

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

the important items contained therein. That being so, it is not my intention to occupy the time of this House at unnecessary length in moving this Address, but simply to refer lightly to what I consider the most important items contained in His Excellency's Speech. It is gratifying to learn that our mining, agricultural, and pastoral industries are steadily advancing. This is in itself a sign of the continued prosperity of our State, and that in this respect we are holding our reputation. It goes farther, and gives a clear and emphatic answer to those persons who a few months ago said that owing to certain political changes which had taken place those industries, particularly the agricultural and pastoral, would be entirely neglected, if not almost ruined. What is the position of things in this State to-day? [MR. HOPKINS: Very bad.] The hon. member has been away a considerable time, and has suddenly been resurrected. So far as settlement is concerned, we find it going on by leaps and bounds; and we can fairly claim for this Government—and I am sure its most pronounced opponents will admit it—that it has thrown no obstacles in the way of settlement, but instead has given every encouragement to foster the agricultural and pastoral industries. That being so, I consider the Government has proved itself in that direction at least worthy of the confidence placed in it, and has dispelled the illusion and exploded the fallacy which previously existed that the party from which this Government was drawn was a party entirely opposed and indifferent to what, after all, is the most important question in regard to the success of any country, and that is the land question. I desire to compliment the Government upon having taken the initiative in inviting the Prime Minister and members of the Australian Commonwealth to visit this State, and upon having done so at a time when the fate of an important measure in the national Parliament, which is of the utmost importance to this State, was being discussed; and upon the knowledge which those gentlemen possess of the vast resources of our country will depend the ultimate fate of that measure—I refer to the Trans-Australian Railway. It was only right to give those Federal members

an opportunity of visiting our shores to see what would be the benefit of passing such a measure through the national Parliament. A bold step is taken in the introduction of a Bill to tax unimproved land values, and also in proposing to tax incomes and totalisator receipts. If these measures become law, they will, I think, go a long way towards helping to replenish our revenue, which is fast decreasing owing to the gradual cessation of the Interstate duties. [MR. H. BROWN: Why not tax your own income?] I presume my income is not in the same position as the hon. member's. I am very glad to welcome the introduction of a Bill in reference to the bicameral system, in order to give the people of this country an opportunity of saying whether they shall longer tolerate the existence of the Chamber which is a bar to progress, and whether we will allow those persons to stand in the way and defy the will of the people as expressed by the Chamber returned upon a popular vote. I fail to see why this state of things should longer exist. I do not think those members who may be returned to that House on a property franchise have any more intelligence than the representatives returned on a popular franchise. Wealth and intelligence do not necessarily go hand in hand; nor do poverty and ignorance. I think the time is ripe to give the people a chance of saying whether they will tolerate this system any longer. I am sure every member in this Chamber will welcome the legislation in connection with old age pensions. It is a humane scheme, and one which, if it become law, will at least, I think, put an end to a very deplorable system which obtains at the present time, that is the separation of old men and old women, those men and their wives who together have fought the battle of life, and who would like to have each other's company in their declining years. It will also help to give a small modicum of comfort in their declining days, and I do not think any member in this Chamber will have the courage to vote against such a measure. The introduction of a Conciliation and Arbitration Bill is also mentioned in the Speech, and I think this is necessary. The system of arbitration is very good, but I think we ought to give to the workers at least the same prefer-

ence as the employers have. Had it not been for the workers of the country banding together, there would not have been in this State to-day, or I dare say in any other State, a Court of Arbitration ; and the country would not have been saved the great waste of time and money and the usual deadlocks to commerce and trade which follow upon strikes ; and as the worker relinquished what was his only protection, it is only right, it is only equitable and just, that some measure of protection and preference should be given to him in lieu of what he has given up. Therefore I welcome this Bill, and hope it will become law.

MR. RASON : Do you mean preference to unionists ?

MR. NEEDHAM : If you ask me the question, I say preference to unionists.

MR. H. BROWN : You said preference to workers.

MR. NEEDHAM : The hon. member never worked in his life. I also am glad to see it is the intention of the Government to bring in a consolidating Mining Bill, to try to get better conditions of employment for our miners. Having worked as a miner myself, I know the dangerous nature of their occupation and the precarious existence they lead, and I think this measure will receive the good attention of the House. Now I come to what I consider the most important portion of the Speech of His Excellency, and that is the reference to the offer to purchase the Midland Railway and its vast amount of land. I am not going to say at this juncture whether the price offered, £1,500,000, is a reasonable or unreasonable price ; nor can it be expected of me to say so just now, in the absence of all the details which I am sure the Government will place before this House. Be that as it may, I think it is of paramount importance to the people of this State that this Parliament should face the question, and bring it to a final issue one way or the other. Some members may be under the impression that a tax on unimproved land values would have met the situation ; but the most sanguine supporters of this principle could not expect that it would be effective for a very long time to come. There is another phase of the question which we must not lose sight of, and it is this, that

if Parliament in its wisdom decides to purchase that railway, I am very much afraid we will have to economise somewhat in our projected works policy. We will have to determine what portion we will leave out, and what effect that will have upon the labour market and the country generally. [**MR. MORAN :** Apply the deficit to the purchase of the railway.] But let the results of our deliberations be what they may, I think we should congratulate the Government upon the manner in which it has conducted these negotiations. Other Governments have recognised the gravity of the situation, but have taken a convenient way of getting round the obstacle instead of trying to surmount it ; whereas the Government of the day has had the courage to manfully face the situation, and to grasp the nettle firmly. The very fact of the Government having secured the postponement of the date for closing the option shows how earnest it has been in these negotiations ; and this proposal having been submitted to Parliament to-day shows the honesty of the Government's intentions, for I believe the arrangements were scarcely completed to-day when the Governor's Speech was printed. There is another matter in connection with public works which I think worth referring to ; that is the metropolitan water and sewerage scheme. I am sure it will be a decided assistance and advantage to the health of the community if this work is taken in hand at the earliest possible moment. I also see reference to railway extension from Coolgardie to Norseman, and to an extension of the Jandakot and Collie-Narrogin railways. These are all good works, and I dare say that the construction of the Jandakot and Collie-Narrogin railways will give assistance to our settlers, and give them a chance to get their produce to market. [**MEMBER :** That has yet to be settled.] I also see a reference to the proposal to construct the Fremantle Dock — [**MEMBER :** That is a national question] — a floating dock ; and again, I think the Government deserving of appreciation for having lost no time in getting all the necessary data in connection with this question. Whether it will be a mere floating dock or something else has yet to be decided upon by Parliament. [**MR. HARDWICK :** It will be "something else."]

I presume that, before the debate on the Address-in-Reply is finished, an amendment will be moved.

MR. RASON: Hear, hear.

MR. NEEDHAM: If that be so, I hope very little time will be wasted in discussing it.

MR. RASON: Hear, hear.

MR. HORAN: It is of no importance.

MR. NEEDHAM: Because the only thing it will result in will be a waste of public time and a waste of public money. I fail to see what new issue has arisen; and I fail to see why fifty men returned to Parliament about 12 months ago cannot carry on the business of this country.

MR. RASON: But you are not fifty men.

MR. NEEDHAM: I have no more to say, but simply move the adoption of the Address-in-Reply which I have read.

MR. A. J. H. WATTS (Northam): The position which I occupy in seconding the motion that has been moved is one that is usually filled by a younger member of this House; and as no one else is likely to say it, I must congratulate the Premier in choosing your humble servant, I presume for the qualities which he possesses of guileless innocence and immunity from youthful sin, to fill the bill. I listened with pleasure to the various measures which have been brought forward in His Excellency's Speech; and in view of the criticism which was levelled at the Government by opponents during the last session of Parliament and during the recess, I think the Government are to be congratulated upon the number of the planks of the Labour platform incorporated among the measures they propose to bring before the House. [MR. H. BROWN: Name one of them.] It was said that the Government would not have the courage to ask Parliament to place on the statute-book of the State those measures which have been fought for so long by the democracy of Australia, and by the democracy of Western Australia in particular; but we find that among the proposals to be brought before this Chamber many of those planks are there mentioned, and I hope that we shall have the pleasure of seeing them passed into law. I hope that of those measures which have been fought for so long by our ancestors in the old country, and which are now brought forward in this country by their

descendants—measures which will secure greater liberty to the subject, the uplifting of the lower ranks of the community, and equal rights to all members of the race—many will be passed into law this session. I hail with pleasure the proposal for an income tax, and for a tax on unimproved land values with the exemptions that have been proposed—[MEMBER: Where?—]—that are proposed. I consider that if these are carried out as proposed, the financially strong of our State will bear a greater proportion of the State's burden than the financially weak. That, I hold, is the position we should have. With regard to the Referendum Bill which has been promised to this House, I have no doubt it will be hailed by all sections of the House with pleasure; by this side of the House because it will provide the means whereby another Chamber may be disposed of; by the other side of the House because it will provide a convenient question on which to attempt to oust the Government. With regard to the proposed liquor law reform, I am pleased to see this democratic measure brought forward by a democratic Government. I think that the proposal for local option which we are promised is one that is most needed in dealing with the liquor question.

MR. RASON: Where is that in the Speech?

MR. WATTS: I hope that by referring these matters of licensing to the electors or ratepayers of a district much good will come out of it.

MR. RASON: That is not in the Speech.

MR. WATTS: I hope that the direct veto will be provided for in the Licensing Bill, so that the wishes of the people, should they desire to have the whole of the hotels in any district closed, shall be given effect to.

MR. H. BROWN: You do not want that at Northam.

MR. WATTS: It may be needed where the hon. member resides. With regard to the Land Act Amendment Bill which is promised, I hope we will have a provision brought forward by which grazing lands may be again made available for selection. I regret that it has been found necessary to withdraw them from selection; but at the same time I am satisfied with the reasons given by the

Premier for that withdrawal. I hope that provision will be made for these lands again being utilised by the selector. With regard to the promise of the Premier to give assistance to those in the backblocks of our country, to the farmers who are living amidst great difficulties, who are pursuing their avocations under difficulties which beset very few members of our community, I hope that this promise will be given effect to, and that money will be provided for the construction of roads, water supply, railways, schools, and other necessities for making life in the backblocks a little better than it is at present. I am pleased that the Government have seen their way to giving assistance to farmers in the erection of grain sheds.

MR. BURGESS: The farmers built those themselves.

MR. WATTS: Yes; and they received a great deal of assistance from the Government in doing so. That assistance is greatly appreciated by the farmers in the State. I am pleased to find that the farming industry is in the prosperous condition it is at present; and I hope that the House will recognise that this industry requires greater consideration and more help than it has had in the past; and I hope that this House will be able to see its way clear to give that assistance to those settlers in back districts. I hope that the iniquitous provision in the dealings of the Agricultural Bank for fencing land before a loan is granted will be done away with. One settler has said that he would have been £1,000 better off to-day if he had been allowed a few years ago to put the money he was obliged to put into fencing into clearing; and I cannot for the life of me see why any man should be compelled to do fencing that is useless and not required by him when his money could be spent to greater advantage in clearing his holding. Another matter in connection with the Agricultural Bank, and which I hope will be remedied, is the refusal to grant loans beyond certain limits. I say that if we put up land for selection here and allow people to select it as farming land, we should be prepared to give them assistance which we give to settlers in other portions of the country, and that no section of the community allowed to take up first-class

land should be debarred the privilege of dealing with the Agricultural Bank. With regard to the railway proposals of the Government, while I hope that the construction of the Norseman railway will be justified by the evidence which will, I presume, be brought before us, I cannot, with the information I have at present, see eye to eye with the Premier on the other proposals in regard to the Port Hedland line and the Midland railway. I am opposed to the principle of the ownership of railways by private enterprise—at any rate of main lines of railway; and I hope this Legislature will not agree to any lines being built and owned by private persons, unless very strong arguments are brought forward for their justification. At any rate, if it is to be done, I hope that we are not going to have iniquitous concessions given to the builders that have been given previously, as for instance in the case of the Midland Railway Company. In regard to the Midland Railway Company's concession, I consider that the price asked is a ridiculous one.

MR. A. J. WILSON: Hear, hear.

MR. RASON: Are you seconding the Address?

MR. WATTS: With the information I have and the knowledge of the country I have, I say that the price asked is altogether too high.

MR. A. J. WILSON: What is the land worth an acre?

MR. WATTS: It would not be worth much to the hon. member, because he would never do enough work to make it worth anything. With the quantity of land convenient to our main lines of railway, about 5,000,000 acres, and with 15,000,000 acres of land in all near to the Government lines of railway, we would be far more justified in spending a quarter of the money proposed to be devoted to the Midland Railway on building spur lines to bring the Government lands into touch with the railways.

MR. HEITMANN: What about a line across to Cue?

MR. WATTS: That would, perhaps, be a better proposal. According to evidence the Government possess, we have no less than seven times the area of land in the Midland concession available for selection by farmers, and I make bold to say this land is not inferior to the land

in the Midland concession ; and I cannot see any reason, when we have seven times the Midland area of Government land available, why settlers should be compelled to pay an increased rate in order to acquire the Midland Company's land and to satisfy the greed of the shareholders of the Midland Railway Company. At the same time I appreciate the Premier's position. With the option falling due on the 30th June, I can readily understand that, if he had not made some promise with regard to the matter, members of this Chamber would not have had an opportunity of dealing with the matter and settling it for themselves. I appreciate the position in which the Premier has been placed, and I hope that the House will discuss the matter in no party fashion, but upon its merits, and that party prejudices shall not be allowed to come into the question. I believe if this is done that the Midland Company's concession will not be bought, at any rate at the price which has been asked by the company. I cannot see, when we have proposals to deal with the land under a land tax, that this land is likely to lie idle for any great length of time ; and if the company sell the land and it becomes available for selectors, and is settled and worked, I do not think we should ask for very much more than that. In conclusion, I say I appreciate the honest efforts Ministers have put forward to carry out legislation, and the ability they have shown in the administration of their various departments. They have done excellent work in the face of many difficulties which have beset them and which I do not think have beset many previous Governments ; and I think they have carried on the work very creditably. Whilst I do not agree with all the proposals the Premier has brought forward, yet at the same time I think all sections of the House must give them credit for the way they have administered their departments, in spite of assertions made by certain members in their constituencies very recently who are very prone to interjection to-day. I sincerely trust that in the coming session those measures which have been foreshadowed will receive earnest attention, that much good will result from their consideration by this House, and that they

will be placed on the statute-book of the State, whether by the present Government or by my honourable friends opposite. I have much pleasure in seconding the motion which has been moved.

AMENDMENT TO ADDRESS, NOTICE GIVEN.

MR. C. H. RASON (Guildford) : I beg to move the adjournment of the debate ; and following the customary procedure, I give notice to my friends opposite that when the debate is resumed I shall move an amendment to the Address-in-Reply, in terms of which I have given my friend the Premier a copy, to this effect :—

We regret, however, that your present advisers do not enjoy the confidence of a majority of the members of this House.

Motion for adjournment passed ; the debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT.

THE PREMIER moved: That the House at its rising do adjourn until 3.30 p.m. on the next Tuesday.

Question passed.

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

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 11th July, 1905.

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THE ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon. H. Briggs) took the Chair at 4.30 o'clock p.m.

PRAYERS.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by the COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew), leave of absence