

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

# PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES.

### SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTH PARLIAMENT.

#### OPENING OF PARLIAMENT.

*The Second Session of the Fifth Parliament under Responsible Government was convened for the despatch of business on the 6th July, 1905.*

*Parliament was opened by His Excellency the Governor.*

#### Legislative Council,

*Thursday, 6th July, 1905.*

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#### OPENING OF PARLIAMENT.

The Legislative Council met at 3 o'clock p.m., pursuant to proclamation, which was read by the Clerk of Parliaments.

#### ACTING PRESIDENT, ELECTION.

The Clerk of Parliaments announced that the President (Hon. Sir G. Shenton) was unavoidably absent, and it would be necessary to appoint some member to preside until his return.

**THE COLONIAL SECRETARY AND MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE** (Hon. J. M. Drew): I beg to move,

That the Hon. Henry Briggs be elected Acting-President of the Legislative Council, pending the return of the Hon. Sir George Shenton.

**HON. J. W. HACKETT** (South-West): I have great pleasure in seconding the proposition, which I believe will be thoroughly satisfactory to the House.

Question put and passed.

**THE ACTING-PRESIDENT** having been conducted to the Chair by the mover

and seconder, said: I beg to submit myself to your wishes, and to thank you for the honour which you have conferred upon me.

#### THE GOVERNOR'S OPENING SPEECH.

At five minutes past 3 o'clock His Excellency Admiral Sir Frederick G. D. Bedford, G.C.B., entered the Council Chamber; and the members of the Legislative Assembly having attended in the Chamber obediently to summons, His Excellency delivered the following Speech:—

**MR. PRESIDENT AND HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,**—

**MR. SPEAKER AND GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY,**—

During the year which has just terminated, the development in the Mining, Agricultural, and Pastoral Industries has been of a substantial and gratifying nature, and there is every indication of similar satisfactory progress in the future.

An encouraging feature in our mining development is exemplified in the satisfactory increase in the number of local companies and co-operative parties engaged in the industry.

The expansion of our agricultural industry in all its divisions has been specially marked.

In response to an invitation from my Ministers, the Right Honourable the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth and a considerable number of members of the Federal Parliament visited Western Australia during last April, and were afforded an opportunity of making themselves acquainted with the resources and industrial possibilities of the State. It is believed that the knowledge thus gained will be of material value to them when dealing in the Federal Legislature with questions which vitally affect the welfare of Western Australia.

**MR. SPEAKER AND GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY,—**

The finances of the State will require your close attention.

The revenue received, although substantial in amount, has not been sufficient during the year just ended to meet all the demands made upon it.

The precise result of the operations for that period is not yet available, but there will be a deficit on the year's transactions, the exact amount of which will be reported shortly.

By the exercise of due economy in the expenditure for the present financial year, and the imposition of some slight taxation, the deficiency can be fully made up.

You will be asked at an early date to grant temporary supplies for the administration of the departments until the Annual Estimates have been submitted to you.

You will likewise be asked to consider a Loan Bill, authorising the State to borrow a sum sufficient for the construction of such Public Works as appear necessary to encourage the development of the various industries of the State.

Measures for the imposition of taxes upon unimproved land values and incomes, and upon totalisator receipts, will be submitted, to recoup the deficiency caused by the reduction in revenue returned by the Commonwealth, and to make provision for a system of Old Age Pensions.

My advisers have had under consideration during the past few months a proposal by the Midland Railway Company of Western Australia Limited to sell to the Government its railway and such

portion of its lands as are at present mortgaged to the Government. Both railway and lands have been carefully inspected and valued, and the Government has agreed, subject to the sanction of Parliament, to make a purchase at £1,500,000. The original option of purchase expired on the thirtieth day of June ultimo; but in order that Parliament might have an opportunity to determine the question, an extension of the option until the thirty-first day of July instant has been arranged. You will, therefore, be asked to decide before the latter date whether you are prepared to give the necessary authority to my Ministers. Full particulars of the valuations and the proposed terms of purchase will be supplied to you without delay.

**MR. PRESIDENT AND HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,—**

**MR. SPEAKER AND GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY,—**

To ascertain the wishes of the people in regard to the retention, or otherwise, of the Bi-cameral System of Legislature, my Ministers will introduce a Bill providing for the reference of this question to the electors, with an alternative question upon the franchise of the Second Chamber, if retained.

A measure providing for the establishment of an Old Age Pension Scheme within the State is a matter with which you will be called upon to deal during this session.

Your approval will be sought for an amendment of the existing law relating to Aborigines, in order to secure more efficient protection for our aborigines, and at the same time to safeguard those of our citizens who pursue their avocations in the Northern areas of the State.

With a view to minimise the evils attending the Liquor Traffic a consolidating measure, embodying the local control of this trade and the principle of State ownership, will be brought before you.

The necessity for the amendment and consolidation of the Mines Regulation Acts has become apparent, and provisions ensuring better protection for the health and lives of miners, and for the protection of the interests of shareholders in our

local mines, as well as other important matters, will be embodied in a Bill.

The Conciliation and Arbitration Act requires amendment in the direction of empowering the Court to grant the same preference to the workers as is already extended to the employers under the existing measure, and likewise for the purpose of rendering the legislation for the amicable adjustment of industrial disputes more effective generally than it is at present.

An amendment of the Companies Act will be introduced for the purpose of enforcing the Local Registration of companies operating within the State.

To provide for the immediate construction of the Sewerage System you will be asked to approve an Amendment of the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Act.

Measures dealing with the Amendment and Consolidation of the Laws relating to Crown Lands, Municipal Institutions, and the Public Health, will be submitted.

In compliance with a resolution passed by the Legislative Assembly in 1903, the survey of a Railway line between Port Hedland and Nullagine has been completed; plans have been drawn, and estimates of cost prepared; and in pursuance of that resolution it is proposed to invite offers for the construction and management of this undertaking upon a Government guarantee and under the supervision of Departmental Officers, with all necessary safeguards of the public interest, and with the right of purchase reserved to the State. Such offers will be submitted for your consideration.

Proposals will be placed before you for the extension of the Narrogin and Jandakot Railways now in course of construction; for the construction of a Railway from Coolgardie to Norseman; and for the provision of a Floating Dock at Fremantle.

I declare this Session of Parliament opened, and I confidently trust that, aided by Divine direction, you will materially advance the well-being of the State.

#### PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the **ACTING PRESIDENT**: The Public Accounts for the financial year ended 30th June, 1904, with the Auditor General's Report.

By the **COLONIAL SECRETARY**: 1, "The Mining Development Act, 1902"—Regulations for the purchase of auriferous copper ores at State Smelting Works, Phillips River. 2, "The Explosives Act, 1895"—Amended regulations. 3, By-laws for municipalities of Albany, Carnarvon, Coolgardie, Leederville, Menzies, North Fremantle, Perth, Subiaco. 4, "The Railways Act, 1904"—Report and returns in accordance with Sections 54 and 83; notices as to special penalties; by-laws. 5, Royal Commission on Ocean Freights, report and minutes of evidence. 6, "The Coal Mines Regulation Act, 1902"—Amended regulations. 7, Report of Inspector of the Insane. 8, Fremantle Harbour Trust Commissioners' half-yearly report. 9, Royal Commission on the Condition of the Natives, report and minutes of evidence. 10, Report of Superintendent of Public Charities and Inspector of Industrial and Reformatory Schools. 11, Report by the Chief Inspector of Fisheries on the fishing industry and pearling operations, 1904. 12, Report by the Government Astronomer on Meteorological Observations, 1903.

#### BILL, FERTILISERS AND FEEDING STUFFS ACT AMENDMENT.

**THE COLONIAL SECRETARY AND MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE** (Hon. J. M. Drew): In order to assert the undoubted right and privilege of the House to initiate legislation, I move, without notice, for leave to introduce a Bill entitled "An Act to amend the Fertilisers and Feeding Stuffs Act, 1904."

Leave given. Bill introduced and read a first time.

#### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

##### FIRST DAY OF DEBATE.

**HON. R. D. MCKENZIE** (North-East): Having listened to the Speech of His Excellency the Governor, I beg to move the adoption of the following Address-in-reply:—

To His Excellency Admiral Sir Frederick George Denham Sedford, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, Governor, etc., etc., etc.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

We, the Legislative Council of the Parliament 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 address to Parliament.

Before referring at all to the Speech, I should like to express my great regret at the absence, owing to serious indisposition, of our President (Sir George Shenton). I am sure I voice not only my own opinion, but the sentiments of every other member of this House, when I state that we sincerely wish that he may soon be restored to health and again in our midst. I should like also to congratulate you, Mr. Briggs, on your election to fill the vacancy caused by his absence. I feel sure that in appointing you, members have acted wisely, and that the duties of the office will be carried out most satisfactorily by your good self. In moving the adoption of the Address-in-reply, I should like to say that I look on the motion as somewhat formal. This is the second occasion on which I have had the honour of moving it. I have not been taken into the confidence of the Government; in fact, a copy of the Speech was not handed me for perusal till 11 o'clock this morning: so members will admit that I have not had much time to give it that attention which perhaps is necessary before one attempts to deal with it in detail. However, I can but do my best, pleading as an excuse for any shortcomings that the time at my disposal has been very brief indeed. It will be noticed that the Speech itself is very brief, and particularly void of details. Very little has been said about the past doings of Parliament, or about the past history of this great State; but a tolerably long bill-of-fare has been presented to us for digestion during the session. The finances of the State do not seem to be absolutely satisfactory to the Government; for the Speech begins with a statement that the finances will require close attention. It goes on to forecast the introduction of Bills for the imposition of some slight extra taxation in the shape of income, land, and totalisator taxes, to make up the deficiency with which the financial year has ended. I have not the exact figures for the whole year; but till the end of May, 1905, the revenue received was £3,193,282 16s. 5d. For the corresponding term in the preceding year the revenue was £3,176,000

odd; the present year thus showing an excess of some few pounds for that period. But it must be remembered that the year ended the 31st May, 1904, was commenced with a surplus of some £230,000, whilst the year just ended was commenced with a surplus of £83,000. If one fault can be found with the present Government, I think it is probably a weakness in their financing; and in my opinion the present revenue of this State is quite sufficient, if it is used economically, to provide for all the country's wants and requirements. I hold that we should hesitate before exhausting all available means of taxation or of raising revenue. We are very heavily taxed through the Customs Department; much more heavily than are the people of the other States. The reason is, I suppose, that our people are in a flourishing condition, and are therefore using more of those commodities which we may term luxuries than residents of the other States can afford. Moreover, the Customs duties collected on those luxuries are much higher than those on ordinary every-day requirements. Consequently, being taxed to that extent through the Customs, I fail to see the need at the present moment for fresh taxation. There is no question about it, but sooner or later the ship of State of Western Australia will get into bad weather, we will have stress of weather, and then will be the time to look around for the means of fresh taxation. It would be wise to retain the power of taxation for those dark days that are to come. It should be easy for any Government running the ship of State of Western Australia to finance on the splendid revenue which we have; therefore I hold there is no justification on the part of the Government to make any proposition at all that fresh taxation shall be initiated by this Parliament. The Speech goes on to state that the pastoral, agricultural, and mining industries have progressed favourably, and there is every reason to believe that they will continue to progress. The Speech more particularly mentions the agricultural industry, and I for one am pleased indeed to learn that the agricultural industry is improving and increasing. I had a few figures given to me by the Lands Department to-day by which I notice that the number of condi-

tional purchases etcetera taken up during the first half of 1905 total 2,733, and that applications have been made for 691,472 acres of land. In the first half of the previous year there was a slight increase in the number of applications, also in the acreage taken up. I also notice that at the end of 1904 there were 5,064,000 acres of land, perhaps not under cultivation, but at all events for which applications had been approved. This shows there has been a very large increase every year in the acreage that has been taken up. Whether the land is being cultivated or put to good purpose I am not prepared to say, but very likely some members from the agricultural districts will be able to furnish more information on the subject. Coming from a mining district, I am glad to learn that the agricultural industry is progressing. On the goldfields we feel sure that we have done a good deal towards assisting the agricultural industry, and it cannot but be satisfactory to us to know that the industry is in a flourishing condition. In connection with the mining industry perhaps I have a little more to say, knowing more about it than of agriculture. I should like to say that I consider the general prosperity of the State of Western Australia dates from the time of the discovery of gold in Kimberley in 1885. At that time the State had a population of only 35,000 people, and in the following year the output of gold amounted to £1,147 worth. Take 20 years afterwards—the present day—we have a population of 250,000 people, and the total output of gold to date is close upon £59,000,000 sterling—to be accurate, £58,965,905. The number of men employed in our mines totals 20,000, or about one-twelfth of the population of Western Australia; whilst the machinery used in the production of the gold amounts in value to nearly £5,000,000 sterling. The dividends paid to date amount to £12,640,523. Members must admit that this is a splendid record, also that through the finding of gold in Western Australia the great prosperity of this country is due. It has struck me for a considerable time that any other country with such mines as we undoubtedly have in Western Australia would have made a far greater song about it than we have; the country

would have been far better advertised than it has been by us. The people in Western Australia are too apathetic over the magnificent possibilities of this State, and if the columns of the newspapers of Western Australia are a reflex of the public opinion of the people of the State—more especially I speak of the people in the coastal districts—very little interest is taken in the magnificent industry we have at our doors. In perusing the columns of the newspapers here, one very rarely gets much information about the mining districts of Western Australia, and in the other States this condition of things is perpetuated. One may pick up newspaper after newspaper only to find a short telegram giving a police court prosecution or something of that sort, while all the facts about our great industries are left out. I would like to see this altered. Let us see the columns of the newspapers of the capital and the columns of the newspapers of the capitals of the other States filled with the latest news about the mining industry of Western Australia. If that were done it would be the means of bringing to our shores a great many people who would launch out in the mining industry. In connection with mining, I should like to say, and this is a matter I take a deep interest in, that the prospector should be encouraged by every possible means in our power. I say most emphatically—I think I said it last year, and I repeat it again to-day, and I shall go on repeating it—that I believe the prospector to be the backbone of the mining industry in its last resort. I feel convinced of that. Every ounce of gold taken from a mine lessens the value of that mine, and if the industry is to prosper we must find new mines, which can only be done through the medium of the prospector. Therefore it is for the Government and the Parliament to assist the prospector by every possible means. I notice by the Speech it is the intention of the Government to bring in an amendment of the Mines Regulations. Several Royal Commissions have sat during the past 12 or 18 months to deal with mining matters. One of these Commissions dealt with the sanitation and ventilation of mines, and I believe it is the intention of the Government in the amendment which I have referred to—I have not had the

benefit of a perusal of the proposed new regulations—to bring forward a regulation dealing with the health and protection of miners employed underground, and the protection of the interests of those investing money in the mines. I do not know if I can say it was an honour or a pleasure, but I was a member of two Commissions, those dealing with the Perseverance and Boulder Deep Levels mining scandals, and I can say that the members of those two Commissions carried out their duties to the best of their ability. They probed the questions as deeply as it was possible in this State, and I think they laid bare many actions not only on the part of the management of the mines in Western Australia, but more particularly relating to the administration by directors and those in authority at home, that will do good to the mining industry. I believe a large number of the reports have been sent home and distributed by the Agent General. A measure is also to be brought forward to amend the Companies Act so as to compel local registration. I believe this was one of the recommendations of the Boulder Deep Levels Commission, and I think it will be a good thing and meet with the approbation of the House. There is quite a large programme of suggested legislation for this Parliament to deal with; but not having much time at my disposal this afternoon I shall not go deeply into the various questions. Still I should like to run through the list and mention what the measures are. One of the first questions dealt with in the Speech, and one affecting the House considerably, is that of the referendum. The Government propose to take a referendum of the people on the question of two Houses, with an alternative question upon the alteration of the franchise if the people do not wish to do away with the Upper House. I have always been opposed to the referendum and I shall continue to oppose it. I do not believe it is right to take a referendum of the people, and this part of the Speech does not meet with my approval. When contesting the election for the North-West Province I said I was in favour of liberalising the franchise for the Upper House to some extent. I retain that view now. Another Bill the Government propose to bring forward is to deal with Old Age Pensions. This is a

matter that ought to be taken in hand by the Commonwealth; but if the Federal Parliament do not deal with it, then I am in favour of this State making a move in the matter. At present I do not quite see where the money is to come from, but that is a matter which will receive consideration.

HON. M. L. MOSS: That is only a detail.

HON. R. D. MCKENZIE: The Government intend to bring in a Bill dealing with the aborigines. If my memory serves me aright we passed some legislation on the subject, and I think it was initiated in this House. Now another Bill is to be brought forward. There has been a great deal of controversy about the aborigines lately, and perhaps there is justification for an amendment of the Act. The measure will require the careful consideration of this and the other House. The Government also propose to amend the liquor laws. I have always held and still hold that if there was better administration of the liquor laws and less talk about the building of State hotels and the State ownership of hotels, it would be better for the State. The liquor laws, to my mind, are fairly good, and if there was proper administration and a proper system of inspection, and if licensees carried out their obligations to the public, there would be very little to complain of. The State has had one experience of the running of a hotel, and I think it is generally admitted to be a failure—at any rate no profit was made. But if the license and goodwill of that hotel were put up to auction to-morrow they would bring a large amount of money, and the purchaser would still make a large profit.

HON. J. W. WRIGHT: Bad management.

HON. R. D. MCKENZIE: Perhaps it was the management to some extent, but the licensee was under the Government, and if he did not do his duty the Government must take the responsibility.

HON. J. W. WRIGHT: He was a Government officer.

HON. R. D. MCKENZIE: Another measure to be dealt with will be an amendment of the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Act. This is intended to facilitate the immediate construction of a sewerage system in Perth. This will

have my hearty and entire approval. It is time Perth had a good system of sewerage, and I shall gladly support the measure. We are also told there are to be measures dealing with the amendment and consolidation of the laws relating to Crown Lands, Municipal Institutions, and Public Health. In regard to municipal institutions, there was a lengthy Bill before the House last session. It passed through this Chamber and was sent to another place, where it dropped out of existence. I hope this session the Bill will reach the House in decent time, so that there will be ample opportunity for its consideration, and that we shall be able to evolve something which will not only be of benefit to the municipal institutions, but to the general public. I notice that the Government propose to build a floating dock at Fremantle; and I am pleased that they have decided not to build a graving dock. To that I should have been opposed; but to a floating dock I do not think there can be any serious objection. I am opposed to a graving dock because I believe there are two in the other States, and neither has ever paid. It would be absurd to build another here and expect it to pay, in view of the fact that most of the shipping calling at West Australian ports is owned in Adelaide, Melbourne, or Sydney. It would not be reasonable to expect those ships to be docked here when they could be docked, doubtless at lower rates, in the East. The only customer our graving dock would have would be an occasional "tramp," which, having broken down in the Indian Ocean, might make for Fremantle as the nearest port; or perhaps we might have the custom of some pearling luggers, or other local shipping of light tonnage. No doubt Captain Laurie would be pleased to see a graving dock at Fremantle; but I think its construction would be a waste of public money. Talking of money, we have one institution in Perth, the Royal Mint, which in my opinion should never have been built. There are mints in the other States; and it is absurd to have three separate minting establishments scattered throughout the Commonwealth, seeing that none of them will ever pay. [MEMBER: Close the others.] Then ours might have a chance of paying, as it was built to compete with them. It has no

chance of paying; and the same might be said of a graving dock at Fremantle. Some time ago, during the Premier's visit to Kalgoorlie, a numerous deputation waited on him in reference to State fire insurance. Some strong statements were made by the deputation; and it was pointed out to the Premier that the goldfields people were paying, to cover their risks, about five times as much as the coastal people. I understand that the people of Perth, Fremantle, and the coast generally are dissatisfied with their rates. If so, how much more should we on the goldfields be dissatisfied. We asked the Premier to introduce a Bill to provide for State fire insurance, and he promised to give the matter every consideration; but I see the Bill has been left out of the Speech. Evidently, we are not to get it passed this session. Speaking seriously, I think it is time something was done. When I inform the House that the companies have recently reduced the rates, firstly from 50 to 40, and then from 40 to 25, members will see how exorbitant was the rate first mentioned. If it is possible for the companies to do the business at 25, their profit at 50 must have been enormous; and this shows how great a curse is a monopoly such as that possessed by the Underwriters Association in Western Australia. [MEMBER: The reduction was due to the improved water supply.] No; because we have had the Goldfields Water Scheme for over two years, and the reduction was made only the other day. Coming to the question of our railways, we notice in the Speech a forecast of a Bill for the building of a railway from Coolgardie to Norseman. I have always been a strong advocate of a line to the Norseman goldfield, and am pleased to see the Government making a move to build one. At the same time, I question the advisableness of starting the line at Coolgardie. I have not seen the report of the special board appointed to advise the Government—I believe it will be available in a day or two—but I consider that the justification of the line will to a great extent consist in the back-loading of firewood for the mines of the Golden Belt; and if the line be started from Lakeside instead of from Coolgardie, and be run through the forests to Norseman, the back-loading

will be very heavy indeed. I throw out this as a suggestion merely. I believe the railway will be a much better-paying proposition if it starts from Lakeside. Mention is made in the Speech of a railway from Port Hedland to Nullagine, to be built under certain conditions. The Speech states that—

It is proposed to invite offers for the construction and management of this undertaking upon a Government guarantee and under the supervision of departmental officers, with all necessary safeguards of the public interest, and with the right of purchase reserved to the State. Such offers will be submitted for your consideration.

I am inclined to think that this will be a good thing for the State. I do not think it possible that the Government can find money to build the railway; and from what I have read and heard I believe that the goldfields in that district will justify its construction. So if we cannot build it ourselves, the next best thing is to get private enterprise to build it. If the Government safeguard the interest of the State, I shall favour their suggestion. They propose to proceed during the year with the Narrogin and the Jandakot railways, both of which are agricultural lines. I do not profess to know much about them; but I have no doubt they will be beneficial to the residents of those districts and to the agricultural industry. This brings me to the question of the purchase of the Midland Railway, a matter which has for very many years been under the consideration of Parliament, and which seems at last to have come to a climax, there being now a definite proposal with which Parliament can deal. I understand that the Government have sent surveyors and valuers all through the Midland Company's district; and no doubt we shall soon be in possession of their reports, which will enable us to judge whether £1,500,000 is a fair and equitable price for the railway and lands. I prefer to suspend my judgment until I see those reports; and I have no doubt other members will prefer to do likewise. We were promised—I think some 12 months ago—that we should have a new railway ratebook. We have not got it yet; but I am told it is ready. That this book has not been issued before is not to the credit of the Railway Department. When

the preceding Government were going out of office I was given to understand that this ratebook was all ready for signature; and there seems to be no justification for the delay in its issue. The only reason given is that the department wanted to perpetuate the differential or preferential rates in existence for so many years. I am pleased to learn on good authority that those rates are at last to be done away with, and that we shall find them eliminated from the new ratebook. Whether there is to be any reduction in the rates, I cannot tell. I sincerely trust there is. But at all events, if the preferential rates are abolished and fair and equitable rates substituted, the effect on the railway finances will be such as to render possible in a short time an all-round reduction in railway freights; and this, I can assure the House, will be of very material assistance to the goldfields. I think I have spoken long enough. I should have liked to go more carefully through the Speech; and in all probability I shall not have another opportunity of discussing it here. However, that is my loss. I regret that I have not been able to give it adequate consideration; and I conclude by again moving the adoption of the Address-in-reply.

HON. J. A. THOMSON (Central): I have been asked to second this motion, and I am in an even worse position than Mr. McKenzie, for it was only about 2 o'clock to-day that I was notified of some of the subject-matter of His Excellency's Speech. So for two reasons I shall make my own speech very short: first, because I have had very little time to give any particular thought to the matter; and second, because I do not very strongly believe in speeches on the Address-in-reply. Such speeches do not appear to me at all practical. I prefer to wait until the measures proposed are brought in; and if I wish to express opinions on them, I can do so on the motions for second reading. I may mention that I am in accord with much of the legislation foreshadowed in the Speech; and as I have to speak, I shall briefly mention some of the paragraphs with which I agree. But first I must say that I deeply regret the cause of our President's absence from this opening sitting; and I trust that he will soon be back among us,



in renewed health. With the proposal for the purchase of the Midland Railway and lands I can hardly agree. It is proposed to give £1,500,000 for the property acquired by the corporation. In my opinion that sum far and away exceeds the value of the railway and lands. [MEMBER: Have you seen the country?] I have not seen much of it. I have passed through it a few dozen times by rail, and over more than half of the distance by the main road; but I cannot say I know much about the value of the lands. Still, I have a fair idea. At all events, if the lands have increased in value, that increase is not due to any efforts put forth by the company. I am told that the permanent way and the rolling-stock are not worth anything like £600,000; and if we give £1,500,000 for the property, what does the purchase mean? Simply that we pledge ourselves to an expenditure of £1,500,000, practically out of loan. It does not matter how the purchase may be financed. The people from whom we wish to borrow money will at once say that we have borrowed another £1,500,000; and that will prevent our getting other moneys that may be more urgently required for the construction of future public works. We have the use of the railway; we have fair travelling facilities; and the majority of my constituents in the Murchison and the Geraldton districts would favour the acquiring of the land and the railway by the Government. But I do not think that any one of them would favour our paying the price proposed to be paid. I also notice that no mention is made of a railway to Black Range. In my opinion, if we acquire the Midland Railway property, we shall not be in a position to carry a railway to Esperance, or on the way to Esperance; nor shall we be able to construct an equally necessary railway from Mount Magnet to Black Range. For that reason we shall have to think twice before we give authority to this Government or any other Government to acquire the Midland Railway—at least at a very much reduced price. I think the price paid for the Great Southern Railway and lands was £1,200,000.

HON. C. A. PIESSE: £1,100,000.

HON. J. A. THOMSON: There is no comparison between the two properties. It is some years since the Great Southern

Railway and lands were acquired by the people of Western Australia, and the value of the property has increased twofold since then. If the Midland Company, or any other company, will not do anything to encourage people to settle on their lands, it must be for the House to devise some means to make the Midland Railway people carry out their agreement in its entirety. The Speech says:—

With a view to minimise the evils attending the liquor traffic a consolidating measure, embodying the local control of this trade and the principle of State ownership, will be brought before you.

Like Mr. McKenzie I am not in the confidence of the Government, and I do not know what is contained in this measure, but I am not in accord with Mr. McKenzie when he says that State hotels cannot be in the interests of the State. I rather believe they are. If hotels can produce huge profits for private individuals, the same thing can be done for the taxpayers of the State. We have had the experience of one hotel, but that experience has not been a too happy one. It is not to be said that State hotels cannot be managed satisfactorily if we put in the hotels men capable of managing them properly. As one with some knowledge of business principles I should say the better plan would be to have more State hotels. If we had State hotels in districts similar to the district in which the present State hotel is situated, the managers of the different establishments would know that some comparison would be made between the hotels. That would be one way of carrying out the system, and it would show if the fault were due to mismanagement or other circumstances. I quite agree with Mr. McKenzie that the railway towards Esperance is a necessity, and permission should be granted to have this line, at least, commenced. Although I am a resident of the coast, and have no interests away from the coast, I hold that it is an injustice to the people living on the goldfields not to give them this railway: they should have this means given them of reaching the coast. I do not believe there would be a great goods traffic along the line, but I believe there would be a large passenger traffic in the summer time. A narrow-gauge line would carry a vast number of passengers

to the sea-coast—those who have no opportunity now of reaching the coast in the summer time; therefore I am in accord with the proposal. As to the Port Hedland railway, which is proposed to be constructed by private enterprise, as it is called, I question very much if that is a move in the right direction. Seeing that we have acquired one railway which was constructed under somewhat similar circumstances, and the Government are asking for authority to purchase another, I do not know if it would be wise to sanction the construction of another line by private enterprise. True, the conditions are different, but if the conditions are less liberal than those which applied to the Great Southern Railway and those which at present apply to the Midland Railway, I question if many people would care to take up the work. I will not detain members with farther remarks, but conclude by formally seconding the motion.

On motion by HON. WESLEY MALEY, debate adjourned.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at eight minutes past 4 o'clock, until the next Tuesday at half-past 4 o'clock.

### Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 6th July, 1905.

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#### OPENING OF SESSION.

The Legislative Assembly met at 3 o'clock p.m., pursuant to Proclamation, which was read by the Clerk.

In obedience to summons, Mr. Speaker and hon. members proceeded to the Legislative Council Chamber; and having

heard His Excellency deliver the opening Speech [*vide* Council report, *ante*], they returned to the Assembly Chamber.

#### ELECTION RETURN, MINISTERIAL.

The Clerk reported the return of one of the two writs issued to fill vacancies caused by appointment to Ministerial offices; namely, the vacancy for Brown Hill electorate, filled by the re-election of the Hon. T. H. Bath as Minister for Lands and Education. The re-elected Minister took the oath and subscribed the roll. [The writ for Mount Leonora not yet returned.]

#### PAPERS AND NOTICES.

Numerous Papers, chiefly annual returns, were presented and laid on the table; particularly the Auditor General's Annual Report on Public Accounts, Report of Royal Commission on the Condition of Aboriginal Natives of Western Australia, Report of Royal Commission on Ocean Freights and Marine Insurance.

Notices of questions and motions given by several members.

#### BILL, ELECTRIC LIGHTING ACT AMENDMENT.

THE PREMIER (to assert the privilege of the House) obtained leave and introduced a Bill for amendment of the Electric Lighting Act. Bill read a first time.

#### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

##### FIRST DAY OF DEBATE.

MR. E. NEEDHAM (Fremantle) said: Having heard the Speech read by His Excellency the Governor, I now rise to move the adoption of the Address-in-Reply, as follows:—

We, the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament 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 address to Parliament.

The Speech of His Excellency contains some important and weighty proposals which demand the earnest, the sincere, and the careful attention of all members; and it goes without saying that it will be our imperative duty to set to work at the earliest possible moment at the commencement of the session to deal with all