

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES.

First Session of the Twentieth Parliament.

The Legislative Assembly was dissolved on the 31st January, 1950.

The Twentieth Parliament was convened for the despatch of business on the 27th July, 1950, and the first session was commenced on that day.

Legislative Council.

Thursday, 27th July, 1950.

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OPENING OF PARLIAMENT.

The Legislative Council met at noon.

The PRESIDENT took the Chair.

PROCLAMATION.

The Clerk of Parliaments (Mr. L. L. Leake) read the proclamation of His Excellency the Governor summoning the first session of the Twentieth Parliament.

COMMISSIONER.

His Excellency's Commissioner (His Honour Mr. Justice Wolff) having entered the Chamber at 12.3 p.m., a message was sent to the Legislative Assembly requesting the presence of members in the Council Chamber.

Members of the Legislative Assembly having arrived accordingly, the Commissioner requested the Clerk to read His Excellency's Commission to do all things necessary in the name and on the part of His Majesty the King or in the name and on the part of His Excellency for the opening and holding of the first session of the Twentieth Parliament.

The Commission was read.

The Commissioner read the following statement:—

Mr. President, Honourable Members of the Legislative Council and Members of the Legislative Assembly—

I have it in command from His Excellency the Governor to inform you that, at 3 o'clock this afternoon, His Excellency will declare to you the causes of his calling together of this Parliament; and it being necessary that a Speaker of the Legislative Assembly should first be chosen, it is His Excellency's pleasure that you, the members of the Legislative Assembly, repair to the place where you are to sit, and, having been duly sworn by me in accordance with the terms of the Commission granted me by His Excellency, you do elect your Speaker and notify the same to His Excellency.

The Commissioner and members of the Legislative Assembly retired from the Chamber.

SWEARING-IN OF MEMBERS.

The Clerk of Parliaments then announced the return of writs for the election of members at the biennial elections, showing that the following had been duly elected:—Hon. H. K. Watson (Metropolitan), Hon. E. M. Davies (West), Hon. H. C. Strickland (North), Hon. A. R. Jones (Midland), Hon. G. B. Wood (Central), Hon. L. Craig (South-West), Hon. J. McI. Thomson (South), Hon. E. M. Heenan (North-East), Hon. Sir Frank Gibson (Suburban), Hon. R. J. Boylen (South-East), and Hon. N. E. Baxter (Central—by-election). These members took and subscribed the oath and signed the roll.

Sitting suspended from 12.25 to 2.55 p.m.

GOVERNOR'S OPENING SPEECH.

His Excellency the Governor entered the Council Chamber at 3 p.m., and, the members of the Legislative Assembly having also attended in the Chamber, obediently to summons, His Excellency was pleased to deliver the following speech:—

Mr. President and Honourable Members of the Legislative Council—

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly—

It is with pleasure that I open the First Session of the Twentieth Parliament for the transaction of public business.

I record with deep regret the loss suffered by the State and by Parliament in the passing of the Honourable C. F. Baxter, who was a member of the Legislative Council continuously from 1914 until his death. Mr. Baxter, whose distinguished public service included several periods as a Minister of the Crown, was held in high public esteem.

Ministers are deeply concerned at developments in the international situation and strongly support the action taken by the Federal Parliament to uphold the authority of the United Nations Organisation. They are fully prepared to take whatever action is considered necessary to co-operate with the Federal Government should the position require it.

At the request of the Prime Minister, my Ministers have agreed to co-operate in arranging suitable celebrations next year to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Federation.

The strong world demand continues for increased food production and it is the intention of my advisers to take full advantage of the opportunity offering for the development of large areas of land hitherto unproductive.

Ministers have conferred with representatives of the Commonwealth Government to enlist the support of the new Commonwealth Department of National Development. Important developmental schemes are being submitted as worthy of Commonwealth assistance.

Shortages of materials and skilled labour continue to delay the State's progress, although our population is steadily increasing. The Department of Supply and Shipping is constantly engaged in assisting to overcome problems associated with securing and shipping commodities in short supply. The Government is importing considerable quantities of materials, so as to leave the lower priced local products to meet the public demand.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly—

The revenue for the financial year 1949-1950 was £25,810,961 and the expenditure £25,787,203, leaving a surplus of £23,758.

Although the year's transactions resulted in a surplus, over eleven million pounds out of a total revenue of approximately twenty-six million pounds was received from Commonwealth sources. While Income Tax Re-imbursement will continue to be received in accordance with the agreed formula, the remainder of revenue from Commonwealth sources, other than interest contributions under the Financial Agreement, has no degree of permanency. The Commonwealth Grants Commission is fortunately taking a realistic view of the State's needs, but the legislation under which the Commission operates gives no guarantee for our future requirements. Until a solution is found of the problem of Commonwealth-State financial relations the financial outlook must continue to be uncertain.

Mr. President and Honourable Members of the Legislative Council—

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly—

The season opened with bountiful and widespread rains. Early growth of feed was excellent and a good average lambing has been experienced. Further rains, however, are essential to ensure a good season.

Scientific research into the problems of primary production is being constantly expanded and farming standards considerably improved. The establishment of the Rural Training Centre for returned servicemen should greatly assist in this direction. Seven hundred farmers have already attended and 600 are still to undertake this course. It is hoped that, after the rehabilitation programme has concluded, the school will be continued so as to furnish instruction in modern farming methods.

Unfavourable conditions during the summer have detrimentally affected fruit production, including apples, grapes and oranges. Fruit fly control measures have been strengthened.

Legislation will be submitted regarding many recommendations of the Royal Commission on Vermin. Other Bills affecting primary production to be introduced include amendments to the Seeds Act, and the Feeding Stuffs Act.

A number of amendments to the Land Act will be placed before you, some of which are intended to ensure that land sold by the Crown will be satisfactorily improved and developed.

As a result of a decision by the High Court invalidating Commonwealth legislation dealing with War Service Land Settlement, a Bill will be introduced to ratify a new agreement. Under the existing scheme, 541 properties have been purchased at a cost of £2,863,000, from which it is anticipated 702 farms will be made available for settlement.

Present arrangements regarding nominated migrants will continue. Since 1947 nearly 10,000 British migrants have arrived under the Free and Assisted Passages Scheme and approximately 5,000 will arrive during the next twelve months. In addition 14,000 New Australians have arrived in this State during the same period.

An improved outlook for gold mining has resulted from the rise in the price of gold following devaluation of sterling. Activity in other minerals has been fostered by world demand. A geological survey is now proceeding to assess deposits of clays, stone, sands, etc., for industrial purposes.

Coal production has been satisfactorily maintained and Government assistance particularly in regard to mechanisation, has contributed to last year's record of 750,000 tons. Deep drilling has been undertaken to establish the extent of the Collie basin and plans are under consideration for the better use of our coal resources, in which the newly appointed State Coal Mining Engineer will be of much assistance.

Amendments to the Coal Mine Workers' Pensions Act and the Inspection of Machinery Act will be introduced.

The timber industry is rapidly returning to full production and five large new mills should reach capacity this year. Forest protection is being increased, particularly in the Manjimup and Pemberton areas where new sawmills are developing. Pine planting is being extended and will soon reach 2,000 acres a year.

Last summer was one of the worst fire seasons on record and considerable damage was done. The Government has afforded aid to sufferers and Commonwealth assistance is anticipated.

The Rural Fires Prevention Advisory Committee, after consultation with local authorities and farming organisations, has proposed amendments to the Bush Fires Act and these will be placed before you with a view to stricter preventive measures and better control.

Encouragement continues to be given to secondary industries. The output of pig iron from Wundowie is now approximately 8,000 tons per annum and production will shortly be substantially increased. These supplies have proved of great service to local foundries.

Consideration of proposals for the commencement of an iron and steel industry in Western Australia is awaiting the report of Messrs. Brasserts Ltd., which should be received in the near future.

The Board of Management of the State Alunite Industry at Lake Chandler found the continued production of potash uneconomical in the face of overseas competition and recommended its discontinuance. The Government has negotiated a short term arrangement for the production by private enterprise of plaster from

Chandler gypsum deposits to relieve a temporary shortage of plaster in certain of the Eastern States.

The two trawlers brought out from England have proved that fish in quantity exist on our south coast. This year's canning operations have been quite successful. There is a keen demand from America and the United Kingdom for crayfish. The whaling industry was successfully established on our coast last year by private enterprise with State Government assistance and the Commonwealth Government station at Carnarvon is expected to operate shortly.

The housing problem continues to receive unremitting attention and a target of 5,000 houses has been set for 1950. Immediate permits to build homes up to 1½ squares are being issued. Contracts have been let for a number of pre-fabricated houses and further tenders are under consideration.

The production of building materials is being stimulated and considerable quantities of materials in short supply are being imported. A Bill will be placed before you providing for partial relaxation of building controls and enabling further relaxation to be made as the position improves. Amendments to the State Housing Act will also be introduced to expand the provisions relating to advances for workers' dwellings.

The need for a balanced building programme is recognised and, while concentrating on house construction, the State Housing Commission will continue to provide a proportion of resources for essential educational, hospital and industrial buildings.

The rehabilitation of the State's railway system is proceeding. In addition to 35 "P.M." locomotives recently delivered, 60 "W" class light line locomotives are on order for delivery commencing towards the end of this year. The introduction of diesel engines will reduce the uneconomical transportation of water for railway purposes to dry areas and lessen the risk of fires from engine sparks. Tenders are being invited for 18 diesel mechanical locomotives, 48 diesel electric main line locomotives, and three diesel shunting engines. Tenders have been called for 4,160 new wagons and 107 new coaches.

Transport facilities are being provided to keep pace with housing development. The replacement of trams on a number of routes by omnibuses and trolley buses is providing a better transport service. In country districts local bus services have been encouraged and there has been an outstanding expansion of long distance routes.

The rapid increase in motor vehicles has created a serious metropolitan traffic problem. Measures taken or under consideration to alleviate the position include the

provision of bus and car parking places, abolition of angle parking, and a speeding up of traffic at both ends of the Causeway.

Approval has been given to the Tydeman scheme providing for up-stream extension of the port of Fremantle. To relieve congestion at the port, and to obtain a quicker turn-around of vessels, steps are being taken to use external warehousing and to provide better mechanical equipment. The co-operation of all concerned with the operation of the port has been obtained by the creation of a Cargo Advisory Committee.

Harbour schemes approved at Albany and Bunbury are proceeding. The building of bulk wheat silos and superphosphate works at Albany will commence at an early date.

Special attention is being given to the conservation and distribution of water which is of the greatest importance to the State's development.

The raising of Mundaring Weir to a capacity of fifteen thousand million gallons should be completed by June next. Preliminary work on raising the Welling-ton Dam will commence in six months.

Very good progress is being made with the Comprehensive Water Supply Scheme. Contracts have been let for approximately 20,000 tons of steel plate, of which much has already been delivered.

Several key dams have been constructed in the agricultural areas and this work will be continued.

Many water supply and sewerage extensions have been undertaken in the metropolitan area. To cope with the increased demand for water, investigations are being conducted preparatory to providing additional storage, and it is intended to increase the daily flow from Canning Dam.

Although expenditure this year on main roads will reach a record figure of £1,600,000, work is still limited by shortages of manpower, equipment and materials.

Good progress has been made with the construction of the South Fremantle Power Station. The "A" station buildings have been completed and installations are reaching an advanced stage. Foundations of the "B" station have been completed and erection of the framework is proceeding.

Progress with the South-West Power Scheme is satisfactory despite delays in delivery of equipment.

As the development of the North-West is essentially a national problem, an approach has been made to the Commonwealth Government for special provision for the North-West in any national developmental scheme.

Assistance has been given to the establishment of abattoirs at Glenroy for the aerial transport of beef. A special branch of the Department of Agriculture is to undertake research work in the northern

areas as soon as suitable staff can be secured, and experiments on the Ord River station are being intensified. Survey parties are being sent out into areas of the Kimberleys beyond existing settlement. The State Shipping Service is purchasing the Dongara for the North-West trade and plans for another new vessel are to be prepared.

During the year the Commonwealth Grants Commission accepted the invitation of the Government to pay a visit to the North-West portion of the State.

Expenditure last year on educational services exceeded £2,250,000, the highest in the State's history. School enrolments have increased by ten per cent. during the last two years.

School buildings estimated to cost £320,000 have been authorised during the last three years and at present there are more school buildings in course of erection than ever before. As an emergency measure it has been decided to purchase 30 pre-fabricated schools equivalent to 60 class rooms. Renovations to existing school buildings are being carried out as speedily as possible.

The State Health Council consisting of representatives of the Health Department and the British Medical Association has been appointed to offer technical advice on health and disease. Additional professional staff has made possible research into a number of important health problems and an extension of school medical and dental services.

The extensive programme undertaken for the building and improvement of hospitals will be continued, although difficulty is being experienced in obtaining tenders for some important works.

Consideration has been given to the report of the Royal Commission on the Claremont Mental Hospital and steps are being taken to effect further improvements in conditions at this institution.

The work of the Child Welfare Department has been expanded by the appointment of inspectors in country districts. Payments in respect of State wards have been substantially increased. A building was secured for a Child Guidance Clinic, which is now established.

The division of the State into eight districts under the charge of experienced officers has already resulted in a marked improvement in the administration of Native Affairs. A better relationship between employer and native employee has been established and wages and housing accommodation for natives on stations are being considerably improved. Increased financial support is being given to denominational missions.

The need for rent control continues but proposals will be placed before you with the object of removing existing anomalies.

Tourist activity continues to grow and will be further expanded when it is possible to provide additional accommodation.

The Royal Commission appointed to report on a Bill to consolidate the Municipal Corporations Act and the Road Districts Act has made good progress and will submit its findings at an early date.

A Bill will be introduced to empower local authorities to establish a reserve fund to invest and accumulate funds realised from the sale of capital assets.

The maintenance of satisfactory industrial relations between employers and employees continues to receive the constant attention of Ministers. The appointment of a Conciliation Commissioner has enabled the work of the Arbitration Court to be brought up to date.

The administration of price control by close collaboration between the State Governments has prevented unjustified price rises in many commodities. While my Ministers desire to discontinue the regulation of prices wherever this can be done without detriment to the consumer, it will be necessary in the public interest to continue price control for the time being and legislation for this purpose will be placed before you.

With the constantly expanding development of the State and increasing demands upon the time of Ministers, it is felt that the number of Ministers should be increased from eight to ten and an amendment to the Constitution Act for this purpose will be placed before you for consideration.

I now declare this Session of Parliament open and trust that Providence may bless your labours.

His Excellency then withdrew from the Chamber.

[The President took the Chair.]

BILL—FREMANTLE HARBOUR TRUST ACT AMENDMENT.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: In order to assert and maintain the undoubted rights and privileges of this House to initiate legislation, I move, without notice, for leave to introduce a Bill entitled "An Act to amend Section 65 of the Fremantle Harbour Trust Act, 1902."

Leave given; Bill introduced and read a first time.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH, DISTRIBUTION.

THE PRESIDENT: For the sake of greater accuracy, I have obtained from His Excellency the Governor copies of the Speech he has been pleased to deliver to Parliament. These will be distributed among hon. members.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

First Day.

HON. A. R. JONES (Midland) [3.35]: I move—

That the following Address be presented to His Excellency the Governor in reply to the Speech he has been pleased to deliver:—"May it please Your Excellency: We, the members of the Legislative Council of the State of Western Australia in Parliament assembled, beg to express our loyalty to our most gracious Sovereign and to thank Your Excellency for the Speech you have been pleased to deliver to Parliament."

In his Speech, His Excellency mentioned the late Hon. C. F. Baxter, who was a member of this House, and pointed out that he was a great loss to this Chamber, in which he had given many years of service. I would like also to couple in this vein the remark that, in his retirement, we have lost the services of Hon. A. Thomson. It is indeed fitting that these two gentlemen, after serving their country for so long, should have their sons elected to occupy seats in this House. I think that is an extremely fine tribute to the work those gentlemen did and indicates the esteem in which they were held by their electors.

It is certainly most distressing, Mr. President, that the opening day of this Parliament should see the world experiencing such troublous times. In his Speech, His Excellency remarked that the Government had promised the Commonwealth every assistance necessary in carrying out the duties attached to the government of this country and its obligations to the United Nations Organisation. We have already Air Force and Naval personnel serving in Korea, and only in this morning's press it was announced that ground troops would be supplied. It is indeed regrettable that we should have this circumstance confronting us so soon after the completion of one war. Unfortunately, it seems that it is the only way that we can restore peace in the world, and I feel proud that this State and the Commonwealth of Australia have supported and honoured their obligations to the United Nations Organisation.

His Excellency mentioned quite a number of matters the Government intends proceeding with and some legislation which it proposes to bring before Parliament this session, the chief of which, I think one can say, concern water supply, education and hospitalisation. Those undertakings, affect all the people throughout the State. He did mention that the Fisheries Department was given consideration, together with mining and forestry. We are pleased to know that those matters are receiving the attention of the Government.

I propose to confine my remarks to those subjects that affect all of the people and to leave aside minor subjects; that is, minor as compared with the three phases I have mentioned. The installation of the comprehensive water scheme, which is now in progress, has been held up for some time due to lack of materials. His Excellency has told us, however, that materials are now being forwarded from oversea. It is gratifying to know that this scheme is going ahead and will eventually serve a large portion of the State.

The Speech indicated that several key dams have been constructed in the agricultural areas, and that this work will be continued. As a representative of the people in the northern agricultural areas, I feel that we should receive greater consideration in the matter of water supplies for that extensive part of the State. We are looking forward to the time—and hope it will not be too long—when a definite and comprehensive water scheme will be undertaken for those districts. During the last 12 months, a survey has been made and good water is available, but it is a matter of pumping it to that part of the State. We realise that while the existing shortage of materials continues, there is not much chance of our getting a scheme quickly, but we ask that the Government should consider our claim and provide a comprehensive scheme as early as possible.

I wish to make light reference to education, not that I consider it a light matter, but there is need for improvement of educational facilities throughout the State. During the last three years, the Government has done a considerable amount of work in the way of erecting new buildings and renovating existing schools, so that throughout the country the facilities are much better than they were years ago. His Excellency mentioned that a record sum had been expended on education last year and it is pleasing to know that the education of the children, particularly in the outback areas, is receiving increased attention.

I have a suggestion to offer the Government that might be of benefit. It is that a mobile unit should be provided to visit the smaller schools and introduce domestic science and manual training courses. I think the idea is worthy of consideration. We look to the time when the children of the country will be able to pass from the primary schools into the high schools in the larger centres.

Hospitalisation is a subject that has been exercising the minds of all the people, particularly since the war years. It is pleasing to know that the Government intends to build three regional hospitals—one at Albany, one at Bunbury and one at Geraldton. Extensions have been made to various hospitals throughout the State.

The only comment I wish to make on this subject is that we in the northern part of the State feel that such wide areas are entitled to greater consideration and that one regional hospital should be built there. We hope that the present and succeeding Governments will bear in mind that, if we are going to develop those areas, we must provide the people with the facilities they need and that adequate hospitalisation must be readily available to them in the country and so obviate the need for their coming to the city for treatment.

Let me now touch upon what I consider is one of the most important needs of the State. Someone has suggested meat. That might apply to the Goldfields, but I have in mind the agricultural industry. Of all the wealth produced throughout the length and breadth of the State, 90 per cent. comes from the soil. It is true that the products of mining also come from the soil, but I am referring to agriculture. On account of the importance of this industry, I claim that the Department of Agriculture should be raised from the lowly position it has occupied throughout the years to that of "the" department of Western Australia.

All Governments over the last 25 years have shown lack of foresight by not creating a department such as was warranted by the development of the industry. Such a department as I advocate should result in more work being done on an economic basis. Too long have we left people to go out into new areas and grope about without knowing whether produce could be raised there or not. They have had to experiment and expend their money, and many are the disillusioned people who have thus been broken in health and in every other way. I consider that the Government should give early consideration to building up this department to the important status it deserves.

The only way in which this can be done, in my opinion, is by placing a Minister in charge and making agriculture his sole responsibility. If we are going to build the department in size and staffing, we must make it attractive for men to join. In this department, I would include the Soil Conservation Committee. Over the years, some of our most able men—men born and bred in the State, men who have gained their degrees at our University—have joined the department only to leave because greater remuneration was offered them in other States or oversea. Thus we lost the services of good men who understood the problems of agriculture in this State. This should never have happened, and Governments over the last 25 years have been lax in allowing it to happen.

Endeavours should be exerted to build up the department by making the remuneration of officers commensurate with the work, so that this loss of staff shall not continue. We should even offer sufficient remuneration to attract good men from other parts of the world, particularly to deal with soil conservation. We are fortunate indeed that soil erosion has not been so serious in this State as it has been in America, China and other countries where millions of tons of soil have been lost through this cause. I recall having read that 10 to 20 per cent. of the topsoil—that is, the fertile soil that produces the food we eat—has been washed into the sea. So I consider that if we spent £1,000,000 in setting up a department with the men and machinery necessary to conserve the topsoil in Western Australia, we would be justified.

I have been told that the honour that has been bestowed on me today is one I should not abuse, and that people like to have their afternoon tea. As it is now afternoon tea time I shall conclude my remarks, and have much pleasure in submitting the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply.

HON. H. K. WATSON (Metropolitan): I formally second the motion.

On motion by Hon. E. H. Gray, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 3.53 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 27th July, 1950.

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MEETING OF THE ASSEMBLY.

The Legislative Assembly met at noon, pursuant to proclamation by His Excellency the Governor, which proclamation was read by the Clerk (Mr. F. E. Islip).

MESSAGE—OPENING BY COMMISSIONER.

A Message from His Excellency's Commissioner requested the attendance of members of the Legislative Assembly in the Legislative Council Chamber. Hon. members having accordingly proceeded to that Chamber and heard the Commission read, they returned to the Assembly Chamber.

SWEARING-IN OF MEMBERS.

His Honour Mr. Justice Wolff, having been commissioned by the Governor appeared in the Assembly Chamber to administer to members the oath of allegiance to His Majesty the King.

The Clerk produced election writs showing the return of 50 members.

All the members elected, with the exception of Mr. Needham, were present and took and subscribed the oath as required by statute and signed the roll.

The Commissioner then withdrew.

ELECTION OF SPEAKER.

THE PREMIER (Hon. D. R. McLarty—Murray): The House being duly constituted I move—

That Mr. North do take the Chair of this House as Speaker.