

If the Government does go along with the proposal to establish the alumina refinery in the Swan district, the provision of a commuter rail service through this district might not only be feasible, but also prove to be quite necessary; because to run a railcar from Toodyay to the site of the proposed area of mining development would be more rapid than if one were to travel from most parts of the metropolitan area, even from Midland, to the mining area. The same could be said in regard to travelling from Toodyay by rail on the broad gauge line to the proposed site of the alumina works.

Therefore, in making such a suggestion, I consider that it is quite feasible that such a proposal could come about. Many issues which affect the Toodyay electorate I will not mention tonight, but during all the times that are made available to me in the future I shall raise them in this House. I can assure members, and Ministers in particular, that I will never be guilty of failing to advocate a policy in support of the people of the Toodyay electorate at every opportunity afforded me.

**MR. BLAIKIE** (Vasse) [6.04 p.m.]: I appreciate the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to speak in this House on the Address-in-Reply debate; and at the outset I offer you my congratulations on your appointment to your most important office. As a member of the Opposition I would also like to offer my congratulations to the members of the Government and the Premier because they have a very hard road ahead of them and I wish them success in their labours.

Today, speaking for the first time, I have an overwhelming feeling of the tremendous responsibility that the people of Vasse have placed in me, but this is a challenge I accept. It is affording me an opportunity to acknowledge the work done by the previous member for Vasse, The Hon. Stewart Bovell, who is now the Agent-General for Western Australia in London. Mr. Bovell was elected to Parliament as the member for Sussex in 1947, and subsequently, in the Brand Government was the Minister for Lands, Forests, and Immigration. I offer my respects to a man who was a true representative of the people.

As I have already said, Mr. Bovell is at present in London representing this State and I congratulate the Government of the day for making that appointment. I have no doubt that the dignity and traditions that go with this office are in the most capable hands of a man who is not unkindly known as the Squire of Vasse.

The Address-in-Reply debate allows a member to speak on a variety of subjects and tonight I intend to draw the attention of the House to various elements in

the Vasse electorate and, in particular, to decentralisation as it affects the industries that are at present operating there. However, before I go on, I would be remiss if an acknowledgment was not made of Western Australia's remarkable achievement of reaching a population of 1,000,000. For this State to emerge from the doldrums that were experienced in the mid-1950s to the position it is in today is something quite remarkable. To continue this expansion rate and maintain the confidence of the people will be a challenge to the Government. I am quite sure the people of the Vasse electorate will be looking to the Government to ensure that this confidence is maintained.

The Vasse electorate lies almost completely within the boundaries of the Augusta-Margaret River and Busselton Shire Councils and a wide diversity of industries are practised. It is favoured by a climate probably second to none in Western Australia, and I believe in the years ahead it will be acknowledged as the playground of Western Australia. I spoke earlier of decentralisation and one of the first aspects I wish to bring before the House relates to the dairying industry. This is an industry that is decentralised and certainly requires some assistance from both inside and outside the industry.

In past years dairying has been the major source of income to the majority of farmers in the south-west. Statistics in the 1969-70 returns show that the Augusta-Margaret River and Busselton Shire Council areas produced dairy products of a volume that was bettered only by the Harvey Shire area.

In the combined shire areas the total in terms of whole-milk production—and this is even more significant when one takes into account that the area I have spoken of is dry land farmed—was as follows:—

|                         | gals.      |
|-------------------------|------------|
| Augusta-Margaret River- |            |
| Busselton     ....      | 10,115,818 |
| Harvey area   ....      | 12,193,916 |

This is a tremendous achievement. However, with falling prices butterfat producers have been forced to diversify to other forms of agriculture and this diversification is continuing.

Today we can look at the tragic situation that faces the farmers in this area who changed from butterfat production to sheep. I certainly hope the current beef prices will be maintained because it would be catastrophic if those farmers who are engaged in the production of beef are placed in the same position as sheep farmers.

In my opinion the dairying industry consists of three sections; namely, the butterfat section, the whole-milk section, and the manufacturing section. I believe that the manufacturers have not played ball

with the others engaged in the industry and this has certainly been at the expense of the butterfat producer.

I would say that the manufacturers have been operating a transport system which is outmoded and completely out of touch with conditions existing at present. The system is archaic to say the least. How can the dairying industry continue to pay the cost of transporting milk from Augusta to Boyanup in tankers, bottling the milk at Brunswick, and then, by another means of transport, carting the same product, in processed form, back to Augusta?

In the electorate we have country roads which are besieged by milk trucks, milk tankers, and cream trucks, all of which are operated by different companies. Now that it is anticipated that Busselton will go onto whole-milk production in February the roads will be cluttered up with a few more of these vehicles. It is a fact that, in the final analysis, the only one who pays the cost of such transport is the producer.

It might be interesting if I briefly explain to the House how these trucks are operated by the various companies on a country road on a particular day and at a particular time. For example, at 7.30 a.m. Company A would send a cream truck out on this road. At 9.30 a.m. Company B would send a truckload of milk cans on the same road. At 10.30 a.m. Company B would then despatch a tanker for the cartage of milk, and then, at 10.45 a.m. this would be closely followed by a milk tanker despatched by Company A. This is the situation that exists today. I believe that if we are to continue to have a dairying industry in Western Australia it is essential to have co-ordination of transport.

I believe that the co-ordination of transport would be a major factor in assisting the producers to attain a higher return. If all sections of the industry are not prepared to co-operate to achieve this objective—and I know full well that the whole-milk and the dairy sections have done so—then the industry will have to accept a decision made by Parliament. The butterfat industry has been the subject of adverse and unwarranted criticism over the years. The men who have farmed those properties that have produced butterfat in the past have been put in a position that has been governed by world markets.

Today I have noticed people in the wool and wheat industries beginning to realise what is meant by world parity prices. Whilst butterfat producers have laboured against formidable odds, the whole-milk section of the industry has been relatively free of the adverse criticism that has been levelled against the butterfat section. This is because this section of the industry has had the foresight and the ability to place its own house in order. I

believe that of all the agricultural industries in this State whole-milk production is certainly the most profitable.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

Mr. BLAIKIE: Prior to tea I was outlining the situation in respect of the whole-milk and butterfat sections of the dairying industry. I said that I believed the whole-milk section of the industry in Western Australia was probably the most prosperous of any agricultural industry. To follow on with that, I believe it is most necessary for the whole-milk section to recognise the needs and the problems of butterfat producers and to take definite steps to fully integrate the two sections. I would support fully any move designed to cut the ever-increasing costs, and if it would offer increased returns to producers.

It has been mooted that a single marketing authority would be advantageous to the industry in Western Australia. If it can be proved that a single marketing authority will in the ultimate benefit the interests of all dairymen, then after examination of such a proposal I would support it.

The areas controlled by the Milk Board have definite boundaries. I would question on what authority these boundaries are fixed, and what right has the board to prevent a dairyman from selling his product in his own State. It is quite an anomaly when a dairyman, producing milk in Western Australia, can be prevented from supplying the milk to his home market, but is permitted to import the same article from interstate and to sell it to local consumers without any fear of a penalty being imposed.

I bring these matters before the House, because I feel some genuine hope that the various sections of the industry will get together on these matters; and also that those interests which are controlling the manufacture of the products will arrive at policies which will assist the future welfare of all sections of the industry.

In February next year, whole-milk quotas will be in the Busselton Shire Council district. I would like to quote from the *Busselton-Margaret Times* of the 8th April—

One of the greatest boosts this district has had both to the farming community and the district as a whole has been the issuing of milk quotas.

That was said by the president of the dairy section of the zone council of the Farmers' Union. In the same newspaper of the 20th May appeared a report under the heading, "Dairy Farmers Don't Need Whole Milk Quotas." That was a report on a statement by the Minister for Agriculture in reply to a request for boundary extension. It is necessary for the whole-milk boundaries to be extended, to include the Augusta-Margaret River Shire, despite what the Minister has said, as I believe that there are farmers in this district who are most anxious to take part in this industry.

I spoke earlier on decentralised industries, and the most significant industry in my electorate, and one which is a large employer of labour, is the timber industry. I would like to bring before the House the role that this industry plays. It has a formidable record and, as I said earlier, it is an industry which offers the district its major source of employment.

I realise that in times like the present the timber industry is rather hard-pressed. I am sure that those who are associated with the timber industry will make approaches to the Government, so that it fully appreciates the problems which confront the industry. I would ask the Government to reassure the private mill operators of its awareness of the industry's concern, and to do all it can to make sure that this industry continues to operate at a profitable level.

In the Government sector there are in my electorate two forestry mills. At the last count I found that those mills were also hard-pressed for orders. The Forests Department employs a total of 72 persons in the two forestry mills, and the timber industry as a whole employs 362 persons. I hope the House will appreciate the necessity for the industry to be given the consideration to which it is entitled.

The remaining item I wish to speak on—I will leave decentralisation and work in the private sector—is the tourist industry. My electorate is situated within close proximity to the metropolitan area and is acknowledged as a major tourist centre. Magnificent beaches are to be found stretching from Geographe Bay to Dunsborough. The rugged shore line along the west coast between Cape Naturaliste and Leeuwin, and the cave country of Augusta-Margaret River and Yallingup contains features of world-wide significance. These are some of the features that give the district a diversity of tourist attractions.

In past years the private sector of the tourist industry has been active. The development of tourist attractions has been assisted by the Tourist Development Authority which has from time to time made substantial grants available. I hope that a much greater acknowledgment is made of the area, and that the case for increased tourist development grants will be well worthy of consideration by the Government in the times ahead. I thank the House for listening to me so patiently.

**MR. FLETCHER** (Fremantle) [7.38 p.m.]: I did not set the theme of the comments which I will make; members opposite have done that. We answer argument with argument, and that is the purpose of our presence in Parliament.

**Mr. Brown:** We can interject.

**Mr. FLETCHER:** Members can interject, but there is no need for outbursts. In his contribution to this debate the member for Floreat made reference to the

moratorium march; the member for Mt. Marshall took us to task in respect of the situation which exists in the pastoral areas; and the member for Wembley made reference to demonstrations against apartheid and to the unwitting, but perhaps unfortunate, ambassadors of South Africa.

However, I would be remiss if, like other members, I did not congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your elevation to the Chair. I say this: you should have occupied the Chair many years before.

**Mr. Bickerton:** He was much younger then.

**Mr. FLETCHER:** You should have occupied the Chair many years before, and similarly the Premier and the Ministers should have been on this side many years ago. In spite of what members of the present Opposition have said, they look comfortable sitting opposite and they, too, should have been there years ago! I hope I will be able to see them sitting opposite for many years to come, with a progressive diminution in their numbers—a diminution brought about through the medium of electoral casualties and the ballot box rather than through any other type of box! The House will hear fewer questions from me, sitting on this side of the House. For some reason I have become less inquisitive!

**Mr. Court:** You will not be permitted to become inquisitive.

**Mr. FLETCHER:** The lack of questions from me could be related to the fact that there are more satisfied customers around, as a result of the assumption of office by the present Government. I notice that the seat which I formerly occupied on the opposite bench is vacant. It is strange, but I have some reluctance to ever occupying that seat again. I am pleased to notice that the seat is vacant, and is unsullied by any conservative posterior. However, I have not been ashamed of my role while I occupied that seat. Members heard a great deal more from me while I was sitting opposite, than they will while I am on this side. Members will not hear me speaking from the front bench of the Government for the reasons given by the member for Pilbara.

My peers thought I should not occupy a seat on the front bench. I would like to think that, perhaps, in the ballot I did come close to getting a front bench seat. Then again, the thought occurs to me that this might have resulted from the abundance of talent that is to be found on this side of the House.

I deferred my speech this evening for the benefit of two or three members opposite, to enable them to speak and leave to attend to some outside commitments. This shows that I can still be co-operative; however, I do not intend to be any less provocative, as the situation demands.