

*Mr. Taylor:* He has him up there now.

*Mr. WALKER:* Taking a public servant with him to promise batteries. I say so long as that bribery is persisted in the Government may count on a reckoning day, which when it does come will be all the more severe for its very delay.

*Mr. McDOWALL:* I move—

*That the debate be adjourned.*

Motion put and negatived.

*Mr. McDOWALL (Coolgardie):* I had no intention whatever of speaking to-night, for the simple reason I thought that as a new member I would have some opportunity of escaping speaking until I was better acquainted with the forms of the House. But it seems I shall have to do the best I can to engage the attention of the House for a few minutes, seeing that an adjournment is not agreeable just now. I would say something on the question of this electoral business, and I trust I shall have the indulgence of the House, seeing I have to speak from what I have heard this evening. A strong indictment has been made out in connection with this electoral matter and the examination of postal votes. Some three years ago I had to go through the ordeal of an election petition; it is true I was the petitioner, and I certainly had splendid grounds for my petition. The petition was heard, and it was admitted that 38 postal votes were bad. Now I wish to emphasise this point, because it is a point that so far has not been touched upon. They were known to be bad; it was admitted in Court that they were bad. The Angwin case had been decided shortly prior to that and was taken as a precedent. My opponent endeavoured to resign but I declined to accept the resignation for I wanted the case to go to Court, to prove whether it was in order or not. I asked for an examination of the postal votes in order that it might be known who was the elected candidate. Of course, I might tell you I knew I was in by seventeen or eighteen votes. In the Angwin case which I listened to, the Chief Justice distinctly stated that if counsel wished

it he could examine the postal votes. When it came to my case the decision was reversed, and it was decided on the grounds of the secrecy of the ballot that they would not examine the postal votes. It was all very well, and very good and very proper, but I want to point out that the numbering of Parliamentary votes is no different from the numbering of municipal postal votes so far as the recognition of the votes is concerned. That being so when I found that in a municipal case in Victoria Park a year or so ago the postal votes had been examined I thought it was decidedly unfair. But I am not rising to object to that so much as to the omission that was made when the new Electoral Act was passed. One would have thought that with the experience of Mr. Angwin, with my experience, and the experience of the whole country, something would have been done to prevent expense to persons contesting election petitions. Had it not been for that consecutive numbering on the ballot papers I or my party would have been saved from £60 to £70 expenses; because we would have accepted the resignation of Mr. Eddy or would have refused to have gone on and would have fixed the matter up. But finding the numbers were there we wanted to push the thing to its logical conclusion. What I complain of is that when the new Electoral Act was inaugurated the consecutive numbering was left on notwithstanding that it leads people into spending an extra amount of money. In the case of the Commonwealth the numbering is on the counter-foil and the blank form, but once the elector obtains the ballot paper and it is placed in the box it is just as secret as ordinary papers, and in consequence in the Blackwood case it was held that postal votes could not be examined. So litigants know that it is of no use asking that the postal votes should be examined because it is impossible to examine them. I think the Electoral Act under the circumstances was very badly drafted in that direction. We are told the good conscience clause was left out of it and things of that kind; I do not think that makes a bit of difference. I endeavoured



to plead the good conscience clause in my case, but the Courts do not bother about good conscience. That is nothing to do with them; it is law all the time. Then somebody told us the costs would have been £200 less if they had pleaded at the commencement and stopped the case. Well, I would like to find the lawyers in this State who would go so far with Mr. Gregory's case for £20 as on this occasion. My experience was that Mr. A consulted Mr. B, his partner, and Mr. B consulted Mr. A, his partner, at five guineas and ten guineas and so on. So of course it is too thin to tell us that sort of thing. I do not know that I desire to speak any longer on this question, I am simply trying to get breath or something of the kind in order to have some chance of mentioning one or two little matters. I think it is admitted it is a difficult matter for a new member to be thoroughly conversant with all the rules and forms and usages of an assemblage of this kind. Therefore I am not quite certain as to what subjects I can touch upon, but I shall become very parochial in a sense in mentioning a little matter in my constituency. We have been for a long time in Coolgardie troubled over Pell's Crossing. It may be a trifling matter, but straws show which way the wind blows. For years we have been told that this footbridge has been promised to us, and on the eve of an election we were always told that the matter would be dealt with in a few months. In June, 1908, just when we were preparing for an election Mr. Gregory, in reply to a request from the council, wrote that Pell's Crossing would be constructed as soon as funds were available. Of course, it might be possible that funds are not yet available. Judging by the financial condition of the country they might never be available. Mr. Gregory said the matter had been promised some years ago, and he hoped in a few months that the work would be done. That was on the eve of an election. Passing other matters we come to the most recent communication which reads—

“In reply to my memo. of the 13th instant relative to the above. I am

directed by the Minister for Railways to inform you that the amount necessary for the construction of this bridge will be placed on the schedule of works for consideration with other works after the passing of the Estimates.”

Now, what I want to call attention to is that the work was promised years ago. The Government have practically been in office for three years, and on the eve of an election we were absolutely told that the material was actually on the way, while after the election is over we are told that the amount will be placed on the next Estimates. I hope it will be placed on the next Estimates. If it is not I shall have the pleasure of reminding the House about it. I dare say this may seem a small matter, but it is a matter of consequence to the people who live in a certain portion of Coolgardie. When the land was sold to these people the plans showed this crossing. Consequently an added value was obtained by the Government. Then the crossing was closed with the consequence that the value of the land deteriorated. However, I must congratulate the Government on having at last taken action in connection with the sanatorium at Coolgardie. Just now we listened to an eloquent oration by the member for Kanowna in connection with suffering humanity. I think it must be admitted by everybody that the patients in the sanatorium not having a dining-room apart from the wards was distinctly a hardship. Actually while they were having their meals other patients were dying. Again, there were 40 patients with only one bathroom and things of that kind. But I am informed that the Government have let a contract, and I am pleased to be able to congratulate them.

*The Premier:* That is something achieved.

Mr. McDOWALL: I do not wish to be misunderstood in any way. Although no doubt I shall be able to pick many faults in the Government as well as in anybody else, I am not prepared to go so far as to say that there is not some good in everybody. It would be a very bad outlook for the country if that were not so. There is another matter that re-



ceived considerable attention during my election campaign, and that was the unsatisfactory condition of the Police Superannuation Fund. It has been held that the police, especially those on the goldfields, have little or no chance of promotion, and that they are in an extremely bad position. Even the Attorney General while at Coolgardie admitted that if any cause needed looking into it was the cause of the police force of Western Australia. This is not hearsay. I was present at the meeting. I sincerely trust something will be done in this direction. During last Parliament the Leader of the Opposition moved for a select committee. I trust something will be done in the matter in the near future. I must also congratulate the Government on having constructed the first section of the Norseman Railway. Of course have no doubt it is really to be the first portion of the Esperance Railway, and that we shall have the Ministers rushing over each other to support the railway going to the natural port of the goldfields. I am quite certain the Attorney General will eventually give it his most ardent support. There is a matter of local concern in connection with the Mines Regulation Act I wish to mention. It appears that at Bonnievale the men, in consequence of the insurance or some question of the kind, and in consequence of the report of the inspector of mines, so I am informed, have to go down 1,400 feet by ladders, and have to climb up the same distance each shift. I think everybody will admit that is a severe hardship, and I understood that by some alteration to the Regulations, the matter could easily be remedied. These men have been working on tribute for months, and nothing has been said until recently. They are now on very good gold, and we are told this regulation interferes with the carrying out of their work, in fact, that they must give up the tribute or clamber up and down ladders 1,400 feet, that is 2,800 feet per day. If there is any way of inquiring into the matter I sincerely trust it will be done. Now, having said so much in connection with local matters, I desire to say a word or two in connection with finance.

I am not going to pose as a financial expert, nor is it my intention to make use of any figures that may be controvertible. That is a dangerous thing, I think, for a new member to do, and therefore I shall leave the question of local finance out altogether, but I desire to say that we in Western Australia should talk more as Australians and less as simply Western Australians; and in that connection I can say that I am sincerely pleased at the decision of the High Court in connection with the Surplus Revenue Bill.

*The Premier*: You would not be if you were Treasurer.

Mr. McDOWALL: There are more important considerations than mere financing and merely being Treasurer. There is the question of humanity and the question of what is right. I maintain that the matter of old age pensions is of paramount importance.

*The Premier*: Did not we offer to provide old age pensions from consolidated revenue?

Mr. McDOWALL: I have been in Western Australia thirteen years, and you have been talking old age pensions ever since I arrived. But has anybody done anything? Has anybody ever attempted to do anything? It is all right talking; talking is cheap. That is the position with old age pensions.

*The Premier*: I am sorry I spoke.

Mr. McDOWALL: Some one, the Premier probably, says, "You would not if you were Treasurer." No, because he would reckon the State would pay little more than its fair proportion; but he overlooks the fact that this State has drawn the youth and manhood and the flower of the Eastern States for many years and has left the old people there; and it is only a fair and reasonable thing that we should repay the other States in some way. I do not wish to get into any heated argument over the matter. It is my opinion that the Federal Government in providing old age pensions have done an immense service to the country and to Australia as a whole; and I maintain that we should not be altogether parochial, but that we should look to the interests of the whole of the Com-

monwealth. We desire to make Australia a White Australia, and we desire to make it a great nation, but we will never do it by looking at things from limited and narrow boundaries. The question of defence is also of paramount importance, it is a matter that appeals to all of us. Therefore, I am pleased, though it may seem wrong, to say that I am glad to see the High Court's decision in regard to the Surplus Revenue Bill.

*The Premier* : Why do you not join the defence forces ?

*Mr. McDOWALL* : I was going to say that I was too stout, but when I look at the Premier I see there is a possibility. There are questions I am certainly in favour of. I do not propose to take up any more time this evening, but during my campaign it was mooted abroad that the Parliament in this State costs £60 per hour to keep it going. That is what my opponent said. He said : "Do you think my opponent is worth that?" Fortunately for me, the audience interjected "Yes." But notwithstanding the flattering opinions of my constituents on that occasion, I have no intention of using up any more of my £60 to-night. However, I sincerely trust that the Government will mend their ways and do a little better in the future.

*Mr. GORDON (Canning)* : History in a most astonishing way repeats itself. Some charges made against the Government to-night are practically a reiteration of charges made by myself against the Daglish Government. I do not know whether the member for Balkatta (Mr. Gill) has read any of my speeches, but he has accused the Government of jaunting. Let us go to Hansard. On the 18th July, 1905, in a most memorable speech I made on the downfall of the Daglish Government, this is what I said:—

"Charges have been laid at the door of the Government and proved, that the administration during the present Government's term of office has been an utter failure ; and the failure is more marked on account of the jauntings that the members of the Ministry

have made throughout the State on every occasion."

That is the charge made to-night by the member for Balkatta, who was at that time the Labour Government whip. Let us go a little farther. I will refer to the charge made by the member for Kanowna (Mr. Walker) in reference to the unemployed. This is the charge I made against the Labour Government—

"There are two questions that the people of this country expected to be dealt with by the Labour Government and those two matters would have been welcomed by the Opposition because of their democratic nature. I refer to the question of the unemployed and the reduction in the cost of living. Neither of these questions have the Labour party attempted to unravel or administer. I am prepared to admit there is no serious cause for alarm yet as to the unemployed, but in the other States the unemployed question has become chronic, and is argued and fought over every day. Therefore I think it should have been the duty of the Government and what might have been expected of them, to have attempted to provide in the future for the unemployed. We cannot always expect to progress as we have done in the past, especially if we have a Labour Government in power, for they only cause unemployed. Therefore the least thing the Government might have done was to have attempted to deal with the unemployed."

These are charges laid against the present Government by the member for Balkatta, and although he said that what the Government have done has been argued and talked over for years, I claim that the Government have had the pluck to take up such questions.

*Mr. Heitmann* : When.

*Mr. GORDON* : They are on now. If the hon. member were an unemployed man to-day he would be taken on, but he would certainly be put far back. It is galling to one who has listened to debates here and outside the House for years to hear these charges reiterated by members of the Opposition. After all I take it as a compliment that the members of the Opposition have read my