

no information is vouchsafed to us as to the Commission or its duties. This is a matter that has caused my constituents extreme anxiety, and I trust before the House rises eventually, at the expiration of the fortnight, that some steps will have been taken to remove our anxiety in that respect. Another topic on which we are most anxious, and the country is most anxious, to receive some information, is that of the loan. We have been told in the Governor's Speech that the finances of the colony are in a satisfactory condition, and that no money is owing to any financial institution in the colony. Of course that may be a fact; it may be true, and probably is true, as it is stated in the Governor's Speech that the Government "are not indebted to any of the financial institutions of the colony." If that is the case money must be owing to financial institutions outside the colony. Advances must have been got from outside.

**THE MINISTER OF MINES:** None whatever.

**HON. D. MCKAY:** I am glad to hear the statement of the Minister. In any case, the balance of money available must be an extremely small one to carry on the works authorised in the last Parliament. It seems almost inevitable that unless some arrangements are made for securing the money the works will have to be put off for an indefinite time. One would have thought that something beyond the statement that so much money was in hand would have been vouchsafed to the House. One hon. member, without exactly considering the relation of the output of gold with the money expended in making that output, has stated that the country is prosperous, because the gold output has increased. While under some circumstances that may be the case, it might under other circumstances be far from the case. As far as the country's prosperity is concerned no one can have a higher opinion of the actual prosperity of the country and its future prosperity than I have myself, but when you deal with the question from an economic point of view, you have to bear in mind that the gold-output merely represents the proceeds of something. It often happens that more money is spent in securing an output than the amount of the output itself. The cost of producing the gold is undoubtedly

swelled each month—some hon. members do not believe it—but the cost is largely and unnecessarily enhanced by the cost of the necessities of life to the extent of the very high duties levied on them at the port of entry. Though, no doubt, the agricultural industry should, to a certain extent, be considered, still I do not think they should be considered entirely without some consideration being given to the effect of the duties on the gold-producing industry of the colony, because, although people go on producing gold at a loss—assuming that it is produced at a loss—they will not go on producing it at a loss for ever; they will only do so for a certain time. I trust hon. members who have so very strongly expressed their opinion that the duties on food should not be reduced, will take these matters into their consideration and modify the opinions they have expressed. As to the Federal Constitution Act, I find it an extremely difficult thing to form any just opinion, in the two or three days at our disposal, of the effect it will have on the colony, but the chief point on which I personally require a little light is the object with which we are going to discuss the Bill to-morrow. Some hon. members propose to throw the measure out altogether. I should like to know whether we are going to discuss it with a view of amending it so that in the course of four or five years, if it was thought desirable, we could join in, or is it intended to try and lick it into shape so as to render it possible for this colony to go into the federation at once? I have tried to make up my mind which is the proper course to adopt, but in the time at our disposal I have found it almost impossible.

**HON. S. J. HAYNES:** I take this opportunity of saying a few words on His Excellency's Speech. It seems we are called specially together, or chiefly, for the purpose of considering the Bill to constitute the Commonwealth of Australia. I think, myself, and a great number do so also, that the idea of a federated Australia is a grand one, and one I think nearly all of us hope will eventuate some day, but undoubtedly at the present time, it seems to me, and from what I can gain of public opinion generally, that it is a very premature matter. At the present time federation is a sub-



ject for the best minds and leading politicians to speak upon. I fail to observe any great enthusiasm on the part of the people of the colonies, as a whole, on the matter. That is the conclusion I have come to from what I have observed and read. It is a very difficult question to deal with, and the difficulties must be apparent to all of us from the fact that the leading minds in the colonies, at least many of them, are very much opposed in their ideas as to what form this constitution should take. So far as this colony is concerned I cannot see at the present time that we could join in that federation without losing far more than even the most ardent supporter of federation in the colony could wish, in the joining. The only two questions I think on which the colonists would be at one upon—I have only just had time to glance through the Bill—are the questions of defence and quarantine. I doubt whether at the present time it would be worth while to have a federation for these purposes. So far as I can understand the subject, the Bill before the House at the present time is the Bill drafted at the Convention recently held in Adelaide, and it is a Bill arrived at by mutual gives and takes at the time. The Bill has subsequently been submitted to the Parliaments of the other colonies, and now it has come before us. The other Parliaments do not seem to be able to agree to the Bill as adopted by their representatives at the Convention. Great alterations have been made in New South Wales, in Victoria, and in South Australia. What is the great drawback to federation, or to federation of the type which we ultimately wish to see? It is that each colony, and no doubt this colony is the same, is blessed with a selfishness and a desire to do the best for its own colony. Victoria, as the Hon. R. S. Haynes said, would be the greatest gainer by joining the federation. It is a very great question, and I approach it with every respect; but it is premature, at least I, in my humble opinion, think so, for us to join at the present time—indeed it is premature for Australia to federate at all at the present time. I doubt very much whether in about a quarter of a century it will be time enough to have a Bill prepared which will be acceptable to the colonists as a whole. So far as I am

personally concerned, I hope the time will be far earlier. We cannot think of joining at the present time. To-morrow night we are to consider the Bill, and I feel sure hon. members will consider it seriously, and give their best attention to the great subject. So far as the Convention that it is proposed should take place shortly is concerned, I do think that this colony should be represented, although I think it is inexpedient for the colony to join in the federation at the present time. We should be represented so that the colony can take a hand in moulding a constitution which hereafter we may join. I will support, so far as I can, the sending of delegates from this colony to the Convention. If we do not join this federation at the present time, at any rate this conference will have a great educational effect on the movement, and will do, amongst the general public, a large amount of good, and hasten the time when a constitution will be framed which will be acceptable, and will be fair, and just to all. I do not propose to say more on that subject at the present juncture, but I shall do what I can when the Bill is in committee. As to the other matters in His Excellency's Speech, it is gratifying to all of us to find the finances in such a satisfactory state. Some time ago there were rumours about as to the financial position of the colony. I felt myself at the time that the rumours were without foundation, and I am pleased with the references to the finances in the speech. It is equally gratifying that the gold output of the colony is increasing, and I am sure it will go on increasing. It is quite as satisfactory, if not more so, to find that the agricultural interests of this colony are advancing. It is extremely gratifying to listen to hon. members like the Hon. E. McLarty, when dealing with questions of this kind, because he is a gentleman whose opinions can be relied upon on such subjects. I have had a little experience in agriculture, and I can only say that in the province I represent wonderful strides have been made in agricultural matters during the last 12 months, especially since the purchase of the Great Southern Railway. Settlement has taken place about such places as Broomehill, Wagin and Katanning, and it is settlement which is likely to remain in those localities, and that being so, the prospects of the South-Eastern Province



are much greater now than they were 12 months ago. The class of people who have taken up the land are evidently those who have come to stay, and those whom I have had the pleasure of speaking to say they are perfectly satisfied with the land they have taken up. That must be gratifying to all of us, because in the past our land has been very much decried and run down. Some remarks have been made by hon. members about the depression in the colony. We do not know what depression is in this colony. [AN HON. MEMBER: We don't want to.] No, we do not want to, but they do know what depression is in the other colonies. There it has been brought about by the excessive and wanton waste of public money. I hope, so far as this colony is concerned, and the expenditure of public money is concerned, the Government will go slow from now out. If I have a complaint at all against the present Government, for whom I have the greatest respect, it seems to me they have a pleasurable way of saying "No"; but in almost all the other colonies the Government invariably says "Yes." So far as the Minister of Mines is concerned I was glad to find, on more than one occasion, he had the backbone to say "No." I hope from now out the Government will keep a check on the public purse, and not be afraid to say "No." I join with the other members in welcoming those who have come to this House with a knowledge of the wants of the goldfields, and I am pleased to note that these gentlemen speak in fair terms in respect to the other interests equally as important as the goldfields. Certainly one of the members (Hon. G. Randell) complained that the requirements of the goldfields were not attended to. So far as the Ministry was concerned, the Ministry of the day have promised to do the utmost in their power, within reasonable bounds, for the furtherance of the goldfields. To a large extent the prosperity of the colony depends on the prosperity or non-prosperity of these fields. I do not propose to say anything more at the present time. I have great pleasure in supporting the speech. In committee on the Federation Bill I suppose all of us will have an opportunity, as the Minister states, of bringing forward such amendments as we see meet.

HON. C. A. PIESSE: I do not think the people of this colony intend to allow themselves to be used as a material for this federal structure. I know that in the country, people are quiet on the subject of federation, because they are aware that they will have the power later on of expressing their sentiments, and of disagreeing with any conditions that their representatives may have agreed to at the federal meetings, provided these are not in keeping with their wishes. I think this very fact should be sufficient for those who are opposing the movement, and should cause them to withdraw their opposition, and allow our representatives to go to Sydney and help in framing this federal structure. The time may come—there is not the slightest doubt about it—when we may want to join the federation, and we should feel very small indeed if we were told that we had taken no part in framing the federal constitution, and that we had laughed at the very idea. The Hon. R. S. Haynes speaks of it as if it were a matter not to be considered by Western Australia in the future. He looks upon it as a question we should never deal with. I think that in the hearts of all of us, even supposing we are opposed to federation at the present moment, there is a feeling that the time will come when we shall federate and become a great nation. I am one of those who will support our being represented at the Sydney meeting. I would like to mention the very great improvement that has taken place in agriculture in my district. I notice that many men who went on the goldfields for the purpose of obtaining gold have now gone into agriculture. I have noticed many of them selecting in my district. I would ask those hon. members who represent the goldfields, and who have spoken in such temperate words respecting agriculture, to look at the question of duties as it affects agriculture, for many of their own men have been induced by the protection given to agriculture to go into it. Some of these men go in for agriculture at one season of the year and then work on the goldfields at the other. The goldfields members will, I think, be only too glad to give agriculture every consideration. If they have not looked personally into the matter, I would like to point out to them that



there is nothing in the world so uncertain as the results of the labour of the man who takes up agriculture for his calling. Take the miner first. When he gets an ounce of gold he knows exactly how much he will get for it. He knows what its value is. The tradesman knows pretty well what he will get for his goods. Give a carpenter a piece of wood and he will make a chair or a cart, for which he knows he can get a certain price, as there are certain fixed labour rates, as a rule, by which he will be paid for his labour. But the farmer has not only to do the heavy work attached to agriculture, such as clearing, etc., but he has to face, in addition, the uncertainties of the market. The question is whether he is paid for his work in view of the heavy labour he has to perform. We have been twitted in the past with not having a labour supply. The need did not exist then as it does now. We would have had to cart our wheat 130 to 150 miles in some cases to get to the market. It would have been folly to have embarked in a venture that would have involved so much expense and labour. I would ask you, therefore, to consider whether the agriculturist is not entitled to very great consideration at our hands. The uncertainties he has to face are so great, and he is not even sure when he has cleared his land that he will get any return for it. There is another point I would like hon. members to weigh very carefully before taking any active part in removing the duties, and that is the bearings of agriculture on the colony generally. Taking the other colonies as an example, agriculture has much to do with the permanent prosperity of a colony. I will say no more at present, but will add my congratulations to those that have fallen from other hon. members at the fresh representation that has taken place, and at the addition to our ranks of such desirable members, as I think they promise to be, from the goldfields.

HON. G. RANDELL: I think my friend the Hon. E. McLarty must have misunderstood the remarks which fell from the mover and seconder of the Address-in-Reply. The opinion I formed of the speeches was that they were very optimistic. I was pleased with the cheerful way in which they spoke of the future prospects of the colony. I was also much pleased to hear the expression of their

sentiments with reference to working in unison not only with the agricultural members, but with all members of the House. I would like to refer to one matter before I make any further remarks. I think it has been, and I have thought it a long time, a most unhappy concurrence of circumstances that has prevented the calling together of Parliament before. I understand, however, there have been special reasons why Parliament was not assembled at least a month ago. I do not know whether the reasons given to me are the correct ones or no, or that I am at liberty to mention them. If, however, they are correct, I can understand the difficulty in which the Ministry was placed. I endorse the opinion expressed both here and elsewhere, that the business of the country could have been carried on without the presence of the Premier in the Assembly. While I say that, of course I recognise the great abilities of the Premier, and the desirability of having him here to assist in the discussion of public affairs, but I believe that the result of the delay on the whole has been injurious to this colony. Hon. members have referred to the fact that we should be unable to properly discuss the Commonwealth Bill, in consequence of the arrangements which must be made to enable the delegates to visit Sydney, and to be present at the deliberations of the Convention in the course of a fortnight. It must be remembered, and I presume other hon. members have been as favoured as myself in that respect, that we have had this Bill in our hands for some time. I have read it over three or four times in order to make myself as fully acquainted as possible with its contents. I honestly confess that many portions of the Bill—and I confess it without any discredit to myself—are beyond my comprehension. I cannot see where it would lead us to in many cases. I take it that it requires men who have been accustomed to financial operations, or it requires men who have had a legal training, to understand the whole gist and direction of the Commonwealth Bill. I think, therefore, hon. members should admit that they have had an opportunity of examining the contents of the Bill, and should not have left it to the opening of Parliament to consider the measure and to form their opinions upon