

this session I hope something will be done to give effect to the decision of the House. There are three great questions now before the House. Federation I will not touch upon, because I will have an opportunity later on when the Bill is before us. The other two questions are the Coolgardie water supply and the tariff. When the question of the tariff comes on we shall, I suppose, have to fight it out, and one argument hon. members will have to take hold of is that the money sent out of the country is not purely for the keep of families on the other side. As to the Coolgardie water supply scheme, I shall be very proud and pleased to give it my absolute and unconditional support, if the finances of the colony at the time warrant my doing so. Unless it can be shown and proved to me more fully than it has been that the finances of the country justify such an expenditure—that we can borrow money at a fair rate of interest to construct this particular work—I cannot say I shall be a supporter of the scheme. Other works can be taken in hand and carried out which would be of much greater benefit to the country than the Coolgardie water scheme. We want more railways, and the hon. member for Pilbarra has urged that more inducement should be given to prospectors and others who go into the country to open up new goldfields. That, in my opinion, would be of even greater benefit than the £2,000,000 or £3,000,000 which it would cost to get the water scheme through. All the same, given that money can be borrowed, I will be a supporter of the scheme; but in the present state of the finances of this colony, I am afraid it will be a step which, in a very short time, we will find not to be to the benefit of the colony generally. There is another matter which I think should stand over, and that is the proposed new Houses of Parliament. New Houses would cost a quarter of a million (£250,000) in order to build them properly, and I should be very sorry indeed to see such works otherwise than properly carried out. If we cannot afford to do the work well, we ought not to do it at all. I do not see why we cannot carry on the business of the country in the present buildings as well as in the new Houses, which are not required, and the cost of which would cripple other industries of the colony.

MR. GREGORY (North Coolgardie): It was not my intention to speak on the Address-in-Reply; but after the remarks that have been made by the hon. member for East Kimberley (Mr. Connor), it is necessary I should do so. A statement has been made by that hon. member in regard to etiquette in this House, and I wish to explain my position in the matter. On Monday I was informed that certain members were marking off seats. The hon. member for Fremantle, who is an old member of the House, told me that if I would come into the chamber he would assist me in picking out a seat for myself. He showed me the seat which I at present occupy, telling me it was his seat during the previous session, and that he did not intend to occupy it during the present session, and he said if I desired I might have it for myself. I put my card on the seat, and some time afterwards I heard some impertinent remarks made in a room outside about certain new members jumping seats. I think I am fairly well known, and if the gentleman who made those remarks had come to me and told me I had taken a seat which he imagined was his by any etiquette of the House, I should willingly have given up the seat to him. Instead, however, of coming to me in that way, that honourable member placed his card on the seat I had chosen, and the remarks to which I have referred as to new members jumping old members' seats were afterwards made. As the honourable member chose to be what I might perhaps call arrogant in the matter, I declined to let any old member use dictation to me in this matter. I wish to explain my position, because Tuesday morning's newspaper published a version of the occurrence. Referring now to the Address-in-Reply, I do not intend to speak of federation at all—that can be discussed in Committee—but in regard to the requirements of the goldfields, I think that, now I have risen, I may as well make a few remarks. I would like first to deal with the food duties: and I wish to do nothing in this House to injure the agricultural industry. I will do my best always to foster that industry; but, at the same time, notice must be taken of the moneys which are being sent out of the country through the post office every month. We are told that last month

some £82,000 was sent away by this channel, and that this month the amount is £72,000. Those facts present a grave situation, which must be faced by the House at a very early moment. I trust we will have a very short recess, and that as soon as the House meets after the conclusion of the Federal Convention, an endeavour will be made to find some means of preventing that money leaving the colony in the way it is now doing. The export of that money is, no doubt, owing to obstacles placed in the way of working men making their homes in the colony. On the goldfields, owing to the regulations, it is difficult for a working man to get a piece of ground for himself. Every obstacle is placed in the way, and I hope that the Royal Commission to be appointed to deal with these matters will take this point seriously into consideration. As to the Coolgardie water supply scheme, it is absolutely necessary there should be a good supply of fresh water on the goldfields. The food duties realise a very large proportion of the customs revenue. If the agricultural districts could supply sufficient products for the wants of the country, there would be no objection to those duties as a sort of protective tariff. But at the present time the tariff is actually an imposition, and I hope the Government will make some concession in the matter. Dealing with mining generally, I would urge on the Government the necessity for considering the desirability of providing public batteries. The Premier stated at Bunbury that he thoroughly agreed with a proposal to that effect, adding that private enterprise had not grasped the position, and it was time the Government stepped in. If the Government do take this matter in hand and construct batteries on the different goldfields, their action would not only prove a great boon to the country, but would pay handsomely. It is not desired that the Government should make a large profit out of the public batteries. The Government might charge 10 per cent. on the working cost, which would give 4 per cent. on the cost of construction, and 6 per cent. for sinking fund and depreciation of plant. Public batteries would no doubt increase the returns enormously, and give practical help to men in the back regions in realising the stone pro-

duced from their mines. The miners are not afraid to have the public batteries tested on the goldfields, and if such batteries were provided we would hear less outcry against the company-monger and the present mining regulations. We want an amendment of the Electoral Act as soon as possible. I would be quite content to resign my seat and go back to my constituency if a reasonable Bill were passed through the House, giving every man on the fields, and all over the colony, the right to vote. I want a re-distribution of seats on a somewhat different principle from that of the present distribution. The hon. member for Central Murchison has given the House some figures in reference to the voting powers in various constituencies; and we learn that while the one member is returned by 2,080 voters, another is sent to the House by 90 voters. [MR. DOHERTY: What about the territory represented?] We have been told that in the old times a donkey might have a vote in England. I, myself, represent 750 voters, but if every man on the goldfields could have a vote, there would be something like 2,000 or 3,000 persons on the electoral roll for North Coolgardie. [MR. CONNOR: Are you in favour of a re-distribution of seats here?] I am in favour of a re-distribution of seats, and hope we shall soon have a new Electoral Act that will give all classes the right of representation in this House. I hope honourable members will excuse my somewhat disjointed speech. But for the remarks of the hon. member for East Kimberley, I should not have addressed the House, and I trust that my explanation has been satisfactory.

MR. GEORGE: Before proceeding to deal with the federation question, I wish to draw the attention of the House to an evil which I have pointed out during the last two sessions of Parliament as being a danger which this country has been drifting into, and which will soon land us pretty nearly in the same state that the colony of Victoria was in some years ago. I refer to the accumulation of railway stores at Fremantle. If my information is correct, on April 30th of this year there were nearly £750,000 worth of stores lying unused on waste ground at Fremantle, the great bulk of which was exposed to the weather or to