

ADJOURNMENT.

On motion by the COLONIAL SECRETARY, the House adjourned at 26 minutes past 4 o'clock until 4:30 p.m. on the next Tuesday.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 15th August, 1900.

Opening of ordinary Session—Message: Opening Speech—Election Returns (2)—Papers presented—Petition, Dividend Duty Act (Companies)—Public Service Bill, first reading—Address in reply to Opening Speech, debate adjourned—Adjournment.

OPENING OF ORDINARY SESSION.

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

THE SPEAKER (Sir James G. Lee Steere, K.C.M.G.) took the Chair.

MESSAGE—OPENING SPEECH.

Black Rod having appeared at the Bar, and delivered a summons from the Administrator,

Mr. Speaker and hon. members repaired to the Legislative Council Chamber, where His Excellency delivered a Speech on the opening of the sixth session of the Third Parliament. [*Vide* p. 1, *ante*.] Mr. Speaker and hon. members returned to the Assembly Chamber, and the business of the session was then proceeded with. Several notices of motion and of questions to Ministers were given for the next sitting.

ELECTION RETURNS (2), Etc.

THE SPEAKER announced that during the recess Mr. Robert David Hutchinson had been elected for Geraldton (in room of Mr. Robson, resigned), and that Mr. John Frederick Tasman Hassell had been elected for Albany (in room of Mr. G. Leake, resigned).

Mr. J. F. T. Hassell and Mr. Hutchinson then took the oath and signed the roll.

Mr. Leonard H. Darlôt, elected for the DeGrey in May last (in room of Mr. E. T. Hooley, resigned), also took the oath and signed the roll.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the PREMIER: Reports (annual): 1, Lands and Surveys Department; 2, Agricultural Bank; 3, Gaols and Prisons; 4, Fremantle Lunatic Asylum; 5, London Agency; 6, Superintendent of Public Charities; 7, Land Titles Department; 8, Government Storekeeper; 9, Victoria Public Library; 10, Museum and Art Gallery.

PETITION—DIVIDEND DUTY ACT (COMPANIES).

MR. WILSON (Canning) presented a petition, signed by 42 representatives of commercial, shipping, and banking companies, praying for repeal of the Dividend Duty Act 1899, as affecting such companies.

Petition received and ordered to be printed.

PUBLIC SERVICE BILL.

Introduced by the PREMIER, on leave given, and read a first time.

ADDRESS IN REPLY TO OPENING SPEECH.

THE SPEAKER informed the House that he, with hon. members, had attended His Excellency the Administrator in the Legislative Council Chamber to hear the opening Speech of the session. Having obtained a copy of the Speech, he read the same to the House.

MR. MOORHEAD (North Murchison): Mr. Speaker, a perusal of His Excellency's Speech must afford matter for congratulation to hon. members, at least; because it will be within the memory of the House that the session before last there was passed a Redistribution of Seats Bill, and to many hon. members the reflection will naturally arise that this is hardly a fitting occasion to legislate for the colony when we have practically admitted we hardly represent the wishes of the people. If the necessity for a Redistribution of Seats Bill existed at that period so strongly

as to bring about that enactment, the conditions have hardly altered since; and if we then thought it necessary that certain sections of the community, who had hitherto been unrepresented, should receive representation in the House, I take it that is the opinion of members of the existing Legislature. I must, therefore, congratulate the Ministry on the recognition of the fact that this House is not representative at the present moment of the entire people of the colony; and the Government have exhibited considerable wisdom in omitting, for the first time, a public works policy of any magnitude. It must be a matter for congratulation that they have confined themselves to practically a recapitulation of what has occurred in the last twelve months, of works completed and those in process of completion; and a perusal of the Speech should afford considerable satisfaction from that point of view. It is, no doubt, pleasing to ascertain that we are one year nearer the completion of the Coolgardie Water Scheme; and it must be a matter for congratulation to all of us that the finances of the colony are in such a condition that we have been enabled to wipe off in one twelve months a deficit of £249,000; nay, more, we have been enabled to turn the deficit into a credit balance of something like £12,000. Again, it must be a subject for congratulation, especially to members for the Eastern goldfields, to find facilities are in process of completion for railway carriage between the Boulder and Kalgoorlie, and also that a survey has taken place in connection with the Laverton line. These facts all point to the conclusion that the Government are alive, and have been alive during the last 12 months, to the encouragement of the district, and that the interest they have hitherto exhibited in the welfare of the Eastern goldfields has by no means slackened. It is also a matter for congratulation to find the gold export has not fallen off; that, so far from falling off, gold was exported to the extent of almost £6,500,000 in the last financial year; and also to find that the financial year has been a good one for the railways, which are still returning good revenue on the outlay. I only express the hope that the railways may continue to return good revenue, and, in speaking of this matter, I also express the hope that

the time may shortly arrive when the Government, should they be in power—which I earnestly trust they may be—will recognise the necessity for establishing what has been found successful in other colonies, namely a Board of Railway Commissioners. It must be recognised by those who have devoted their attention to the consideration of our railway management, that this has outgrown one department or the energies and supervision of a Minister, and that the time has arrived when we may follow with advantage the example of other colonies. Dealing with the reference to material advancement which has occurred during the twelve months, it is with pleasure we find the coal industry developing at a rate commensurate with the value and success which at one period were prognosticated in reference thereto. When the railway to the Collie was mooted, a good many people were found to say it would never pay, that the Collie was like what many of the gold centres then opening up were supposed to be—all a myth. But time, in this instance at any rate, has fulfilled the prediction, and we find the industry of sufficient importance to supply the railways with the coal requisite. This is a matter on which we can congratulate ourselves, inasmuch as the railway is opening up the Southern districts, and I understand information has been received in Perth that further industries in the immediate neighbourhood have been recently indicated by returns. Passing from the portion of the Speech dealing with the works being carried out or actually carried out, and coming to that portion which intimates the intentions of the Government in regard to the present session, I feel great pleasure in noticing that the Government intend to bring in a measure known as a Conciliation and Arbitration Bill. That, in my humble opinion, is a step in the right direction. Similar measures have been tried with success in other portions of the globe: in fact, in Australasia itself an enactment of the kind has met with a measure of success, notably in New Zealand. I have not had the pleasure of perusing the proposed measure, but I trust if a Bill is to be brought in during the present session—no doubt there will be, as intimated in

the Speech—it will contain the necessary ingredient of compulsory reference to arbitration, and that provision will be made for enforcing whatever sanction the Court may impose on reference. A study of this question in other parts of the globe undoubtedly shows that the fault or failure of measures of this character is attributable to the absence of the provision I indicate, namely a provision for compulsory reference. If we take the boards of arbitration in France and Belgium, or the boards of arbitration in America, and consult writers on the subject, we find the failure, whether in France, Belgium, or the United States, is undoubtedly attributable to the absence of the provision I indicate; whereas, the degree of success which has attended such a measure as that in force in New Zealand is attributable to the presence of a clause of the kind. I, therefore, trust that the Ministry, when they see their way to carry out the promise contained in the Speech, will see that due provision is made for compulsory reference, and the measure made a success in this colony. Another measure which may be included in the short programme of public works contemplated this session is the construction of a line from Cue to Nannine; and I should hail with pleasure the introduction of such a measure as that contemplated in the Speech. I may point out, as it has probably been forgotten by hon. members, that a Bill to authorise the construction of this line was passed as far back as four years ago, without a dissentient voice; but somehow or other the Ministry of the day did not see their way to inserting in the Estimates funds sufficient to carry out the work. Since that time the people of North Murchison have lived in expectation of this measure being carried, and matters have gone considerably ahead in the district. When the Cue-Nannine line was authorised, Nannine was the only gold-bearing district known in North Murchison, and then had the honour of being represented by the leader of the Opposition (Mr. Illingworth). Nannine was the only spot then referred to as a ground of appeal to the House to carry the measure; but since then Nannine has been out-distanced in gold production by other centres in North Murchison. Populous camps have sprung

up, and districts hitherto unknown have become well known; and I have only to mention Peak Hill and the Golden Horseshoe to show that the reasons which existed then for the passing of an enactment of this character have been intensified tenfold. In addition to Peak Hill and the Golden Horseshoe there are Tuckanarra, Cork Tree Flat, and other centres all producing gold at the present moment; in fact North Murchison, in the last seven or eight years, has returned something like 150,000 ounces of gold, and the greater quantity of that in the last four years. Therefore I say that if there was good reason in 1896 for passing a measure authorising the Cue-Nannine line, greater reasons now exist, seeing the gold output and the population have increased, and that new industries are springing up. It would be a matter for congratulation if the Government were to say that although this session is to be a short one, and in all probability few measures will be passed, this measure of justice should, at least, be granted to the North Murchison district; for we are not asked to pass a Bill or discuss the terms of the measure, but are merely asked to give authority to utilise available loan funds. It is not a measure to cause any lengthened debate or waste of time in discussion in Committee, but simply gives the Ministry authority to avail themselves of funds in hand. In regard to other matters set forth in the Speech, I have already said, at the opening of my remarks, that clearly the Ministry on this occasion recognise the anomalous position we are in: anomalous by reason of the fact that they have sanctioned a statement to the effect that we do not represent the entire people of the colony. We have passed a Redistribution of Seats Bill, which under ordinary circumstances ought to have led to a dissolution of Parliament and to the return of members for districts which were recognised as entitled to representation. Secondly, I say the Ministry are to be congratulated on their recognition of the state of affairs that has arisen, by reason of the consent of the colony to join the Australian Commonwealth. It must be within the knowledge of all of us that the incidence of taxation is altered, or must be altered to a considerable extent. We must, by reason of the decision of

the colony to join federation, lose a portion of our customs; we must lose—to put it generally—a portion of the money that would otherwise have been in circulation. Some of us opposed the federation measure, and I am only too glad to hope we may yet live to see the falsification of our prognostications. Without detaining the House any longer with the matters set forth in the Speech, I have only to express my regret at the necessity which has arisen for the reference set forth in the second paragraph of the Address. It must be a subject of deep regret for every one of Her Majesty's subjects in this colony, as elsewhere, that the closing years of Her Majesty's reign should be darkened by such a sad bereavement as that which is referred to in the Speech. I can only hope and trust that the same fortitude which has been present to Her Majesty in more trying circumstances will yet be with her in this bereavement. Referring to the regret which is expressed in the third paragraph, in regard to the loss of life among members of the Contingent representing this colony during the military operations in South Africa, I wish especially to pay my tribute of respect to the gallant young officer (Major Moor) who lost his life in that campaign; for no matter what may be our individual opinions as to the merits or demerits of that war, at least we have the consolation of knowing that the troops which this colony contributed have continued to do credit to themselves and to this colony by the manner in which they have upheld the honour of Australia as a loyal portion of the British Empire, and that the young officer who has lost his life in leading them was worthy of the troops he commanded. In conclusion, I have great pleasure in moving that the following Address in reply to the Governor's Speech be transmitted to His Excellency:—

To His Excellency Sir Alexander Campbell Onslow, Knight, Chief Justice, Administrator of the Government in and over the Colony of Western Australia and its Dependencies, &c., &c., &c.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

We, the members of the Legislative Assembly, in Parliament assembled, desire to assure you of our loyalty and devotion to our Most Gracious Sovereign. We beg to thank Your Excellency for the Speech which you have addressed to Parliament. It will be our endeavour to carefully consider the

matters mentioned in the Speech, and all others that may be submitted to us; and we join with Your Excellency in the hope that the Almighty will so guide our deliberations that permanent good may result.

MR. D. FORREST (Ashburton): I have great pleasure in rising to second the adoption of the Address-in-reply, so ably proposed by my friend the member for North Murchison. This being the first time I have had the honour of addressing the Legislative Assembly, I hope I shall not be expected to say much; and indeed it can hardly be necessary to do so, after the mover has expressed so well all that can be said in regard to the Speech of His Excellency in opening the session—except the paragraph in the Speech referring to the proposed repeal of the duties on imported stock and frozen meat. I, as a pastoralist, have been for some time quite willing that the stock duty should be taken off; and while, at the same time, I do not think the removal of the duty off imported live stock will make much difference in the price of meat to the consumer, yet I think it is our duty to “give it a show,” and if after trying it we find that the “ring,” as it is called, does put the difference into the pockets of those engaged in the meat trade, it may then be our duty, as an Assembly, to put the duty on again. I will conclude by congratulating the hon. member (Mr. Moorhead) on the eloquent speech he has made, and have great pleasure in seconding the motion.

On motion by MR. ILLINGWORTH, debate adjourned until the next sitting.

ADJOURNMENT.

On motion by the PREMIER, the House adjourned at 4:45 o'clock until half-past 4 p.m. on the next Tuesday.