

Legislative Council,*Tuesday, 25th August, 1936.*

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read notifying assent to the Supply Bill (No. 1), £2,200,000.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Hon. H. Seddon, leave of absence for six consecutive sittings granted to Hon. J. Cornell (South) on the ground of ill-health.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.*Fifth Day.*

Debate resumed from the 13th August.

HON. G. B. WOOD (East) [4.35]: Before proceeding with my remarks, I wish to express my appreciation of the many kindnesses extended to me by members on my election to Parliament. Particularly do I appreciate the remarks of Mr. Baxter, Mr. Piessé and Mr. Angelo, and their kindly references to my late father. Not only do I appreciate those remarks, but members of my family have also appreciated them. I wish to refer to one or two matters of vital importance to the province I represent, as well as to the State. I represent a huge province, in which are contained many primary industries. I am naturally concerned about the welfare of the people engaged in those industries. Many of our wheat farmers are producing real wealth for the State, and the State is existing upon it, but they themselves are not in a happy condition as regards comforts, finances, or general prosperity. Many of them are merely existing upon their farms, working long hours, living in inferior houses, their wives and children not receiving the comforts due to them, and they themselves not receiving an adequate reward for their labours. We have the sorry position of being possessed of

2,700 abandoned farms. I say positively we cannot permit that state of affairs to exist indefinitely without making a determined effort to re-occupy some of those that are within the safe rainfall area. I would not suggest re-occupying every abandoned farm, but there are many which we cannot afford to allow to remain as they are at present, breeding grounds for grasshoppers, rabbits, and other vermin. Another task also confronts us. We have to consolidate the position of those who are remaining on their farms. Many of them are sadly in need of assistance for the reconditioning of their machinery and the purchase of more horses. I am opposed to the use of the Rural Relief Fund for either of these purposes. I consider that fund is inadequate for the rehabilitation of the farming industry. Many farmers, particularly in the north-eastern wheatbelt, have lost all their horses, while others have lost half their teams through troubles ensuing upon drought. This State has built up in good times essential transport services to cope with the 53,000,000-bushel yield of some years ago. We cannot afford to carry on these services without considerable retrenchment, especially if our wheat yield this year does not exceed 23,000,000 bushels. The surest way to cope with the situation is to again increase our yield to 53,000,000 bushels. We are all very glad of the assistance the State has received from the goldmining industry. As a result of that, this State is enjoying a certain amount of prosperity, and the going is more or less good. Now is the time to take advantage of that prosperity, and place our other primary industries on a surer foundation. The time has come when we will have to depend upon our wheat and wool to carry us through. We are very grateful, too, for what has been done through the Rural Relief Fund. That, however, is only a drop in the ocean compared with what is required to put the wheat and other industries in a good position. We must have more money for the rehabilitation of our farming industry. The Rural Relief scheme is not for rehabilitation; it is only a debt adjustment scheme, and one that has not done very much good. One can say that 75 per cent. of the wealth of the State comes from our rural industries. Notwithstanding that, those industries have only about 30 per cent. of the representation in Parliament. I appeal to legislators, other than those representing rural interests, for sym-

After viewing the claims of various country towns, it seems to me that Merredin is deserving of favourable consideration when a decision is being reached regarding the site for the new high school. Mention is made in the Lieut.-Governor's Speech of the increased supply of electricity that will be available when the extension of the East Perth power house plant has been completed. It is suggested that all the requirements in that respect will be fulfilled when that work is completed. I hope that that will cover the requirements of the hill districts, and that mains will be extended to Glen Forrest and, if possible, to Mundaring. A large number of people reside in those districts and I am confident that much power will be utilised in fulfilling their requirements and, in consequence, considerably increased revenue will be reaped by the department. In fact, I believe that the service there will be self-supporting. I was disappointed to note that no mention was made in the Lieut.-Governor's Speech regarding the intention of the Government to introduce marketing legislation. It is desirable that the small producers, particularly those who deal in perishable articles, shall be provided with protective legislation, so that their industries may be controlled. I do not suggest price-fixing when I refer to the necessity for marketing legislation, nor have I in mind anything that will conflict in any way with Section 92 of the Constitution. The egg producers and poultry farmers generally require the establishment of a marketing board, and legislation along the lines of the Victorian Act would be most desirable. Under that Act those connected with any individual industry can seek the protection of the legislation and their activities can be controlled by a board of producers, men who know something about the industry concerned. Although there is no reference of that description in the Speech, I hope that the Government will introduce legislation along the lines I have indicated. A serious position confronts certain industries to-day, in respect to supplies and prices for bran and pollard. The millers of Western Australia, in order to provide sufficient bran and pollard for those engaged in the various allied industries, including poultrymen, pig raisers and dairymen, require a certain volume of export trade. Our millers are operating at a distinct disadvantage com-

pared with the millers in the Eastern States, where they have a "through-the-mill" rate. Although our millers did enjoy a similar provision at one time, it was taken away from them in 1914. If our millers had the benefit of that particular rate, it would mean assistance to them to the extent of 8s. per ton. Although that does not seem much, it would place them on a more equitable footing with the producers in the Eastern States. Some time ago the then Premier (Hon. P. Collier), during the course of a broadcasted speech, emphasised the fact that the Government had assisted the timber industry by granting a rebate in respect of railway freights amounting to a large sum. No one would object to that assistance, but I maintain that if the Government could render that help to the timber industry, they could also afford to assist the flour-milling industry. Any sacrifice that might be made in order to render that assistance, would mean that the Government would be more than compensated because of the extra freight that would be received on the State ships in connection with the export of timber to Singapore, while it would mean more wages for the wharf lumpers, more work for the railway men, and advantages in other indirect ways. In addition to that, there would be the increased avenues of employment for mill hands. I hope that, in the interests of all concerned, attention will be given to the milling industry and assistance rendered by the provision of the "through-the-mill" rate. I was surprised that no mention was made in the Lieut.-Governor's Speech of provision for a new building for the Agricultural Department. Anyone acquainted with the condition of the present building must be aware that it constitutes a disgrace to the State. The premises are not fit to house the smallest and least important department, whatever that may be, let alone a department that is the most important in a State of primary production. No fitting laboratory is available to enable the officials to carry out necessary research work. At the present time the presence of toxic paralysis in our stock, and the ravages of the red-legged mite in our pastures, are taking their toll and no reasonable expense should be spared in attempting to find remedies. We cannot expect our doctors and professors to carry out research work in the present dreadful buildings, and I trust that something will

be done in the near future to remedy the existing unsatisfactory state of affairs. Dealing with transport matters, the State Transport Co-ordination Act, while in itself a desirable measure, requires drastic amendment. It operates exceedingly harshly with regard to some of the smaller primary producers. Quite recently some of our apiarists were told that they could not convey clarified honey to Perth, although they could cart crude honey to the works at York where the article was clarified. That honey is not manufactured in York, but merely clarified, and I fail to see why any such restriction should be placed upon the apiarists.

Hon. A. Thomson: Don't you think they were very fortunate to be allowed to cart their crude honey to York?

Hon. G. B. WOOD: Perhaps that is so, but these people are being hampered in their activities. They are operating at Manjimup, New Norcia, and other centres, and while they are permitted to convey crude honey, they are not permitted to transport their clarified product. Those apiarists say it is not economical to use the railways, and in those circumstances they will be forced to leave their homes and their operations generally and move to the city. That means enforced centralisation, which is very undesirable. It will also mean increasing the price of their product. Surely to goodness there are troubles enough already without making conditions any harder. I understand that some dairymen in the South-West have been instructed that they cannot transport their milk supplies; yet people who are within a certain radius of the city are permitted to do so. Why should not the people in the outer country districts be allowed to cart their milk to Perth just as much as those living nearer to the metropolis? I hope that matter will receive consideration too. It is interesting to note that the Government have authorised an inquiry by a special committee into the desirability of removing the lazaret at Wooroloo, and as that matter is being considered now, further comment on my part might be ruled out of order. In passing, however, I might remark that the residents of Wooroloo are anxiously awaiting the findings of the committee. The Government are to be commended upon their action in assisting in

the provision of three hospitals in the country districts. I refer to Gnowangerup, Merredin and Manjimup. While I have not inspected the Gnowangerup and Manjimup hospitals, I can assure the House that the Merredin hospital is a credit to the State. The buildings are remarkably fine. The local people found some of the money necessary for the institution, and the Government rendered assistance as well. I am glad to see that the Flying Doctor Scheme has received assistance from the Government. As a resident of the North-West for many years, I know what a wonderful boon the scheme must be to the people residing in that part of the State. Lately we have heard talk regarding the desirability of recommencing the introduction of assisted migrants to Australia. I hope nothing will be done along those lines until our own youth unemployment problem has been solved and our own people placed on full-time work. Either that, or we should wait until the position has reverted to what it was in pre-depression days. Perhaps something could be done to induce people possessed of a little capital to come out and settle on some of our abandoned farms. I would not be a party even to that unless the properties could be given to the newcomers on extremely favourable terms. I think some of the holdings could, practically speaking, be given away. If any system of migration is embarked upon in the future, I trust that a very careful selection of migrants will be made. Most of our troubles—at any rate with our land schemes, especially the group settlement scheme—have been due to the very poor type of immigrant despatched to Australia. I do not suggest that all the migrants were of an inferior type, but I have had considerable experience with them. In my opinion at least 50 per cent. of them should have been retained in England. Turning to another serious problem, I am very much afraid that we will be confronted by another invasion of locusts in the north-eastern parts of the wheat area. The farmers there are not in a financial position to cope with the pest, and some concrete assistance should be rendered them immediately. I understand that the Beneubbin Road Board is prepared to carry out certain work if the Government will provide some assistance. The Government Entomologist, Mr. Newman, has

visited that district, and I am afraid his policy has in view the protection of the present crop. The problem is far greater than that. It is a State matter, and unless some most determined action is taken in the near future, a very serious position will confront us. I know of one small area where the holdings of about six different farmers are surrounded by abandoned Agricultural Bank holdings comprising some 40,000 acres. Those half dozen settlers are in an impossible position and cannot hope to cope with the locust pest under such conditions. It is realised that the abandoned farms are the breeding grounds for locusts or grasshoppers, and I urgently appeal to the Government to take action in that respect in the near future. If action is not taken, the problem will before long develop into a much more serious one, and conditions may arise under which it will be practically useless to endeavour to cope with it. Before concluding, I desire to touch on a few Federal matters that I consider are of vital importance to Western Australia. I notice that the Federal Aid Roads Grant is to be extended, and that negotiations are to be entered into with the Federal Government. I hope that when negotiations are in progress between the Governments, an understanding will be arrived at in regard to the petrol tax. That tax was imposed some years ago with the idea of making main roads, and we know that only about 3d. a gallon of the tax has been used for that purpose. The remainder has gone into Consolidated Revenue. In the years 1934 and 1935 Western Australia was paid £200,000 less than was taken away in petrol tax, and I do hope that when negotiations are in progress this aspect will be given serious consideration. Touching that £200,000 I think it would have kept on full-time work very many workers who have been and are still being employed on part-time work. Much has been said lately as to the merits and demerits of the Federal Government's action in imposing tariffs on imported foreign goods. It appears to me that the Federal Government had to come to the point of deciding very definitely who was to be given consideration between England and foreign countries. We know that the woolgrowers have been hit the hardest, because Japan appears to be the only country that instituted reprisals. We still have to accept the fact, though, that England is our best customer for wool, and England buys many of our other products as well—fat lambs, dried fruits, eggs, butter, chilled beef, etc.—which Japan does not buy from us. It behoves us all to take a broad view of the position and look at it, not only from the material but from a sentimental and defence viewpoint, while not forgetting the fact that the standard of living of many of our workers, particularly in the Eastern States, is being undermined by the importation of cheap foreign goods. We have reason to believe that England will trade with us to help us, and Japan will trade with us to help Japan. The findings of the Privy Council Appeal are very disappointing to our producers, particularly those in the dried fruits and dairying industries. It is a matter for surprise to producers that the Government of a primary producing State should have intervened in that case and assisted Mr. James and his friends in his fight against the dried fruits industry. While I am prepared to admit that the Government were not interested in Mr. James, but rather intervened with the idea of maintaining State rights, it seems a great pity that this should be done at the expense of very important primary industries. It took many years to get that legislation through, and it is a great pity that it has all gone by the board. No doubt judging by the trend of events in Europe, and particularly what we hear over the wireless sometimes from foreign countries, many of us will be thinking of something else in the near future rather than of our immediate domestic affairs. For instance, we may have something more to think about than whether we are going to get 4s. for our wheat or 1s. for wool. I refer to the possibility of war. Eastern States Parliamentarians have told me that it seems likely a measure for compulsory military training will be introduced in the Federal House in the near future, although I noticed that Sir Archdale Parkhill denied this. It is our duty as citizens in this State to educate people as to the necessity for the introduction of such legislation, so that when it comes along they will be ready for it, and take it as they should take it. While at this early stage in my Parliamentary career it would be presumptuous of me to criticise the Government, I must admit that I am very disappointed in the Lieut.-Governor's Speech. I was struck by the fact that there is nothing in it to lead us to believe that any assistance will be given to our wheat industry, and other primary industries.

Mention has been made of future activity in the mining areas, such as a railway at Cue and new pipelines to Norseman and other mining districts. Perth is to have more sewerage, trolley buses, drainage, water supplies, educational facilities and electricity. While we know that all these things are desirable, even in a prosperous city like Perth and for the prosperous mining industry, we are naturally very disappointed that nothing has been said to lead us to believe that any assistance will be given to some of our rural industries. Surely our farming industries from which so much wealth comes, but which in themselves are not very wealthy, are deserving of a little assistance? The Government should have learnt during the recent drought the desirability of a much more adequate water supply in the country than exists at present. I do hope that though these questions are not mentioned in the Lieut.-Governor's Speech, the Government will give all the relief that is necessary to the people concerned and the industries that have suffered and are still suffering through no fault of their own. I thank hon. members for the patient and tolerant hearing they have given me.

HON. L. CRAIG (South-West) [5.7]: I join in the congratulations to the two new members who have been elected to this House and in condoling with the two unfortunates in their defeat. Two things struck me at the opening of Parliament, which I may be permitted to mention. The first was the dreadful overcrowding. The time has come when the number of invitations should be limited. The opening ceremony has become more like a football match every year, and I do think we should limit the number of people invited to the galleries. I am not talking about the invitations to the floor. That, Sir, is your pigeon and I understand that you bear the expense of it. But it is most difficult to obtain a cup of tea and the scrum that takes place is most undignified.

Hon. C. B. Williams: What was the position in the bar?

Hon. L. CRAIG: I did not go into the bar. I was not able to get there; it was so crowded. The position was such that I sent my blue tickets to my boys at school. I would certainly not invite ladies to come to the gallery. I sent my tickets to my boys at the school and told them to put on their footy togs if they wanted to get a cup of

tea. Why not limit the number of invitations and allow the proceedings to be a little more dignified and less crushed? One other small thing struck me as out of date, although perhaps I am out of place in mentioning it. I noticed that when the Chief Commissioner was addressing the two Houses, he started off, "Mr. President, Honourable Gentlemen of the Legislative Council and Members of the Legislative Assembly." Now that might have been all right a hundred or two hundred years ago, but I think the time has come when our customs should be reviewed. I am a great believer in traditions and customs when they are sensible but not when they are out of date. I noticed that at this particular introduction some of our worthy friends from another place tittered like a lot of schoolboys. It created a lot of mirth and the opening of Parliament is not a place for the creation of mirth. I think the time has come when some of these matters might be reviewed with a view to coming down to our more or less matter of fact days. It is a rather foolish expression, "Honourable Gentlemen of the Legislative Council and Members of the Legislative Assembly." At mess dinners in the army, more for a joke than anything else, those present may be addressed as "Gentlemen of the Light Horse and men of other units." That kind of thing creates mirth, and that is just what takes place here at the opening of Parliament where we hear "Hon. gentlemen of the Legislative Council and Members of the Legislative Assembly." I think that is foolish and we should bring this method of addressing members of both Houses to something more reasonable. I do not suggest how it should be done; I leave that to the people who know more about it.

The Honorary Minister: Would you call them all "gentlemen."

Hon. L. CRAIG: I would say "Hon. members of the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly." That would be better and certainly would not cause mirth amongst the gentlemen who stand at the back of the Chamber. I am going to touch on another subject which is not popular. I consider the time has arrived when something should be done towards the completion of Parliament House. It is about 35 years since the construction was first begun, and still we find the same projecting pieces of galvanised iron at the end of the walls that were there when I was a boy attending