

pilfering. It was stated during the last session that a lot of these goods which were indented were for immediate needs; but it is a strange thing that a lot of valuable machinery, which must have cost thousands of pounds, has been lying at Fremantle nearly three years, and is still rusting and rotting away. In a period of grave financial necessity, despite the roseate hue placed upon it in the Governor's Speech, we are accumulating, day by day, and adding to those stores, until, before a couple of months are over, something like a million pounds' worth of stores, which are not needed, will be lying there, rotting and rusting and uncared for. [MR. HUBBLE: That is not true.] Another matter I wish to briefly refer to is the fact that in the South-Western district there has been a lot of land thrown open for timber leases; and I am sorry the Commissioner of Crown Lands is not in his place to-day, for I know that in this matter he is fully in accord with me. A number of those leases have been taken up and others applied for merely for speculative purposes; and I take it that if, in regard to our goldfields, we insist that leased ground shall be worked, then I say that if we let out by leasing what I consider a source of wealth not much inferior to our Eastern goldfields, we should shackle those leases with the condition that they must be worked, and not be held for speculative purposes. The hon. member for East Kimberley (Mr. Connor) made some remarks on a question about jumping seats in this House, which matter might well have been left alone, although I may say someone jumped my seat, and the Press, in their kindly manner, made some joking remarks about me. I do not mind them, for I know they did not mean any harm, and I know there was no intentional discourtesy on the part of new members in taking seats which might have been appropriated by other members in previous sessions. Referring now to federation, I will ask hon. gentlemen: Do we meet here to show that we want federation, or have we met to shelve it? It seems to me the delegates who went to the Federal Convention last time practised what I will not call a conspiracy of silence; and I will not even say, as an hon. gentleman did in the other chamber last evening, that they went to

the Convention as students, for I take it that if this colony sends men to the Federal Convention it sends them, not as students, but as representatives. If we do want federation, for goodness' sake let us go straight at it, and show what we really mean. It is no use our sitting here a few days to play with federation, for that would be merely wasting the country's money and our time. Whether we want federation or we do not want it, let us grasp the nettle, and show at once that we are in earnest in dealing with this great question. [AN HON. MEMBER: What do you say about it?] When the federation debate comes on, I shall be prepared to say what I have to say. But this is the proper time to ask hon. members to be earnest in this matter, and make up their minds as to whether they want federation or not. It may be said that it would be undignified for this colony to withdraw from the federation movement now by taking no part in the next Convention; but I say that if this House decides that it does not require federation, we shall stand far higher in the estimation of the other colonies by declaring at once that we believe in federation as a theory, but that in practice we are not ready for it at present.

MR. HUBBLE: The object for which we are assembled, as the Attorney General told us yesterday, is first to dispose of the Address-in-Reply, and afterwards to deal with the Commonwealth Bill, and with the granting of supplies. I have risen now to contradict some remarks made by the hon. member for the Murray (Mr. George) in reference to a certain amount of Government stores, which he says represent nearly a million of money, lying on open ground at Fremantle, exposed to the weather and going to rust. Although not myself a representative of Fremantle, yet it is well known I am closely connected in business with the Fremantle district, and I cannot allow the remarks of the hon. member to pass uncontradicted, when he says there is a wasteful and unwarranted expenditure there. As a matter of fact, being myself in the iron trade, I may say the material now exposed to the weather at Fremantle is not any article which will depreciate in value to any material extent. [MR. GEORGE: What about the engines?] Those engines are out in the open air from

the first of January to the last day of December, and they have only to be cleaned and treated as engines are treated in the ordinary course of engineering work. The bulk of the material one sees lying on the outside at Fremantle is composed of wheels and iron frames for carriages, and so on ; and it is no great detriment for such material to lie in the open air before being put together for use. Referring to the Address-in-Reply, I have to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, as other members have done, on your being re-appointed to the honourable position of Speaker of this House ; and I feel certain you will do all you can to assist new members ; and if at any time I, as a new member, should need your kindly guidance, I feel sure you will readily put me in the right way. The main object of the Address-in-Reply is to pass a vote for supplies during September and October ; and this, I feel no doubt, will be brought forward and settled to the satisfaction of the House. In reference to the Commonwealth Bill, I regret that so much time has been taken up to-night in discussing it in advance, seeing that we have to go into committee upon its clauses in a day or two, and then we shall have full opportunity for discussing the whole measure. Too much time has been taken up in referring to it and to other matters which might be better dealt with at some future time. I have very much pleasure in supporting the adoption of the Address-in-Reply.

MR. OLDHAM : From the remarks of the Attorney General, I understood that Parliament had been called together particularly for the purpose of sending delegates to the Federal Convention. Therefore, I intend to take a somewhat unusual course—if it is not very unusual for a new member to enter into a subject of a congratulatory nature—and congratulate ourselves on the fact that the occasion which calls forth our maiden effort in this House is a subject to which no one can say the least sign of party politics attaches. In venturing to address a few observations which I consider to have some bearing on this important subject, I recognise that my inexperience may lead me to commit some errors which would be avoided by hon. members having a better knowledge of the methods of procedure and usages which govern

debate in this Chamber. I feel also that I may possibly, for the purpose of eliciting some information on this subject which I think is necessary, ask some questions of the hon. gentlemen who occupy the Treasury Bench, which seem to me to be pertinent ones, but which, after all, may only serve to show that I possess, in common with some other members of this House, a good deal of ignorance on the subject of federation.

MR. DOHERTY : On which side of the House do you mean ?

MR. OLDHAM : On both sides.

MR. DOHERTY : Speak for yourself, then.

MR. OLDHAM : I recognise, in venturing to say a few words on this subject and expressing my ideas, that the ideas which I do express will not probably receive the same credence or notice that would be given to speeches coming from hon. gentlemen who occupy seats on the front Ministerial bench ; for by virtue of the position they occupy it is generally understood that in speaking on a constitutional question, Ministers are entitled to greater credence than may be given to any ideas I may put forward. I am not egotistical enough to believe that the opinions that I may express will be received with greater credence than the opinions of hon. gentlemen who have had the honour and advantage of occupying seats in a previous Parliament. I do not propose to set myself up as an authority on a constitutional matter, for to do this it would be necessary to have had some legislative experience, and that I have not. But I believe I possess a knowledge of the fundamental principles of the British Constitution, and I believe—and I hope the House will believe me when I say so—that the position which the House has been led into by the Government on this question of federation is altogether a false one. I believe the Government are playing shuttlecock with the cause of federation, and I believe that they have violated the principles, or at least the ideas of a majority of the people of this colony as to what are the principles of the British Constitution, as affecting the rights of the people. We have been told by an eminent authority that there is a great deal of ignorance existing in the colony and in this House with reference to this question, and I have