

**ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.***Sixth Day.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

**MR. BROCKMAN** (Sussex) [3.33]: I wish to convey my congratulations to you, Sir, on your elevation to the high office of Speaker, and to congratulate the Government upon their return to power, and the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Nationalist Party on their respective appointments. I give the Government credit for having had Sir James Mitchell appointed as Lieut.-Governor of this State. That appointment has been eulogised throughout the State, with the exception perhaps of very few who hold extreme views regarding that gentleman. Sir James Mitchell has rendered statesmanlike service to this country. To him we must credit the development both of our wheat industry and of our South-West. I wish to say a few words in regard to the Governor's Speech and the Address-in-reply debate. There is not a very great deal of constructive thought in either, but I am pleased to see in the Speech that the dairying and other industries in the South-West have been playing their part in the development of the State. I was sorry to hear the member for Gascoyne (Mr. Wise) speak in the way he did regarding the money that has been spent down South. I feel sure he did not really mean to convey that he thought too much money had been spent in developing industries in the South-West, and not enough in the North-West. Personally I, as a member of the House, intend to extend my support, not only to the development of industry in the South-West, but also to the development of industry throughout the State. I hope the Government will be actuated by a similar view, for I feel that the only way we can get over the great difficulty confronting us in respect of unemployment will be by the development of our primary industries. Undoubtedly those industries are having a very hard time. I know that those engaged in developing the dairying industry in my own electorate are in a deplorable position. Unemployment is everywhere rampant, and I wish the best of luck to the new Minister for Employment, for I know the difficult task he has before him. I represent a district where there has been an enormous amount of unemployment owing to the closing-down of the timber industry, to which I will allude again later. I

was pleased to hear the member for North-East Fremantle (Mr. Tonkin) refer to the schools, but I am sorry he did not emphasise the position of the schools in country districts. If he were living in the South-West and could see the difficulties from which the children there are suffering, he would know that they have to travel very great distances to school, and that in many instances there is not at the schools any accommodation where the children could have their meals in comfort. At many of the schools there are no shelter sheds, and it would be a merciful improvement if the department could remedy this omission. I should like to refer to the timber industry in this way: first of all in regard to the revenue it has produced for the State and the effect its revival would have on unemployment in the South-West. In normal times no fewer than 5,000 men are employed in that industry, representing the livelihood of over 16,000 people. I congratulate the Premier on having reduced the railway freight and the royalty, but I think it would be wise to go even farther in bringing down the many costs of production in the industry. If the industry were revived there would be no further unemployment in the South-West, and that would be a great factor, since it would not only reinstate 5,000 men in employment, but would also create employment in shipping and in the Railway Department. Moreover it would bring a great deal of revenue to the State. I refer particularly to the timber industry because it has cost the Government nothing to develop. It is natural wealth that has been handed to us by Nature. For the last five years, with the exception of last year, the industry has produced £2,370,000 per annum, but last year, unfortunately, the return fell to £600,000. In my electorate many timber mills have been closed down and the employees placed on sustenance. I do not like that word "sustenance," for I think that a State like Western Australia, with all its undeveloped industries, should not have people unemployed. Undoubtedly there is work for everybody in the State, but the difficulty is that we have not the money with which to pay them. The timber industry, if reinstated, would bring in no less than £2,000,000 a year to be used in employment. The total wealth returned by this industry to the State has been £45,000,000, out of which £29,700,000 represents timber shipped overseas. I should like briefly to refer to the effect the high tariff of the Federal



Government has had on this industry. Many years ago I worked in the timber industry, and know a good deal about it. In those days we paid from 4s. 6d. to 5s. 6d. for the best axe obtainable, but to-day we pay no less than 15s. 6d. to 16s. 6d. for a similar article. That is only a small item, but one can imagine what effect increases like that must have upon this industry where so much imported machinery is used. I am confident the Government will do all they can to reduce the tariffs, though the only way out that I can see is through the secession movement, so ably dealt with by the member for Nedlands (Hon. N. Keenan). I wish now to refer to group settlement. Last year I had a good deal of experience on this question. I do not intend to-day to touch fully upon it, though if I did I think I should make many members blush. The scheme was inaugurated by the ex-Premier, Sir James Mitchell. I consider it was a good one. It was brought into being for the specific purpose of developing our dairying industry, and keeping within the State large sums of money that were being sent to the Eastern States for various products. The scheme has met its obligations though it has cost a great deal of money. I am not going to pick out any particular Government for abuse, but I do think that no Government in the last 12 years has advanced any definite and sound policy for group settlement. Last year I was a member of the Royal Commission that inquired into the scheme, and I remember that the member for Bunbury (Mr. Withers) said I had no right to be on it as I was milking only three goats. For the information of the House I would say that last year I milked 120 cows. I have two dairy farms, one with 80 cows upon it and another with 40, and this year I hope to milk 140 cows. If all goes well, and prices revive, I shall put in another machine and milk an additional number of cows next year. Those who have read the report of the Royal Commission will know that the high capitalisation of the holdings rendered it impossible for the unfortunate struggling settlers to meet their liabilities. I do not believe in the present method of weeding out settlers who may not be suitable for the development of that country but would be useful in other walks of life. It is wrong to harass a man so that he is actually turned off his

holding through being unable to do the impossible, that is, pay interest with commodities at their present price. The report recommended that an independent board should be appointed, and I hope the Government will carry out that recommendation. The board should not consist of paid members. I am confident that there are enough patriotic citizens in the South-West to deal with these cases individually without any other cost than their out-of-pocket expenses. Those settlers who are not suited to the life of a farmer would then be weeded out, and others put in their place. I have been amongst group settlements since their inception, and I declare that among the settlers there are some of the finest men in the State. Many of these men have not only carved out a home for themselves but spent their all and given 12 years of the best of their lives to building up a competence for their wife and family. To-day those men are pestered for interest to such an extent that they are walking off their holdings and leaving their life savings behind them. That is not right, and the Government should take steps to remedy it. During my election I assured the people that if I could not induce the Government to afford some relief, I would at least express my opinions in the House. I am doing so now in the interests of these people. I am a practical South-West farmer. I started there with nothing and though I have not much to-day, I have an asset. I want these people to have the same chance, and will fight for their rights.

The Minister for Lands: Many who started with nothing have nothing to-day.

Mr. BROCKMAN: I hope the Minister will see that some relief is afforded. A large amount of capital is involved and the future of good men is at stake. It would be a great pity to see these settlers walking off their holdings. A point to remember is that many of these people are really good settlers, and they are leaving because they have been unduly harassed. I do not think any of them are wholly unsatisfactory, but a lot of them are quite unsuited for land settlement. These may be good men if put into other walks of life. I am not going to cry down anyone, whether he is a waiter or a farmer. In my political career I intend to do the best I can for everyone in the community. I believe in fairness and justice to all, and I am specially going to fight for fairness and justice on behalf of



the group settlers, and the returned soldiers, who have perhaps sacrificed more than anyone else.

The Minister for Lands: Consistent with fairness and justice to the taxpayers, who have to shoulder the whole burden.

Mr. BROCKMAN: As a taxpayer, I am prepared to bear my share to help these people on to prosperity. I believe the taxpayers, if they saw the conditions under which the settlers are living to-day, would think along the same lines as I do. I shall not dwell upon the question of unemployment. Those who are out of work are at least being provided with a reasonable living, and have been so provided since the inception of the trouble. The late Government did their utmost for the working man under the conditions that existed, and with the amount of money they had at their disposal. I congratulate them upon their achievements. I hope the Minister for Employment will be able to do as well as they did. I read his proposals in the paper this morning. I do not know how they will operate, but I can assure him I will render him every assistance I can to carry out his programme in a successful manner in the interests of those concerned. Everyone feels sorry for a man who is out of employment through no fault of his own. That is the position with most of them. I was sorry to hear the Minister say that farmers were better off than sustenance workers. That is not my view at all. The Minister said a farmer had a roof over his head. But of what use is a roof to him if he has nothing inside him, and he has no clothing or bedding with which to cover himself? That is the case with group settlers. During my electioneering campaign I visited a number of group homes. On one occasion I saw a lady whom I did not know run into her house, and heard her call out that she could not see me as she had no dress to wear. That was a very terrible position. If the Premier had seen such a thing, I am sure he would at once have made money available for the assistance of these people.

The Premier: I would not furnish money to alter a circumstance like that!

Mr. BROCKMAN: To-day there are many deplorable and needy cases on the groups. There are many small matters affecting my constituency which I intend

to bring before the Minister for Employment, but I shall do so privately.

Mr. Latham: That will be much more effective.

Mr. BROCKMAN: I observe that the board appointed in connection with unemployment have devoted a considerable amount of money to the supply of rugs and so forth to Perth unemployed. I trust that that beneficial system will be extended to unemployed in country districts. Doubtless an opportunity will be afforded to members to deal more fully with various matters upon which I have touched slightly, and particularly the subject of land settlement, a phase on which I could speak for an hour or two. As a new member, however, I consider it would be out of place for me to take up more of the time of the House. I assure the Government that I intend to do all I can to assist them in the difficult task confronting them. If they do the right thing from the aspect of the country's interests, I shall not be merely critical but shall try to assist them constructively in every way to overcome the obstacles in the path of Western Australia's further progress, particularly in regard to group and soldier settlers.

MR. FERGUSON (Irwin-Moore) [3.55]: I desire to associate myself with the congratulations of other members to you, Mr. Speaker, on your appointment to your present position. From close association with you during the life of the last two Parliaments, I feel perfectly confident that the members of this Chamber may safely leave their interests in your hands, knowing that you will conserve those interests and also the dignity of the position which you occupy. Further, I wish to offer my congratulations to His Excellency the Lieut.-Governor, Sir James Mitchell, on his appointment to that high and honourable position. Notwithstanding some small measure of criticism which has been levelled at the appointment, I think no appointment of recent years in Western Australia has met with more universal approval than that of Sir James Mitchell. The hon. gentleman deserves well of Western Australia, and it is fitting that as the crown of a long and honourable career he should be placed in the highest position that the people of Western Australia can accord to him. The result of the recent general election was rather in the nature of a