applications for financial assistance had been received by the Agricultural Bank from farmers residing within the Victoria magisterial district; 2, If so, what amount of money had been advanced by the Agricultural Bank to the farmers in that district.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS replied:—1, Yes; 2, Loans to the amount of £525 have been approved, of which £122 has been actually advanced.

QUESTION—RAILWAY EXCURSION FARES.

MR. HIGHAM asked the Commissioner of Railways:—1, Whether ticket clerks were instructed to issue full rate tickets on those days when the reduced fares were allowed, unless specially asked for the lower priced tickets; 2, If not, whether the Commissioner was aware that such a practice obtained, and whether he would issue instructions to discontinue same.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS replied:—1 and 2, No special instructions are given, but it is left entirely to persons applying for tickets to ask for what they require. Instructions have been given for notices to be posted up at the ticket windows, advising intending applicants for tickets that excursion rates are ruling.

QUESTION—RAILWAY EXCURSION FARES, PERTH-ALBANY.

MR. LEAKE asked the Commissioner of Railways: 1, Whether he proposed to make any alteration in the time-table with regard to the running of trains between Perth and Albany. 2, Whether it was proposed to run weekly excursion trains between Perth and Albany during the summer months. 3, Whether a more convenient time than 8.30 could not be appointed for the departure of the mail train from Albany.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS replied:—1, Not at the present time; 2, It is not intended to run special trains, but cheap tickets will be issued by ordinary trains from the metropolis and the goldfields, as has been done hitherto; 3, A more convenient time for the public and the department cannot be fixed for the departure of the mail train from Albany, which is governed by the arrival

of the mail steamers. Although they frequently arrive in time to admit of an earlier departure, there is no certainty of this being the case.

QUESTION—BREAKSEA ISLAND LIGHT.

MR. LEAKE asked the Director of Public Works: 1, Whether it was proposed to erect a new light on Breaksea Island, and when; 2, How long the light had been kept in store.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. F. H. Piesse) replied:—1, Provision will be made on the Estimates, and, if passed, the work will be commenced as soon as possible; 2, Since June, 1897.

MINES REGULATION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Introduced by the MINISTER OF MINES, and read a first time.

RETURN—RAILWAY AND TELEGRAPH EMPLOYEES, PARTICULARS.

On motion by MR. VOSPER, ordered that there be laid on the table of the House a return, showing: 1, The number of casualties occurring to railway servants during the last six months, and the nature of same. 2, The salaries paid to telephone and telegraph operators on the goldfields. 3, The hours for which signalmen on the railways are employed.

MOTION—AGRICULTURAL BANK, BRANCH FOR GERALDTON.

MR. ROBSON (Geraldton) moved:

1, That in the opinion of this House it is desirable that a branch of the Agricultural Bank be opened in Geraldton; 2, That the settlement of the land in the Victoria magisterial district be encouraged by the granting of free farms of 300 acres each.

In submitting this motion, he thanked the Commissioner of Crown Lands for the answer he had made to the question asked at a previous stage this afternoon, as to the amount which had been advanced in the Victoria district by the Agricultural Bank, showing that the amount of the advances during the past 12 months to farmers in that district was £122. The Victoria magisterial district represented one-third of the agricultural land of the colony, and of the £100,000 advanced by the Bank to settlers during the year, only

£122 had been advanced to settlers in this large district as an encouragement to engage in agricultural pursuits. It was with a view of having these facts explained that he submitted this motion. The Minister did not tell the House how many applications had been received from the district, but he (Mr. Robson) was aware there had been a good number, and that many of the applications had been refused, so that the £122 must have been spread over a very small area. These continual refusals of applications created indifference on the part of the settlers, and they ceased to ask for financial assistance from the Bank. There was no information put forward in the district as to the terms and conditions on which money was advanced by the Bank. Indeed the district, from an agricultural point of view, was neglected not only by the Bank, but by the Government and by the Lands Department. The question arose as to why this should be so.

THE PREMIER : No applications, probably.

MR. ROBSON : But the Commissioner of Crown Lands said there had been applications.

THE PREMIER : Not many, it might be supposed.

MR. ROBSON : The Commissioner did not say how many ; but applications had been absolutely refused, and no reason given by the Lands Department. One explanation might be found in the fact that the Victoria district was a considerable distance from Perth, and the policy of the present Government was one of centralisation. In this statement the Premier might not agree ; but there was no doubt the policy of the Government was to encourage settlement on land around Perth and Fremantle.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : And Bunbury.

MR. ROBSON : Yes ; and in Bunbury and the Southern districts. Another fact which militated against the Victoria district was that the Midland railway concession intervened between what might be called the Southern agricultural district and the Northern agricultural district, Victoria Plains being absolutely cut off from the sphere in which the Agricultural Bank worked. He took it that the Agricultural Bank was practically the Minister of Lands and the manager of the Bank ; and it was necessary the

manager should travel over a good deal of country, and should practically advance money on the spot. Anyone who read the terms and conditions on which money was advanced by the Bank would agree it was necessary for the manager to be a practical man, who made himself thoroughly acquainted with the country within the sphere of the operations of the institution. Why did the manager not visit the Victoria district, and see what was required there ? An explanation might be found on the one hand, in the centralising and southern policy of the Government, and, on the other hand, in the retrenchment policy in the Lands Department. When travelling over the Government lines, the manager's expenses became merely a departmental debit, but when he had to travel to the North, over the Midland railway, it was necessary there should be an actual cash outlay for expenses, and it was to be supposed that a strong reason why no assistance had been rendered to the Victoria district settlers by the Bank was the narrow policy of the department in keeping down expenses. Having shown that the Victoria district had been neglected in the matter of the encouragement of settlement, and having shown the difficulty, owing to the retrenchment policy of the Government, of getting the Lands Department to send the manager down to see what was being done in the district, he had no hesitation in advocating the establishment of a branch of the Agricultural Bank in Geraldton, to encourage settlement and assist in opening up the country. One fear that many hon. members had in connection with federation, was that it would retard land settlement in this colony, and, a federalist at heart, he agreed with that view. But he asked all members, whether federal or otherwise, to recognise the fact that federation under the Commonwealth Bill might become an accomplished fact, and the day would be welcome when it was possible to accept the Federal Constitution for this colony ; but his view was that if federation could be staved off for a few years, it was the duty of the Parliament to take advantage of the delay and opportunity, and do all they could to settle population on the land. It was with a view to opening up what in his opinion was capable of being one of the largest wheat-growing areas in

Western Australia, that he advocated the establishment of a branch of the Agricultural Bank in the Victoria district. The district was very large, embracing portions of the constituencies of Northampton, Geraldton, Greenough, and Irwin, and the motion was desirable if this large range of land had to be thoroughly developed. The Minister of Lands a few days ago expressed the opinion that the motion was somewhat radical; but he (Mr. Robson) failed to see that, because it was better to have land settled somehow, even if the land were given away, than to have it populated merely by kangaroos. Federation was staring us in the face, and if the land was not settled before federation was accomplished, it would not be settled for a long time afterwards. The Victoria district was originally settled some 40 or 50 years ago, and it was opened up through the influence of the Northampton miners, the present population being descended from the miners, teamsters, and others who were then associated more or less with the mining industry. In due course these people took up small blocks of land in order to provide homes for their families, and runs for their horses; but they had no market for any produce they might grow in the intervals of working at the mines. There was no railway communication, and the men took to cutting sandalwood; and, in his opinion, the sandal-wooding and the truck system in vogue amongst the storekeepers in the district at that time had been the curse of agriculture there.

A MEMBER: And the kangaroos.

MR. ROBSON: And the kangaroos gave the settlers cheap meat. They were quite happy if they could trade a load of sandalwood for a bag of flour with the storekeeper, and catch a kangaroo. They had no inducement to grow wheat or anything of that kind; but still these people had blocks of land and were settled there. The sandalwood cutters and the kangaroo hunters, who could not be called farmers, afterwards took to driving teams. They helped to open up the goldfields before the railway was constructed, but these men never got more than a bag of flour at a time; cash to them was a thing unknown. We were honoured in that district by a system of banking known by the name of "shin-

plastering." When the goldfields were opened up the people did fairly well in carrying goods to the goldfields, but these people did not go farming. They followed the carrying trade to the goldfields until the railway was put through. He (Mr. Robson) had the pleasure himself of driving a 10-horse team on the road, therefore he had sympathy with the men who had done this work. The teamsters did not make much money, when the dead horses were put on one side. He (Mr. Robson) then tried farming, but gave it up. After the railway had been constructed to the goldfields the people had to return to their homesteads, and we now had the people back on the land. His (Mr. Robson's) object and the object of the Government should be to endeavour to keep these men on the land now they were there. A few years ago this was an important matter to the district, because hundreds of tons of chaff, chiefly from South Australia, had to be imported, but the men having returned to the land it was found that the farmers were well able to produce a good quality of chaff, better than that imported, and to-day the settlers had overcome the fodder difficulty, and the farmers were producing ample chaff for the requirements of the district, and they were enabled to send a little down here. His object was to ask for an extension of the terms of the Free Homesteads Act, so that the people could get more land and compete in the wheat market. If the settlers obtained sufficient land, before long they would not only compete in the local market but in the wheat market of the world, and it would be a good thing for Western Australia when once the colony competed in the breadstuffs market of the world. He had had prepared, by permission of the Minister of Lands, a map giving the area of land between Guildford Junction and Geraldton, which showed that we had much good land, but the difficulty was how to get at it. In bringing the matter before the House he wanted the Minister of Lands to try and solve the problem. Around Geraldton we had a good deal of land, but for many years the land on what might be called the Northampton line had been locked up under the Mineral Lands Act, and was not open to conditional purchase or settlement in any

way; the land had been blocked for many years. Now the Minister of Lands had thrown the land open, and conditional purchases and free homestead selections could be taken up, provided the approval of the Mineral Lands Department was obtained. There was another railway going through the land from Geraldton, the Mullewa to Cue line. Along that railway there was rich land, and the district had a good rainfall. The land was good for wheat growing; it was freehold, and had been taken up under the so-called poison provisions of the land laws, years ago. This land was locked up, and anyone who wanted it had to purchase from the squatters. The squatters had done all that they could to the land for the pastoral industry, but instead of carrying sheep that land should be carrying families. Tanks and dams, and all that was necessary from a pastoral point of view had been constructed on the land, but this land should never have been granted under the poison provisions of the Land Act. Coming towards Perth on the Midland line, all the Greenough flats were settled too closely, and the people on these flats should get more land. The soil was good, but the farms were too close together, and the holdings too small. Coming further down, the land was in the hands of the Midland Railway Company, and it was impossible to get land from that company. There were some pastoral properties in that district on which agriculturists could secure land, but the properties were further out. In two or three weeks time he hoped to have the company of the Minister of Lands in going through the district, so that the Minister could see for himself that what he (Mr. Robson) was saying was true. Then the Minister would perhaps throw open the land for settlement, and open a live department in the Geraldton district, so as to advertise and try to settle the land. In what he might call the southern district, that was the country south of Gin Gin to Albany, which was closer to the ports of Fremantle and Albany than the land in the northern areas, there was a greater rainfall. In the coastal country people were much nearer to the market, nearer to Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie, nearer to the mills and the metropolis, and the produce could be got to the market much cheaper.

In the Southern district there was the possibility of mixed farming being carried on, of a rotation of crops, and in every way the farmers had the advantage over those in the North. His object in asking that more land should be granted in the Northern district than in the Southern was to encourage people to take up land where there was a small rainfall and poorer land. He wanted the Government to give more land to induce settlement, and he wanted the Minister to treat the land up in the North as wheat areas and not as mixed farming areas. With sufficient settlement and wheat-growing being followed, the people in the northern district would, in a few years time, produce enough breadstuffs to feed the whole of the people of the colony. Immigrants landing at Fremantle or Albany, looking for farms, came to Perth, and if anyone took the trouble to read the daily newspapers they would see where the people settled. These people looking for farms settled at Pinjarrah, at Northam, and Wagin, at Cookernup, and several other "ups." If people looking for farms asked whether there was any land further up, they were told it was no good going further. The poor Victoria district had no advocates and no friends as yet in the Lands Department. In the Southern districts the same conditions of improvement applied as in the Northern districts. It was the duty of the Lands Department not to encourage settlement in any one spot, but to distribute their favours in regard to settlement, and encourage settlement all over the colony. We in the North were further away from the centre of Government and the seat of commerce, and to induce settlers to go into the northern districts, greater concessions should be offered to the farmers.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: Did the hon. member say there was no land agent at Geraldton?

MR. ROBSON: Nominally there was a Lands Department at Geraldton, but it was hardly alive. The officer there was engaged in many duties: he was Collector of Customs, coroner, and did many other things. The officer did not devote the whole of his attention to the Lands Department. He (Mr. Robson) did not know whether his motion was in order, in the form in which he had submitted it, but

if he had made a mistake he trusted members would assist him to lick the motion into shape. In the first place the people in the North desired to settle on the land. He repeated there was in his district a vast area of the finest land in the colony, capable of producing breadstuffs, and the land was crying out for population. There was a wish for the Lands Department to assist, not only by advertising here, but in all parts of the world, through the Agent General. Let the people know that they could have 160 acres on the Great Southern line, or 300 acres on the Northampton line. If people chose to go on the Northampton line, let the department assist them with all the information they possessed, and also by their bank, as they were assisting those on the Great Southern line. If the department would assist as he suggested, the anti-federalists of the colony need have less hesitation in considering the Commonwealth Bill than at present. The settlement of that district as a wheat-producing area would be a great lever towards the possibility of Western Australia accepting the Bill at a very early date. He had much pleasure in moving the motion standing in his name.

MR. CONOLLY (Dundas) seconded the motion.

MR. MITCHELL (Murchison): The motion was one which he had much pleasure in supporting, as to the Agricultural Bank. If a branch were opened in the locality referred to, that particular institution would be brought more into touch with the Victoria district. He was rather astonished to find the Government had been liberal enough to grant the Victoria district £122. He had not thought, from what he had heard, that the amount was half so much. The Agricultural Bank had not done in the Victoria district what it was intended it should do, namely, to help the agriculturists, and in what they did they commenced at the wrong end. They asked people to make certain improvements, and gave an amount after the work was done; whereas if people were going to make improvements, they wanted the money to assist them in so doing. Speaking more particularly of his own district (Northampton), he could instance more than one case, but to avoid taking up the time of the House he would only mention one. There was a block of

land called conditional purchase land, and he believed it amounted to something like 130 acres. The lessee had gone to the trouble and expense of putting a seven-wire fence along it, and had made other improvements, subdividing it. He sank two wells 70 feet each, put up two small houses, and made certain stockyards, for which that celebrated bank advanced him £30. That man had actually spent over £500, and the Government, with their munificence, came forward and lent him £30. Before he could get the £30 he had to mortgage the lease to the Government, so he was debarred from raising a shilling upon that lease while the Government held the lien over it. He hoped we would get a branch bank open at Geraldton, and that it would bring the department into touch with the locality, and cause the department to be a little more liberal in the future than in the past.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. G. Throssell): The remarks of the member for Geraldton (Mr. Robson) were listened to by him with pleasure. In regard to the establishment of a branch of the Agricultural Bank in the locality referred to, he could only say the same means were open to Geraldton as to the other districts of the colony. The regulations allowed people to apply direct to the head office or through the local agency; and so far he had found the management of the Agricultural Bank most satisfactory. He kept the manager of the Agricultural Bank outside political influence as much as possible. It was only upon the manager's recommendation that loans were granted, and there was no interference on the part of other persons. An application went to the manager of the Bank in due course, and he visited the locality. If the security was ample, and the land appeared to be all right, he made a recommendation, and, if satisfactory, it was acted upon and approved. With regard to the larger question of granting 300 acres of land as free farms, whatever he might think privately, he could only repeat what he had said to the hon. member, that it was a radical movement. He believed he was right in saying no other Australian colony gave a free farm of 160 acres. He believed that in Canada 160 acres were given, but he knew of no part of the world where a free gift of 300 acres was

made; and it should be remembered how liberal our land laws were. When a man applied for 160 acres as a free farm, he was at perfect liberty to apply for another section alongside it, making a total of 1,000 acres, the amount charged being 10s. per acre, with 20 years in which to pay it. Members would, he was sure, say the land regulation was liberal enough. Indeed, the hon. member would find that a free gift of 300 acres would be a dear thing for the man who took it, for he would only get seven years in which to improve the free farm, whereas under our laws he got 20 years in which to effect improvements. He could not for one moment support the idea that we should give away 300 acres of land, because he thought there was no necessity for it. This was the first time the motion had come before the House. As to the general remarks of the hon. member, he was very pleased to hear them. He could not plead guilty to the charge of studying centralisation. However well that charge might be brought to bear upon any other portion of the Government, it certainly could not be brought against the Lands Department, the whole policy of which was opposed to the spirit of centralisation. According to the hon. member's own showing, we had established agents at Wagin, Northam, York, Wagerup, and Cookernup, and that being so, he would tell him for his consolation that he would undertake to add another "up" to the country, and "wake 'em up" in the Geraldton district. With regard to lands generally, the hon. member's remarks came as an echo of old days when he spoke of 40-acre men, kangaroo and sandalwood, which had reference to 25 years ago, before the Forrest Government and railways came into existence. He (Mr. Throssell) was indeed sorry to gather from the hon. member's remarks that the people were so very hard up in his district. It was new to him that we had large quantities of wheat-growing land there. For the purpose of inquiring into the whole question, he had requested the Surveyer General to visit the district. That gentleman had a considerable acquaintance with the locality, and he (Mr. Throssell) would wait with great interest his report as to the capabilities, not only of Geraldton, but of Northampton and the surrounding country.

He hoped very soon to make himself personally acquainted with that part of the country. As to the great question of granting free farms of 300 acres, the Government could not for a moment undertake to give such farms, and the hon. member would see it would not be good for the people. As to the Agricultural Bank, he would live up the office at Geraldton, as had been done in other parts. It should be seen from large notice boards that there was a loan office, and that applications could be received there. In calling attention to the matter, the hon. member had done great good, and he was much obliged to him. It would be his pleasure to make himself well acquainted with the capabilities of the land, and members might rest assured that if there was wheat-growing land in the locality, not only should people around there know about it, but the people of Western Australia generally, and the people in the Eastern colonies should also be made acquainted with the fact that Geraldton possessed land suitable for wheat growing. Having brought the matter before the House, the hon. member would do well to withdraw the motion upon his (the Minister's) promise that he would see what could be done with the object of livening up the Agricultural Bank in Geraldton.

MR. ROBSON: It was a pleasure to hear that the Commissioner of Crown Lands was open to conviction. That Minister had never yet been in the district, but had informed the House he was going; and he (Mr. Robson) would be pleased to accept the Minister's assurances, and to withdraw the motion until after the Minister had visited the district. No doubt, having once seen it, the hon. gentleman would give every facility in the power of his department to aid the farmers there. Hon. members should recollect that the Southern Division, bounded on the north by a line extending from Sharks Bay to Albany, was a large territory, containing nearly half the area of the colony, and throughout that district were great diversities of soil, rainfall, and climate generally; therefore, in such a territory it was necessary to differentiate land laws and regulations, which should not be the same for a man who at Bridgetown grew 20 tons of potatoes to the acre, as for a

man at Northampton whose farm yielded eight or ten bushels of wheat to the acre. This argument might be justified by the fact that the squatter in the coastal districts paid £1 per thousand acres; the squatter further back, having lighter soil and less rainfall, paid 10s., further back again 5s., and beyond Nannine, towards Lawlers, 2s. 6d. per 1,000 acres. If it were necessary and prudent to make allowances to the pastoralists in consideration of climate, rainfall, and distance from civilisation, it was surely fair that similar treatment should be extended to the agriculturists. Further, if it were reasonable to give the agriculturist in the neighbourhood of Perth 160 acres free, the farmer 300 miles from that market, with less rainfall and worse conditions generally, should have 300 acres; and moreover, the burdens of the farmer in remote districts should be reduced by one-half to give him a better chance. On conditional purchase leases the farmer's house was not counted as an improvement, though the erection of a house of some sort was compulsory. If a man built a £200 or £300 house, the Government made no allowance in respect of it, with the result that many of the agriculturists were living in mud huts, like the Irish peasantry. Some of the hovels in this colony were a disgrace to a civilised community, the reason being that the conditional purchase lessee would fence his paddocks gladly, because such work was an "improvement," though his wife and family might live in a pigsty. People settled on the land in the Victoria district were there prior to the granting of the doubtful blessing of free and compulsory education, and what they wanted now was technical education, pecuniary assistance, and encouragement. He accepted the assurance of the Minister, and would waive the matter till the hon. gentleman had visited the district, and thanked him meanwhile for the courtesy with which the motion had been received. He asked leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

MOTION—LEAD ORE, BONUS.

MR. MITCHELL (Murchison) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, it would be in the interest of the colony if the Government would offer a bonus for raising lead ore anywhere within the colony; such offer of

bonus to be in force for two years from the 1st day of January, 1900, and to be payable on the sale of such ore, either in or out of the colony.

Since giving notice of the motion, he desired to alter it. Could that be done?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member could not do that now.

THE PREMIER: Get some other member to move an amendment.

MR. MITCHELL: Then he would allow the motion to stand unaltered. The motion was that the offer of bonuses be in force for two years from the 1st of January, 1900; but he wished to alter the date to the 1st of November, 1899. If he had any diffidence in moving, it was because some might think he was personally interested in lead-mining. He would ask hon. members to discard any such idea, for he had little or no connection with lead-mining at the present time. The motion applied not only to his district, but to the colony generally. In the Northampton district a bonus would have the effect of enabling the once prosperous industry of lead-mining to start again. The Northampton mines had been shut down for many years, and every practical miner knew that, as a consequence, the props of the shafts having fallen in, a large amount of "dead" work would have to be done before ore could again be raised. To reopen the mines would be too expensive for working miners; and his object was to help such men, though the bonuses should also be given to companies. Much money must be spent before any benefit could be derived from the mines, and by recouping miners for that expenditure, a great service would be done, not only to this district, but to the colony generally. If the motion were carried, he would suggest that the bonus be, for the first year, 25s. per ton for ore containing not less than 60 per cent of pig lead, to be paid on the sale of the product, and for the second year, 20s. per ton. It was hardly possible that the bonuses granted during the first year would materially affect the colony's exchequer, for if no lead were sold by the miners, no bonuses would be granted. Indirectly, the Government would be repaid for the expenditure, because work would be provided, not only for the miners, but for the railways and in other directions; so

that the Treasurer would not lose so much as might be supposed. Much money was at present being sent out of the colony in connection with certain smelting works, all of which might be retained in the country if these mines could be reopened; but the low price of lead which had ruled till recently had prevented local resources being developed at a profit. Mines other than lead mines had been helped by the Government. Recently a resolution had been passed to give a bonus for deep sinking, and much public money was being spent in public batteries, which expenditure was analogous to that contemplated in the motion. He commended the proposal to the favourable consideration of the House.

MR. HIGHAM (Fremantle): The motion would benefit not only the Northampton mines, but the interests of an industry which, with slight encouragement from the State, might be established in various parts of the colony. Galena had been found distributed throughout the country, but in situations where, without some encouragement, it might be impossible to work that ore profitably. As hon. members knew, the smelting works in Fremantle were started on the assumption that all the galena required for smelting could be obtained from the Northampton mines. The last speaker had explained that, owing to the low price of lead previously ruling, those mines had been closed for years, and could not be reopened now without considerable expenditure.

MR. GEORGE: Parliament could not regulate the price of lead.

MR. HIGHAM: The fact remained that the local smelting works were obtaining supplies from South Australia instead of from our own mines, which deserved some consideration at the hands of the Government; and if the lead-mining industry could be thoroughly established, the benefit to the colony would far exceed that derived from some gold-mines in respect of the resulting railway traffic, the amount of labour employed, and the taxes paid by those engaged in the industry.

MR. GEORGE: How much lead did the hon. member expect to raise? Thousands of tons?

MR. HIGHAM: There were lead mines in the colony which, if properly developed

and with a little encouragement from the Government, would turn out, not thousands of tons, but hundreds of thousands of tons, perhaps millions. There were other centres besides Northampton where large quantities of payable galena might be found, and the motion ought to be passed. If no results, there would be no cost to the Government; and if there were results, the cost to the Government would be a mere nothing compared to the benefit conferred on the community.

MR. ROBSON (Geraldton) supported the motion. He could only reiterate the arguments advanced by the mover and previous speakers; but he had some knowledge of the Northampton mining district, and had also had some connection with the working of the lead mines and smelting companies there. If the industry were encouraged by the passing of this motion, it would prove a great boon to the district, and would also help the great industry being built up at the present time at Fremantle. A precedent for this motion was afforded in the bonus granted a little while ago for deep-sinking in gold-mining at Southern Cross, and in many bonuses granted in connection with other industries. Only the other day hon. members read in the newspapers of what was practically a bonus granted to the public crushing companies; and if it was good to assist farmers, it was good to assist gold-miners and the proprietors of private batteries. A good case had been made out for granting assistance to the old-established district of Northampton, and the bonus, if granted, would help to make this district thrive and prosper once more, and lift it from that obscurity in which of late years it had been lost. Not only would the bonus be a great assistance to the district, but it would prove of value to the railway department, and also to the commercial centre of Geraldton. He hoped the motion would meet with the approval of hon. members.

MR. GEORGE (Murray): No one would for a moment think he wished to do anything but help industries forward, and what industries there were in this colony, and there was a goodly list, deserved helping. It was very easy for the House to pass a motion affirming the desirability of offering a bonus; but unless it was particularly laid down what

number of tons must be raised before the bonus was given, hon. members would be taking a leap in the dark. It was currently reported that the Smelting Company at Fremantle had spent a large amount of money in prospecting at Northampton in an endeavour to obtain supplies of ore, but had failed; and if a large company like that would spend money and then abandon the enterprise, it did not look as if there were very hopeful prospects of lead ore being found at Northampton.

MR. HIGHAM: Northampton was not the only possible centre.

MR. GEORGE: If there were other places where lead ore would probably be found, so much the better; but the quantity to be raised should be stipulated. It should not be a small quantity of 500 tons or even 1,000 tons, because to be of any use to the colony there should be a certain supply of 5,000 to 10,000 tons per year. Anything less than that would really mean, that instead of searching for lead ore, the prospector would simply search for the golden sovereigns of the bonus. Some years ago, a bonus was given in connection with the jam industry, and he would like to know how much jam had been manufactured since.

THE PREMIER: The factory was still going.

MR. GEORGE: But was jam being made at the factory.

THE PREMIER: Yes.

MR. GEORGE: It would be interesting to know how much jam was being made. A number of industries could ask for bonuses; indeed, he might himself ask for a bonus as the maker of the first battery manufactured in the colony. Whatever bonus was offered ought to be contingent on raising a sufficient quantity of lead ore to show there was permanency in the industry. It should not be, as he thought had been the case in regard to the jam factory, that the payment of the bonus practically put an end to the industry; and when the mover of the motion replied, he might inform the House as to those other centres where he believed lead ore was to be found.

MR. MORAN (East Coolgardie) supported the motion, which he pointed out did not commit the Government to any definite action, but merely affirmed the

desirability of their considering the matter. Many resolutions of this kind were passed and nothing more heard of them. The discussions on such motions filled in a certain amount of time on private members' days, and gave an opportunity to members of saying something which was more or less for the benefit of the country; but very often nothing more was heard of the matter. Every ton of ore taken out of the large mines on the eastern goldfields, especially in the big centre of Kalgoorlie and the Boulder, would have to be treated by some heat process. Whether that would take the form of roasting, or cyaniding, or smelting—and it would be smelting if material could be obtained for the rich ores—some process of the kind would have to be adopted. Everything possible should be done to keep every process of this great industry in Western Australia: where the ore was raised, the ore should be treated, as it was in other countries. In British Columbia the ore was treated, and this formed an important industry, maintaining a large population. Something would have to be done to foster the smelting works already started in Western Australia. We could not afford to turn back for the sake of a few thousand pounds and allow this industry to die out, and unless some encouragement were given, he was afraid the smelting industry would be a waning quantity in the future. There was some serious opposition in Kalgoorlie to the Fremantle smelting works, as a sort of revenge on the Government for introducing the differential railway rates, and he would be lacking in his duty if he did not tell the House he had been seen by the representatives of the Chamber of Mines, who were determined they would not tolerate, if they could possibly help it, the introduction of those rates. The people to whom he was now referring, and their corporations, were very powerful. The Commissioner of Railways was doing his utmost in a patriotic way, working day and night for the benefit of his department; and if the people on the goldfields took an antagonistic attitude in this matter, the smelting industry would probably be left high and dry. To prevent that, the development of the lead industry ought to be encouraged, and the smelting works enabled to hold their own against smelting works in any part of

Australia. If there was a wish to see rich ore treated in Fremantle, something should be done to encourage the production of the necessary fluxes in this colony. He knew himself there was good lead in Western Australia, because he had seen some very excellent specimens from the hills out Pinjarrah way. Unfortunately the veins there were very small, simply gash veins, and although the lead was very rich, there was not sufficient to justify the sinking of capital. He had seen lead going to 68 and 70 per cent., and possibly an industry might be created at Northampton. Whether the lead was as poor there as some people said, or whether it was as rich as had been described by the member for the district, remained to be seen. If we were going to have federation in Western Australia in the next year or two, we should be prepared for the worst or the best. Whatever we did we should have to stand on our own bottom, and the smelting industry would have to stand by itself. We must, as a country, rest on our foundation; and if it were necessary to give a bonus of £10,000, let us not be backward in developing our industries. If we could do anything to increase the important lead industry to give us a supply of flux for smelting in Western Australia, we should do so at the earliest moment.

MR. CONNOR (East Kimberley): This being essentially a mining country, we were justified in doing everything we could to help along the mining industry; and he approved of the suggestion that, if the Government decided to offer a bonus, a certain quantity of ore should be produced before the bonus was given. He approved of the principle of fostering and developing as far as possible the mining industry. We could not go a step too far, provided we stopped within the bounds of our financial limit. If we did not overstep the liability involved, we could not go too far in encouraging and developing the mining industry, whether, lead, gold, coal, or any other mineral.

MR. RASON (South Murchison): At the first glance, he was not prepared to support the motion, because he believed a bonus of this kind should only be offered for the encouragement of a new industry, or an industry that could hardly compete against similar industries else-

where. We knew that in the Northampton district there were lead mines that had been worked in the past at a considerable profit; but the member for the Murchison (Mr. Mitchell) had explained the difficulty which existed, and after the explanation given he (Mr. Rason) felt it his duty to support the motion. Through long disuse, the lead mines in the Northampton district had got into such a state that it would cost a considerable sum of money to put the mines in a workable condition; and that was sufficient excuse and warranty for the offering of a bonus for raising lead ore. He could hardly agree with the suggestion that the bonus should only be available on the raising of a given quantity of ore, and presumably a large quantity.

MR. CONNOR: Not presumably a large quantity, but a given quantity.

MR. RASON: The object of the mover was to encourage the working miner, not the capitalist; therefore the bonus should be available for small quantities of lead ore as it was raised, and the bonus should be given at per ton as the ore was sold. He would support the motion.

MR. SOLOMON (South Fremantle): If the lead mines in the colony were developed, they would be of great value to the colony. The smelting works at Fremantle had sent a large amount of money away to obtain flux from Broken Hill, and it would be well to keep the money in the colony, at the same time giving encouragement to working miners. From 30 to 40 miles from Perth, a mine was opened for galena, and although the ore appeared to him to be good, the mine was not developed—why he could not say. If that mine, which was so near to the port, could be opened up, it would be a great boon to the colony generally.

THE MINISTER OF MINES (HON. H. B. LEFROY): The Government were pleased indeed to have a matter of this sort ventilated in the House, and he was also pleased to state the Government favoured the motion. There was a principle involved in the motion, and he did not think it mattered much how the motion was worded. The mover simply asked the House to affirm the fact that the development of the lead industry should be assisted. On behalf of the

Government, he (the Minister) had pleasure in stating the Government would give this matter every consideration, and not allow it to be shelved, as the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) had apprehended. While we had smelting-works, it was a scandal to Western Australia to send away for flux; therefore, every opportunity should be given to persons to sink for lead, and if possible to get it near the ports. It was a pity the Northampton mines had been allowed to go into disuse at a previous period; but if any encouragement could be given in the way suggested which would open these mines, it was the duty of the Government to give that encouragement as soon as possible. The method by which the bonus would be applied would have to be well considered, and he should say that he could not agree altogether with the remarks which fell from the member for the Murray (Mr. George), that no bonus should be granted until a large quantity of lead ore had been won. Without thoroughly going into the matter, his (the Minister's) idea would be that the Government should offer bonuses at per ton for any lead ore raised and placed on the market—any lead ore producing a certain percentage of lead. That, he thought, would be the proper method to adopt in offering bonuses, and every man should be allowed to compete, both the working miner and the capitalist, although the man with money did not require the bonus. If we could induce the working miner to go and sink for lead, it would be of benefit to the country. It would give him (the Minister) pleasure to go into the matter as soon as possible, and devise some means of offering a bonus which would be acceptable not only to the member for the Murchison (Mr. Mitchell), but to the House generally.

MR. MITCHELL (in reply): The object of the motion was to encourage and to restart the lead-mines. He had purposely refrained from speaking about the smelting company, because it was pretty well known there had been some slight friction between himself and the company; but when the member for the Murray (Mr. George) alleged that the company had expended a large sum of money in trying to develop lead-mines at Northampton, and did not find any lead,

it was his (Mr. Mitchell's) duty to disabuse the hon. member of that impression.

MR. GEORGE said he was told by Mr. Köehler.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Köehler might be a good smelter, but he was not a good miner. The company took up a lot of properties, and then went to the other colonies and purchased about £15,000 worth of machinery. He could inform the House that he would undertake to do all the mining work which was done by that company for £3,000. He believed the machinery was of the value of £15,000, because there was such a large quantity of it; but much of it was not taken out of the original packing cases. That machinery had now been removed to another place, and the unfortunate part was that not only had the machinery been taken away, but the company had given the place a bad name. He had no intention of saying one word concerning the company, or what it had done; but, without fear of contradiction, he said the company never went to the trouble of cross-cutting to try and find a lode. The company sank shafts, but did not cross-cut at the depth they reached.

MR. GEORGE: The lodes were there, though.

MR. MITCHELL: The lodes were there. There were lodes extending from close to Geraldton for fully 150 miles. This company had condemned the lodes without even seeing them. He (Mr. Mitchell) was part-owner of a little mine consisting of 20 acres, and something like £70,000 worth of mineral had been sent away from that mine in former years. He supposed that out of the 20 acres, not more than five would be utilised for mining purposes. There was another mine which once belonged to him, and now belonged to the present company, and it was one of the best mines there. He offered indirectly to lease that mine a short time ago, and he used a little duplicity about it, because he thought that if he applied for it the company would be waiting for him. He got another man to apply, but the smelting works manager not only did not let the mine or lease it, but never had the courtesy to reply to the letter. He (Mr. Mitchell) wanted to advocate the workmen's interests. These companies had given the place a bad

name, perhaps, in London and everywhere else, and it was hard now to persuade a company to take up shares. If the Government offered a bonus in the way he asked, it would be the means of restarting this industry, and everybody knew that big things often came from small ones. He did not advocate a bonus for more than two years, for if no good was done in that time it never would be. As to the quantity of ore raised, that depended entirely on the number of hands employed in the mines, and the appliances for pumping water. He was glad to know the Government had made up their minds to support him in this matter.

MR. LEAKE (Albany): At one moment it was stated we had lead ore, and at another that we had not. It appeared from the statement of the member for the Murchison (Mr. Mitchell) that there was a large quantity of lead at Northampton which only required to be raised. He always understood that bonuses of this kind were given rather to encourage the search for the mineral, and not for the development of old abandoned mines. If the bonus was to apply at all, it should apply to districts other than the Northampton district.

MR. MITCHELL: It applied to all the colony.

MR. LEAKE: It should not apply to all the colony, but only to districts outside Northampton. What necessity was there to offer a bonus for the development of what the member said were the rich mines of Northampton? We wanted to encourage the search for minerals, or to develop resources in places other than Northampton. We were told they existed in large quantities. If the mines were so rich, and they were not worked, the inference was that there was no market; but on the other hand we were told there was a market at Fremantle for all the fluxes that could be raised, and yet no attempt had been made to raise these ores at Northampton. The hon. member said a good many of the mines belonged to the smelting company, and the smelting company were using no effort to develop their property. Why, then, should these bonuses be offered to assist the smelting company? Why should we offer a bonus to develop a practically proved property. That was against the

principle of bonuses altogether. If hon. members said there was lead in the Darling Range and other places, he would be inclined to support a motion having for its object the development of mining in that district, but he was emphatically against the granting of a bonus for opening up abandoned mines which, on the hon. member's own showing, were extremely rich. He certainly should not support the motion.

MR. MITCHELL: The hon. member never would support anything he (Mr. Mitchell) brought forward.

THE PREMIER (Rt. Hon. Sir John Forrest): In regard to this matter, he could not altogether agree with the leader of the Opposition (Mr. Leake). It seemed to him we wanted everything we could obtain to stimulate the natural productions of the country, and at present we were much in want of lead ore. There was a good market for lead ore at Fremantle smelting works, and all lead ore had to be imported from outside the colony. The lead mines about Northampton and Geraldine in their day did a very great service to the colony, and supported a large number of people, but owing to the low price of lead principally, they became unworked, and for years and years they remained unworked and abandoned. The company tried to obtain lead at Geraldine, and spent a good deal of money, but they were not successful. There were various opinions about it, some saying that the company did not use their capital in the best possible manner; but at any rate the result was they abandoned the enterprise or nearly so, and what we wanted to do was to encourage not only the capitalists, but those who had not capital, to open up lead mines in that district. Anyone who had travelled over that country must have been saddened by seeing that whereas a large amount of work was done there in years gone by, now no workmen were there at all. This bonus would not be a very large amount for the colony, but it would encourage a good many men with small means to prosecute the lead mining industry, and we certainly should do all we could to make Western Australia produce sufficient lead for its requirements, if not a good deal more than that. We knew there was a lot of lead in the colony, but owing to the want of capital to develop

it we were dependent on other countries, whereas we ought to be self-contained. He heartily supported the hon. member (Mr. Mitchell), for he saw no reason why a small amount in the way of bonus should not be applied to the development of the industry. He was informed that some time ago a parcel of lead was sent to the smelting works, and that it realised 80 per cent. of lead. That did not look as if there were no lead there. It only wanted prospecting.

MR. GEORGE: How many tons?

THE PREMIER: That was not known to him.

MR. MITCHELL: Over seven tons.

THE PREMIER: There was plenty more where that seven tons came from. It had been quite a surprise to all who had lived in the colony the whole of their lives, or for many years, to learn that there was not plenty of lead in Northampton and Geraldine. They had always considered there was any quantity of lead there, and it was only the low price of the product that prevented its being utilised. Any small amount of money spent in trying to resuscitate an industry which had flourished here in the past would be money well spent, and as far as the Government were concerned, they were in sympathy with the motion of the hon. member.

MR. OATS (Yilgarn): Some two years ago he visited the locality of Geraldine, and deplored the sight of a deserted mining district. He had known the history of this particular place for several years past, and, in fact, before he came to Western Australia he was aware that something had been done there. Thirty years ago, when his friend (Mr. Mitchell) went there, things were not so come-at-able or accessible as at the present time. That gentleman had great success, but owing to a material reduction in the price of lead—which fell from about £30 to £8 or £10 a ton—a total collapse was occasioned. When once a district was killed, it was hard work to get it up again. Of course, in those days there was no market near at hand, but now, as had often been said this evening, there were smelting works in the colony, for which lead ore was very important. The company referred to had spent a lot of money, and it was said to have been expended on machinery,

etcetera. He did not wish to say a word against the gentlemen belonging to the company, but he thought the failure of the company was due to their not having a knowledge of the conditions under which the lead was to be obtained, which were different from those at Broken Hill. A different class of work was required for dealing with a small sinuous lode from that needed for a mass as big as the room in which members were now sitting. He had no doubt Geraldine would produce a lot of lead profitably if the ore were rightly handled. He hoped the subsidy asked for would be granted.

Question put and passed.

At 6-28, the SPEAKER left the Chair.

At 7-30, Chair resumed.

MOTION FOR PAPERS—FREMANTLE SHIPPING, DELAYS.

MR. HIGHAM moved:

That there be laid upon the table of the House the letter or letters received from the London Shipping Brokers, relating to the unnecessary delay caused to vessels awaiting discharge of general cargoes.

Certain disabilities connected with the Fremantle harbour works had, he understood, led to a threat from London shipping brokers that, instead of landing goods on the quays at Fremantle free of lighterage, they would revert to the old practice of discharging cargoes into lighters at Owen's Anchorage. Still, it was true that during the last three months there had been considerable improvement in the harbour administration, for which much credit was due to the Fremantle Chamber of Commerce and the Steamship Owners' Association, who used every endeavour to bring about amendments. It must be admitted that the Railways and Works Departments, owing to inter-departmental complications, did not move so quickly as was desired by the commercial community of Fremantle. In every suggested improvement the two commercial bodies he had mentioned had to fight their way through the Harbour Works Department of the Engineer-in-Chief, the Railways Department, and the Harbour Master's Department; and it seemed strange that those three departments could not unite to facilitate suggested alterations, when it had been shown that

such alterations were for the benefit, not only of the commercial community, but of the departments themselves.

MR. SOLOMON seconded the motion.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. F. H. Piesse): While offering no objection to the motion, he must notice the hon. member's remark that Fremantle business men, in order to effect improvements in the harbour administration, had to fight their way through three different departments. The hon. member might rest assured that there was no necessity to do so.

MR. HIGHAM: It had to be done.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: A large public work at Fremantle was in course of construction, and the shipping people had an opportunity of using portions of the harbour not yet completed, much to the detriment of the progress of that work; and those connected with shipping should endure inconveniences which must necessarily be experienced until the work was finished. The old jetty had again been put in order and was available, but no vessels would use it, for they insisted on taking up positions at the South Quay. The department were endeavouring in every possible way to give facilities for shipping. Recently it had been said that the department had been very slow in carrying out certain work in connection with the laying down of rails. Certainly some delay had occurred, but the question of ways and means had to be discussed: the work in question cost money, and required some consideration before the course ultimately adopted could be sanctioned. A portion of the harbour abutting on the jetty had to be deepened, and the work was now well in hand. He had received a communication from the Shipowners' Association of Fremantle, with which he was dealing; and it was his desire, as the Minister controlling the department, to do everything possible to assist the shipping community, for it was as much against his wish as against that of the hon. member to cause any unnecessary delay in the completion of the harbour works. It must not be forgotten that vessels came to the South Quay upon certain conditions; and in berthing them there, the department were actually delaying the harbour works. He hoped within a few days to be able to meet the

representatives of the Steamship Owners' Association, to discuss with them the matters brought under his notice in their communication. If the question asked by the hon. member to-night could have been answered immediately, a satisfactory reply would probably have been furnished. He trusted the hon. member would not again accuse the department of in any way seeking to incommode the shipping interests of Fremantle.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir John Forrest): There was no objection to the papers being laid on the table, but he did not think they would prove much. He did not know exactly to what the papers referred, but he remembered only two or three days ago receiving a communication from some owners of ships trading between this port and London; and, on that communication, he caused an inquiry to be made as to any delay which had taken place in regard to the ships mentioned. The result was to find that very little delay had occurred. Hon. members would be able to judge for themselves from the papers when on the table; but if the papers were what he supposed they were, he did not think they would lead to the conclusion that there had been any great delay in regard to ships getting berths at the South Quay.

Question put and passed.

MOTION FOR PAPERS—FREMANTLE WATER SUPPLY.

MR. HIGHAM (Fremantle) moved:

That all letters, reports and papers connected with the Fremantle water supply be laid on the table of the House.

A serious problem was facing the municipality of Fremantle at present; because, induced by a fairly satisfactory supply of water provided from the prison reservoir, the municipality had closed the majority of wells in the town, and during the last few months the water from the reservoir, owing to the percolation of sea-water, had become almost too salty for consumption. Summer was approaching, when it was anticipated the impregnation would be much more serious than at present, and the problem was as to where the people of Fremantle had to obtain their water supply. His desire was to have the official reports on this question laid on the table, so that the representatives of Fre-

mantle might peruse them, and possibly decide on some further action with a view to overcoming the difficulty referred to. His motion did not make the point clear, but the papers he desired were those dealing with the percolation of the seawater.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. F. H. Piessé): There was no objection to the papers asked for being laid on the table.

Question put and passed.

MOTION—ALLUVIAL FLATS, DREDGING OR SLUICING.

MR. LOCKE (Sussex) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, it is desirable in the best interests of the colony that the Government should be authorised to enter into such negotiations as they may deem expedient with any person, persons, or company, for the working by sluicing, dredging, or otherwise, of the abandoned alluvial flats, lakes, swamps, or marshes, for the purpose of winning gold or minerals therefrom.

He did not anticipate opposition to the motion, because at present there were large portions of the colony either temporarily or permanently under water; and his idea was that, if the Government had power to enter into the negotiations suggested, that course would open up an industry that had hitherto been lying dormant.

MR. LLLINGWORTH: Did the hon. member intend to make the motion applicable to the Vasse?

MR. LOCKE: There were many swamps, rivers, and lakes in the Vasse which might be worth attention in this connection; but he also had in his mind large marshes, of some miles in extent, which he understood were at Roebourne, and which were at present quite outside the Goldfields Act. He further believed there were in the interior of the country lakes of 60 or 70 miles in length and varying in width from five to 10 miles. These lakes meant millions of acres altogether, which were at the present time absolutely waste lands, whereas they might be used to advantage by means of dredging, and bring a lot of capital into the colony for the opening up of a new industry. The same power suggested in the motion existed, he believed, in most of the colonies, and had lately been conferred in South Australia; and he did not see any reason why the plan should not be adopted

here. He was not much of a mining expert, but he knew these lands were lying idle, whereas they might be used to advantage in the interests of the colony. If the people to whom the concessions were given failed to get any value out of the land, it would cost the country nothing; and if they succeeded, their success would assist greatly in developing and advancing the interests of the colony.

MR. GEORGE: Would the hon. member give a bonus?

MR. LOCKE: Bonuses were not the subject of discussion, but he proposed to give a good-sized area of land and water. He did not suggest that any lands available for mining purposes at the present time should come within the motion, but merely land which, for the reasons he had stated, were not now available. Every mining man in the House realised there were vast numbers of acres unused at the present time, which, with present appliances, could not be worked, and it was these areas he desired brought into use.

MR. MORAN (East Coolgardie) said he had much pleasure in supporting the motion, which, coming from the right wing of the ultra-conservative and agricultural party, showed what a cosmopolitan spirit there was abroad in the House just before the funeral of the Parliament. It was evidence of a fellow-feeling amongst hon. members, who were doing all they could for each other, in view of the possibility that they might not meet again. The question of dredging had received great attention both in Queensland and New Zealand, and had been successfully carried on in the latter colony, more particularly in the South Island. It had been successfully carried on in some of the rivers in Queensland, though he did not know whether there was dredging for gold in New South Wales, and certainly there was not in South Australia. Dredging was the sister industry of sluicing, and was carried on where there were rivers or other large bodies of water, into which had been flowing for considerable ages the alluvial from the hill-sides or, probably, from the mountains. Sluicing was carried on where there was sufficient head of water to bring force to the hill-sides, and wash down the dirt, which could not be made to pay by any other means. There

could be no harm in passing the motion, and he was informed that in the Northern parts of the colony there were many large swamps or marshes subject to inundations, and into which it was supposed alluvial had been washing for a long time. It was supposed that at the bottoms of these marshes or swamps, would be found deposits of alluvial gold; and if that were so, nothing but good could result from allowing companies, rich or poor, to take up large or small areas of land under certain regulations. These regulations would have to be generous, because the land would lie idle unless encouragement were given in the way of large grants. The motion was rather general, and spoke of "abandoned alluvial flats"; but care would have to be taken not to include such partly abandoned alluvial flats as those at Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie. It would not do to turn a large head of water on these flats, because that would be infringing once again on the rights of the alluvial miner, who had quite enough grievances already. When the Coolgardie water scheme was in operation, these alluvial flats would be washed for gold with the greatest success all round Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie, Six Mile, and similar places. There could be no harm in legislation of the kind proposed, and in encouraging dredging, more particularly in the Northern parts of the colony and on the salt lakes of the goldfields. It was perfectly true that Lake Lefroy contained large quantities of alluvial gold, because at various places, from 50 to 200 miles apart, alluvial gold had been found at shallow depths on the edges of the lake. It was confidently expected by prospectors and alluvial diggers generally that in the body of the lake would be found some heavy deposits of alluvial gold. Whilst we gave away large tracts of the beds of these lakes, care must be taken not to give away any land which might be utilised by the ordinary alluvial miner; and every concession must be hedged round with safeguards, and each treated on its merits. The Minister of Mines could be relied on to see that everything possible was done to safeguard the interests of the colony; and the day was not far distant when the salt lakes would be dredged for alluvial gold. But without capital that could not be done; and capital should be at-

lowed to do what could not be done by the working miner, preserving for the working miner, as in the past and at present, all country which could be worked without capital. The dredging and sluicing would have to be carried out by machinery, which would cost a large amount of money. It took a large expenditure of money to bring a head of water on to an alluvial flat. We should be consulting the best interests of the country if we passed the motion, but we should ask the Government to be guarded as to granting concessions, so that no harm would be done. We should not give to the capitalists what could be worked by the alluvial miner.

MR. A. FORREST (West Kimberley): Those who had travelled from the North to the South of this colony were well aware there were hundreds of thousands of acres of lakes throughout the length and breadth of the goldfields. Lake Austin had an area of 60 or 70 miles, and it averaged from one to 10 miles wide; it would take a month to travel round Lake Lefroy as fast as one could go, and there were lakes from Southern Cross to Kalgoorlie, the whole distance, and lakes from Menzies away up to Mt. Sir Samuel, and these lakes were all in gold-bearing country. There was no instance in this country where any development had been attempted on these lakes; not the slightest effort had been made to find gold except in Lake Austin, where an attempt was made, but the water came in and it was found impossible for anyone to carry on the work. The object of the motion was that large areas should be granted to pay for the capital put into the work. If the motion were carried and the Government gave effect to it, it would be the means of opening up a new industry. It would not affect the miners who had any interest in the country at the present time. In New Zealand the whole of the gold was obtained from dredging in the rivers.

MR. MORAN: No.

MR. A. FORREST: A great portion of the gold in New Zealand was being got by dredging, which was carried on by large English companies who had taken up the work. In South Australia a Bill was now before Parliament to authorise this industry in the northern areas, on the lakes there. The passing of the Bill in South Australia was a foregone con-

clusion because South Australia was not like Western Australia, or any of the other colonies; South Australia only looked to see if there were any benefits to accrue to the country, and if so the Parliament were not backward in granting the concession asked for. No country was so willing to give concessions as South Australia. Only the other day the member for East Kimberley (Mr. Connor) suggested that a port should be established for shipping cattle at a certain part of the South Australian coast, and the South Australian Government saw there was likely to be an output from that port and jumped at the suggestion. Western Australia was more like a dog-in-the-manger. The first thought of Parliament was to see if the proposal hurt anybody. This proposal would not hurt anybody, and he (Mr. A. Forrest) knew that if areas were granted on the lakes—no areas should be given on the mainland except a place for camping—a great deal of good would be done. The plan for carrying out this work would cost between £60,000 and £80,000, and this outlay had to be made before any benefits were received. Not many people, if they had the money, would be prepared to go into a scheme of this sort. In the first place the people did not understand the matter, and in the next place they were too cautious. Assuming that Lake Le-froy was surrounded by alluvial country, there must be fully a quarter of million acres in the lake. The House might suggest that the area to be granted should not exceed 5,000 acres for one man in one district. That would meet the views of the people who were here and had been here two or three years prospecting the lakes, not only in this part of the colony but in the North. If we could encourage people to go on to the lakes and spend their money and develop that portion of the territory, the House would be only doing what was just and right in giving them an area sufficient to recompense them for the capital they would have to put into the concern. The gentlemen in this colony who were desirous of going into this enterprise asked for nothing. They were willing to build their dredges and take them up to the lakes, and they were satisfied that there was gold in the lakes. These gentlemen went further than that and said that the marshes all

along from Nichol River, which was 20 or 30 miles from Roebourne, were in auriferous country, where the tide flowed backward and forward monthly, and every day to a certain extent. These gentlemen were of opinion that this was the best portion of the colony for dredging operations. This motion should commend itself to members who represented the goldfields, as no risk would be run and no danger could be done to the people in the country engaged in gold-mining: the risk appeared to be on the side of those who were willing to go in for the dredging of the lakes. Anyone who knew anything about the lakes of this colony was aware that the formation of the lakes changed every few hundred yards. First one would find clay formation, then sand, and then rock, and every two hundred yards the formation might change. Great difficulty would be found in dredging the lakes, because all over the lake beds would be found the outcrop of rocks, deep indents and shallows. Everything that was not good for dredging would be found: more especially did this apply to the Northern portion of the colony. He was informed that before any company could get any return from the gold they would have to dredge practically a river to wash the dirt after it had been dredged. The first work would be to dredge a canal, so that when the material was obtained it could be washed. He suggested that the member for Sussex (Mr. Locke) should omit from the motion the reference to alluvial flats. He did not think that was ever intended.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member had better move that as an amendment.

MR. A. FORREST moved that the words "abandoned alluvial flats" be struck out.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. GREGORY (North Coolgardie): Now that the words "abandoned alluvial flats" had been struck out, no danger could arise. If we could induce any one to go on the goldfields and attempt to dredge the salt lakes that were there, in many cases it would lead to success. He knew of one lake situate close to Goongarrie, where a deal of puddling had been done, and people were sluicing on the surface of the lake-bed and had picked up a good deal of alluvial gold. If we could induce any company to start dredging the lakes,

he did not care how large an area was given to them so long as the company undertook the work. It would mean the employment of a large number of people and the expenditure of a large amount of capital. There was no need to limit the area of the concession granted. In Victoria a little while ago a run of country 11 miles long was granted to an English company to treat the country for alluvial. It was necessary in that case that a large pumping plant capable of raising 5,000,000 gallons of water per day be placed on the land. If we could induce people to sink a large amount of money to go in for dredging operations, we should be prepared to grant to them a large area of the lake-beds for that purpose. Now that certain words had been struck out of the motion the Minister's hands were not tied, and the Government would be able to act generously to anyone undertaking the work.

MR. VOSPER (North-East Coolgardie): Like the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran), he desired to congratulate the member for Sussex upon the degree of mining energy which he had displayed in bringing the motion before the House. At the same time the hon. member's observations in regard to the various qualities and proportions of land and water were at least somewhat confusing. They reminded him (Mr. Vosper) of a question which was put to a boy, as to what the earth was made of. The reply was "land and water, sir." When asked what were land and water, the boy said "mud." He, (Mr. Vosper) would not say the hon. member's speech was "mud," although the hon. member seemed to be confused in regard to his reference to land and water. Further than that one was rather amused when reference was made to any individual trying to dredge abandoned alluvial flats. As far as the motion was concerned, and especially with the amendment just made, he approved of it, and congratulated the mover on having brought forward so useful a proposal. His own experience of the goldfields had taught him there were large areas of salt lakes all over the country which contained gold, and he believed in large quantities; and concessions should be made over those areas to secure their being efficiently worked. It was obvious that, if we were to grant concessions, they

must be over large areas. In the first place we had to consider the fact that whatever machinery was brought to bear upon these lakes, it would, he thought, have to be of a kind altogether unknown in the present system of alluvial dredging. One could not take a river dredge to dredge those lakes. Some modification of what was known as the sea navy would be most suitable for dredging, and another thing was sluicing. It was impossible to say what kind of machinery would be adapted; but it was evident the machinery would have to be on a large scale; and in order to compensate for the risk and possible loss, we should, as he had said, have to grant considerable areas. Some forty miles below Norseman, in the Dundas electorate, was what was called Lake Dundas Extended, and there, at the point called Lake View Hotel, on the road to Esperance, a large arm or bay came in. On one occasion he went down to the spot, which was a long way from any place where a drift of gold could easily come into the lake, and on the beach there was a well. He took the trouble to wash some of the soil, and obtained from it a large amount of alluvial gold. It was highly probable that if one went nearer to Norseman or Dundas, a large amount of gold would be found to exist. He had heard prospectors say that a whole string of lakes existed to within a few miles of Esperance on the one side, and beyond the Murchison on the other. These were important facts, and there was a source of potential wealth which some did not dream of. If we did not take advantage of it, our successors would do so. What had been said regarding the swamps and marshes was a matter which was entirely outside his own experience, but he should think perhaps the amount of gold in the mud or *débris* at the bottom of the lake or swamp would be even larger than that on the Eastern goldfields. In any case, all these things were purely theoretical. If we asked people to come here and invest capital, let us encourage them. If the motion had been preserved in its original form, although he had goodwill towards it, he did not think he should have voted for it so willingly. When we came to deal with abandoned alluvial flats, we must remember that almost everywhere where they existed men succeeded in getting a

living after those flats had been what was called abandoned. He believed that in some of the oldest goldfields in New South Wales, Victoria, and elsewhere, men were still making a living out of alluvial areas which had been abandoned years ago. The same applied to Coolgardie and to areas around Kalgoorlie and elsewhere. The alluvial flats furnished a reserve fund, probably, for the men who would otherwise be unemployed. He gave his cordial support to the motion, and congratulated the hon. member for Sussex on having brought it forward.

MR. ILLINGWORTH (Central Murchison): The mover was lucky in getting congratulations from all sides of the House. Many years ago, when he (Mr. Illingworth) first took a seat in this House, he advocated that we should give large areas in the Lake Austin district (Murchison), for the very reasons which had been suggested to-night. He now supported the motion as amended, but could not have supported it in its original form. Powers were given to the Minister under the Act, but the Minister had not exercised those powers to the extent intended by this motion. We desired to have large areas granted in these lake districts. No doubt in the Lake Austin district a considerable amount of gold would be found, and also in Lake Nannine and several other places. He had not the slightest doubt that if the suggestions made in the motion were carried out, a great quantity of gold would be secured in the Lake Austin district. All these hills had been explored over and over again, and a large quantity had been got out of what was called the Island. It was very reasonable to suppose a good deal of gold had been shed into those soft lakes around the Island; indeed, a good deal had already been secured. When a mining Bill was before the House in 1894, he endeavoured to impress upon the House that a company had tested some of the ground in Lake Austin; but the House did not seem to receive the matter with favour, or the matter was not sufficiently understood at the time, and it lapsed. At the present time there was, he believed, in this country a company or some people associated together, who were prepared to test this question to-morrow. If the question were tested by some large com-

pany it would be a great boon to the country, and every encouragement should be given to the company, wherever they commenced their operations. Beyond doubt a large area of auriferous country was covered by what we called salt lakes. People would have to expend money for the necessary machinery, and be prepared to run risk, and he had no doubt that if they persevered they would be fully rewarded for their efforts; but their success would be the success of the country, and would open up practically a new industry altogether. He congratulated the hon. member upon the success he was likely to achieve on the motion placed before the House.

MR. LEAKE (Albany): The motion would meet with his support, because he was in favour of the principle involved. When the hon. member moved the motion, he did not hear from his lips at whose instance he did so; but perhaps that was by the way.

MR. GEORGE: If the strings were pulled, the figures jumped.

MR. LEAKE: Of course the proposition before the House was only a motion at the present time, and nothing could be done until a Bill was brought in. When that Bill had been introduced we should understand exactly where we were, and what sort of regulations were likely to be framed. It was interesting to learn that there were in these lakes deposits of alluvial gold, and no doubt that gold could not be reached by the ordinary means. A man with a miner's right could not go and peg out that land with any degree of satisfaction to himself or any chance of profit, nor could the land be worked under the ordinary leasehold provisions, and it was consequently necessary that special legislative powers should be given to exploit these deposits. Before we were asked to consider the question, it would, he thought, be well if the Mining Department would have a special report by their own experts for the information of hon. members, and that would enable the House to express a definite opinion.

MR. HIGHAM: Let a Fremantle dredge be sent out.

MR. LEAKE: That would not, he thought, really meet the case. Of course the hon. member's knowledge of mining enabled him to speak with greater accu-

racy upon that question, but it did not appeal to him (Mr. Leake). It would be useful to know to what extent these lakes were gold-bearing, because the question of value was of great importance in helping the House to determine what area should be granted. He did not think any hon. member had suggested how much.

MR. A. FORREST: An area of 5,000 acres was suggested by him.

MR. LEAKE: That seemed to be rather too large.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: No area could be fixed.

MR. LEAKE: That was one of the difficulties we were landed in at once, unless we had some definite opinion from experts on this subject. He saw many difficulties. He was also aware of the fact that it would take an enormous amount of capital to work those places. He did not see it would be prudent to enforce certain labour conditions, because we knew perfectly well that although a company might have a big area to work over, yet they could only work it in small patches. The proper course would be not to insist upon labour conditions as applied to leaseholds and alluvial claims, but to impose a royalty.

MR. VOSPER: A machinery value would be better.

MR. MORAN: Or an expenditure value.

MR. LEAKE: A royalty on the gold won would be fairer. In the case of a large company there would be no difficulty in collecting the royalty, for returns must be furnished for the shareholders' information; but the House must guard against the enormous profits possibly derivable from such enterprises going out of the country. The people in the colony should benefit in some way, and directly too, from the concessions.

MR. MORAN: There was already a dividend tax of five per cent.

MR. LEAKE: The motion could only affirm the principle that in the peculiar circumstances of the case the present Goldfields Act and Regulations must be departed from.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Look at Section 33.

MR. LEAKE: There could hardly be anything in the Act which would meet the case, and there was certainly no clause enabling the Minister to grant an area of 5,000 acres; consequently, fresh legisla-

tion would be necessary, and without more information it would be idle for the House to fix terms and conditions.

THE MINISTER OF MINES (Hon. H. B. Lefroy): The expressions of opinion on this matter were very gratifying, because the matter had frequently been brought under his notice, both orally and in writing. He agreed with the member for Albany (Mr. Leake) that no action could be taken by the department on the motion as framed, nor would the Government have power, in consequence of its passing, to negotiate with persons desirous of leasing large areas of salt lakes for dredging purposes. The Goldfields Act provided that the Minister, with the approval of the Government, might grant leases up to not more than 24 acres, and might grant 24-acre leases on abandoned alluvial ground at a rental of £1 per acre. He reminded hon. members that last session, when he was new in office, and while the Goldfields Act Amendment Bill was before the House, he moved a clause embodying what was asked by the present motion, which clause read as follows:—

Notwithstanding the provisions of Section 35 of the principal Act—

Section 35 provided that the Minister could, with the approval of the Governor, grant leases up to 24 acres.

it shall be lawful for the Minister, with the approval of the Governor, and subject to the Regulations, to grant special leases of Crown lands for gold-mining when the Minister, after report from the warden, shall be satisfied that special difficulties for mining thereon exist, either by reason of the poverty of the ground applied for, its great depth, wetness, costliness of appliances required for its development, the Governor may prescribe the terms of any such lease and the form of area of the ground to be demised, the amount of rent to be paid, and any covenants, conditions, reservations, and exceptions to be contained in the lease.

MR. MORAN: That clause applied to land only; not to water.

MR. VOSPER: The clause embodied too much.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: It embodied everything necessary. The members for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) and for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans) had strongly supported this clause when moved, but at that time hon. members were tired of discussing mining legislation, the session was nearing its close, and they were not inclined to support the innovation, which, in more favourable

circumstances, might have secured their hearty sympathy.

MR. VOSPER said he did not show any sign of fatigue while opposing the new clause.

THE MINISTER OF MINES said he was not sure that the hon. member had opposed it. However, seeing that the House had not then been in the humour to discuss the clause, he (the Minister) had withdrawn it, at the same time expressing the hope that hon. members would consider the matter with a view to dealing with it on the next occasion when an amendment of the Goldfields Act was proposed. It was pleasing to find that hon. members had considered the question during the recess, but at the same time he agreed that distinct legislation would be required on the subject, and he would be opposed to giving the Government power to enter into negotiations of this kind without a special Act of Parliament empowering them to do so. [MR. ILLINGWORTH: Hear, hear.] That would be a dangerous precedent. The motion included other minerals besides gold, and hon. members might not be aware that there were provisions in the Mineral Lands Act empowering the Government to grant large leases for searching for minerals under certain conditions. The Act of 1893 provided that, notwithstanding anything contained in the Mineral Lands Act of 1892 or the Regulations, the Governor might grant leases of any Crown lands within any mining district, which might comprise such areas, covenants, privileges, and be subject to such rents, fees, conditions and reservations as the Governor might approve or prescribe. The Governor had the power to grant such special leases in respect of all metals except gold. That clause, however, was followed by a provision that no lease should be granted as aforesaid unless the general conditions, subject to which it was granted, had been approved by Parliament. That provision would not always be convenient: in dealing with people prepared to take up a lease, it would be well if the Government had the power to close negotiations while the investors' money was available, otherwise such capital might be invested elsewhere. At present he would countenance no provision for the granting of large leases of so-called abandoned alluvial ground. Many men were working on

such alluvial flats in different parts of the colony, and were earning, if not a competence, enough to keep the wolf from the door; and he believed that no man could starve on the goldfields who chose to engage in dry-blowing on such ground. Such resources were very useful to have at command, and although much of this ground had been worked over and over again, still he had never visited such workings without finding one, two, and sometimes more men earning a living upon the land, and for the sake of such men it would not be advisable to let large areas of abandoned workings. Moreover, if such large areas were let on lease, no one at the present time would be in a position to work them profitably, owing to lack of water. By the time the Coolgardie water scheme was completed these flats might be tried.

MR. VOSPER: "In the sweet by-and-by."

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The scheme might be tried, if it were considered that the flats had been properly worked out by the alluvial miner; but the present was not the proper time for considering the matter. Certainly, it would be by no means a popular movement for this Parliament to let large areas of abandoned alluvial ground at present, nor would it be equitable to do so while there were working men prepared to occupy such country. It was scarcely possible that the State could run any risk by letting sufficient areas on the salt lakes under lease, to enable capitalists to ascertain whether there was gold there. It was unnecessary to send geologists to examine such country, for they could hardly bring back any more information than hon. members already possessed. It was probable that where there were large alluvial deposits "shedded" away from reefs in the neighbourhood of a salt lake during past ages, some of this alluvial, in the finest possible form, might have filtered into the waters of the lake in considerable quantities. At all events, if capitalists were prepared to put money into such undertakings, Parliament should give them every possible opportunity for so doing. In his office he had often been asked for concessions of this kind. Numbers of people were always trying to get concessions. A concession, in fact, was a most popular thing.

MR. VOSPER: Something to hawk about.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: Many of the applicants were perhaps prepared to do actual work of this kind, while others were probably mere speculators; but he had always told them that the Government had no power to grant such privileges--no power outside the pages of the Goldfields Act to lease Crown lands for gold-mining purposes. He had inquired into the matter, and did not think any harm could be done to the State by allowing people to use their capital in testing those salt lakes for alluvial gold. Dredging was carried on to a great extent in Victoria, and there dangers and difficulties had arisen. The Minister of Mines in that colony had been much exercised over the matter, and had numerous deputations wait on him urging objections against dredging being allowed. That Minister had personally visited the districts, and there had been in his office for the last twelve months applications which were under consideration, but had not been granted. But the conditions in Victoria were very different to the conditions in Western Australia. In Victoria dredging was carried on in good rivers and on rich alluvial flats, and even on agricultural land and private property. It was this latter fact which gave rise to most of the objections to the dredging, it being urged that by the time the mining was over the property would be no good, and further, that the dredging polluted the rivers. He believed, however, that the opposition in Victoria was being surmounted to a very great extent; and, in any case, he could see no risk in allowing people to test the large lake areas in Western Australia. He was pleased the motion had been submitted, because it was a great advantage to him to have these matters discussed, and to hear the views of hon. members. Moreover, he knew that when hon. members supported a motion of this sort, it was impossible for them not to support legislation which might be introduced in consequence; and he hoped members would support any ensuing legislation in the same spirit as they had supported the somewhat crude motion of the member for Sussex. It was to be hoped further that the member for Albany would support any such legislation, because he had been considering this matter for the last 12

months, and at the end of last session objected to a clause which he (the Minister of Mines) read to the House, and which simply gave the same power as asked for in this motion. Indeed, the hon. member for Albany, in speaking to the motion, hinted and suggested much larger powers than were given under the clause to which he had referred. Such powers were given under the gold-mining Acts of the other colonies, and there ought to be some legislation in the same direction here; and he was quite prepared to introduce legislation to give effect to this motion, if he were fully satisfied he would have the support of the House. It was the duty of hon. members to express their opinions most decisively on the question, and it should be his duty, as far as he could, to introduce a measure which would meet with the views which had been expressed.

MR. DOHERTY (North Fremantle) said he had listened to the lucid explanation of the mover of the motion as to the dredging of the various rivers and flats in his particular district; but he (Mr. Doherty) failed to see how the dredges were going to be floated on the lakes on the goldfields.

MR. MORAN: There were worse things than dredges "floated" on the goldfields.

MR. DOHERTY: That was exactly what he was beginning to see; and, in fact, the desire was not so much a desire to float dredges on the lakes on the goldfields as to float concessions on the London market. That, to him, seemed the beginning and end of the motion. At first he regarded the motion as a deep-laid scheme for selling some of the old dredges at Fremantle harbour, and sending them up to the goldfields, but now he felt sure the object was flotation on the London market. Even gold-mining members must pause before they gave too much scope to any company which might take concessions to London, because the colony was already over-ridden by London investors, who had killed every industry they had got hold of. We seemed to be always giving concessions, and allowing people to go home and float them.

MR. MORAN: What would the country lose if the concessions were floated on the London market?

MR. DOHERTY: What had the country not already lost, owing to the immense amount of gold taken away?

MR. VOSPER: And the scenery at the lakes would be spoiled.

MR. DOHERTY: There were some classes of people in the country too honest to take up these concessions, and probably he was one of them; but the House seemed to be in a good humour, and possibly, after the severe lectures of the previous night, as to honesty of purpose and clear characters, they would soon be as good as a Salvation Army meeting. Great care should be taken in any legislation such as that suggested, to hedge it round with safe-guards, in order that we might not lose all our wealth and allow it to go into the pockets of the London investor.

MR. GEORGE (Murray): The member for North Fremantle (Mr. Doherty) had done greater service in this debate than any member who had yet spoken. He (Mr. George) moved as an amendment that the following words be added to the motion: "Before any concession be granted, the matter shall be laid before the House for approval."

THE MINISTER OF MINES: No concession could be granted without the approval of Parliament.

MR. GEORGE: Anything could be done in the Mining Department.

MR. MONGER: Supposing the House were in recess, how could the amendment be carried into effect?

MR. GEORGE: To that, the reply might be the question "Supposing we were all dead?" He congratulated the member for Sussex (Mr. Locke) on having been made a very excellent cat's-paw by some more astute brain than his own.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member was not in order in making such an observation as that.

MR. GEORGE withdrew the remark, and expressed the hope that the member for Sussex would not take offence. He looked on this motion as the beginning of some gigantic concession which it was desired to get from the Government for the purpose of floating it on the London market, and wrecking the good repute of this country in the same way as it had been wrecked in connection with the timber industry during the last few years. In those few years this colony had presented, in some respects, the most

deplorable aspect that a self-governed community could present to the world. Paid officers in the Government service had been authorised by responsible Ministers to act as mining experts and timber experts, and to take fees for their opinions, which were used for the purpose of exploiting on the London market concerns which, so far as the general good of the colony was concerned, would have been far better left undeveloped. In the timber industry to-day there was the melancholy fact that one of the companies, which had been floated under the representations to which he referred, had had to close their mills, and discharge between 300 and 400 employees. Not only was the closing of this one mill spreading distress through the district, but the same fate threatened a considerable number of the timber companies which had been floated under the same auspices. That should be a warning to hon. members, at any rate to those hon. members whose consciences had not been blunted; but he must not say that of hon. members, because their consciences were all clear, and he would apply the remark to the general public outside.

MR. LOCKE: Had the observations of the hon. member anything to do with the question before the House?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member for the Murray (Mr. George) was in order if he were using those observations as an argument why the motion should not be agreed to. It was to be presumed that was the object of the hon. member's observations. If the observations were not used in that sense, the hon. member was out of order.

MR. GEORGE: The observations were used for the purpose of showing the damage which might be done to this colony by granting worthless concessions, which might be floated on the London market and destroy the credit of the colony. For the purpose of pointing his argument, he was referring to the deplorable spectacle which had been seen of an expert from the Mines Department, and an expert from the Lands Department, paid officers of the Crown, being authorised by responsible Ministers to give reports to be used in the flotation of companies on the London market, some of which companies had fallen to the ground already, while others were almost threaten-

ed with extinction. During the last few weeks, the Canning Jarrah Timber Company had closed their mills, owing to the competition caused by the flotation of other timber companies, bringing down prices to a figure that would not pay the wages expended in producing timber for the market. We knew that, in addition to this company, other companies were feeling the pinch; and when a company felt the pinch, we did not know what the result might be to the company, but we knew what the result was to the people employed on the stations and in kindred industries. On one occasion, when he referred to Mr. Ednie Brown's reports being used for the purpose of putting the prospectus of companies on the market, the member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest) said that Mr. Ednie Brown had done more to push Western Australia ahead than anyone else in the country. What did the hon. member think now? Let the hon. member look at the share list in London, and see what price the shares were quoted at. Some of the timber companies were disappearing altogether. We, as a Parliament, had voted for the payment of experts on timber and mining, and what had the result been?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member was prolonging the debate on timber companies, which really had nothing to do with the question.

MR. GEORGE said he was endeavouring to show the swindles which had been perpetrated in the country, but he would bow to the ruling of the Speaker. If this concession were given to dredge alluvial flats, or if a concession were granted for catching the "flats" in the London market to get them to drain the swamps and marshes in this colony, there would be just the same run on companies for dredging as there had been in connection with timber companies.

MR. MITCHELL: That was their look out.

MR. GEORGE: The hon. member could not see beyond the length of his nose. We were trying to build up a nation with a clean escutcheon, but how could we do it if we allowed company promoters to do as they were doing? The Premier would have to go to the London market for loans, and was the Premier likely to float loans advantageously to the colony when it went

forth that the Western Australian Parliament were going to leave their industries to look after themselves, and that Parliament were not going to stop this absolute swindling or attempted swindling. The member for Murchison (Mr. Mitchell) could not have given the matter sufficient consideration, or he would think, as he (Mr. George) did, that we did not want Western Australia to be besmirched—if he could use stronger language he would do so—by the abominable swindling that had been done, and some of it practically under the auspices of Ministers of the Crown.

THE PREMIER: What Ministers?

MR. OLDHAM (North Perth) seconded the amendment, not because he believed in it, but because the Government and hon. members who had spoken should have an opportunity of replying to some of the observations which had fallen from the member for the Murray. He congratulated the member for Sussex for bringing forward the motion, and he was willing to believe that the hon. member had brought the matter forward on his own initiative. He did not desire to read the House a lecture such as he had to do last night, and which evidently took effect. It reminded him of the quotation that there was more joy over one sinner who repented than over ninety-nine who needed no repentance. There was a good deal of truth and sound argument in what had been advanced by the member for North Fremantle (Mr. Doherty) and the member for the Murray (Mr. George); he hardly thought it would be desirable that concessions should be granted to any particular companies to exploit these lakes. If we were desirous of granting a concession to any particular company, that concession should rather take the form of an experiment than be made to apply generally. There was a company willing to spend a considerable amount of money in the necessary machinery for the purpose of extracting gold from the lakes of which they had made extremely good tests. There was no one in the House or out of it who could form any really accurate idea of the value of these particular lakes intended to be worked, and it appeared to him that it would be better, if a company were to be allowed to enter on the undertaking, to give them a reasonable area for the pur-

pose of proving whether it was profitable to work the areas or not. These lakes might be so rich that whilst it would be desirable that we should grant a sufficient area to induce any company to spend the necessary amount of money for the purpose of working them, after the work had been proved it was quite possible that a small area would satisfy a small company, and by that means we should be able to retain a considerable amount of gold in the country that would otherwise go out of it. Say we granted 5,000 acres to one company.

MR. A. FORREST : It was open to every company.

MR. OLDHAM : That was exactly what he wanted the House to guard against. With our present information it was not desirable to throw these lakes open to everyone. If we granted 5,000 acres to one company, we might grant 5,000 acres to twenty companies ; that would amount to 100,000 acres. The first company we granted an area to might erect their machinery and make enormous profits. With the experience we then would have, if we had not parted with the rest of the lakes, there might be sufficient inducement for another company to come in and work 100 acres or 500 acres ; that would give the smaller people in the country a chance, and would prevent companies being floated on the London market to find capital to work the lakes in this country. We should act cautiously indeed. He threw the suggestion out for what it was worth ; not that he contended that he knew much about gold-mining.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir John Forrest) : Before any concession could be given under this motion, it would be necessary to pass legislation ; therefore, so far as the hon. member's addendum was concerned, so long as the motion would be inoperative, no harm would come of it. If the hon. member had said that no concession should be given until legislation had been framed on the matter, that would have been more to the point. It would be impossible for the Government to undertake the responsibility and deal with a matter of this sort without legislation. We had been listening to the same old cry that we had been accustomed to hear so long in this country. Whenever a proposal for any-

thing which we considered worthless was brought forward, many people saw dangers and thought that it was too good a thing to be given away. A lot of members, like the member for North Perth (Mr. Oldham), who really did not know anything about the colony outside Perth, wanted to caution us. He (the Premier) did not say that disrespectfully, but the member for North Perth really did not know anything about the interior of the country, and how subject this country was to salt marshes or lakes, as they were called, nor did he know how numerous were these lakes.

MR. OLDHAM said he had seen some of these lakes.

THE PREMIER : The hon. member might have seen one or two, but there were hundreds and hundreds of them. He would tell the hon. member a few of them : there was Lake Barlee, which he supposed contained half a million acres ; there was Lake Lefroy, which covered two million acres, and stretched for miles and miles ; the hon. member had no idea of the extent of it. Then there were Glangarry, Lake Austin, both of which were very extensive ; the extensive lakes about Nannine, and the lakes closer here, Carey, Monger, Glass, and others : the whole place was covered with salt marshes ; those he had named alone covering, he was quite sure, ten millions of acres of country ; so that it was no use being afraid that we were going to give anything good away, because there was such an immense number of lakes. If we could get any of this country worked by capitalists it would be a good thing for the country. It was very likely a good lot of fine gold would be found all round the margin of the lake ; but that was only supposition.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : The gold might be richer in the bed.

THE PREMIER : Such was not his opinion ; still, it might be so. It would be reasonable to legislate in regard to this matter. This land was open to everybody, but there was not sufficient money available to erect sluicing machinery and provide large pumping power. In some places the great difficulty would be to keep the water out. He saw no reason why we should not introduce legislation to deal with the matter even this session, with the object, at any rate, of giving an op-

portunity to anyone willing to try these places. There were plenty of them. Lake Lefroy and Lake Cowan alone would be sufficient to afford occupation to all the people in Australia if they wanted a bit. In Lake Austin there were hundreds and thousands of acres. There was so much of this kind of country, and the working of any of it would cost a lot of money.

MR. OLDHAM: The Premier was not so sure of that.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member could get up a company and try. There was plenty of this kind of country, but it was so troublesome that no one had attempted to work it, and we could not be going wrong in trying to induce people to occupy and work that which no one in this colony, up to the present time, had been able to work. The hon. member's amendment was not worded quite as he would like it.

MR. GEORGE: It would be agreeable to him to alter the amendment in the way the Premier suggested.

THE PREMIER: What he would suggest was that there should be no concession granted until legislation had been passed.

THE SPEAKER: The words at present proposed to be added were: "Before any concession be granted the matter shall be laid before the House for approval."

MR. LEAKE: Until legislation was passed there would be no power.

THE PREMIER: With general powers, and a resolution by Parliament behind them, the Crown could do a great deal.

MR. GEORGE: The only thing he was anxious for was that the House should have full knowledge of what was going to be done. He wanted the Government to have a free hand.

THE PREMIER: The Government did not want a free hand.

THE SPEAKER: It was now proposed to add these words to the motion: "And no concession be granted without the necessary legislation."

MR. VOSPER (North-East Coolgardie): While he had no objection to the amendment, but, on the contrary, supported it, he wished to disabuse the mind of the House (particularly the member for the Murray, Mr. George), and the public generally, of the idea that the object of the motion was to give the Government power to grant a

concession to the first company that came along and asked for it. This was a matter which, after all, came more within the scope of an amendment of the Companies Act than anything in the nature of a motion of this kind. We might with very great advantage allow the Government a large amount of power in this way without running any great risk. We had millions of acres of country which could not be used. No man nor country would look at it, and no animal would live upon it, and it was even a very serious matter to travel on it. At the same time there was good reason for believing these places contained a great amount of gold. Take places around Kanowna. We knew that old cementings ran down towards Lake Wynne, and a couple of years ago there was a big flood. The same with regard to Gordon Lake. It was very probable that every time a flood occurred a certain amount of gold was washed down to the lake, and very likely that had been so for thousands of years. Many of these mines were mines of potential wealth, and the question was whether we were going to allow these lands to be locked up or to turn them to advantage. If we permitted people to work on them, we could not do less than allow those people large areas. These lakes might be found to be very patchy. A thousand acres taken might not be worth having, and then perhaps a patch might be reached which contained a great amount of gold. There was much sense in the proposal that some kind of experiment should be made in the first place. Perhaps it should take the form of a reward claim. If a company were willing to come forward and expend a large amount in machinery on the lakes, he should be inclined to grant them a very large area as a reward, and when once the company had proved the existence of gold, we could let smaller areas, and could preserve a small amount of gold for our own use. But even the smaller area would have to be very much larger than anything we had been accustomed to in this country, and he did not think that leases of this kind could be hampered with labour conditions. If the Government wanted to impose conditions, they should stipulate that the area should depend on the amount of expenditure or the class of machinery, the bigger the

machinery the larger being the area. He did not think that in making a change of this kind by law we should be likely to create or maintain any of those evils to which the member for the Murray had alluded, but he was glad the hon. member had moved the amendment, because a Bill would be brought before the House at an early date. As to the Bill introduced last year, the proposal carried too much with it, for it made the Minister of Mines a despot as far as the administration of the Crown lands of the colony was concerned. He would not care to trust that Minister any more than any other Minister, and we know that the spirit of the constitution was that a Minister should be regarded with suspicion.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The same law existed in New Zealand.

MR. VOSPER: New Zealand was not a paradise. He had noticed that when members said legislation was good because it came from New Zealand, the idea was absolutely scouted, yet it was wonderful to find how people who scouted the idea could quote scripture and do all sorts of things when it suited their purpose. New Zealand was liable to bad legislation as well as Western Australia; not quite so bad, but bad enough. Members would judge the question when the Bill came before them, and if it did not go further than the motion, members would support it; but, if it went beyond, they would be perfectly justified in criticising the details or rejecting the Bill.

MR. MORGANS (Coolgardie): It was his intention to oppose the motion as a protest against the construction put upon the action of members on the Government side of the House with regard to it. The hon. member for the Murray (Mr. George) had no justification in assuming that members of the House who supported the motion had any intention to float wild cat companies in London. No evidence had been given to him or the House to that effect. He should say the liver of the hon. gentleman was very much disordered. He appeared to be absolutely verging on the violent in his denunciation of members for supporting this motion, which so many of them believed to be a thoroughly good one. He did not know whether he might suggest to the hon. member that a dose of "Bile Beans" would do him good; but, at any

rate, he protested against the position taken up by the hon. gentleman. As to the object and intention of the hon. member for Sussex (Mr. Locke) in bringing the motion before the House, he failed to see what the disaster which had fallen on the timber companies had to do with the motion. In the first place, timber was not like gold in any way, for gold had a market at a price at all times. Timber had to compete with timber, and the prices of timber fluctuated, but practically the price of gold did not. Therefore, the cases were not parallel, and the member for the Murray was very unhappy in drawing an analogy with regard to what might happen in reference to the motion. The two cases were not parallel.

MR. GEORGE: Was it not possible to float a company?

MR. MORGANS said he was not speaking of floating companies.

MR. GEORGE: That was what he had been speaking about.

MR. MORGANS said he had been refuting the parallel drawn by the hon. member between gold and timber. No one would suspect the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) or the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) of a disposition to yield to capitalists improper concessions, yet both hon. members had strongly supported the motion, and with good reason. In the other colonies, Victoria especially, large concessions had been granted to mining companies for sluicing and dredging operations. In Victoria a concession of 20,000 acres had been given to an English company, which was not tied down to any particular process. That colony had had 40 or 50 years' experience of gold-mining.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: And its auriferous area was very small.

MR. MORGANS: True; therefore, our Government could not be mistaken in granting a concession of 5,000 acres in a salt lake. It was not the duty of the Legislature to act as censor over the formation of companies in London. The suggestion that the House should control the formation of companies floated in respect of mining areas taken up in the colony was too ridiculous for consideration.

MR. GEORGE: The Government found experts for the companies.

MR. MORGANS: The class of mining proposed by the motion was unknown in Western Australia, and in all probability a large field of enterprise would be opened up. Lake Lefroy doubtless measured considerably over 2,000,000 acres, and probably a large proportion of that area contained gold in larger or smaller quantities. Some trial shafts had been put down four miles from one edge of that lake, and material giving 8dwts. to the ton had been found; and had it not been for the fact that the water overpowered the men in the shafts, the find would have been worked, because the ground was soft, there was plenty of water, and money would ultimately have been made out of the enterprise. In its salt lakes the colony had an enormous and valuable asset, which it was the duty of the House to develop. The area of the lakes now available for dredging, or for mining by any other process, might be set down at 15,000,000 or 20,000,000 acres. Still further north there were other large lakes, but he spoke of the lakes within reach.

MR. VOSPER: Already explored.

MR. MORGANS: Lakes which were known. What reason could be adduced against the motion, which simply suggested to the Government the advisableness of introducing legislation for developing these new resources?

MR. GEORGE: The motion sought to authorise the Government to negotiate.

MR. MORGANS: As explained by the member for Albany (Mr. Leake), that meant the Government could not negotiate without an Act of Parliament. Let the House reject the hon. member's (Mr. George's) amendment, and request the Government to bring in a measure this session to deal with this class of mining. A small Bill could be brought in, and then the hon. member would raise any objections and impose any restrictions that might be thought advisable. He would oppose the amendment because of the implications it contained, and would ask the hon. member to withdraw the amendment and to let the original motion be passed intact.

MR. LOCKE (in reply): The words in the motion "abandoned alluvial flats" had been inserted because he had heard of certain marshes in the Roebourne district at one time pegged out for alluvial

mining, and which were now covered periodically by the tides. Such lands might be brought under the head of lakes or marshes; but the words could be excised if desired. The remarks of the member for the Murray (Mr. George) were most uncalled for, and when the hon. member said that he (Mr. Locke) was being used as a catspaw—

MR. GEORGE said he had withdrawn that statement.

MR. LOCKE: There were other objectionable remarks. The House might rest assured that the remarks of the hon. member were absolutely unjustified. However, as probably no one believed them, and as the hon. member was generally rude to everyone in the House, the remarks might well be taken for what they were worth. The Minister of Mines had said that a Bill could be brought in within 24 hours. If so, the sooner it was introduced the better.

Amendment (Mr. George's) put and negatived.

Question put and passed.

MOTION FOR PAPERS—MAIL SERVICE, NORTH.

MR. WALLACE (Yalgoo) moved:

That there be laid on the table of the House all papers and correspondence between Ministers and the Postmaster General and other persons re mail service from Yalgoo to Yuin station via Nancarrong goldfield, and Pindah to Nancarrong goldfield via Yuin station.

The House would doubtless approve of the papers in question being laid on the table. If anything he said hurt the feelings of any hon. member, he hoped it would be recognised that these statements were true.

THE PREMIER: Surely the hon. member would not hurt the feelings of anyone on the Government side of the House?

MR. WALLACE: Whatever facts he quoted he was prepared to substantiate now, if desired. It might be said by hon. members that he had an "axe to grind," and he told the House candidly that perhaps he had; but he had been requested by persons interested in the present mail service to submit the motion.

THE PREMIER said he would be glad to lay on the table all the papers referred to.

MR. WALLACE: While accepting the promise of the Premier, he desired to say a few words on the matter. This was a small item, which might appear scarcely worth the time of the House; but it was the principle involved to which he desired to call attention, and also to the underhand means that had been used. When an expenditure of public funds was about to take place, the Minister in charge of the department concerned made inquiries as to the necessity for the expenditure. In this case he could not blame the Minister in charge for not having made the necessary inquiries; but the inquiries made from the head of the department, the warden of the goldfields, and the member for the district, resulted in the three expressions of opinion that this service was not necessary, the population in this particular part of the district not warranting the expense. When the Premier was at Yalgoo some months ago, he (Mr. Wallace) introduced to the right hon. member a gentleman interested in the Nancarrong goldfields, who requested that there might be a weekly service from Yalgoo to Yuin. At that time he (Mr. Wallace) told this gentleman he could not advocate the service desired; but the Premier, after the gentleman had seen him, promised that the service should be established.

THE PREMIER: How many miles was it from Yalgoo to this place?

MR. WALLACE: Five miles further from Yalgoo, where there was an established post-office, than it was from the point on the Mullewa-Cue line, where the mail-bags were received, but where there were no post-office officials. The object in asking for the papers was to ascertain what information the Premier had when he granted the service against the recommendations of the head of the department and the warden on the goldfield. As a matter of fact, this service was granted by the Premier without any reference to either the Minister or the head of the department. He (Mr. Wallace) had declined to support the petition in favour of this service, because there appeared on the petition 20 more names than there were people in the locality. The petition contained 37 signatures, and he was now in the possession of the names of every living soul in the district, and they numbered 24. The Postmaster

General assured him he had reported that the population in the locality did not warrant the service, and this opinion was supported by that of the warden. The next thing was an announcement by a gentleman at the Wield Club, whose name he could give if desired.

THE PREMIER: Let hon. members hear all. But, in any case, what was all this about?

MR. WALLACE said he wanted to show the underhand way in which the Premier had been acting.

THE PREMIER: In what sort of way did the hon. member say?

MR. WALLACE: The underhand way.

THE PREMIER: Surely that was unparliamentary.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member (Mr. Wallace) must not use such an expression as that.

MR. WALLACE withdrew the expression, but said he could not help thinking that it was true.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member was impudent.

MR. WALLACE: There was no desire to be impudent, but the Premier had not acted straightforwardly in this matter. How could the Postmaster General curtail expenditure in the working of his department, when the Premier, without any reference to the head of the department, sanctioned such expenditure? That was not the only instance in the district in which public moneys had been expended contrary to the recommendations of the heads of departments. He (Mr. Wallace) never asked for favours to his district, which the district was not entitled to.

THE PREMIER: But Nancarrong was not in the hon. member's district.

MR. WALLACE: No contracts were called for the mail service, and that was not customary. The rule was to call public tenders for mail services; and the Premier, although he was possessed of the fact that the service could be carried out for £60, gave the work to a firm of squatters for £75, and also put the postal department to the risk of receiving the mail at a place where there was not a Government official of any sort. Some of the residents at Nancarrong had protested against the present service, and inasmuch as their interests were all at Yalgoo,

where there was an established post-office, they would prefer a fortnightly service from that place, to a weekly service from Pindah. One of the successful firm of squatters could boast in the Weld Club that the member for the district could not succeed in getting this small service, but that he himself got it by going to the Premier. This gentleman said that the best way of getting a favour of this kind was not to go to the head of a department, but to the Premier, from whom he could always get what he wanted. That was said in a public club in the city of Perth, and the heads of the departments were looked on as nonentities. He had had a lot of transactions with the Postal Department, and he knew the Postmaster General had the whole postal services at his finger-end. The matter of letting this contract was being commented on in the district, and he had endeavoured to persuade the people to be satisfied with the weekly service. Should the people, however, urge him to go further with the matter, he would not do so, because he personally had not that influence with the Premier which older inhabitants outside the House had. It would be useless for him to go to the Premier with any request, if it were opposed by the older residents of the colony. He could instance a case in which 62 miles of telegraph had been laid into the wilds, and along which not six telephone messages a week were sent. His district, he understood, would be obliterated under the Constitution Act; but he took this opportunity of protesting against money being expended there, not at the request or with the approval of the representative, or for the benefit of the district itself, but merely as one of those little games worked by Ministers to satisfy the whims of the older settlers.

THE SPEAKER: The question of telegraph lines had not anything to do with the motion before the House.

THE PREMIER: The mail route was not in the hon. member's district.

MR. WALLACE: Pindah was in his district.

THE PREMIER: Millandie was the boundary of the member's district, and that was 20 miles away.

MR. WALLACE: Instead of there being 50 persons served by this mail, all the men and women in the district

had been mustered, and only 24 could be found. When such replies as were usually given by the Premier went before the public, a wrong impression was created, and he (Mr. Wallace) desired to protest against the replies which were given.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir John Forrest): There was no objection to the motion being passed. The hon. member (Mr. Wallace) had tried to make a great thing out of a small matter. When he (the Premier) was at Yalgoo, a deputation waited on him and asked for a mail from Yalgoo to Nancarrong goldfield, where gold was being worked and which was said to have some prospects. The deputation also asked that the mail should go to the Yuin sheep station. He promised to look into the matter. He did his best to get a mail service from Yalgoo to Nancarrong, but was opposed by the Postmaster General and everybody else: no one wanted it. The Postmaster was an excellent officer, but he did not know much about this district, not as much as he (the Premier) did, for he knew it well, and knew all the places on the route long before the hon. member thought of coming to this country. He (the Premier) had not felt inclined to press the matter against the opinions of those in the Post Office, and a reply was sent to the people that nothing could be done. The member for the district (Mr. Mitchell) and Mr. Burges, the owner of the Yuin station, waited on him and pressed the matter, and he (the Premier) said he preferred the mail going to Yalgoo, where there was an established post office; but it was pointed out that this was not wanted; that the people wanted the mail to go along the road where people travelled. He (the Premier) then protested, for he did not want to carry out the suggestion made to him; but Mr. Burges said his teams were travelling that way, that it would be more convenient to have the mail along that route, and if the Premier consented to the mail going that way, he (Mr. Burges) would run a weekly mail for £75 a year. He (the Premier) knew the prospecting at Nancarrong, and £75 a year seemed such a small sum to run this weekly mail, for the distance must be 50 or 60 miles, and he authorised it. The Postal Department had not the money, unless they went

to the Treasury for it, and he (the Premier) said he would take the responsibility on himself and run the mail for one year. He thought he would be pleasing the Nancarrong people and the Yuin people, as well as the member for the district, and that he would not be displeasing anyone, because from Pindah to Yalgoo there was a train, and the mail could be carried from Yalgoo by train. He thought it a most excellent idea, and if it was not so, he regretted it. In that case, the arrangement could be altered at the end of the year, and he was sure the contractor was not making anything out of it. The only thanks he got from the member for Yalgoo, who was not the member for the district, and who did not represent the people of Nancarrong or Yuin, was that the hon. member thought he (the Premier) had done some bad deed. If hon. members knew the facts, they would say he had done the best he could to serve this little community. The papers would be laid on the table, and hon. members would see the trouble he took about the matter. Everybody he consulted knew less about the district than himself, when he was trying to get the opinions of others about the mail service. However, he took the responsibility upon himself rather than be bothered about the matter further. Now the member for Yalgoo made a long speech, and said he (the Premier) had acted in an underhand manner. He might tell the hon. member that the Postmaster General did not control the country, but that the Ministers did. He (the Premier) had tried to do many services which were not recommended by the heads of departments, and he would continue to do so as long as his knowledge was better than that of the heads of departments. The day had not come when the heads of the departments should rule the country. Ministers were responsible to Parliament. When he could serve a community by the expenditure of £75, and give a weekly mail service which the people in the district had asked for, he did not think he was doing harm. He would be glad to place the papers on the table.

Question put and passed.

RURAL LANDS IMPROVEMENT BILL.

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

ROADS AND STREETS CLOSURE BILL. AMENDMENT ON REPORT.

Report from Committee read.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS moved, as a further amendment in the Bill, that after the paragraph headed "in the town of Fremantle," there be inserted the words: "All that portion of Mayhew street lying between the western side of Tuckfield street and the production northwards of the eastern side of Quarry street."

Amendment put and passed.

Report adopted.

MUNICIPAL INSTITUTIONS BILL.

MOTION FOR SELECT COMMITTEE.

On the Order of the Day, for resuming consideration in Committee, at Clause 210:

MR. GEORGE (Murray) moved that the order be discharged, and the Bill be referred to a select committee. He deeply regretted having to take this step with regard to a Bill which dealt with municipalities, because he could claim that from the first time he took his seat in the House he had taken what seemed to him to be a loyal course in connection with the municipality with which he had the honour to be connected as a city councillor, and had done what he considered best for the municipal institutions of the colony generally. The fact was, members were faced with a Bill of some 400 clauses, which had to take the place of an Act with about 230 clauses which had been in operation in the colony. The powers set out under this Municipalities Bill were of such a nature that it behoved all members who had the interests of the country at heart to carefully consider whether such a Bill should not have been placed in the hands of a responsible member of the Government rather than in those of a private member, however estimable, and however able with regard to municipal government. Last week he (Mr. George) made some references to municipal conferences, and he was pleased to say that from what he could understand from the members who had been attending the municipal conferences during the last year, or two years, the accusation brought against them of being guzzling conferences was no longer warranted. He

much regretted that in what he said of previous conferences he should have attached that stigma to them. He had already pointed out various inconsistencies in the Bill. No doubt, carrying out what he considered to be the right course, the hon. member in charge of the Bill (Mr. A. Forrest), had been far from lenient with any member, whether himself (Mr. George) or the member for Toodyay, who, in their innocence, and earnestness, put forward suggestions. The hon. member by that course and stating he intended to force the Bill through without amendment only brought considerable opposition upon himself. Some amendments proposed would make a considerable difference to the rights of the citizens affected, and the fact that the hon. member occupied the distinguished position of Mayor of Perth was no reason why private citizens should surrender their right of judgment, or why members of Parliament should swallow the Bill. The object of this Assembly was that members should meet together and exchange ideas, and as far as possible produce the best legislation for the country. Whilst members were carrying out that course, they were certainly entitled to be treated with as much respect as that gentleman could give them, and certainly ought not to be overborne, as it were, by the weighty position of the hon. gentleman who was the Mayor of Perth. The member for the Swan (Mr. Ewing) pointed out at the last sitting that there were various differences with regard to the marginal notes. From those marginal notes members were naturally led to understand that the clauses referred to were the same as those in the old Act, but the member for the Swan had pointed out several instances in which such was not the case. Up to Clause 210 there had been some 30 or 40 or even more clauses on which the marginal notes had been taken by the House as a fair guide of correct transcription without alteration from the previous Act. It was necessary we should have a more complete authority with regard to this matter than the hon. member in charge of the Bill. No member wished to make any charge against that gentleman of misleading the House, but he had been telling us time after time that the Bill was the result of the conferences of the best representatives of the various

municipalities of the colony, that the Bill had been carefully considered and gone through by various legal gentlemen, and that it had been practically pronounced perfect; yet we had found inconsistencies of the sort to which he had referred, and was he (Mr. George) not fully justified in asking whether the hon. member had not been pushing the matter a little too far? In connection with this marginal note business he would briefly refer to two or three items which we had not yet reached, and which would prove the point he wanted to make. Clause 439, page 120, had as a marginal note "Notices of demands, how served on owners." In the old Act it was provided that notice should be sent by registered letter. In the new Bill it seemed to be sufficient to stick a notice on a piece of ground. A person might own a piece of vacant ground in Perth, and according to the new Bill the mere sticking up on a fence or a piece of wood a notice or demand that the Council might make, was to be considered a sufficient service within the meaning of the Bill, and the owner might really be brought before Justices without knowing anything about the fact that he had been summoned and was to be mulcted. It seemed to him to be striking at the very root of fair government that a man might be condemned in his absence and be fined and subject to penalties in the way the Bill pointed out. Clause 443 was far more stringent than the similar provision in the existing Act, which provided that there must be proof of service of any demand or notice made or given to an owner; but, by this Bill, it would be absolutely unnecessary to prove service upon the owner. That seemed unfair. The marginal note to Clause 445 referred the reader to Section 531 of the existing Act; but the existing Act only consisted of 239 sections, therefore where Section 531 came from was difficult to discover. Apparently, whoever drafted this Bill had taken various Municipalities Acts of different colonies, had used paste and scissors pretty freely, and had forgotten that Section 531, to which he had been referring, did not exist in any West Australian Act. Coming to Clause 449 of the Bill, the existing Act read: "Where any matter or thing is by this Act, or by a by-law, or any notice, made and published." But in Clause 449, providing

penalties for non-performance, the words "order or notice" were given exactly the same effect as a by-law made and properly gazetted; and, further, there were these words: "Where any authority is given by this Act to any person." In the existing Act, and rightly so, the Section said: "Any member of the council, or officer of the council"—not "any person." The House was asked practically to confer on a municipality the power of delegating to any person whomsoever power to do whatever that municipality might, by any order or notice, have commanded to be done. Such a thing was never contemplated by the existing law. The same remarks applied to Clause 455, where there was a marginal reference to Section 540, though there was no such section in the existing Act. Regarding Clause 456, "proof in legal proceedings," it would be found that the existing Act stated that in certain circumstances no proof should be required of certain things until evidence had been given to the contrary. The words "until evidence is given to the contrary" were omitted from Clause 445 of the Bill, whereas they should have been retained. In Clause 458, regarding certificates as to ownership of land, the existing Act provided that the Registrar of Titles should give a certificate of ownership on payment of 2s.; but the Bill interfered with the revenue of the colony by providing that such certificate must practically be given gratuitously. He (Mr. George) was under the impression that legislation likely to diminish the revenue could be introduced only with the consent of the Governor.

MR. A. FORREST: The councils did not pay now for such certificates.

MR. GEORGE: By the Act they ought to pay.

MR. A. FORREST: No.

MR. GEORGE: Clause 459 dealt with a serious matter. Prosecutions had been and might be brought on frivolous grounds against ratepayers, and the clause provided that all documents purporting to be issued or written by or under the direction of a municipal council, and purporting to be signed by the mayor, town clerk, or surveyor, should be received in evidence in all Courts of law, and should be deemed to be issued or written by or under the direction of the

council, without proof. The existing Act said distinctly: "Unless the contrary be shown"; but these words had been omitted from the Bill, thus taking away from the accused person the right of proving that the council had done wrong. The mere production by an officer of the council of a letter-book, or the statement of an officer that he had written a letter to an accused ratepayer, would be taken as correct and irrefutable without any proof whatever, and it would not be sufficient for the ratepayer to prove that he had never received such a notice if the officers of the council could show that they had sent such a notice. That matter required careful consideration. Clause 461 contained another innovation, empowering any officer of the council or authorised person to arrest, without warning, any person found offending against any by-law. That provision was in the old Act, but the words "or regulation" had been added in the Bill. And the clause continued: "if the offender refuses to give his name and address." Such an offender might know nothing about the regulation.

MR. A. FORREST: This was practically a new Bill.

MR. GEORGE: It was a very new Bill, and a Bill which, though it might be and doubtless had been conceived with a view to the best interests of the municipalities, must be looked upon with a jealous eye by the House. The only reason for the existence of a municipality was that equal justice should be dealt out to the ratepayers by the council's officers, and by passing this Bill, Parliament would be striking a serious blow at the liberty of the subject. He had said enough to prove the inconsistencies of the Bill, and would leave hon. members more conversant with the law, to point out technical defects. The Bill required further investigation than could be given to it in a hurried passage through Committee. The Bill provided for increased powers of taxation, so that a council could raise the general rate from 1s. 6d. in the £ to 2s. That, perhaps, might not be very serious, but there was also power to make special rates with regard to any ward, portion of ward, or street. Parliament should be very chary in giving an opportunity to the officials of a council to urge on that council the necessity for

bleeding the ratepayers. The present rating in Perth rendered property unprofitable to the owners, and it was not right that powers should be sought, as proposed in the Bill, to increase the taxation. He assured the hon. member (Mr. A. Forrest) that he had no wish to reflect upon him, but he (Mr. George) would feel much more confidence in the measure after it had been thoroughly investigated by the law officers of the Crown, and placed before the House by a responsible Minister. Municipal government was only a phase of the general government of the country, and therefore the Ministry might fairly be charged with the drafting and conducting of such a Bill through the House. In conclusion, he emphasised the statement that he should be sorry indeed if the hon. member in charge of the Bill should think that his opposition had sprung from factiousness. That was not so. That opposition had been prompted by sympathy for the ratepayers of a large city like Perth; moreover, nothing could be done to affect the ratepapers of Perth without affecting the ratepayers of other municipalities. That was his excuse, if excuse were needed, for asking the House to adopt the motion, which had been conceived simply with a desire to have the best municipal government that could be got; and the only way in which this kind of government could be obtained was by having the Bill thoroughly examined by the law officers of the Crown and introduced by the responsible Government of the day.

THE SPEAKER said that when he was consulted by the hon. member for the Murray as to the course to be taken to-night, he was rather in doubt as to whether the hon. member could do what he proposed to do. On looking up the matter in *May*, however, he saw that what the member proposed could be done. He would read the extract from *May* for the information of hon. members, because it might be an advantage to them in the future to know what could be done under similar circumstances. *May* said:

When it has not been determined until after the second reading to commit a Bill to a select committee, the Order of the Day for the Committee of the whole House is read and discharged, notice not being required, and the Bill is committed to a select or standing committee; a motion which can be made, although

the Bill is under consideration by a Committee of the whole House.

That was the case on the present occasion. This Bill was under consideration in a Committee of the whole House, and the motion submitted was in order. The question now before the House was that the Order of the Day be discharged, and the Bill be referred to a select committee.

MR. A. FORREST (in charge of the Bill) opposed the motion. There had been too many select committees appointed already, and the few faults the member for the Murray (Mr. George) had found in the Bill could be dealt with by the Committee of the whole House. If a Bill of this number of clauses went to a select committee, it would not reappear in the House this session; and it was absolutely necessary, in the interests of the municipalities, more particularly those on the goldfields, that the measure should become law at once. He failed to see the reason for the position taken by the member for the Murray, because very few clauses of the Bill required amendment, as had been shown by the progress made up to Clause 210. The amendments suggested by the member for South Fremantle (Mr. Solomon) had been accepted, and the amendments placed on the Notice Paper by the member for Toodyay (Mr. Quinlan) had also practically been agreed to. It would take a select committee a very long time to deal with the Bill, and in the end, little or no good would be done. There were plenty of legal gentlemen in the House to point out how the Bill could be improved, and the Attorney General now intended to take an active part in assisting him (Mr. Forrest) in putting the Bill through Committee. He (Mr. Forrest) appealed to the House to let the Bill go through Committee clause by clause, because he felt confident it would receive more useful attention from the members of the House than it could from a select committee of five members.

MR. QUINLAN (Toodyay) said he desired to compliment the member for the Murray (Mr. George) on the kindly manner in which this motion had been submitted, because as a rule that hon. member was inclined to "jump on the chests" of other members. It must be admitted that in moving that progress be reported on this Bill the other evening, the member for the Murray had done

good, because he had given hon. members time to consider questions which had arisen when the Bill was before the House. It had been shown that the Bill required considerable amendment, although some of the clauses referred to by the member for the Murray, as contained in the present Act, had not really been enforced, more especially that power given to the officers of the council to make arrests.

MR. GEORGE: "Or any person" was now interpolated in the clause.

MR. QUINLAN: Although that clause was in the present Act, it was a mistake which ought not to be continued. It was far too considerable a power to give to any officers of the council, and it might, some time or other, render the council liable to pay considerable damages, and he hoped the clause would be expunged. In reference to notice being given to property owners, he had an amendment on the Notice Paper, but he had since found that the municipality were giving notice to owners as well as to occupiers, and he would not proceed with the amendment. Under the Bill the municipality of Perth would be able to strike a rate up to 5s. 6d. in the £, and it was well known that the rates at the present time in Perth were simply abominable, one gentleman he knew, paying 32s. 6d. per week rates on property for which he received £3 a week rent. That was because the house happened to have more than the ordinary quantity of land surrounding it, and the only course left open to this man would be to build on the land; and that, of course, it would not be wise to do at the present time. He (Mr. Quinlan) contended that it was not the duty of either the municipality or Parliament to create conditions calculated to make people discontented with the place, and to drive them away. On the other hand, every encouragement should be given to people to settle here, and not heavy rates imposed on people who, perhaps, were utterly unable to sell their properties. The member for the Murray had done good work in delaying the passage of the Bill, and now might be content to withdraw his motion. The subject had occupied the attention of members inside and outside the House, and they might be able to devise some scheme which would meet the general wishes of the community.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Mr. R. W. Pennefather): An apology was due to the gentlemen who had been engaged in framing this measure; and he, like some others, unwittingly made a mistake in jumping to a conclusion that the marginal notes in the measure were inaccurate. The last evening the Bill was under consideration a clause was referred to, opposite to which was a marginal note—he referred to Clause 205—which gave a reference to the Act from which the clause was taken. He looked up the old Act and saw what was a manifest mistake; but subsequently he came to the conclusion that the marginal note was not misleading. It had been pointed out to him since that the reason the marginal notes appeared to be misleading was that in framing the Bill, instead of grouping together, as in the case of the existing Act, all powers contained in one clause, the provisions had been split into several clauses in the Bill. That was why he and the member for the Murray (Mr. George) fell into the error. The same thing occurred in regard to Clause 210. He had looked up the existing Act, and the difference he could see at once; for while the clause in the Bill comprised not only the powers contained in the particular section of the Act, it also contained powers as to the constitution of the council, which should have been separated; therefore, he thought the Bill was a decided improvement on the Act. As to many other clauses to which the member for the Murray had referred, there was no doubt variance of language, but in substance the clauses were the same as in the present Act; therefore, the objections were not well grounded. Besides, we had already gone more than half-way through the Bill in Committee, and all that time would have been, comparatively speaking, wasted if the motion were carried. He asked the hon. member (Mr. George), in the light of these facts, to withdraw the motion. The hon. member would retain his right, which every member on the Committee had, of challenging every clause when in Committee.

MR. LEAKE (Albany) said he supported the motion of the member for the Murray (Mr. George), for the reason that here was a Bill submitted to the House for the purpose of consolidating and

amending the laws relating to municipalities. *Prima facie*, one supposed it was a consolidating measure, and consequently did not require that careful revision which practically a new Bill required at the hands of the Legislature; but when we looked at the Bill, we found that it was really not a consolidating measure, but, as the hon. member in charge of it had said, it was almost a new Bill; consequently, we might infer there were many new provisions in it which were not contained in the existing Act—in fact, new departures. In matters of this kind it was usual, particularly where a Bill had such a vast scope as this one, to refer it to a select committee, because the scope of the clauses could then be considered and threshed out far better than in Committee of the whole House. It was a pity this Bill was not taken charge of by the Government. It was not submitted, he believed, to the Parliamentary draftsman; for if it had been so submitted, members would have approached the consideration of the measure with greater confidence. The member in charge of the Bill was anxious to have an effectual law as far as municipal government was concerned, and with that he entirely agreed; but the hon. member would admit there were difficulties as to the drafting and as to explaining the ramifications of the Bill.

MR. A. FORREST said he quite agreed with the hon. member.

MR. LEAKE: Without saying anything in derogation, yet the hon. member was not in a position to explain such matters, because more than the explanation of principles was required. One set of clauses bore on another set of clauses, and when we knew that this Bill was framed, not by experts —

MR. A. FORREST: Yes; by experts.

MR. LEAKE: Not experts in Bill drafting, but perhaps experts in municipal government.

MR. A. FORREST: Three firms of lawyers in Perth were consulted.

MR. LEAKE: We did not know whether these lawyers were employed by the municipalities or by the ratepayers. What particular view did the draftsmen take of the question? Was it from the view of the Municipality of Perth, the country municipalities, or the view of the ratepayers? Hitherto measures of this

kind had always come from the Government; they had always been given a vast amount of care and attention, and he (Mr. Leake) knew the difficulties which were in the way of any draftsman in handling matters of this description. It would be better in the interests of all parties if the Bill were submitted to a select committee. It was very difficult for hon. members who had not gone into the details of the Bill, which contained 463 clauses, and was embraced in a volume of 126 pages, to properly consider the measure. It was a very big item, and he confessed to the House that he had not been able to give the measure that consideration he should like to have done this session. It was not as if the Bill had been before the public many months, but it had come down to the House with a great deal of other important legislation, and it was not a matter that anyone could master in a fortnight. He (Mr. Leake) would not undertake that task himself, and he supposed he could read a Bill with most members in the House. He only thought we should be doing well if we gave serious consideration to the suggestion of the member for the Murray (Mr. George), and submitted the Bill for the consideration of a select committee. No harm could be done, and he thought if that course were pursued the Committee might get through the measure in two or three weeks time. No doubt the Bill would pass more readily in the House if it went through the ordeal of a select committee. He supported the motion for a select committee, and so far he had heard no arguments against it. The difficulties of the position were proved by the fact that even at this late moment the Attorney General had promised to assist the member in charge of the Bill; and we might assume the Attorney General had already mastered the clauses, and would be prepared to explain the provisions. Not only had we this Bill of 463 clauses, but there were now on the Notice Paper a number of fresh clauses and amendments to be proposed. Each of those amendments must bear materially upon the clauses as drafted, and there, again, an expert was required. It should be the work of the Parliamentary draftsman to adjust these amendments, and endeavour to fit together this municipal puzzle.

While we had never been able to solve the question of municipal law, this hasty legislation must be a further disadvantage. We could not regard the question merely from the standpoint of Perth and Fremantle and other big towns, for every clause of the Bill might be taken advantage of by the very smallest municipality in the country; and, of course, there was not the same supervision over the small country municipalities as over those situated in populous centres. The Bill related to all classes of the community, and it therefore behoved us to be careful, and to see that too great a power was not put into the hands of small local councils. He would be sorry if the suggested delay would imperil the passage of the Bill this session; but he did not think it would, and he thought the House should accede to the suggestion of the hon. member for the Murray.

MR. OLDHAM (North Perth): The proposal to refer the Bill to a select committee did not meet with his approval, for reasons known to every member who had anything to do with municipal government. When he had the honour to represent a ward in the Perth Council, it was found impossible in almost every instance to secure a conviction against any person who had been offending against the by-laws, whether good, bad, or indifferent.

MR. GEORGE: It was a question of bad by-laws.

MR. OLDHAM: That it was a question of bad by-laws was not known to him; but the municipal authorities found they had no power over many things in relation to which they ought to have power. Notwithstanding all the criticism that had been indulged in against the Bill, and notwithstanding the suggestions that there was a great deal of bad draftsmanship in it, yet not one legitimate fault had been found with the measure up to the present. Even in regard to that clause which caused such a sensation the other night, that even the Premier was led to believe the marginal note was wrong, it would be found the note was almost, if not quite, word for word the same as in the existing Act. In fact, the ratepayers were better protected under the Bill than by the existing Act. By the Bill a council could not part with land unless that land had been

purchased. Under the existing Act land had to be subject to a special trust before the council were prevented from selling it. The Bill read, "and not otherwise subject to any trust," which was a much more stringent provision than that of "a special trust." He hoped the hon. member in charge of the Bill (Mr. A. Forrest) would not agree to refer the measure to a select committee. The House could easily deal with the Bill unassisted. The measure contained some admirable provisions, and while the hon. member could not expect it to pass through the House intact, still, to refer it to a select committee would be a mistake, because the result would be that municipalities would probably have to exist till another session of Parliament under the clumsy Act at present in force.

MR. GEORGE (in reply as mover): Nothing he had heard gave him reason for altering the opinions expressed in his opening speech. The member in charge of the Bill was continuing his previous tactics by attempting to force the measure through without amendment.

MR. A. FORREST said he had not said so.

MR. GEORGE: Reference to *Hansard* would prove the statement. Was the hon. member to be allowed to be an autocrat? If so, discussion would be useless. One did not object to improving municipal law; but he did object to making serious inroads on the liberties of the people. How could the House give adequate consideration to the measure when the member in charge had the power, and almost used brute force to secure its passage.

MR. A. FORREST: Was the hon. member in order? He (Mr. A. Forrest) had never asked any hon. members to support the Bill, nor was he putting any pressure on members.

MR. GEORGE said he was not speaking of direct pressure; but the hon. member knew that his (Mr. Forrest's) mere statement that he would force the measure, was equivalent to most effective pressure on certain other hon. members. He would press the motion to a division, because he would like the ratepayers of other towns to know that the chief municipal officer of Perth was prepared to ignore the rights of the poorer ratepayers, for the purpose of carrying out the vaunt of being able to push through the House

a Bill which ought to have been in charge of the Government.

MR. A. FORREST: Had the hon. member any right to say that?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member for the Murray should not make such an observation.

MR. GEORGE withdrew the observation, which, he said, had been forced from him. Sufficient had perhaps been said to awaken the slumbering ideas of responsibility on the part of the Attorney General, who had now promised to give close attention to the Bill and explain the effect of the clauses. He knew the motion would be defeated, and, as the Bill progressed in Committee, he would ask hon. members to carry amendments which commended themselves to his common sense.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir John Forrest): It would be unwise, after going so far with this long and important Bill, to refer it to a select committee; and he advised the hon. member for the Murray (Mr. George) to place on the Notice Paper any amendments he desired. No doubt the hon. member had given close attention to the clauses of the measure; and it was open to every member to suggest amendments in the same way as he (the Premier) and other members had done.

MR. GEORGE: Did no new lights break in on the Premier in the course of discussion?

THE PREMIER: Yes; but after reading the whole Bill through, he found nothing to justify its being sent to a select committee.

MR. GEORGE: That was just where the Premier and himself differed.

THE PREMIER: But considering the amount of other select committee business there was now, it would be difficult to get members to do the work. The Committee of the whole House could much better deal with the subject; and he had asked the Parliamentary draughtsman and other officers to examine the Bill, in order to see, particularly, whether any rights of the Government were infringed. Some amendments had already been made with a view to affording reasonable protection to the Government.

MR. GEORGE: Was it not necessary to also protect the ratepayers?

THE PREMIER: Ratepayers could very well look after themselves.

MR. GEORGE: That was what the ratepayers were trying to do.

THE PREMIER: The whole of the municipal councils had been criticising, examining, and generally assisting in framing the Bill, and no doubt they had in view the protection of the ratepayers. He did not know that it was his duty to look after ratepayers, when they had trusted officers to see to their interests. If he saw anything in the Bill which infringed on the rights of the ratepayers he would certainly use his influence to have it removed. The other evening, he joined with the member for Albany (Mr. Leake) and others to expunge from the Bill the right to sell lands belonging to municipal councils, as he thought that was a power municipal bodies should not possess, and he still thought so. He looked on municipal councils as merely trustees for the people represented by them, and these bodies had no right to alienate lands which had been entrusted to them. It would not do any good to refer the Bill to a select committee, if the House did so, we might give up all hope of passing the measure this session, because the Bill had to go to another place.

MR. GEORGE: Better not pass the Bill than have defects in it.

THE PREMIER: It would be better to pass the Bill if it had some minor defects in it, because those defects could be set right subsequently. Depend upon it the members of municipal councils who had to go up for re-election were not going to recommend provisions in the Bill which would be found to be irksome or against the interests of the citizens: he trusted municipalities to look after the interests of those they represented. He hoped the Bill would not be sent to a select committee.

MR. HALL (Perth) said he did not wonder at the hon. member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest) objecting to the insinuation of the member for the Murray (Mr. George), that the member for West Kimberley was, by brute force, as he called it, going to pass the Bill through the House. The insinuation was that all that the member for West Kimberley had to do was to say the Bill must go through, and members on this (the Government) side would have to do as stated.

MR. GEORGE said he never mentioned any side of the House.

MR. HALL: No one thought the member for West Kimberley had that influence in the House. He objected to the Bill going to a select committee, because he felt the object of the member for the Murray was to shelve the Bill.

MR. GEORGE: Nothing of the kind.

MR. HALL said he was giving his opinion.

MR. GEORGE: Then the opinion was wrong.

MR. HALL: The Bill had been considered by delegates from all the municipalities of the colony; it had been well threshed out, and the municipal bodies were desirous that the Bill should become law. The statement was made by an hon. member, but it had been withdrawn, as to the worthlessness of municipal conferences. He (Mr. Hall) had had the honour and pleasure of being president of two municipal conferences, and he could assure hon. members that a vast amount of work was done at these conferences. A little pleasure, naturally, took place after the work of the conference was done, but he was sure a great deal of valuable work was done, and it was not right that the hon. member should endeavour to belittle the work done by those gentlemen who took upon themselves public duties for which they received no recompense whatever, except plenty of abuse.

MR. GEORGE said he did not belittle the conferences.

MR. HALL: The hon. member stated that municipal conferences were only "guzzling matches."

MR. GEORGE: That was so.

MR. HALL: It did not seem that the hon. member found much wrong with the Bill; and surely in this House we could amend any clause we thought necessary, or strike it out. He hoped the House would consider the Bill, and that it would not be referred to any select committee to be thereby shelved.

Motion (Mr. George's) put and negatived.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 11:11 p.m. until the next day.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 7th September, 1899.

Papers presented—Question: Attendances of Delegates at Federal Convention Question: Loading Vessels at Fremantle—Question: Harbour Dues, Concessions to Mail Steamers—Question: Albany Harbour (Princess Royal)—Question: Boring for Coal near Albany—Question: Kimberley Stock Returns Municipal Loans Validation Bill, first reading—Land Act Amendment Bill, first reading—Roads and Streets Closure Bill, third reading—Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Bill, second reading; renewed and concluded—Electoral Bill, Re-committal; reported—Constitution Acts Consolidation Bill, in Committee, Clauses 1 to 8, Divisions; progress—Patents, Designs, and Trade Marks Bill, second reading (moved)—Municipal Institutions Bill, in Committee, Clauses 210 to 276; progress—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the PREMIER: 1, Correspondence between Premiers, etc., re construction of railway from South Australia to Western Australia; 2, Correspondence as to Mail Service, Yalgoo, Yuin, etc., on motion by Mr. Wallace.

Ordered to lie on the table.

QUESTION—ATTENDANCES OF DELEGATES AT FEDERAL CONVENTION.

MR. JAMES, without notice, asked the Premier when it was proposed to complete the return moved for by the member for the Murray (Mr. George), as to the attendances of Western Australian delegates at the Federal Convention.

The PREMIER: The return has been laid on the table.

MR. JAMES: Part of the return was laid on the table, but the Premier said at the time that there had not been time to prepare the full return.

THE PREMIER: A telegram has been sent to Melbourne, but no reply has as yet been received.

MR. JAMES: The right hon. gentleman has been able to find out the number of my attendances at the Convention.

THE PREMIER: I went through the records myself, in order to get the attendances of the member for East Perth.

MR. JAMES: Then the Premier ought to go through the records and get the attendances of the other delegates.