

talk about what some members on the other side call a "ring." There is a lot said about this ring; but, if there is one which is supposed to be called the butchers' ring, I know nothing about it. [A MEMBER: Oh, I do.] But I firmly believe there are rings of other descriptions. There are rings in all classes of trade. Why, there are rings even for the lawyers. I was going to call theirs a six-and-eight-penny ring.

MR. LEAKE: You would not get off so cheaply as that.

MR. HUBBLE: The member for Albany would not let me off so cheaply; but I think lawyers have got a very good protection, for they will not allow any new-comer to practise here unless he has been in the colony six months. Why should lawyers be protected any more than the farmer who produces the food we eat? Why should not the producer in the agricultural industry, which we try to foster, be protected the same as lawyers?

MR. DOHERTY: Lawyers generally protect themselves.

MR. HUBBLE: I think I am only echoing the sentiments of nine-tenths of the people of this colony when I say there is no real desire that the present Government should go out of office. We have a good Government, who have piloted us through the last seven years. To-morrow is the anniversary of their accession to power, and we can look back on their period of office with very great pleasure. I ask hon. members both on the Ministerial side of the House and on the other, supposing on a division this Ministry were turned out, whether the future Government would be able to look back on as good a career as the present Government now can.

MR. GEORGE: After seven years they would.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: To which Government do you refer?

MR. HUBBLE: I am speaking of the present Government.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The present administration is only a remnant of the original Government.

MR. HUBBLE: I am sorry the member for Central Murchison has misunderstood my remark. I would like to impress upon members on the Opposition side of the House the necessity of encouraging the

timber trade and every other branch of industry now being carried on in the colony.

MR. GEORGE: What about those industries that have been killed?

MR. HUBBLE: I have one opinion, and that is we ought to make "live and let live" our motto. If this motto were acted upon, the Opposition would see the folly of bringing this amendment before the House. I feel certain that, when a division is taken, should there be a division—

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Oh, there will be a division.

MR. HUBBLE: Then I shall see six or eight members walk over from the other side of the House, leaving the remainder of the Opposition in the comfortable seats they are now enjoying.

MR. OLDHAM: It is not my intention to try and follow the Premier in the feeble attack which he has made on those of us who, up to the present at any rate, can be charged only with trying our best to fulfil the pledges we gave to the people who sent us here to represent them. It is worth while, just in passing, to notice the nature of the complaints which have been brought against us. Strange to say, it is not that the issue has not been made clear or concise, but that the leader of the Opposition has put before the House a proposal divested of all those side issues on which the existence of this Government seems so much to depend. This motion was not proposed with the purpose of putting the Government out of office. Do not mistake me in this. For my own part, personally, I would not have the slightest hesitation in putting this Government out of office; but, still, this proposal was not made with that object. I recognise at any rate that while we are not desirous of putting the Government out of office, there are many hon. members on the other side of the House who are pledged to a reduction of the food duties, and who are also pledged, in a certain degree, to give a general support to the policy of the Government. It was with the object of securing a reduction of the food duties that the proposed amendment was made as mild as it has been. I am rather surprised to find the Premier taking upon himself to ask hon. members on this side of the House to stultify themselves as public men, and go back on their



pledges to the people, simply for the purpose of keeping his Government in power. Coming to the real issue, I have been very much struck during the course of this debate with the wonderful amount of ingenuity possessed by hon. members on the Ministerial side. If they could only prove one-half of what they have said in regard to those food duties—if they could only justify one-tenth of the virtues they claim for those duties—then I, for my part, sitting as I do as far away from the Government as possible, would be very pleased to be found voting for them on this occasion. But one is compelled to examine their statements, for truth's sake. I have been compelled, strange as it may seem, to come to the conclusion that a connection with the agricultural or pastoral interests of this colony has a tendency to develop in a remarkable degree the faculty of imagination. The Premier has developed that faculty. He imagines for the moment that he and his Government represent the majority of the people of this colony. But how can it be said they represent the people of this colony? Last night the Premier quoted biblical history, and spoke about travelling the country from Dan to Beersheba. Let the Premier travel from Encla to the most northern part of the colony, and then I will ask him how many men he will find who are qualified under the Electoral Act to have a vote. Not one man in ten has the franchise. How is it possible, then, that this Government can represent the majority of the people of the colony?

MR. A. FORREST: Whose fault is that?

MR. OLDHAM: I am asked whose fault it is that only one man in ten possesses the franchise. I would ask the gentlemen on the front Ministerial benches to explain one little transaction which occurred in connection with this Electoral Act in my own constituency. Last year, on the last day on which claims could be received, some three hundred were sent in, and fully testified to by the proper officer; but the applicants were not put upon the roll. Mr. Cowan was asked not to sign the roll, so that an inquiry might be made, but did he accede to that request? Certainly not; and yet I am asked whose fault it is that so few men are on the roll. The fault lies with the Government.

THE PREMIER: Oh! that is very good.

MR. OLDHAM: The hon. member for the Gascoyne, who spoke last, also went in for some little imagination. When he was speaking, I believe he said we had a free breakfast table in this colony. His imagination is so vivid that, in response to an interjection by myself, he said that galvanised iron had something to do with a free breakfast table. I had the misfortune during last session of Parliament to say something that was not very polite, and it drew down upon me the 81-ton eloquence of the hon. member for West Kimberley. If I exhibit to-night some degree of nervousness, and speak with more than my ordinary amount of diffidence, I can assure the House that it is not from any want of conviction in the opinions I am expressing. It is really only because I am afraid I should transgress some of those laws of courtesy which are so admirably exemplified in the person of the hon. member for West Kimberley. That hon. member during last session said that the working men did not want a reduction of the food duties. I am very sorry indeed to have to question that statement. I can assure the hon. member that up to the present time he has not been recognised as an authority on the wishes, desires, or aspirations of the working classes of this colony.

MR. A. FORREST: Far more than you: I am satisfied of that.

MR. OLDHAM: We were told by the Premier that the food duties were responsible for high wages.

THE PREMIER: I do not think I said that.

MR. OLDHAM: That is what any person would gather from the Premier's remarks.

THE PREMIER: Oh, yes, "gather."

MR. OLDHAM: We are told also that the food duties are responsible for railway construction, and that they are going to be responsible for public batteries.

THE PREMIER: I did not say so.

MR. OLDHAM: All this reminds one very forcibly of some of those nice little paragraphs in the *West Australian* and the *Morning Herald*. These paragraphs commence with reviewing some historical event—some of the deeds which one may admire—and as we go over those stirring incidents we find all at once that we are



reading an advertisement of some patent medicine. I do not see what connection there is between the battle of Waterloo and Dr. Williams's pink pills, but there is certainly quite as much connection as there is between the food duties and those things which the Premier says will have to be abandoned unless we can continue receiving the revenue from those duties. It is proved very conclusively that in West Australia we have, at the present time, a gentleman who has introduced a new science in political economy. The state of the other colonies, where food is cheap and wages low, is triumphantly pointed to, and it is said the wages are low because the food is cheap. Is that so?

THE PREMIER: I did not say so.

MR. OLDHAM: I think you did say so, and it can be proved by *Hansard*. If this is true, it simply amounts to this, that if South Australia wants a certain revenue, all she has to do is to knock off producing wheat and put a tax on the imported article. If Victoria wants a period of prosperity, let her knock off producing butter and put a tax on the imported article, and then she can go on in the same old game and be a prosperous colony. [A MEMBER: She would be bankrupt.] The hon. member says Victoria would be bankrupt. Last year she had a heavy duty on butter. According to the hon. gentleman, that should make her prosperous. Let New South Wales, if she wants a period of renewed prosperity, inoculate her cattle with the tick or tuberculosis, and put a duty of 1½d. per lb. on meat from New Zealand. I do not wish to say for one moment that the right hon. the Premier has not brought forward some decent arguments. There are two sides to every question, which can be fairly stated, and I think he made the most out of our loss of revenue. I understand from him that we shall lose something like £200,000 per annum, if we abolish the duties upon food supplies; but it is a question whether on the whole our revenue would be decreased, if these duties were taken off. I do not believe it would, but still, admitting for the sake of argument that the right hon. the Premier would receive £200,000 less per annum, what would be done with the money if the Government did not get it? Why, the people would have it. Take my own constituency: if

these people had this money in their pockets, what would they do with it?

[THE PREMIER: Spend it in whisky.] They would buy bricks, timber and iron for the purpose of increasing their little freeholds. Would the abolition of the duties interfere in any way with the spending power of the goldfields? Have not the people a better right to spend this money than the Government, and can they not spend it in a better way than if the Government spent it for them? Can they not spend it to far greater advantage than the Government can do for them? I think they can. I hope hon. members opposite will not deny to hon. members on this side of the House the same privilege that hon. members opposite demand for themselves, and that they will allow that we are equally desirous with themselves of legislating for the best interests of this colony. Where do our people come from? The eastern colonies. Do they intend to stop here? I ask hon. members this question seriously: do the majority of people who come to this colony intend to stop here? Can that question be answered truthfully and at the same time satisfactorily? I say that it cannot be answered satisfactorily. When the people come to this colony they do not intend to stop here, and if, after a time, they do stop here, it is not for the most part from any inclination but from the force of circumstances. Why is this? It reminds one of that old prophet in Holy Writ who, three times a day while in captivity, threw up his window and prayed with his face towards Jerusalem. Believe me the majority of people who come to this colony from the Eastern States look towards the East and pray for their deliverance from Western Australia. It is no use blinking this fact: it may not be palatable, but still it is the truth. The hon. member who is so anxious to attract population to this colony says that he does not mind this fact. I do not know whether his constituents agree with him or not. I may say the bulk of the people and those who have the interests of this place at heart do not agree with him. What is wanted here? We want to attract the population. And in what manner can we attract it?

A MEMBER: Offer them a free breakfast table.

MR. OLDHAM: We can only attract them through their wives and their families. The hon. gentleman, the leader of the Government, gave us to understand last night in his speech that the majority of the people of this colony were, to say the least of it, not teetotallers; that they spend more money in drink than on anything else, or at any rate he said the Government had received more money through the drink bill than through the food supplies. Is there not a reason for this?

A MEMBER: Yes; it is owing to their prosperity.

MR. OLDHAM: Go into the town and into any of the centres of population, and see the men hanging about the public-houses. What is the reason? They have no home to go to. The hon. gentleman must recognise that, if we gave these people the same facilities that they have in other colonies, they would bring their wives and families here, and would not be hanging about the public-houses. Let me draw the attention of the House to the hon. member's remarks last night. He appealed to hon. members not to be trapped, and he asked hon. members most pathetically: "Are you going to hand over the affairs of the colony to the Opposition, because you do not happen to agree with us on one particular subject?" Is the right hon. gentleman sure of that statement? Is he sure that those hon. gentlemen who sit upon this side of the House only disagree with him on one subject? What about the Electoral Act? what about one man one vote? what about payment of members? what about the Asiatic question? Hon. gentlemen upon that side of the House who represent the goldfields are pledged right up to the hilt to the exclusion of Asiatics. What is the hon. gentleman, the leader of the Government, going to do on that question? Does he believe in the exclusion of the Asiatics? I think not. Here is a record of the Asiatic question since 1890. Mr. Solomon, the member for East Fremantle, on the 30th November, 1892, asked the Government, taking into consideration the increasing number of Chinese, "Is it true that the Act dealing with Asiatics is not being strictly carried out?" The hon. gentleman said it was being strictly carried out. Further on the hon. gentleman said that he would be introducing a

Chinese Immigration Bill, which would contain provisions that only one Chinaman should be allowed in this colony for every ship of 500 tons burthen; and in a flowery speech dealing with the exclusion of these people, he said that he wanted to keep this colony for the British race, but he concluded by stating that he was not prepared to say that they could do without Chinamen in the colony. Since then, while the hon. gentleman has been able to pass a measure through this House, he has allowed it to be thrown out in the other Chamber. When the question came to be fought out in this Chamber on the motion by Mr. James, what was the result? The right hon. gentleman and his friends are prepared to support anything in the abstract, but when it comes to placing a statute on the records of the colony, they jib. When the hon. member for East Perth made his first real attempt to deal with this question, and brought a Bill before the House which insisted upon a £100 poll tax on every Asiatic, the leader of the Government was responsible for the rejection of that motion. It was defeated by 19 to 8, and defeated upon the instance of the hon. gentleman. I bring this matter forward for the purpose of showing that too much faith cannot be placed in the promise of the Government to deal with the question of food duties next session. For the purpose of showing that we are not taxed more than any other colony, the right hon. gentleman said last night that, if our tariff had been applied to Victoria, the Victorian Government would have received about £300,000 less than they did. Certainly they would. That is exactly what we are complaining about. I should be ashamed myself to put forward such a very disingenuous argument. The table compiled by the Government Actuary shows that in 1896 there was a duty of 2d. per lb. on butter in this colony, and also in Victoria, but that whereas we received a revenue of £27,107 from it, the Government of Victoria received only £27. Now we have a population of 160,000, and Victoria has a population of something over a million. The House will understand quite distinctly that, to properly compare the tariffs of the two colonies, it would be necessary, before Victoria could receive the same amount of revenue as we do, that they



should put about no less than £3 duty on every pound of butter. The reason is not very distinct.

THE PREMIER: They produce it: that is why.

MR. OLDHAM: They produce it, and we do not produce it. That is the reason why. [THE PREMIER: We want to.] Now the honourable gentleman goes on to say, "I think that every honourable member in this House is in easy circumstances," and he said, "I am sure I never look at the bills." The honourable gentleman I am sure never does look at the bills; but supposing the honourable gentleman lived on seven shillings and sixpence a day and kept a wife and five children out of it, I think he would look at the bills then, and would recognise the severe hardship placed on the workers by this unjust taxation for which he is responsible, and yet we are told that all the trouble is high rents. One honourable gentleman who, I believe, is the greatest sinner in the city of Perth in this respect, told us last night that all the trouble was high rents. Does the honourable gentleman intend to legislate for this high-rent difficulty? Is there any argument in this. Does the honourable gentleman see any logic in saying high rents are the cause of high living? Is that not all the more reason that to counter-balance the high rents we should have cheap food? The honourable gentleman says we have, and I wish particularly to call the attention of the goldfields members to this. I wish to know particularly if they are satisfied with the explanation of the Premier as to the position of affairs. He says we have no time to deal with the tariff, but we will deal with the whole of it next session. This is the speech of the honourable gentleman at Bunbury when he placed the policy of the Government before the people of this colony, and on which he was elected again to the position of leader of the House. "Next session I intend to deal with it." Now he says he only wants time to establish the agricultural industry. "Give us a few years," says he. "Give us five years, and I believe then we will tell you a different tale." Are honourable gentlemen satisfied with that position of the matter? I ask the honourable gentlemen who represent the goldfields, and go and sit on the Government side of the House, to ask the

Premier what he is prepared to do next session. I will be satisfied with any explanation he can offer. Let any honourable gentleman representing a goldfields constituency ask the leader of the Government if next session he is prepared to take the tax off frozen meat.

THE PREMIER: We will not require any frozen meat.

MR. OLDHAM: Whatever the result of this debate may be, whatever may be the intention of the Government, I do not know; but one thing I do know, that in every constituency in which there was a contest, the successful candidate was elected pledged to vote either for or against a reduction of these food duties. [A MEMBER: No.] With the exception, I believe, of my friend the honourable member for Pilbarra; I believe his was the only constituency in this colony in which there was a contest, where the honourable gentleman who was successful was not pledged either for or against a reduction of the food duties; and the result of the general election was simply this, that a majority were returned to the House pledged to a reduction of the food duties. [THE PREMIER: I deny it.] The honourable gentleman may deny it as much as he likes; still it is the truth. Whatever political exigencies of the moment may compel my honourable friends, the democrats on that side of the House, to vote against their convictions or not, I do not know; but even putting aside those honourable gentlemen who were diplomatic enough to lead the electors to believe that they were in favour of a remission of these duties—and they would not have stood "Buckley's show" of being elected to the House if they said otherwise—leaving this out of the question, I say most emphatically a majority of members were returned to this Chamber pledged to vote for a reduction of the duties on food.

A MEMBER: Not for turning out the Government.

MR. OLDHAM: Certainly not for turning out the Government. I should be sorry to take it on myself to try and instruct honourable members how to vote; but this is a question that has been before the people, upon which the people have given their verdict, and upon which the people have a right to expect implicit obedience on the part of those gentlemen

whom they have elected as their representatives in this Chamber. They have a right to expect that obedience. It is a question on which depends not only the welfare of the gold mines, not only the mining industry, not only the welfare of the people who live in the centres of population, but it is a question on which depends even the welfare of the agriculturists themselves; and I appeal to honourable gentlemen supporting the Government—I am appealing now to gentlemen pledged to vote for this particular question—to remember that they cannot shirk their obligation. This obligation is far above that of any Minister of the Crown here. It is an obligation which cannot in any way be sacrificed without bartering the trust of the people whose representatives they are in Parliament.

MR. MORAN: I think we have heard from the two opposing sides of the House a good deal of the sum and substance of the question; but the matter as it appears to members on this particular part of the benches is, have they no confidence in the Forrest Ministry? Some honourable members on the Opposition benches have thought necessary to read to the goldfield members homilies how to vote and act. It is not those who have been a long time in this House who have taken upon themselves to direct the goldfield members how to vote; but it is the schoolboy in knickerbocker politics who reads these lectures to others. The member for Central Murchison, who is an old politician, has not ventured on that line of conduct which formed the principal part of the 19½ yards of pump water we had from the honourable member for North-East Coolgardie. The honourable member who used to represent Nannine, but who now represents Central Murchison, knows too much about the common courtesy due to new members, and he has too much wisdom to lecture them. When the honourable member for North-East Coolgardie has been a little longer in the House, he will show a little more attention to the subject at issue, and not, as I said before, deal us out these long homilies, mixed up as this was, I am sorry to say, on almost the first occasion he has spoken in public life in this House, with the most insulting remarks on the oldest inhabitants of Western Australia. This may be his

view of carrying out the interests of his constituency. He may feel it is his duty to insult a majority in the House; and when he says and boasts as he does that he does not fear the success of the amendment, and the downfall of the Forrest Ministry, but he would note with satisfaction the wreck of the Forrest Ministry, I would remind the honourable member that if he turns his telescope backwards, and looks through it the wrong way, he will see that during the greater part of his life he has taken up a position of wrecking; and it is about time he took some part in formulating some constructive policy, instead of carrying out this system of wrecking. It is all very well for the honourable member to read a homily to those who were returned at the same time as himself. They may explain themselves, and it is for the honourable member to stick to his own last, as it may not last very long. We have had several references to the goldfields on this matter, and apart altogether from the virtue of the food duties, upon which I intend to say a few words later on, I want to look at the question as we are bound to look at it, and as I am bound to look at it—one of no confidence in the Ministry. What is the public feeling on the goldfields upon this question? A good deal of what at present exists on the tariff of the country might with credit be swept away; but there is a time for everything, and everything should be taken in its right place. The goldfields, as far as I understand public opinion—and I speak on behalf of the largest of them, the largest paying goldfield of the lot, which pays nine-tenths of the wages earned—when I stood at the last election I went into the question deliberately, and in a way that some of my supporters might think was endangering my side. My views I stated distinctly to that constituency, which deals out one-half of the gold of Western Australia, and is the largest paying constituency of any of the gold producing constituencies. Before I have done, I will ask honourable members who have pledged themselves entirely to a reduction of the food duties, at what price are they prepared to turn the Government out of office? Do not let the question be divested of what it means. The Forrest Government have pledged themselves to a public policy, and to supply Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie