

WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES.

FIFTH SESSION OF THE SIXTH PARLIAMENT.

OPENING OF PARLIAMENT.

The Fifth Session of the Sixth Parliament under Responsible Government was convened for the despatch of business on the 23rd July, 1908.

Parliament was opened by His Excellency the Governor.

Legislative Council.

Thursday, 23rd July, 1908.

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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 Acting Clerk of Parliaments.

ELECTION RETURNS.

Representatives lately elected (one-third of the Council) then took and subscribed the oath and signed the members' roll; namely, J. D. Connolly (North-East Province, re-elected), E. M. Clarke (South-West Province, re-elected), M. L. Moss (West Province, re-elected), R. W. Pennefather (North Province, re-elected), S. Stubbs (Metropolitan-Suburban Province), A. G. Jenkins (Metropolitan Province), Hon. J. W. Kirwan (South Province), T. H. Wilding (East Province).

THE GOVERNOR'S SPEECH.

His Excellency Sir Frederick G. D. Bedford, G.C.B., entered the Council Chamber at a quarter past 3 o'clock; and

the members of the Legislative Assembly having also 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—

The Session for which you have been called together must, of necessity, be of short duration, in as much as the Legislative Assembly will, at an early date, reach the limit of its existence as fixed by the Constitution.

I am pleased to be able to record that during the interval that has elapsed since the meeting of Parliament, the development of our Primary Industries has been more than fully maintained; the principal feature being the very gratifying increase in Land Settlement, while the prospects of a bountiful season give promise of increased prosperity to the Agricultural and Pastoral Industries; and the rich development at depth in the Mines that have been opened up, together with the more genuine and systematic prospecting that is now in evidence, warrant the most sanguine hopes for the future of the Mining Industry.

Notwithstanding the labours of the recent Premiers' Conference, no satis-

factory solution of the Financial Arrangements between the States and the Commonwealth was arrived at.

My Advisers consider the proposal of the Commonwealth Government was of such a nature that, if accepted, it would have dangerously imperilled the financial stability of the State. They, however, hold the hope that prior to the expiration of the term fixed by the Bradon Clause, a satisfactory arrangement will be determined.

Mr. Speaker and Gentlemen of the Legislative Assembly—

You will be asked at an early date to grant Temporary Supplies for the requirements of the Public Service during the period that must necessarily elapse between now and the meeting of the next Parliament.

Mr. President and Honourable Gentlemen of the Legislative Council—

Mr. Speaker and Gentlemen of the Legislative Assembly—

There are many important matters awaiting Legislative action at your hands, which the exigencies of the Financial Position of the State, and the lengthy consideration given to devising the best means for providing the Revenue necessary for its wants, have hitherto prevented my Advisers submitting to you.

Foremost amongst these matters are Bills for amending the Constitution Act, so as to place the Franchise for the Legislative Council on a more liberal basis; for Amending and Consolidating the Laws applying to the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors, so as to ensure a full measure of Local Option; for Amending and Consolidating the Health Acts, so as to ensure a uniform Administration of Health Matters, and also pure food for our people; and for Authorising the carrying out of various Public Works of great importance in the interests of the future of the State, the principal of which will be the Extension of our National Railway System in Agricultural and Mining Districts.

My Advisers consider that these important matters can only receive due

consideration at the hands of a Parliament coming to its work with a renewed mandate from the people, and having at its disposal sufficient time to allow full deliberation of any Bill laid before it.

They, therefore, advise that the General Election should be held at the earliest date possible, and the new Parliament summoned to meet for the despatch of business at a period which will enable it to give early attention to the wants of the State.

Under these circumstances no Bills, except such as are of a formal character, will be submitted for your consideration.

I now declare this Fifth Session of the Sixth Parliament of Western Australia opened.

The Governor then retired, and *the President* (Hon. H. Briggs) took the Chair.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Colonial Secretary: 1, Annual Report of the Mines Department (1907); 2, Annual Report of proceedings by Registrar of Friendly Societies (1906); 3, Annual Report of Education Department (1907); 4, Report by Sir Whately Eliot relating to the proposed Dock at Fremantle; 5, Regulations under the State Children Act, 1907; 6, Reports and Returns under the Railways Act, 1904; 7, Regulations under the Game Act, 1892, and Game Act Amendment Act, 1907; 8, Regulation 4 of the Shark Bay Pearlshell Fisheries; 9, Amendment of Regulation 163 under the Mining Act, 1904; 10, Addition to Regulation 4 of Mines Regulations Act, 1906; 11, By-laws of Municipalities of Boulder, Bunbury, Coolgardie, Day Dawn, Esperance, Fremantle, Guildford, Leonora, Menzies, Midland Junction, Nannine, North Perth, Perth, Queen's Park, Subiaco, Victoria Park, and Roebourne.

BILL—CLAREMONT RATES VALIDATION.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. D. Connolly): In order to assert and

maintain the undoubted rights and privileges of this House to initiate legislation, I move for leave to introduce a Bill for an Act to validate certain rates made by the Council of the Municipality of Claremont and the Claremont Local Board of Health for the year ending the 31st day of October, 1908.

Leave given; the Bill introduced and read a first time.

DEBATE—ADDRESS IN REPLY.

Motion to Adopt.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN (South) : Sir, I have been asked to propose the adoption of the following Address in reply to His Excellency's Speech, and it reads:—

To His Excellency Admiral Sir Frederick George Denham Bedford, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, Governor in and over the State of Western Australia and its Dependencies, 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.

In proposing this motion, I think it is not out of place for even so recently elected a member of this Chamber as myself to express a sense of gratification at the return of the Colonial Secretary. Representing as I do a neighbouring Province to the Hon. the Minister, I feel justified in saying that the brilliant victory achieved by the hon. gentleman, the brilliant victory achieved over an extremely popular opponent, over an opponent who has taken no small share in local public affairs on the goldfields, is a remarkable tribute to the esteem in which the Minister is regarded by his constituents; and furthermore it is a remarkable testimony of the public appreciation of the earnestness and honesty of purpose that have invariably characterised the Minister's

career. I have all the more pleasure in making these remarks because the Minister was returned on a somewhat different programme from myself, and because it may be necessary for me on some future occasion to differ from the Minister in some of the proposals which he, as Leader of this House, will find it necessary to introduce on behalf of the Government. With regard to the Speech which we have just heard read by his Excellency, I think there is not much scope in that Speech for anything in the nature of political differences. I think that we all must agree that the Government did well in not introducing into that Speech any contentious measures, in view of certain events that are looming in the near future, in which members of another place take an extremely lively interest, events which we in this House can regard with a certain amount of calm. I think there was one feature of that Speech which must create satisfaction among all classes of the community and throughout all parts of this State: that feature was the expression of satisfaction at the advance of land settlement. A prosperous and thriving agricultural community is the best guarantee of a country's stability, and whatever this Government or any other Government may do in reason to advance land settlement, it is in accord with the principles of wise statesmanship. I also notice that the Speech refers to the industry with which I am more particularly associated; I refer to the mining industry, and although that Speech is optimistic concerning the future of the mining industry, I think that it might well be still more optimistic, and still well within the truth. It is all the more necessary to say this in view of certain comments that have been made in London and even in this State to the effect that the mining industry of Western Australia has seen its best days. Those who say that or those who take that view have overlooked certain very important particulars. During last year the output of gold in this State of Western Australia amounted to more than £7,000,000, and in the production of that amount of wealth more than £3,000,000 was spent

during the year in wages. I think, however, you will agree with me that an industry that is responsible for these figures, an industry in Western Australia that produces such a large proportion of the total exports of the State, an industry, sir, that produces three-fourths of the total exports of this State, is such that there is no reason to have any fear regarding the future of an industry in that position. But there are still more important facts than that which should be considered. Critics of the mining industry in its present position altogether overlook a most important consideration and that is, that thanks to the scientific knowledge, to the skill, and to the patience of those who have charge of our mining industry, the cost of production is being much reduced. That cost of production is not being reduced at the expense of the wage-earners, but it has been brought about by methods that in no way influence the bulk of the people who are living upon the wages of those engaged in the mining industry. I think it may not be generally known—even some members of this Chamber are perhaps not aware of the fact—that although the output of gold is less than it has been in previous years, the quantity of ore that has been treated during the past year is greater than that of any year in the history of mining in Western Australia. I think I need not impress upon those who are acquainted with the mining industry, that as you reduce the cost of production, so you prolong the life of the mines, and so you prolong the life of the mining industry of Western Australia. But the Speech referred to what is even more important than all these factors, and that is the position of the great mines of Western Australia on the Golden Mile. I think there is no man among those mining men who are managers of those great mines and who are in the position to offer an opinion concerning their future, there is not one of those men who would not agree with me when I say as regards a large number of the mines, as regards the Great Boulder, the Golden Horseshoe, the Ivanhoe, the Kalgurli, the Associated, and other mines that might be mentioned—I think, sir, that there is not one, competent

to offer an opinion, who would not agree with me when I say that the life of these mines never seemed longer than it does to-day. The ore reserves are better than at any previous time and the men who are in charge of those mines, cautious men as they are in their estimates, have no fear regarding the future, and they look forward to that future with hope and confidence. In addition to that is the fact that the mining industry of Western Australia is not confined to one or two or even three goldfields. We have here a vast extent of auriferous area, that extends from Phillips River and Norseman in the South to the Kimberleys in the North, an area that has been well described as an auriferous continent, and it would be absurd for anyone to say that that area has been adequately prospected. There is no one who is in the position to say that that area does not contain many Golden Miles, and probably long after the present generation has passed away, new discoveries will be made in that vast area, discoveries that will add to the wealth, the greatness and prosperity of this State. There is in the Speech that we have just heard read only one disquieting feature: I refer to the references that have been made to the finances. It is not so much the deficit, because although that is larger than it should be it would not be of such concern were it not for the uncertainty that exists regarding the future, especially in connection with the coming adjustment of the financial relations between the States and the Commonwealth. That to me is a very disquieting feature. It is said that government is finance. If that be true as regards older countries of the world it is still more true regarding the new countries of Australia. It is particularly true regarding a country like Western Australia with its vast territory and its sparse population, and with the ever growing needs of a young and progressive people. The Commonwealth must pay greater recognition to the needs of the States than seems to have been paid by the present Government if Federation is to realise the hopes of its founders. I believe that on the future of the States depends also the Commonwealth, and I am afraid that in the zeal of Common-

wealth legislators to farther the building up of the new nation with which they have been entrusted, there is the danger that they may forget the wants and necessities of the States. This is not an occasion to go into the intricacies of Federal and State finances, but before I conclude, I may say that the Commonwealth Parliament and the members of that Parliament feel that they have been entrusted with a great mission. They feel that it is their duty to build up an Australian nation of which generations yet to come shall be proud. They are filled with great schemes, schemes that it is necessary to accomplish in order that their designs may be achieved. Those schemes are of a various character. There are those to-day who say that Australia should be represented in London by a High Commissioner; that he should have an office and staff commensurate with the dignity of the position. There are those in Federal politics who say that the Northern Territory should be taken over and that it should be developed; others again advocate the construction of the two Transcontinental Railway lines; and the majority of Federal members feel that they ought to keep faith with New South Wales and establish the Federal Capital. Furthermore, a large number of these members consider that a young nation like Australia should no longer be sheltering behind the skirts of the mother land and that she should do something to defend herself on sea as well as on land, that she should do something to help the mother land to bear the burdens of empire. Now all these schemes cannot be carried out without large expenditure, and one of the peculiarities of the position is this, that the party that is strongest in favour of most of these schemes has as the foremost plank in its platform the restriction of farther borrowing. The objection that exists among the dominant party in Federal politics to-day to farther borrowing, combined with the demand for the construction of these schemes, places a very great temptation upon whatever Government may be in power. At the end of 1910 the Brad-

don Clause expires and then the whole of the three-fourths of the Customs and Excise revenue will be entirely under the control of the Commonwealth Parliament. It seems to me, knowing what I do of Federal politics, that there is a very great danger indeed—and I think everyone who knows anything about Federal politics will agree with me—that a nibbling at that three-fourths of the Customs and Excise revenue will begin, and when that nibbling begins, it is difficult to know where it may end. That ought to be a warning to the State authorities to come to some arrangement for the settlement of the financial relations between the States and the Commonwealth before the expiration of the Braddon Clause. The time is gradually going by in which the States might make a bargain; they should make the most of what time is left to them. There is one thing which from a West Australian point of view is rather satisfactory, and it is this, that there has been no Federal Treasurer yet in office who has not recognised the peculiar circumstances of West Australia as regards its finances requiring special treatment, and I have the utmost confidence that there is a sufficient number of responsible members in the Commonwealth Parliament to see that whatever agreement may be ultimately arrived at, that the States will not be embarrassed. Furthermore I believe that those who represent Western Australia in the Commonwealth Parliament will see that no check by reason of any financial disarrangement will be placed upon the progress of this State, a State that every impartial person must agree is second to none in the Commonwealth in the greatness of its potentialities and in the brightness of its future.

Hon. S. STUBBS (Metropolitan-Suburban): In rising to second the Address in reply to the Speech of his Excellency the Governor, I do so with a certain amount of diffidence, because I have only just recently been elected a member of this Chamber. But I feel, like the mover of the Address-in-Reply, that at no stage in the history of this State has the prospect appeared more bright than it does

at the present moment. We have all listened with great respect to the very encouraging account that the hon. member gave us concerning the mining industry; and the practical knowledge and experience he has gained from living so many years on the goldfields warrants myself, and I think every member in the Chamber, in believing he was fully capable of dealing with the subject, an illustration of which he gave us a few moments ago. It is not my intention to make a long speech this afternoon because I do not think the occasion warrants it, but if my friend is enthusiastic about the future of the goldfields, I am even more enthusiastic concerning the agricultural and pastoral industries of the State. While we all recognise it was due to the wonderful gold discoveries that caused Western Australia to make such rapid strides and to be known all over the world, yet I maintain a time will come sooner or later when other industries will have to take the place of the gold-mining industry. When that time arrives, and long before it—and I venture to say the member who moved the Address-in-Reply will agree with me—the pastoral and agricultural industries will more than hold their own in exports, as the gold-mining industry does to-day. Consequently any measure that is introduced in the House having for its object the building of light lines of railway through the agricultural districts will have, I hope, the support of every member. I believe I am right in saying that interest will be paid, from the jump, on every pound expended in opening up the magnificent areas of land in the State which few people, even in the country, know anything about. I have recently made a trip through the Southern districts of the State and it is wonderful the number of people who have settled there during the last two or three years. Many of them arrived with very little capital, and those who are engaged in clearing land anywhere from 15 to 20 miles from the nearest railway station are handicapped more than anyone can conceive. And when I tell members that from 1s. to 1s. 3d.

has to be paid for every ton of produce that has to be carted to the nearest railway station from agricultural centres, members will understand that it is necessary, if we desire to get people on to the land, to build light lines of railway to almost every place where they are warranted; lines of railway not with stations every five miles, but with sidings so that the settlers can send their produce at as cheap a rate as possible, consistent with paying the interest and sinking fund on the money expended. I hold, unless the lines of railway are built, it is no use sending Mr. Ranford or any other agent to England to ask people to come out and settle here. I think the Speech delivered by His Excellency to-day will convince the most sceptical that Western Australia has an immense future before it. I agree with the member who preceded me in saying that the financial relations that exist between the States and the Commonwealth are strained at present, yet I believe with him that we have men in the Federal Parliament who will see that no injustice is done to our State in any shape or form. I hope before the Bradon Clause expires in 1910, the arrangement in force now will be continued or that Western Australia will be placed on an even better footing. The returns from the Commonwealth have decreased by £400,000 during the past five years and if the falling off continues the Parliament of this State will be hampered in developing the great tract of country we desire to see opened up. I will not detain the House longer; I have pleasure in seconding the Address-in-Reply.

On motion by the *Hon. W. Patrick*, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 7 minutes to 4 o'clock, until the next Tuesday afternoon.