

living. Thirty-nine pounds per year has thus been added to the working man's expenses during that period. You cannot get away from it. There is not a better authority on this question than I am. I know that house rents are abominable. I am happy to say, however, that they are coming down now. I am one of the city valuers, and I was glad to see that in one portion of the town a whole row of houses have had their rents voluntarily reduced from 25s. to 22s. 6d., and a requisition went in to the landlord that if the rents were not reduced to £1 per week the whole of his tenants would go in a body. Imagine people doing that a year or eighteen months ago! They would have had to go on their knees to entreat the landlord to raise, instead of to reduce, their rents if they wanted a house. One of the reasons why people have been unable to come here has been that they have had no place to put their families in. Rather than put their families in a tent, they have kept them in the other colonies until they were able to lodge them here comfortably. Another reason is—we all know it, and cannot get away from the fact—the people who come here have had a very sad experience during the Melbourne land boom, and their natural query is, “Is the place going to last?” They do not believe in the place. I said then—I am glad I am not able to say it now: it is, however, only a short time since things have changed—that many people came here for the purpose of making a little money and then going away. Now, I am glad to say, people come here more with the view of stopping among us. I think we need not be afraid about the future of the colony and about people coming here. Let them come here for a couple of years; after that they will settle. Let them go to Melbourne or Sydney, or wherever they like: they will come back again, for they will find on their return that things have changed in the other colonies, and they will be glad to come back here. We have only to get them here for a little while to be sure that they will stop. I would like to refer to one or two things, especially to the speech delivered by the hon. member for North-East Coolgardie, which showed that a great deal of time and labour had been expended, and the figures were very interesting indeed.

The hon. member for East Perth also made a speech. It is always very refreshing to see this gentleman get up, especially if he folds his arms and lectures us. He does not want to lecture us, but he does it all the time. After lecturing members on this side of the House on our duty, and telling us what we ought to do—which I consider a piece of effrontery on the hon. member's part: it “took the cake,” I think—he concluded by telling us that he was going to vote for this motion against the Government. After quietly lecturing us on our duty, and telling us what we ought to do, he winds up by saying that he is going to pair. There are two or three others that would like to pair if they could. I will only say that if I hear a further confirmation of the Premier's promise, in spite of the interjection from the neighbourhood of the right hon. gentleman, I shall vote against the amendment; but unless I get a satisfactory assurance that this question of the abolition of duties will be brought on, I shall vote for the amendment.

MR. LOCKE: It is rather unfortunate that I should, for the first time of rising in this House, have to speak on such an important subject as the food duties. Nevertheless, I do not think I should be doing my duty to my constituents if I did not address myself to this question. When I was returned to this House I beat two other candidates. [AN HON. MEMBER: By a head.] No; by a big majority; and my platform was that, as long as the Premier stuck to his programme as given to us in the Bunbury speech, I would stick to the Government; and there can be no mistaking it. I think every member in this House saw the Premier's Bunbury speech before he went on the hustings at all; and thus members knew what his ideas were—what the Government were prepared to do; and they must have either been returned to support the Government, or to oppose them. On the question of the duties the Premier was very emphatic. He said he would stand or fall by them, and I hope he will. I am very sorry that so many of the goldfields members—new members to me—are in opposition to the Government, and I am very sorry the leader of the Opposition should throw down the gauntlet, as it were, to the farmers. [MR. LEAKE: You mean, pick it up.] We have no al-

ternative but to pick up. The goldfields members say they are going to have free-trade, and the leader of the Opposition twits us with our agricultural railways and bridges over rivers that do not exist. If that is the idea of the goldfields members, they will not be in accord with the ideas of the Southern members. I am glad that some of them, in able speeches, have told us that that is not their will, desire, or intention. If the goldfields members are willing to support the farmers and the pastoralists, the pastoral and agricultural members will be only too glad to help them in opening up their goldfields. I, for one, have much pleasure in supporting anything that would open up the goldfields. It is opening up a market for us and the colony generally. The Government are willing to do the best they can to open up these fields, and it is a great pity that the goldfields members should start, as soon as they get into the House, to oppose the agriculturists. I hope that, when we come to a vote, the goldfields members will show that they are not entirely in favour of the abolition of protection to the farmers. We do not object to the mining industry being protected and having batteries and railways and hospitals, or any scheme that suits them, so long as we have a good market. It is my duty, as long as I am here, to look after the agricultural interests, and I think that, in looking after the goldfields, and in seeing that the goldfields are being opened up, I am treading in the right direction. But, if the goldfields members are prepared to do away with the duties altogether, I will be inclined to go against all their improvements. I do not think the stock tax has anything to do with the high cost of living, or that the duty on flour has anything to do with it. I think it is entirely due to a chain of circumstances. The Premier suggests that if he puts this question off for a year, the difficulties will have vanished—many of them, at any rate. The heavy cost of living is due to the rents; and they are righting themselves every day. I hope the Government will not be disposed to climb down, as it has been termed. I hope they will stand their ground and have a big majority, because it must be evident to the goldfields members that, as long as the Government are willing to do so much for

them—and the settlers are willing to help the Government to do it—it must do more good than having a free breakfast-table and no public works. I do not think it is necessary for me to say much more, but I want to let the goldfields members know what the sentiments of the agricultural portion of the community are. I am sorry that so many of the goldfields members sit on the Opposition side and follow the tactics of the leader of the Opposition.

MR. LEAKE: I cannot live under this sarcasm.

MR. LOCKE: We cannot live without railways and bridges in the agricultural centres, and a moderate protection; and I hope the goldfields members will realise that we have not got it all. If we get the money in one way, it goes back. A major portion of it is spent on the goldfields.

MR. MITCHELL (Murchison): Little is left to say, there has been so much already said, and, I think, enough. But in adding my mite to the already lengthy talk, I may as well at once say that there is not an hon. member of this House, or anyone outside of it, who would sooner see the total abolition of the food duties than I, providing it could be done without injury to any person, or in any way hampering the Government. I cannot see how this can be; I am, therefore, opposed to the amendment. When anyone comes before the House, as my hon. friend the member for Albany does, supported by other hon. members, and asks the Government to give up such an important portion of the revenue, he should be prepared with some reasonable and workable substitute, and such as would be acceptable to members, because it is pretty well known that the present revenue is none too much for the present requirements; therefore it stands to reason that, if the duty were taken off these articles, it would be placed on something else; and the question arises whether the new order of things would be better than the old. I for one think not. In this colony, as in every other colony, we have a Government to keep up. We have sometimes been told that our Government is a spending Government. There is nothing peculiar about that. It would be peculiar if it were not so; because all Governments are more or less spending Governments. If the present Government has spent propor-