

had been guilty in former years of the crime of garrotting. But closely following on that statement comes another, that this man had been sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment for garrotting. Now, fifteen years is a big penalty, and I should like to ask how often should a man be punished for garrotting? If garrotting was considered to be a crime for which flogging could be given, surely it would have been better to give the man a flogging at once, instead of waiting until he ran away from prison. In my opinion, and in the opinion of many, not only in this House but throughout the country, the penalty inflicted in that case was altogether out of proportion to the offence. If prisons are made to keep prisoners in, they should be so constructed that prisoners cannot get out. I am told that this prisoner had run away two or three times previously. If that be so, it points to a very imperfect prison system in West Australia. Surely it would be better either to pull down the walls of the prison altogether and tell the prisoners they would be flogged if they ran away, or to build the walls in such a way as to prevent prisoners getting out. [The PREMIER: It is a good big wall.] Then the walls should be much bigger, so that the prisoners cannot get out. As to federation, I am strongly in favour of the movement; but I consider that the present moment is possibly a little premature for West Australia to enter into such bonds. She has not yet sufficiently developed her internal resources and affairs to enable her to enter into federation on an equal footing with the sister colonies; and although federation would conduce to the strength, prestige, and general progress and stability of Australia as a continent, West Australia ought to wait a little longer. There is no necessity for West Australia to stand in the way of federation if the other colonies desire to federate. Most of our great federations in the world have not been the result of a spontaneous step taken by all the States at the same time. In most cases a few States have federated first, and other States have come in later when the time suited them; and it would be for the benefit of West Australia if she took the latter step. For West Australia to enter into federation at the present moment would be much

the same as sending a small boy of nine years of age, who had a lot to learn, to school with a young man of twenty-one. West Australia has not only a lot to learn, but she has a lot of work to do. All things considered, West Australia, as she stands at the present moment, is better able to carry on internal works for the benefit and progress of the colony than she would be under federation.

MR. F. WILSON (the Canning): You, sir, have been inundated with congratulations on your re-election to the honourable position you occupy, and it is, therefore, unnecessary for me to do more than say you also have from me, as a new member, my heartiest congratulations. I would merely add that I believe you will receive from the new members of the House that loyal support in the chair which you have received from older members in past sessions. I do not wish to go into a long speech in connection with the motion before the House; but I should like briefly to glance at the clauses of His Excellency's address, and make a few comments. In the first place, the Speech is generally characterised by its brevity. The paucity of information may be its chief recommendation to honourable members on the opposite side of the House; but I must say that, as far as I am concerned, the address gives very little ground work on which to enable a new member to make his maiden speech. Reading between the lines, as I think I can do, it seems to me that the Government imply by this speech that they have done very well without Parliament for the past ten months, and that if we grant them supplies for a further period, they are quite prepared to go on without Parliament as long as we permit them to do so. We have the assurance of the Premier that we are all right—that the finances of the country are in order, and that we need have no fear. Still, I think that it is not our duty to our constituents, and to the country, to accept assurances only. I should like to find out as to what the country's engagements are in the immediate future, before I can come to a definite conclusion as to our financial position. It appears to me that we are asked not to discuss the two matters mainly mentioned in the speech in order to allow the delegates, who are neither representative of the people nor



of the Parliament as at present constituted, to attend the Federal Convention in New South Wales. For such a purpose we should not run the slightest risk of letting our own House get into disorder; and if Parliament is to be closed down for another couple of months we certainly run a serious risk. Federation is not of such paramount importance as to justify our running any such risk. I know of no greater conception than federation. I can think of nothing emanating from the brain of man more calculated to fire the blood of a British-born subject. To unite a number of States into one grand nation is a work which all would heartily support. It is a question much too great in importance to be rushed, and I, for one, require some time to fully consider the Commonwealth Bill, before I am prepared to commit myself on its clauses. Federation is a subject on which we ought to educate ourselves, and not only ourselves, but, if possible, the people whom we represent; and the best way of educating the people of this colony on the question would be to let them elect delegates who have to represent them. Surely it is unreasonable, from the standpoint of a new member at any rate, to expect the House to consider this momentous question—to go through the numerous clauses of the Bill, and debate, pass, and amend it if you will, within a few days. In the other colonies the Parliaments have been called together, and have been considering the Commonwealth Bill for six or seven weeks, and are not yet done with the measure. I do not think it is right or fair that we should be called on to consider and pass this Bill in such a hurry. I now wish to refer to the financial clauses in the Speech. As I said before, we have nothing before us on which to enable us to come to a correct conclusion. It is a strange thing—and I have asked many members of the House for information—it is a strange thing that no information is forthcoming from the Government. People outside and the press seem to know more of the financial position of the colony than the members of this House. It is true that the Premier, in the form of a newspaper interview, has offered us some ground-work to go on; and we know from the Speech that the Government is not indebted to any finan-

cial institution within the colony. We also know from the Premier's statement that we are not indebted to any financial institution outside the colony.

MR. CONNOR: Is the hon. member for the Canning in order in reading his speech?

MEMBERS: New member.

MR. WILSON: The hon. member for East Kimberley is quite at liberty to look at my notes if he wishes after I am done. I was saying I was gratified to hear we were not indebted to any financial institution either within or without the colony; but in considering the financial standing of any private commercial institution we always take, with a great amount of care, the statements of a person who flourishes his bank balance in our faces. We are apt to think if a man boasts of the amount to his credit, that there are many liabilities behind, which will have to be provided for, and it may be that although we have £90,000 odd to our credit at the present time, our liabilities are many hundreds of thousands of pounds. I should like to find out if I can how we are financially situated, say for the next six months, and then I would be prepared, with the figures before me, to discuss the question in detail.

THE PREMIER: You will never get that until the Treasurer makes his Financial Statement.

MR. WILSON: The fact that appeals most forcibly to me at the present time is that the Premier says we will not, for some time, be borrowing in London. I should like to know where the Premier does intend to borrow. My experience is that if you cannot borrow in London, you can borrow nowhere else.

THE PREMIER: I do not think I said that.

MR. WILSON: It appears in the morning papers.

THE PREMIER: Well, I did not say it.

MR. WILSON: I am very pleased to hear that also.

THE PREMIER: You are in error: what I said was that we were not likely to raise an inscribed stock loan in London for some time. These were the words I used.

MR. WILSON: Hon. members will agree with me when I say that we have in Perth, and throughout the colony at the present time, a comparative slackening off in trade. Money is tight, and



while there is a slackening off in the building trade, people cannot get houses at a reasonable rental. The cause of the slackening in the building trade cannot be over production. Then what is the cause? It may be there is a loss of confidence in the colony just for the time being; and the question arises, what is the cause of this loss of confidence? To my mind the cause is the huge borrowing policy adopted by the Government last session. There is no doubt in my mind that the financial institutions at Home have for the time being—I should hardly like to say permanently—lost confidence in the administration of the affairs of this colony. My honest opinion is that the cause of the loss of confidence is due to the incubus of the Coolgardie water scheme. That scheme has done more to destroy our credit at Home than anything else the Government could conceive. It seems to me wrong entirely that a small population such as we have here, should be overburdened with taxation for the sake of carrying water to two or three centres, three or four hundred miles from the city. [A MEMBER: They will pay for it.] That is very doubtful indeed. I do not want to go into details, but from a practical point of view I maintain it is utterly impossible to obtain, by one central scheme, the result desired. To talk of supplying a wide extent of country equal to Great Britain in area by one central pumping scheme is absurd. (A MEMBER: What scheme do you propose?) I am quite willing to tell the House what I would propose. If you are going to supply the goldfields with adequate water for domestic and battery purposes, you must have twenty or thirty schemes. Each district must have its own scheme. To pass on, I should like to express my disappointment that the Speech does not allude to matters which I consider of very great importance to the country. First and foremost, some reference should be made to the abolition or reduction of the food duties. Living is too high in this colony, and the duties could be reduced very extensively, and in many cases abolished, without injuring the producer or the agriculturist. According to the Premier in his speech at Bunbury, this was one of the burning questions of the day; and surely it ought to have found some place in the Gover-

nor's Speech. I plead guilty to being a novice in these matters, and perhaps I am mistaken; nevertheless I should have liked to see some indication as to whether the present tariff is to be amended or reduced. The food duties affect us all; and whether we are miners, timber cutters, agriculturists, or fruit growers, a reduction in the tariff would of necessity help us. Such a reform would attract population and increase consumption enormously. There is another matter which I regret is not referred to in the Speech; that is the question of Civil Service reform, which ought to receive immediate attention. After having walked through the different departments here, it appears to me that the sooner we have some board to make the necessary appointments to the Civil Service, after due examination, the better it will be for the Government and all concerned. Another question which I hope will be taken into consideration is that of free education—absolutely free education. I know it is stated that education in this country is practically free at the present time, but I dispute that. A man certainly may obtain free education for his children if he likes to declare himself a pauper; but is any British subject going to submit himself to that indignity? I understand, furthermore, that the fees are so meagre, and realise such a small amount, that they are hardly worth collecting. In fact, I believe the fees scarcely pay for the clerical labour of keeping the accounts. [A MEMBER: The fees realise £1,500 a year.] Let us sweep the fees away, and have absolute free education. I should also like to hear something about the proposed amendment of the law relating to the restriction of the immigration of Asiatics.

THE PREMIER: You do not seem to understand the object of this special meeting of Parliament.

MR. WILSON: As far as I know, as a new member, His Excellency's Speech is all we have before us to work on; and so long as I am in order, I presume I may go on with my remarks. No doubt the question of the restriction of the immigration of Asiatics is a very formidable one; but it is a question which the longer it is put off the worse it will be to handle. If the Government is wise in its generation, it will take the matter into hand



forthwith, and introduce a measure which we can consider and possibly come to a conclusion on. Then I should have liked some expression in the Speech with regard to the drainage question. We have had a scheme for the drainage of Perth delayed and dangled before us so long that the citizens have become tired of the matter, and have lost all hope of ever seeing it carried out. I would like to hear the Government give some assurance that the scheme will be pushed on, and put in hand forthwith. Surely the capital city of this great colony deserves better treatment. A sewerage system is absolutely necessary for the welfare of the people, and it ought not to have been delayed and kept back as it has been.

THE PREMIER: As the scheme in Melbourne was for some time.

MR. WILSON: I do not intend to discuss matters in detail. I have simply outlined what strike me as being the most urgent questions to be dealt with, and have expressed my disappointment that nothing has been said in the Speech which would lead us to suppose those questions will be considered at an early date. I may at some future date have an opportunity of threshing out all these questions, when I hope I shall not be backward in expressing my opinion. In conclusion I should like to say that, although comparatively a new-comer, my interests and the interests of most of those who come from other colonies are now wrapped up in this colony, the home of our adoption. We are equally anxious with the older members of the House, and with gentlemen who were born here, for the well-being of Western Australia. I claim for members who sit on this side of the House credit for the same honest motives which are claimed by hon. members who sit opposite. We intend, as far as our ability goes, to support all measures which will conduce to the welfare of the country in which we live.

MR. W. JAMES (East Perth): If I fail to join my voice in the chorus of compliment to you, Mr. Speaker, on your election to that honourable and distinguished office, it is because I think this House should congratulate itself on the fact of your being the occupant of that distinguished office. I recognise there are cases in which the office reflects honour on

the occupant, but there are other cases in which the occupant reflects honour on the office, as it is in the case of one who has for so many years filled the high office of Speaker in this House with so much satisfaction to members and with such complete justice and integrity. I also add my congratulations to the two new members who have spoken on the Address-in-Reply, as mover and seconder, and all of us must feel how much this House is strengthened by their accession to our ranks. I am glad to see also that in some of these new members we have straight and robust advocates of democratic principles. I also want to congratulate the Government—this I know will not elicit a “hear, hear” from the member for Geraldton (Mr. Simpson)—upon the position they have taken up in connection with the federation question, and I want to congratulate them on being honest to the people of Australia in being true to the pledges they made when they introduced the Federation Enabling Act. I want them to be true to this great cause of federation, for I should be sorry to think any man, who has his interests in this great continent, and especially any native born Australian, could be indifferent to the importance and advantages of a federal union in these colonies. I may, perhaps, in this matter be an enthusiast, but I am not ashamed of that, and indeed I am foolish enough to say I am proud of it, because I know of no subject that is more worthy of enthusiasm than this question of federation. It does seem to me that those members who are responsible for the somewhat obstructive tactics that have been carried out—

MR. SIMPSON: I rise to a point of order. The hon. member says obstructive tactics have been carried out. I want to know in what way, and to whom he refers, when he says obstructive tactics have been carried out.

A MEMBER: To you, of course.

THE SPEAKER: I do not think the hon. member is out of order.

MR. JAMES: Obstructive tactics have been carried out by members who want to gag free discussion in this House—men who want to set up their peculiar opinions as being the opinions of the people of this colony. These are the men who come into this House and want