

tion of our tobacco growers, the depressed state of the timber industry, and the consequent unemployment therein, especially of single men. It is comforting to learn that the Minister for Agriculture, during his recent visit to Ceylon or India, has succeeded in securing an order for about 150,000 sleepers, worth about £40,000. So that for the present and the immediate future there will be more employment in the timber industry, which has passed through a very bad time during the last six months.

The Lieutenant-Governor, in his Speech, indicated that the Government would be bringing forward legislation during the present session. I hope the Government will bear in mind when dealing with taxation measures, the fact that after next Christmas we shall also have to contribute to the national insurance scheme. Legislation is also to be brought forward dealing with workers' homes and the granting of borrowing powers to local government authorities. I would also mention the want of educational facilities in country districts, and our puerile system of vermin taxation and vermin destruction. These are all matters requiring the mature and careful consideration of the House. Members have been saying a lot about them for a long time, but I am afraid these matters are not getting much better. As I have said, I will deal with them at a later date. I take the opportunity of thanking members for hearing with me so patiently during my address.

MR. WILLMOTT (Sussex) [5.22]: I congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your attainment of your high position. I can assure you that I, as a new member, shall look to you for guidance. I must confess that the procedure followed in this Chamber is rather difficult for me to understand at present, but I hope that in the very near future, under your guidance, I shall be acting strictly in accordance with the Standing Orders. I desire also to thank the previous speakers for the way in which they have welcomed both the member for Hannans and myself to the House. I appreciate very much indeed the manner in which members have accepted me. I take the opportunity to pay a high tribute to the former member for Sussex, the late Mr. Vernon Brockman. He was extremely popular and his generosity was known to many. He had close friends among all sections of his electorate.

Hon. members no doubt have noticed that there is a movement on foot to perpetuate his memory in his own home town of Nannup. I regret to say that I am still under doctor's orders and so must not speak at length. I am, however, rapidly regaining my health and trust soon to be able to take a much keener interest in the proceedings of the House.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. WILLMOTT: I trust that my participation in the debate will prove of benefit to my electors. I am pleased that the Government, although it has taken some considerable time to arrive at a decision to do so, has commenced the rebuilding of Cave House. The Government should do more in the way of advertising the South-West as a tourist resort. The South-West has many attractions. We have there some of the finest scenery and caves to be found in Australia. Perhaps the Government could make arrangements with the shipping companies whereby people passing through Fremantle could take a trip to the caves and view the scenery. Thanks to the Main Roads Board, we have wonderfully good roads in most parts of the South-West, although I admit we need more. While on the subject of main roads, I wish to congratulate all the officers connected with the Main Roads Board on the excellent work they have accomplished during the last few years. The road from Perth to Busselton, about 150 miles, is bitumenised the whole distance, and I regard that as a great achievement on the part of the officials concerned.

I am pleased to note the way in which the Government is employing single sustenance men in clearing up vacant holdings in the group areas; but I think some of the older settlers should be given a little assistance on the same lines. The old settlers are still battling very hard for a crust, and so I hope the Government will extend consideration to them. I would also advocate very strongly that young men, sons of present settlers in those areas, should be allowed to take up some of the vacant holdings. At present, a young man who is not married is debarred from taking up a holding. Boys who have been reared and trained on dairy farms should get the opportunity to take up some of the vacant holdings.

Mr. Marshall: If they were permitted to do so, they would be more likely to marry.

Mr. WILLMOTT: Some of them are too young to marry; they cannot think about marriage, because they cannot afford it. There is one matter in portions of my electorate about which we are very much concerned, and I suppose many other places in Western Australia are also concerned about it, and that is the rabbit pest. In parts of my district the rabbit menance has become very serious. I hope the Government will be able to persuade the Commonwealth authorities to allow us to have the use of the new virus at an early date. It seems that the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research has made several trials and experiments, and has found that the virus is perfectly safe in the case of domesticated animals and human beings. The virus will not, however, spread from one warren to another. If we had the virus here, we could possibly find some way—it is easy enough to trap rabbits on small holdings—to infect rabbits from one warren and put them into another. The rabbits are doing such a great deal of harm that anything that would keep them down would be of great assistance to settlers.

We heard a good deal from the member for Nelson about the dispute that has arisen over payments into the equalisation fund. This fund is controlled by the Dairy Products Marketing Board. The situation is vital to the dairying industry. If the equalisation scheme in this State were to break down, it would be a very serious matter for the dairy farmers concerned. I feel sure, too, that if it broke down here, this would affect prices throughout the Commonwealth. It is unreasonable and unfair that the producers should be asked to accept world parity prices for their butter fat. The consuming public realises the position and, I think, would be in accord with the idea of preventing the industry from falling into a bad way. It is of great importance to the farming community in the South-West that the Government should endeavour to procure the services of more veterinary surgeons. I know there is a scarcity of such experts at present, but the necessity for the treatment of animals is frequently arising, and it is difficult to obtain advice. The suggestion has been made that cheap electric power should be provided in country districts. Some time ago a scheme was prepared for the generation of power at Collie and its transmission from that centre. I

urge upon the Government to endeavour to provide means whereby cheap power can be supplied from Collie to adjoining districts, not only for township purposes but for use by the farming community in general. Cheap electric power would be of great advantage to all concerned in the South-West.

I appreciate very much the good work that has been done in connection with forests regeneration, and feel sure that the money devoted to this work will be well spent. The department is also doing good work in respect to pine planting. If this scheme is proceeded with, the State should derive considerable benefit from it. Pines, however, should be grown on suitable soil, and not on good agricultural land, such as has been the case in some instances. The timber industry has had a serious setback. Those concerned in it have had a worrying time. In my district two mills have been closed down and a number of men have had to go on sustenance. Possibly the Government could reduce railage and wharfage charges so that the industry could more readily compete on the overseas markets. All timber should be shipped from the nearest port. If this were done, the Government would be saved much employment relief and the industry might be able to pay its way. When mills are closed down, those engaged in them are forced on to sustenance work. In my district I have not been able to find work for all, and it has been necessary to send a number of married men into other areas to obtain employment. Those men are keeping two homes going, one for the wife and family and the other for themselves. They are, therefore, suffering great hardship. It is not a fair proposition.

I am afraid I have had to congratulate the Government concerning many matters, but I must also congratulate Ministers upon the extensions to be made to the Busselton Hospital. I have seen the plans and think the building is going to be a fine one. I am sure it will be a boon to the medical as well as the nursing staffs. I do think, however, that the amount that has to be found by the ratepayers of Busselton and the surrounding district, a sum of about £2,800, will represent a heavy burden to those concerned. The area takes in only the Busselton and Sussex Road Boards, for the adjoining areas have hospitals of their own. I hope, however, we shall be able to raise the money.

The Minister for Mines: The point is that you have the hospital.

Mr. WILLMOTT: We shall have it very shortly.

MR. WITHERS (Bunbury) [5.40]: I join with other members in congratulating you, Sir, upon your recent appointment. Such congratulations have been very numerous, I am glad to say, and I concur in all that has been said. I also congratulate the member for Sussex (Mr. Willmott) upon the speech he has made. I know him very well, and also know the disabilities under which he has entered the House. In all the circumstances, I consider he made a wonderful effort. At this time last year I was very concerned about the financial emergency tax, and also the hospital tax. It is pleasing to note from the Speech that the emergency tax is to be amalgamated with the income tax. I do not know what principle will be followed, but it should be something better than we have had since the depression period started.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: It could not be much worse, could it?

Mr. WITHERS: Not much worse for a particular section of the community, namely, those who are least able to pay, and do not receive the deductions under the financial emergency scheme that I hope they will get under the scheme of amalgamation. If, during the session, the Government can get through an amalgamation of taxation along the lines suggested, wonderful relief will be afforded in Western Australia, and it will be an achievement that will redound to the credit of the Government.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: So long as it is not loaded.

Mr. WITHERS: I am sure it will not be top-heavy, or may I say, bottom-heavy? On the question of the hospital tax, I should like to refer to the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition when he was Minister for Health. I blame him for the introduction of that tax, and I blame the present Government for continuing it in its present form.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: You would not have had the Sussex Hospital but for that tax.

Mr. WITHERS: Possibly not. I say in all fairness to the Medical Department that, when I have put up cases to it, I have had a considerable amount of money written off.

My contention is that it should never be necessary for the member for the district to approach the department on a matter of this sort. Men who cannot afford to pay any fees, and members of their families, may have to enter hospitals and it should not be necessary for those people to have to ask the member for the district to go to the department and make a statement that they are not in a position to pay anything, and thus induce the department to write off the cost.

The Minister for Health: The trouble is that they go to the member first, and do not give the department an opportunity to write off anything.

Mr. WITHERS: When people were exempted up to £230 per annum, there was no trouble. There is a certain exemption today. If the authorities think a person is in a position to pay, they expect him to pay. The present Minister for Health was one of the greatest opponents of the measure in question at the time it was brought down. If members will look up "Hansard," they can read what he said when sitting in Opposition, at the time when the then Minister for Health brought down the amendment to which I have referred. They will see the extent to which he opposed the amendment on that occasion. Ever since its introduction the amendment has had that effect. The then Minister for Health told us during the discussion in Parliament that all he desired was to ensure that a person who possibly had a banking account and yet did not receive £230 income for that year should pay hospital fees. We were asked whether such a person should not pay, and when we agreed that he should, the then Minister said that was all he wanted. To-day, however, when any workers or members of their families have to go to hospital, they are called upon to prove that they are not in a position to pay.

The Minister for Health: Why should not such people pay?

Mr. WITHERS: Why should they?

The Minister for Health: I know of people with £1,000 in the bank that thought they ought not to pay.

Mr. Styants: And girls who are not in a position to pay have been harassed by the department.

Mr. WITHERS: If a man is on sustenance or is a casual worker on the wharf, he does not earn sufficient money during the