

loyal servants of the people; but we can hold office on no terms other than those that will allow us as honourable men to honourably discharge our trust to the people. (General applause.)

MR. W. NELSON (Hannans): I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that I rise with considerable timidity to venture some reply to the exceedingly able and eloquent speech to which we have just been privileged to listen. It is my intention on the present occasion to be brief for two reasons, first because the real point at issue, I take it, is whether or not the present Administration shall continue, a question of so exceedingly simple a nature that it ought not, I think, to unduly detain the House; and secondly because I naturally desire to maintain untarnished that reputation for brevity of speech which I have so long enjoyed. I desire at the very outset to approach the subject of the Government with that feeling of reverence and veneration generally accorded, and I think rightly accorded, to the dying and the dead, for rightly or wrongly, wisely or otherwise, the death sentence has undoubtedly been pronounced on the present Government.

THE PREMIER: Why not give them a trial.

DR. ELLIS (Labour): You have had three years.

MR. NELSON: I will explain that by and by. I say that the power which in democratic countries makes and unmakes all Governments has decreed, in my opinion, that the James Government must die. We are really here to take part in a sort of funeral ceremony. The Premier, whether he likes it or not—and on the whole I think he rather likes it—is attending his own funeral. It is only fair to add that he seems to meet his fate with considerable courage and equanimity, and goes to his doom with as much cheerfulness as the member for Brown Hill (Mr. Bath) lately went to his wedding. The Premier has entirely misunderstood, if he will permit me to say so, the real issue before the House. I think it will be generally admitted that, administratively and legislatively, the James Government have been undoubtedly an improvement on the Governments that have here gone before them; and I believe it may justly be claimed that the James Government have passed better

laws and have administered the law already in operation with greater purity and impartiality. The Government are going to their doom, not because the people think they are hopelessly bad, but, rightly or wrongly, because the people desire something better. In other words—and in this I am expressing a sentiment which has been general throughout the country—the present Government were condemned only in an indirect way. There has been growing throughout the world—not only throughout this country, but throughout the world—a desire for something better and rather than any particular objection to the James Government, this has resulted in their indirect defeat. The Premier entirely misunderstands the issue when he imagines that because of his especial wickedness he has been defeated. As a matter of fact, the same party which have caused the defeat of the James Government here have caused similar defeats to similar Governments right throughout Australia; and accordingly I think the Premier makes a serious blunder in taking the recent election as specially a vote of censure on himself. In the course of his speech the Premier declared that he had a right to expect to hear why the James Government had been attacked throughout the country. Speaking personally, I never took the trouble to attack the James Government. My especial care was to advocate the principles in which I believe. If the James Government had been absolutely pure in their administration, if they had been absolutely spotless, that would not in the slightest degree have prevented their downfall. Again, the Premier put the question, on what other grounds the Opposition asks the House to force the Government from office. I say it is precisely because the people have pronounced against the Government in the indirect way to which I refer. For example Brutus declared that he killed Cæsar not because he did not love Cæsar, but because he loved Rome more. I believe the people of this country—I accept the figures as practically conclusive on both sides—in an indirect way have defeated the Government. I believe the people have condemned the James Government, not so much because they did not like the Government, but because they had greater faith in some

other body with more correct principles, and that body was going to embody its principles into law. In another part of the Premier's speech he tried to accuse the Labour party—the party on this side of the House—of having altered our policy. He pointed out that originally the Labour party came here pledged to certain definite principles, and that they were quite willing to accept any fair instalment of these principles from the Government in power; they were quite prepared to give an indirect support to the Government so far as that support resulted in the establishment of the measures which the Labour party desired to carry into law. The Premier said there had been a departure from that principle in the attitude taken by the leader of the Opposition to-day. I claim that no departure has taken place from the principles originally acted on by the Labour party. I claim that there has been no inconsistency: our conduct to-day is not different from our conduct of yesterday. It is because events have transpired which justify an alteration of our position. For example, we have been returned by an undoubted majority of the electors of the country; the result of the elections has been that we stand in this House numbering 22 members, that the Government have a much smaller number; therefore if the public verdict means anything at all, it means a mandate to us to take upon ourselves the responsibility of carrying those principles which we advocated on the public platform into effect. We have not changed our position. We are holding to the principles we have held all along. If the James Government were prepared to adopt the platform on which we were elected, if they were prepared to accept as their policy for the next three years the platform of the Labour party—a platform which by no means is revolutionary, but which in some form or other is actually embodied in law in some part of the British Empire—I say that if the James Government were to adopt that platform and come to the House with that policy, so little is our desire to enter office, and so great is our desire to carry out the principles we were sent here to carry out, that I have no hesitation in affirming that the leader of the Opposition, instead of moving what is practically a vote of

no-confidence, would on the other hand have been endorsing and advocating to the best of his ability the continuation of that Government in office. I submit, therefore, that there is no inconsistency in our attitude, that we are here to do the best we can to carry out the principles to which we are pledged. Seeing that when we were a comparatively insignificant minority, when the best thing under the circumstances to get our principles embodied in law was to give a kind of independent support to the James Government, we did so; not out of any love for the James Government, but purely and entirely because we desired to carry our principles into law. So on the present occasion we practically vote a want of confidence in the James Government, not because we do not like them, not because we particularly hate them, but because we believe now as we believed all along that our primary duty is not to be bound to any Government or any party, but to do our utmost to carry into law the principles to which we are pledged. In the course of an exceedingly able speech the Premier declared over and over again, practically by implication rather than directly, that we had been making an attack upon him, that in short the recent elections were in some way or other a great reflection on his own personal character and on the character of his Government. I say that is not so. It is quite true that the leader of the Opposition in his short speech did touch somewhat lightly on some defects in the administration. I quite admit that he did so, but I hold that the cardinal point of his criticism and the ultimate justification of his action was that the country has clearly and conclusively declared by the returns that have been handed in, declared by a considerable majority—

THE PREMIER: No.

MR. NELSON: I know that the Premier has made an attempt to show that the majority is not large, in fact hardly exists; but he only does that by taking to himself the credit, or rather by claiming on his side, the votes that have been cast for Independents. I hold that according to his own basis the statement is absolutely unjustified. I quite admit we have no right to these votes, and we do not claim them. The right way to look at the figures is to leave the In-

dependents out altogether. They stand by themselves. They are neither subject to the Labour party nor are they subject to the James Government, and the James party have no more right to claim those votes than we have. Keep them out, and what is the result? The result is that, on the clear issue which the Premier declared the country should decide, that is between Labour and the Government, the country has decided by a considerable majority in favour of Labour. And my opinion is that it ought not to be necessary for this party to take up the position it is now taking up. I think the Premier would better consult his own dignity and would show a greater fidelity to the principles of constitutionalism in which he believes, if, instead of waiting for a vote of want of confidence by this Chamber, he came to this House and said, "Gentlemen, the country has declared, rightly or wrongly, that it does not want me; the country has given a verdict against me; and although I think that verdict unfair and unjust, nevertheless I will bow to it until by my subsequent conduct I have succeeded in altering that verdict." In the course of a very able speech the Premier was good enough to occasionally cite my own opinions, to quote them as bearing some authority. I trust that on this matter, as in other matters, he will also pay some heed to my advice and gravely reconsider whether the time has not arrived to ignominiously haul down the flag and unconditionally capitulate. I have no sympathy with a great deal that has been said by the Premier in reference to the lack of freedom which prevails on this side of the House. It is quite true that we have caucus meetings.

MR. JOHNSON (Labour) : The Government had one the other day.

THE PREMIER : There was a vast difference, though.

MEMBER : There were not so many there.

MR. NELSON : It is quite true we think it is a wise and proper thing for members of a party to consult together in some sensible way before coming to this House; but I utterly fail to understand in what way the Labour party, in any of its methods during the election or subsequent to the election, have done any-

thing inconsistent with rational human liberty. For example, we were told during the Premier's speech to-night that we were bound by the unions, and that we were bound by the caucus. What really takes place when a general election is going on with regard to the Labour party? What do we do? First of all a number of Labour people, rightly or wrongly, have arrived at certain conclusions, which conclusions we call Labour platform. We join together in an organisation for the purpose of advocating that platform; to try and convince other men that it is a wise and just platform calculated to promote the well-being of the State. Will anyone dare to say that it is a violation of human liberty for me believing in certain principles to bind myself in order to advocate those opinions? I think not; therefore, so far as regards joining organisations with the chief end of propagating opinions, it cannot be said that we do anything that violates human liberty. Subsequently when the election comes round we find that it is a good, reasonable, and wise thing that prior to the election we should make a selection as to the candidate most likely to serve us in the Legislature, and the result is that we have what is called Labour ballot. The Labour ballot, in my opinion, with all its defects is an undoubted attempt to apply to the selection of a candidate the same democratic principles as are applied in the ultimate election of a candidate. What do we do? We do not, as has been constantly urged, even confine the selection to unionists. Every man who agrees with our platform, whether he be an employer or a worker, whether he be rich or poor, every man who agrees with our platform and is willing to join our organisation receives from us a hearty welcome. When that organisation is formed ultimately, and when in time a selection has to be made, every member in that organisation has an equal right to vote. The class to which he belongs and the particular trade which he follows are matters into which we do not inquire and when that selection is ultimately made, the candidate selected receives the support, the endorsement, the sympathy and the aid of all his fellows in the organisation. I ask, is there any violation of liberty there? It is almost a

impertinence to say so, and surely it is right that men who agree to a certain opinion can bind themselves together to advocate that opinion, and the members of a given organisation have a perfect right to select a representative of that organisation to be put forward for selection or otherwise. It should never be forgotten, but apparently it is forgotten, that ultimately the Labour candidate has, like every other candidate, to submit himself to the test of the electors. Ultimately in the longrun that man has to come forward, and when he is finally returned to this House he is returned, not by the votes of this organisation or that organisation, not by the votes of this union and that union, but by the votes of the whole of the electors in the constituency for which he is standing. Surely, therefore, it is utterly beside the point, it is grossly illogical and grossly unfair to contend that so long as the Labour party act in that way they are guilty of any violation of the rational liberties which should be exercised by wise men. Again, it is said that when we come to the caucus we violate liberty in some way. In what way? I have said on the public platform, and I repeat it here, that I am pledged to absolutely nothing but the platform on which I secured my election. I represent the electors of Hannans on that platform, and nothing else. It is quite true that when I enter into that caucus there are many matters of detail which may be brought up, and it is quite true that I have a perfect right, which all rational men exercise in fact, to help to secure by a small sacrifice of individual liberty that unity of action which is necessary to ultimate success. For example, if in the caucus meeting there is a question whether we should put one measure before another, whether we should even elect a Speaker, if in a matter of that kind any individual member feels it is a question which ought not to find vent in caucus, that it is a question to which he is not pledged, the caucus extends to that person an absolute right to exercise his own judgment. I submit, therefore, there is no violation of liberty.

THE PREMIER: What about the case of Mr. Fowler and the Common Rule cause?

MR. NELSON: Let me give a simple example to the Premier, in order that he will understand that not only do we maintain our liberty, but on some questions, possibly on all questions, we secure to each member a larger measure of liberty than used to be enjoyed by those belonging to the old party. Take for instance the great fiscal issue. We had over and over again in the Federal Parliament samples of a freedom such as is never enjoyed by the older parties. The Labour party recognised the wisdom of allowing absolute freedom on that question, with the result that when the division took place in the Federal Parliament we saw Labour men on one side and Labour men on the other; showing that they recognised that even on an important and fundamental question such as that it was wise to permit liberty in order to secure solidarity. Whereas we find that members of the other parties in that Parliament practically made the fiscal question a supreme issue; and the Readite or the Deakinite who, while that great issue was being discussed, had seceded from the party majority would in all probability have been condemned and ostracised. I therefore hold that the charges of the Premier in reference to our lacking liberty and freedom of action are utterly unfounded and unjust, and that we enjoy, and I believe will continue to enjoy, that necessary measure of liberty requisite to the successful performance of the great duties we have been called on to undertake in this House. Just a word or two more. The Premier declared that this was a straight issue between Labour and the party outside Labour.

THE PREMIER: Between Labour and progress.

MR. NELSON: In my opinion there is surely no antithesis between Labour and progress. As a fact, whether the Premier borrowed his policy from the Labour party or whether we borrowed our policy from the Premier—whichever view we take of that—during the last three years there has been such a fundamental agreement between the Premier and the Labour party as to the policy of this country, that I fail to perceive why he should view with the indignation which he has evidently lately developed the party whom I now represent. It is really not at all a question of the

Premier's being attacked by us. Practically the Premier says, "Why not allow us to carry on as we have been doing"?

THE PREMIER: I did not say that.

MR. NELSON: The leader of the Opposition has declared that in his opinion the Government of the country should be transferred to other hands, and the Premier practically objects to such transfer.

THE PREMIER: The leader of the Opposition did not say that. He said that the Government ought to carry on.

MR. NELSON: So far as I understand it, the leader of the Opposition said, and expresses his opinion in his amendment, that the time has come when the James Government should cease to govern this country; and the James Government are amazed at the result, and practically say, "Why should we not go on"? My reply is, "Why should you not stop"? I admit that the leader of the Opposition is an interested party. Very likely he wants to be Premier. The Premier also is an interested party. Very likely he desires to continue in his high position. Therefore let us leave them both out, and go to the power that is higher than both, and what does that power say? The people of this country, by a majority clear and decisive, have declared that the James Government are not wanted, that another Government must have a trial; and whether or not the Premier likes that, I think it is his duty to be true to that democracy which he professes, and to bow with becoming grace to the verdict of the people. I wish also to emphasise once more that it does not follow that because the people of this country prefer a Labour Government, they have any special objection to the James Government. Let me give an example. Only the other day the member for Brown Hill (Mr. Bath) took unto himself a wife. Now in that act of taking unto himself one woman he did not reject all other women: he merely manifested a preference, and I believe an absolutely justifiable preference, for the happy woman on whom he bestowed his affections. And so, in precisely the same way, the recent elections did not blame James, did not condemn him; in fact, to tell the honest truth—and I must apologise for having

to say it—I never referred to the Premier in the course of my election speech and I believe the same may be said of other Labour members. So that just it would be very wrong for all other women in the world to go to the member for Brown Hill and say "Why did you reject me?" so it is in my opinion equally wrong and foolish for the Premier to regard the recent victory of the Labour party as in any special sense a rejection of himself or of his Government. On the contrary, as I hinted before, the great movement which the Labour party has the honour to represent is as wide as civilisation itself. It is growing everywhere, not only in Australia but in England, not only in England but in America, not only in America but throughout the whole civilised world. There has grown up a new party, with new aspirations, new ideals, new hopes; and the old parties are confronted with a power which never confronted them before. In the old days Liberalism was very largely a form of Government by which the great working classes used their power to hoist the higher orders into political positions. In older countries like England there are two great historic parties, the Liberals and Conservatives. The Liberals, generally representing the great manufacturing interests of England, used to say to the working people, "Send us to Parliament and we will save you." The Tories said to the people, "Never mind those Liberals we are the people to save you; send us to Parliament." And generation after generation the people tried first one party and then the other. They put the Liberals in power, and the Liberals somehow did not succeed in saving them. They then tried the Tories, with the same unfailing result. They tried the Liberals again, and there was utter failure; until there grew up in the hearts of the workers the feeling that the Tories could not save them, and the Liberals could not save them that if they were to be saved at all they must save themselves with their own hands and their own hearts. Now I submit that is the meaning of this great Labour movement we are here in this House to represent. It means an especial condemnation of the Premier. Personally I wish to say that I admire his ability and his courage, and am truly grateful for the splendid work he has

done. I wish to say right here—I have said it on public platforms to my electors, and I say it in absolute sincerity—that I trust the time is coming and I believe it is when there will no longer be a war between classes; that the time is coming when the men who are workers, whether workers by hand or by brain, will unite against the lazy fellows who do not work at all; and I personally regret and deplore the fact that the Premier and those who are with him have not seen their way to be more frank and more courageous in the expression of their democracy. When George Leake, I think about two years ago, delivered his policy speech, I remember deploring the fact that it was too moderate, that it did not find a sufficient echo in the hearts of the people. I believe that the policy of the present Premier also is too moderate. I believe that if James dies this week he will have killed himself. I believe, in absolute sincerity, that the Labour party have no desire for office. I do not think that the member for Subiaco (Mr. Daglish), I do not think that the member for Coolgardie (Dr. Ellis), I do not think that one member of the Labour party desires to hold office. That was the most ungenerous and most unkindly statement made to-night by the Premier—made, I believe, with a lack of that sincerity which generally characterises his statements—when he insinuated that the new attitude of the Labour party resulted entirely from a desire for office. I believe that is absolutely unfair, and without a shadow of justification. I can assure the House that the Labour party recognises its manifold imperfections; it recognises how difficult it is for inexperienced men to take upon themselves the high responsibility of the Government of a country like this; and I can assure the House that had it not been for the action taken by the Premier—an action which I hold does him credit—the attitude we have adopted to-night would never have been adopted. Before sitting down, I cordially re-echo the more generous sentiments of the speech just delivered by the Premier. One thing has impressed me in coming into this House, and in conversation with many of my colleagues I find it has impressed them, namely that in spite of honest and fundamental differences of opinion, there exists, and I believe there will continue to exist, that personal

friendship and personal courtesy among members which, after all, lends to Parliamentary life a sweetness it would not otherwise possess. I believe that feeling will continue. I believe in fair fighting. I think the Premier made to-night a fighting speech; and I believe that his bold and courageous front, his fine assertion of what he believed to be his rights and dignity, will commend itself to no section of this House more than to the section sitting on this (Opposition) side. We ourselves are fighters. We have come to this House to fight for great principles. We recognise that we have men of great capacity, and I believe of equal integrity, on the Government side of the House; and I believe that the ultimate result of discussions in this Chamber, and even of this discussion in which we are now engaged, whether it ends in the defeat of the Government or in their continuing to hold office, whatever the result may be I believe it will be found that the members of the Opposition, as well as those on the other side, recognise the great responsibility which they have to discharge, recognise that we owe great and far-reaching duties to those that have sent us here; and we shall do our utmost, not only by what we do but also by what we forbear to do, to uphold the honour and dignity of this Assembly.

On motion by DR. ELLIS (Labour), debate adjourned.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

THE PREMIER: In moving "That the House do now adjourn," we shall meet to-morrow at 3:30 o'clock; and I hope, as there seem to be about 45 orators in the House, members will take care to have their speeches ready, so that we can bring this debate to a close as soon as possible.

The House adjourned accordingly at 12 minutes to 10 o'clock, until the next day.