

cal treatment and compensation for the injured will be paid. I am afraid they will be disillusioned. If the accident is brought about by the carelessness of the person in whose vehicle they are riding, and that vehicle is covered by third party risk insurance, they are provided for, but if the accident is brought about by the vehicle of some other individual running into the insured one, and it is proved that the other person is responsible, although the injured person may be travelling in a vehicle that is insured, he has no hope of recovering anything. It is an alarming state of affairs, and one to which the attention of the public should be drawn. I have been very pleased during the last month or two to see the references that have appeared in the daily Press to this matter. Unfortunately, however, the articles have never been followed up. With the increasing motor traffic on our roads, it is absolutely essential, that something should be done by the Government to protect the public from risks of this kind. I hope during the coming year the Government will give some attention to the matter. It is nothing new. It may be new in Western Australia, but there is an Act governing all this in New Zealand, and I notice that quite recently some of the Eastern States have been turning their attention to it. I believe that attention is already being given to the matter in England. I hope we shall soon be able to learn that this State is taking an active interest in this important question, and making a move in the direction of placing an Act on the statute-book. I am afraid if I speak any longer I shall be unpopular. Therefore, I feel obliged to defer to some later period of the session the opportunity to discuss other matters of interest. I have much pleasure in moving the motion with which I opened my remarks.

HON. E. H. GRAY (West) [3.55]: I formally second the motion.

On motion by Hon. C. F. Baxter, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 3.56 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 2nd August, 1931.

| | PAGE |
|---|------|
| Meeting of the Assembly | 8 |
| Summons from the Lieutenant-Governor | 8 |
| Lieutenant-Governor's Opening Speech | 8 |
| Bill: Electoral Act Amendment, 1A | 8 |
| Address-in-Reply, first day | 9 |
| Adjournment, special | 12 |

MEETING OF THE ASSEMBLY.

The Legislative Assembly met at 3 p.m., pursuant to proclamation, which was read by the Clerk Assistant (Mr. F. E. Islip).

SUMMONS FROM THE LIEUT.-GOVERNOR.

The Speaker and members, in response to summons, 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.

BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT.

THE PREMIER (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [3.32]: 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 for an Act to amend Section 18 of the Electoral Act, 1907-1921.

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

LIEUT.-GOVERNOR'S OPENING SPEECH.

Mr. SPEAKER: I beg to announce that, accompanied by hon. members of this Chamber, I attended His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor in the Legislative Council Chamber to hear the Speech which His Excellency was pleased to deliver to both Houses of Parliament. For the sake of greater accuracy, I have caused copies of the Speech to be distributed amongst members of this Chamber.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

*First Day.***MR. WISE** (Gaseoyne) [3.34]: I move—

That the following address in reply to His Excellency's Speech be agreed to:—"His Excellency Sir James Mitchell, K.C.M.G., Lieut.-Governor in and over the State of Western Australia and its Dependencies in the Commonwealth of Australia. May it please Your Excellency: 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 deliver to Parliament."

I listened most intently to the Speech delivered by His Excellency a few moments ago and I was struck with the more hopeful and optimistic tone sounded therein than that which characterised the previous Speech delivered by His Excellency, more particularly in respect to the mining, dairying and timber industries. We all realise and appreciate the value that the mining industry has been to this State in this and in other decades. The mining industry has not only assisted our revenue, but it has assisted us in meeting very many governmental problems, particularly the problem of unemployment. When this Assembly met about a year ago, every newspaper in our metropolis and, in fact, every newspaper in the State, made the subject of unemployment the great topic of the day. It is very pleasing to note from His Excellency's Speech that the results of a year's operations by the Minister for Employment and by the Cabinet generally have been remarkable.

Mr. Latham: With the aid of additional loan funds, of course.

Mr. WISE: Yes, with the aid of additional loan money.

The Minister for Employment: You do not expect us to carry on without any money at all, do you?

Mr. WISE: Apart from the fact advanced by the Leader of the Opposition, surely he would not endeavour, even at this stage, to detract from the wonderful work of that department.

Mr. Moloney: He would do anything.

Mr. WISE: If there is any one reason justifying the occupancy of the Treasury benches by our party, it is to be found in their handling of the unemployment problem. According to His Excellency's Speech, the number of persons at present in receipt of sustenance is 1,196

compared with 6,265 on the 1st July of last year. Twelve months ago sustenance was costing this State £7,127 per week, as against £1,787 at the present time. Every avenue where employment was offering has been exploited, and perhaps the greatest achievement has been that of the much-criticised Economic Council. At any rate I should expect the Leader of the Opposition to criticise the council.

Mr. Needham: That is what he is there for.

Mr. WISE: The Economic Council were formed of representatives of every section of industry and commerce—

Mr. Latham: They built a couple of houses, did they not?

Mr. WISE:—together with representatives of industrial unions. No matter what one's political thought may be, surely it will be conceded that the campaign launched by the Government through the Economic Council has proved to be one worthy of the greatest commendation. The most pleasing feature of all is the rise in the index figure, according to the Statistician, of employment in factories. Within the year that index figure has risen from 80 to 92. Approximately 3,000 men have been absorbed in other avenues of employment and are not now in any way a charge upon the Government. That is something worthy of the praise of every section of the community. I can understand that the Minister for Employment, more so than the rest of us, would wish that those men remaining out of work will shortly be only those with no work in them. I realise that there are certain conscientious objectors even in that direction. Providing work is not essentially a Government function, but in times of stress it is very necessary for the Government to have full control and to have someone capable of handling the difficulties that occur. We in this State are governed to a great extent by the amount of money we receive externally in what we can do for our people, not only in relieving unemployment, but in providing social services. This leads me to refer to the matter of the Commonwealth grant and the Commonwealth attitude generally to this State. Let me first commend the wonderful report of the committee appointed in this State last year; the report made available in December last.

Mr. Moloney: The secession committee?

Mr. WISE: No, the committee specially appointed to consider the disabilities of this State. I consider that no tribute paid to

those members who did such wonderful work would be too great. There is always a great diversity of opinion as to what our grant should be or should not be, and particularly does that apply at the present time, but the committee furnished what was nothing more or less than a balance sheet of the State's resources after a complete stock-taking. It really was a distillation of facts which they had obtained from all sources from figures submitted by experts. They sounded and probed every activity and every organisation in this State, and their final summary was a very definite statement. It gave out that relief was urgently needed and two alternatives were suggested. The first was that a substantial monetary grant was necessary for a term of years, and that our wrongs and disabilities would not be redressed if a sum of less than £1,500,000 were made available annually. The other alternative was complete tariff autonomy as suggested by the majority report of the 1925 Royal Commission. The conclusion, based on facts and arrived at after a thorough and complete summing up of our position, was that our disabilities would not be redressed if a lesser sum than £1,500,000 were annually made available. To my mind, the trouble is that grants are not allowed or paid on merit. They are not paid to enable us to overcome our difficulties. They are paid on political considerations. We have not the necessary power in the Federal Parliament to enable us to demand what we are entitled to receive. In every instance where we pay the piper, we are not permitted to call the tune. That is the position in which the Commonwealth have us. We are left with the responsibility of producing taxable income for the Commonwealth, with all the dangers and few of the benefits.

Mr. Needham: We have a Minister in the Federal Cabinet.

Mr. Thorn: He has been inoculated with the Commonwealth virus.

Mr. WISE: The States Disabilities Commission were replied to recently in the report of the Commonwealth Grants Commission, the latter being popularly, or unpopularly, known as the Eggleston Commission. The Eggleston Commission's report extends to Western Australia treatment that is in striking contrast to the summary of facts I have mentioned. This report, in the words of our Premier, was based on erroneous presumptions. It was the work of people

steeped in bias, as I shall endeavour to prove. It seems to me to be an unjust attack upon past and present leaders of public life in this State. Mr. Eggleston, the chairman, came here fully convinced that all of Western Australia's troubles were due to bad handling of our loan moneys. Prior to his appointment as chairman, he had expressed himself at length in the Eastern States Press to that effect. If the matter were not so grave, if we were not faced with such serious possibilities, it would be almost ludicrous to think that a man who had expressed himself as so extremely biased against this State should be appointed to such a position. Professor Giblin, another member of that Commission, had previously prepared a Case for Tasmania. He had fully satisfied himself that Western Australia was under-taxed, that we had not squeezed from our people within £400,000 of the amount we should have obtained annually. Those figures are reflected in the Eggleston Commission's report. Our taxation and taxable capacity were worked out on a basis at least 10s. per head lower than should have been done. At least 10s. per head more was received from our people than the figures used by the Commission to work out their conclusions. It may be remembered that Mr. Eggleston directed all his questions to witnesses in this State with the one idea that the failures in the South-West and the general expenditure of loan money were the cause of our unstable and unfortunate position. Mr. Sandford, another member of the Commission, was obviously a South Australian representative. Indeed, he classed himself as such. He made inquiries along those lines, and the amount granted to South Australia fully reflected his activities and his power on the Commission. There we have it. A distinctly and acknowledgedly hostile chairman, a South Australian representative, an ambassador for Tasmania, and no representative whatever of this State! Compare the membership of the Commission with the personnel of the committee appointed locally, which, as I have said, arrived at its decisions after a complete stocktaking, whereas the Commission reached its conclusions on highly unstable grounds. Our committee mentioned the Federal tariff as one of the greatest factors operating against this State, and arrived at a figure of £2,000,000 as being the sum adverse to us. The Federal

Commission were unable to arrive at that figure, but stated that whatever the figure might be—whether £1,000,000 or £2,000,000—it was balanced by the benefit of exchange, which might be anything between £1,000,000 and £2,000,000. Was there ever a more weird formula than that? Something quite nebulous was equal to something even more nebulous. The tariff having been mentioned as our greatest disability, it may be well to say that the control exercised over the tariff by the Federal authority operates as a stranglehold on all our industries, both rural and urban. Our latent resources remain undeveloped, in some cases by reason of the Federal tariff, and existing industries are throttled by it. I am one who is prepared to admit that the sugar industry, which is regarded as a serious disability, has rendered at least two services to the Commonwealth; but be that as it may, we are still forced as a State, through protection to that industry, to pay £360,000 a year more than we should for our sugar. The Federal Commission admitted that this State deserves a grant of £200,000 on account of North-Western disabilities. That leaves us about £40,000 in the way of grant money to counteract all our other disabilities. It is a remarkable coincidence that the actual sum suggested by the Federal Commission is equivalent to the dole which has been paid to this State over a period of years. It must be a remarkable set of figures that arrives, by coincidence, at such an answer. The Federal Commission, working on obsolete figures, endeavoured to prove that Western Australia is under-taxed. In the same breath the Federal Government applaud themselves for reducing taxation. Generally being niggardly and temporary, grants merely prolong our troubles. Indeed, they intensify them. Unless unbiassed consideration can be given to the report submitted by our own committee, or by a judicial body, we have indeed little chance. It may also be said that if anything is to be learnt from the Federal Grants Commission, it is the urgent need for a stocktaking of the past 33 years' operation of the Commonwealth. Originally it was suggested that Federalism would increase the powers of self-government, but the situation has not worked out in that way. We have had Commonwealth Governments continually grasping more power than belongs to them, and refusing to delegate even authority, far less to sur-

render a fair proportion of the spoils already within their control. That reminds me of the iniquity of the petrol tax, and of the wonderful opinion expressed by the Federal Prime Minister that this State has received certain road grants. I would like to analyse that assertion. Western Australia has over a period of years received £334,000 per annum for road grants. Over the same period of years, I find, Western Australia has contributed to the Commonwealth by way of petrol tax £495,000 annually. I will quote Mr. Lyons from last Thursday's "West Australian."

Mr. Raphael: That is not very authentic.

Mr. WISE: It is quite authentic. Mr. Lyons is reported as saying that Western Australia is indebted to Victoria and New South Wales for £1,800,000 which this State would not have received because of its lack of population. It means that if Western Australia were considered only on a population basis as regards Federal taxation and road grants, it would have received £1,800,000 less than it actually has received. Now, that is a deliberate mis-statement. The Prime Minister goes on to say that Western Australia's share would hardly have been more than £1,000,000 for the period. That again is a serious mis-statement. From the State Statistician I have gleaned the following figures: Over 19,000,000 gallons of petrol were used in this State during the year ended on 30th June last, and this yielded a Commonwealth petrol tax of £608,000. Last year Western Australia received £402,000 by way of road grant directly from the Federal tax. Yet the Federal Government say that we have had £1,000,000 more than we are entitled to.

Mr. Latham: That statement refers only to the population basis.

Mr. WISE: The matter was never considered on a population basis. If Mr. Lyons desires that the whole of the money gathered from all parts of Australia by Federal taxation shall be spent on Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide, I am sure the Leader of the Opposition here would not support him in that desire. I am positive that the present Government of Western Australia would not commend such a plan. The allocation of Federal money is on three-fifths population and two-fifths area basis. From that aspect the Commonwealth have filched in recent years at least £140,000 per annum from Western Australia. That field of taxation was originally

ours, but the Commonwealth Government received a judgment through the High Court, who declared our Act ultra-vires. We thought we had the power that the court declared we did not possess. Because there appeared to be such a possibility of an immense amount of money to be derived, the Federal Government collared that source of taxation. I would like to point out that the responsibilities of transport in the rural wealth-producing parts of the State are tremendous. North of the 26th parallel, where not more than 6,000 people reside, even £100,000 a year made available to each district would be little enough for the authorities to spend. On the other hand, if the Prime Minister had his way, Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide and the other capitals of the Eastern States would be the sole places where that money would be expended. My summing up of the position is that improved means of communication and transport represent the greatest cost to industry in the districts where our greatest exportable wealth is produced. There is no greater tax on industry north of the 26th parallel than the cost of transport, and anything that can be done to alleviate that position must be reflected in the general prosperity of the State. It is important that matters relating to health and education should receive full consideration, for these, combined with better means of communication and of transport, constitute the greatest needs of the people in that part of the State. I would like to speak on education matters but the time is not opportune. Suffice it to say that this State has something to be proud of that within its borders there is the lowest percentage of total illiterates of any country in the world. Surely that is something worth upholding and worth striving, if possible, to better. As regards health, it is admitted that unless those charged with the responsibility of administration, particularly in tropical climes, make health everything, then disease will quickly decimate the community. The health of a nation is a governmental responsibility. It is indeed pleasing to those who come from the part of the State to which I belong, that the scheme for the provision of a flying doctor is approaching realisation. It would appear that that wonderful scheme, inaugurated and fostered by the Australian Inland

Mission, is to be brought to successful fruition in Western Australia, and I am sure that the Government will not be lacking in support when the stage is reached that they are approached in that direction. The scheme will provide the greatest safeguard and assurance for the health of mothers in the outback, much greater than that afforded by any other organisation within the State. The relief that will follow the activities of the flying doctor to mothers and others living in isolation, even from the mental standpoint, can readily be imagined. In conclusion, I would say, with His Excellency the Lieut.-Governor, that I hope our labours in this Chamber during the session will be successful in the interests of the State. I hope that on the next similar occasion when Parliament is called together, an even more optimistic note may be struck by His Excellency in his Speech. Perhaps, if we, as inheritors of great possessions, are to be successful, we must be less selfish and prove ourselves at least worthy to occupy the benches on the Government side of the House and worthy, too, of the heritage that belongs to us.

MR. NEEDHAM (Perth) [4.1]: I formally second the motion.

On motion by Mr. Latham, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE PREMIER (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [4.2]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until Tuesday next at 4.30 p.m.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 4.3 p.m.