

those places that are marked out for railway construction. I think this is a put-off, and I think that the people resident there should not be put off longer than it is possible to avoid it. These mines at Norseman are proved to be good gold producing mines, and more likely to be permanent than many of those that are now being worked; and, therefore, I do not see that the construction of this line should be delayed longer than possibly can be helped. It will do the colony good and support a very large population. I would also like to point out that the supply of firewood at Esperance Bay will very soon be exhausted. There is an immense amount of garden land at Esperance Bay; there is very little wheat-growing country till you go 40 or 50 miles inland; but, if you get sufficient rainfall, wheat and cereals grow well. From my experience, which has not been inconsiderable, of that country, I am of the opinion that a sufficient amount of rain does fall to grow corn on those lands. It can be cleared at a tolerably easy rate, and, therefore, the line would not pass through a country which would be useless. It would be a perfectly level line which would present no engineering difficulties, and a line which ought to be undertaken. I was pleased to notice that the Government are not prepared to make any reduction in the food duties. With the enormous expenditure now going on, the Government would be hardly justified in doing anything which would reduce the revenue. This expenditure does not benefit one section of the community alone, but every member of the community benefits by the expenditure, and therefore every member should contribute to it. I am therefore pleased to see that the Government are not prepared to reduce the revenue. I am very pleased to find that at length the Home authorities have consented to turn over the aborigines to the Government here. I am sure the poor beggars themselves will benefit by it, for I am sure they have benefited very little from the imperial supervision. There are many parts of the colony where these poor starving natives should receive consideration and attention, and I fully anticipate that under the present Government an order of things will be established by which these poor creatures will benefit. We know that they are fast becoming

extinct in any part of the country you can approach. Where civilization has been extended they soon die out. They have an insatiable craving for drink, and if they possibly can get it they will. Having had a considerable experience with them, I may say that I have met as fine characters among them as among the whites, and with as kind-hearted creatures among them as among the whites. I thank you all for having given me a kind hearing, and I hope during the ensuing session the House will make satisfactory progress with the work before it.

HON. A. H. HENNING: I do not propose to deal in detail with the items in the Speech which his Excellency has delivered. As a retrospect it is admirable. It is matter indeed for congratulation that we find such wonderful strides have been made by this colony in the past; but as a forecast, and I think this Speech should in its main character be a forecast, I venture the opinion that it is, to say the least of it, disappointing. We find it is pretty well filled with statements of works that have been or are being done, and that it tells us of things that are not to be done. In one paragraph we are told that the Coolgardie water scheme has been shelved, and in the same paragraph we are told that the committee of experts have confirmed the opinion of the Engineer, and that the Government are more than ever convinced that no other means are available to provide a certain, cheap, and good supply of water for the goldfields. It is also tacitly admitted that the need for a water supply still exists; and since that is so, and the Government scheme will give us a certain, good, and abundant supply, why is it not to be carried out, especially remembering that the project was authorised by the last Parliament? If we find that railways authorised at the time of the water supply project are being proceeded with, why should this not be carried out, seeing that it is a matter of far more advantage and profit, not only to the goldfields, but to the colony at large? There can be no comparison between the benefits that are to accrue to the country from the carrying out of a water scheme and from the construction of the railways named. If there is no other scheme, as we are informed, and the Government scheme is a good one, and can be carried out at the



estimated cost, then why are we not to have it at once? We are told that there are several measures dealing with railways and public works, *etcetera*, that will be brought in, and "many others." I think we might have been told of their nature, instead of being informed in general terms that there are others. In the 22nd paragraph of the Speech, we are informed that the tariff is to be maintained, and two reasons are given why the food duties are not to be interfered with. The first is that it is an inopportune time to reduce the revenue, and secondly that it would discourage the rapidly increasing occupation and improvement of the land in the colony. Are we to gather from this that the revenue derived from the food duties is absolutely necessary for the general administration of the Government? Are the duties absolutely necessary for that purpose, and not required to foster what we are told are local production and native industries? Not so very long ago we were told by the Premier at Bunbury that the revenue derived from the food duties was not required—that the duties were not retained for revenue purposes. That was what the Premier told us in March last. What has brought about the change that we should now be told those food duties must be retained for the purpose of revenue? What is the reason given by the Government? That the abolition of the duties might discourage settlement on the land. I can see no connection between those food duties and settlement on the land. It is not the existence of those duties which has impelled and induced people to avail themselves of the opportunities provided by the Crown Lands Act. It is not for that purpose they have settled on the land: it is because of the market. People have come here and increased the population and the market, and it is the excess of demand over and above supply that has caused the settlement. To be told that settlement on the land is brought about by retaining the duties, to me, at any rate, appears childish. I have not the figures for the present year; but, taking the figures which the Premier gave at the time I have mentioned, each individual of the population of the colony for the year preceding March last paid to the Govern-

ment in food duties 30s. per head. In addition to that, I think they paid an equal sum to the local producer, who got the same price for his article as was given for the imported article, *plus* the duty. In addition to that, owing to the restricted supply, a fictitious price was also obtained; and, consequently, the people of this colony paid for that year considerably over £3 per head for the right to exist here, and for no other purpose than for the benefit of those who are interested in local productions. It is the majority of the population who came here and went out into the desert, and there by their energy developed what is now recognised as the great industry—the backbone of the country—the mineral wealth of the colony. I am not dealing particularly with the goldfields people, because the high prices press just as hard on all who are not engaged in or benefited by the duties. The prices press equally on the people resident in the coastal regions as on the inhabitants of the goldfields. It is an iniquitous thing, considering the limited supply and the natural advantages enjoyed by the local producer, that the people of this colony should be mulcted, as they are by those duties. As I have said, the settlement on the land is a matter for congratulation. We have seen vast areas taken up recently. The impetus given to that settlement is due entirely to the market and the limited supply, and not to the retention of the food duties. Since the whole colony has freely expressed its will, not only through the press but during the recent elections, the Government should bow to the will of the people, and at any rate moderate or reduce to some extent those duties. Subject to what I have said, I give my support to the Address-in-Reply, moved by the Hon. Mr. Randell.

THE MINISTER OF MINES (Hon. E. H. Wittenoom): Sir, before proceeding to make any remarks in connection with what has fallen from hon. members on His Excellency's Speech and the Address-in-Reply, I would like to thank those who have expressed themselves satisfied with the efforts the Government have made to promote the interests of this colony. It is exceedingly gratifying to have listened to the majority of the remarks this evening; and even when hon. members have criticised the Government, I thoroughly