

Legislative Council

Thursday, the 5th August, 1965

CONTENTS

	Page
ADDRESS-IN-REPLY : FOURTH DAY—	
Speakers on Motion—	
The Hon. V. J. Ferry	118
The Hon. H. R. Robinson	121
QUESTIONS ON NOTICE	118

The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 2.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS (2): ON NOTICE

1. and 2. *These questions were postponed.*

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY: FOURTH DAY

Motion

Debate resumed, from the 4th August, on the following motion by The Hon. E. C. House:—

That the following Address be presented to His Excellency the Governor in reply to the Speech he has been pleased to deliver:—

May it please Your Excellency: We, the members of the Legislative Council of the Parliament 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 deliver to Parliament.

THE HON. V. J. FERRY (South-West) [2.38 p.m.]: In rising on this occasion to support the motion, I am deeply conscious of the privilege I enjoy of being a member of the Legislative Council of Western Australia. I am deeply aware of the many worthy members who have served in this Council over the years since its establishment; and, in my own humble way, I hope to be allowed through your indulgence, Sir, and that of the members, to contribute a little to the welfare of the province I represent and also to that of the State of Western Australia.

As I have already said, I realise that in the past worthy men have represented the various provinces of this State, particularly the South-West Province, and I take this opportunity of paying tribute to a former member of the South-West Province who has now retired; namely, The Hon. James Murray. He represented this area of the State for a considerable period and with great credit to himself.

I look forward to teaming up with my colleague, Mr. Willmott, who represents the same province, so that we may do all we can for this area in the future. Whilst speaking of members, I could not let this moment pass without referring to the elevation of another member who formerly represented the South-West Province. I refer to The Hon. Graham MacKinnon, who has been elevated to ministerial rank, and I congratulate him on his promotion.

In becoming a member of this Chamber I deeply appreciate the courtesy and kindness that has been extended to me by you, Mr. President, and other members, and the assistance and guidance that has been given to assist me to fit into the scheme of things. Coupled with those remarks I must also include my thanks for the very helpful attitude and manner shown by the officers and staff of Parliament House, who have been extremely considerate and tolerant towards myself, and, I am sure, other new members. I sincerely appreciate their attitude towards me.

I was impressed with the comprehensive coverage of the activities of the State by the speech made by His Excellency the Governor on the opening of the current session of Parliament. I have no intention of touching on all the topics covered by His Excellency, but I am anxious to comment on some of those which concern the South-West Province, and particularly the south-west of Western Australia.

No loyal Australian could be anything but thankful for the outstanding developments that have taken place in recent years in the north-west of Western Australia and for the undoubted future that is now commencing to unfold for this area. This progress is of tremendous moment, and justly vital to our way of life. Nevertheless, since the early days of settlement in this State it has been the southern portion that has always supported the bulk of the population. In referring to the southern portion of the State we can, perhaps, think of an imaginary line drawn roughly from Geraldton to Esperance and, carrying this to a further conclusion, to the lower south-west. It is in this area that settlers encountered a particular physical problem of land development peculiar only to this part of Western Australia; namely, the problem of heavily-timbered land.

Even in 1965 this problem still remains. There are some parts of my electorate where it costs anything up to £100 an acre to clear land from its virgin state to the stage where it becomes established pasture for grazing purposes. This may not seem much of a problem to those who do not understand the nature of things, and some may say, "Well, if it costs that much to clear one acre why not sell it afterwards and recoup some of the expenditure?"

That is not practical, however, because when one attempts to put this type of land on the market after expending £100 per acre to clear it, one finds that the market price for the cleared land is roughly £45 to £50—approximately half the cost of the development. This is rather a paradox, but it is something which is peculiar to this south-west area.

If one were to put this cleared land into production for cash cropping, one would have an earlier return, but if it is used for grazing purposes—as it generally is—it takes many years for the landowner to recoup his capital outlay. I understand that in the early days many of the pioneers who took their bullock teams into this area were faced with the problem of felling huge karri trees. In those days they had no explosives to assist them in bringing down these mighty giants of the forest, and the system which was followed was to excavate as deeply as possible round the root system of each tree and then wait for the August gales to blow it over. That may seem to be a primitive way of felling a tree, but as far as the early settlers were concerned it was the only way. One of the pioneers said to me recently he thought that with the introduction of gelignite the felling of these large trees would be easy, and that he had come to the end of his troubles. He had, however, overlooked the fact that he was still faced with the problem of disposing of karri trees up to 200 feet high.

I notice that the most effective method of ridding agricultural land of karri stumps is a mixture of ammonium nitrate and fuel oil, assisted with a primary charge of gelignite. I understand this is the best way to get rid of the root systems of some of these giants that are standing in the way of agricultural development.

I was particularly interested to hear of the proposed inauguration of a dairy farm plan which will be broader in scope than the dairy farm improvement scheme. I feel that the new consolidated five-year plan will place more emphasis on farm management and technical advice, as well as on the provision of financial assistance. A dairy farm may have all the potential possible; the farmer may be obtaining all the financial assistance he requires and running high quality livestock, but in the final analysis it is the ability of the farmer, landowner, or farm manager to apply technical knowledge and advice received, together with his own practical ability, that will make a success of his vocation.

It is well to remember that the dairying industry was the means of opening up the heavily timbered agricultural land for group settlement purposes. The first group settlement scheme was commenced in 1921 and it played an important pioneering part in agricultural development and hastened to open up this south-west portion of the State. Although the group settlement

scheme brought into production a little more than one-quarter of the acreage initially taken up over a period of some 20 years, the scheme has had a lasting influence on the establishment of agriculture in this part of the State; namely, the lower south-west. Even today those areas which contain the dairying and butterfat industry are still considered to be at a pioneering stage. Therefore the proposed consolidated five-year plan for dairying meets with my approval, because it will be a further step towards assisting dairy farms to become economic farming units.

It is a well-established fact that electric power plays an important part in the development of any area. One of the reasons for the slow progress in some districts has been the lack of such power. I refer particularly to parts of the State like Pemberton, Northcliffe, Augusta, Walpole, and some areas around Margaret River. I would urge that the supply of power to these centres be given the highest priority to assist in their full development.

It is readily recognised that the State Electricity Commission is doing a very fine job in providing this service over a wide and extending network. The provision of such service is not without physical difficulties, but whatever those difficulties may be we must press on with its extension. It is only right that country areas should have the same benefits as the metropolitan area for promoting industry.

This amenity also serves the domestic scene. Here again, as with industry, it might not be thought that electric power is a privilege service to country homes. In the vexed question of decentralisation the supply of power plays an important part. There is no need for me to list all the appliances which can be used in the home with the advantage of electric power. Nevertheless, I am aware a very large viewing audience appreciates the live television programmes on Tuesday nights, to speak of one advantage.

Other matters affecting the south-west which were mentioned in His Excellency's Speech include land development, forests, fruit, mineral sands, tin, and water supplies.

I refer to the remarks which I made earlier regarding the population in the south-west. Today it is, as it was earlier, still true that the people in this area play an increasingly important part in the economy of our State. No other part of the State has such a diversity of industry and agricultural pursuits. First and foremost would be the timber industry from our great forests. I have mentioned something about the timber problem in agricultural development, but here we have an industry from the forests assisting us in other ways.

It would be true to say that the timber industry today is enjoying a period of greater prosperity than it has ever known.

A large measure of this prosperity must be credited not only to the benefits from supplying sleepers for the new railway projects within our State system and the other projects, such as harbours, large and small, but also to efficient management, and the skill of the employees in the trade.

Efficiency of management includes the ability of management not only to meet the requirements of the local market, but also to trade on interstate and overseas markets. The skill of the timber workers embraces their ability to apply themselves diligently, and to overcome as much waste of raw material as possible in their daily run. I appreciate the skill and ability of the timber tradesmen in this State, and I look forward to the time when we can take greater advantage of the timber which is now wasted because it cannot be economically used. The timber tradesmen today, as always, are, with the advent of mechanisation in the industry, doing a very fine job for the State.

Coupled with the welfare of the timber industry is the work being done by the Forests Department through scientific application and methods of forestry production; and forestry preservation is well handled by very keen officers of the department. The practice of sending forestry officers to the U.S.A. and other countries overseas to extend their knowledge of the timber industry is highly commendable, and I hope this practice will continue.

Speaking of timber I look forward to the day, I hope in the not too distant future, when we will have the benefit of a paper pulp industry in the south-west of this State. This, of course, presents problems. I hope that a paper pulp factory will be established to handle our hardwoods, with their peculiar problems, and also our cultivated softwoods. Quite obviously, when the population of the State increases there will be a need for a greater quantity of all types of paper products. Apart from the domestic needs of the State I look forward to the time when we can export interstate and overseas.

To emphasise the diversity of agricultural products and industry in the lower south-west I would list timber, dairying, beef cattle, fruit, potatoes, fat lambs, wool, mining, vegetables, and a few others. In recent years the planting of new apple orchards has been stepped up quite steeply. In the Manjimup area alone we now have just under 3,000 acres of apple orchards. I think it would be true to say that, of this figure, 1,000 acres would be new orchards yet to come into production. It is quite apparent we will have increased yields in the future. We had a record crop in the last season in Western Australia, but I expect greater production in the future; so the present move in the

south-west to establish a fruit canning factory is not without merit. I fully support the move.

Let me refer to the potato industry—one of the main industries in the lower south-west as far as intensive horticulture goes. One of the most interesting features of potato production in the Manjimup-Pemberton area is the doubling of the yield per acre over the period 1958-59 to 1964-65. This is an encouraging feature. I might point out it is not a case of doubling the acreage, but doubling the production per acre.

This rather lends strength to the suggestion that in the issue of future licences earnest consideration be given to increasing the quotas of existing growers and to the granting of licences to new producers. This region has a high annual rainfall, varying from 42 inches per annum in Manjimup to 55 to 60 inches in Pemberton—the two towns being some 20 miles apart.

This brings me to the question of establishing an agricultural research station. Some years ago the Department of Agriculture established a tobacco research station just west of Manjimup, and although it served a reasonable purpose while the tobacco industry flourished, since the collapse of that industry it has been used for other horticultural experiments, such as the growing of tomatoes, potatoes, strawberries, root vegetables, maize, and many other crops. Whilst I acknowledge the need for this work, I rather question the site on which the research station now stands as being suitable for horticultural experiments. The station is situated on the edge of a karri belt, and the nature of its 400 acres is such that only a portion is suitable for intensive horticultural research, while the remaining acres are of a gravelly and stony soil texture, carrying quite heavy timber, and without having much natural water.

This brings me to the question of the karri belt, which is located in an area of high rainfall. We should view the siting of the research station climatically, rather than geographically. All of our karri timber belt is in the high rainfall area, and that is the area which carries the most intensive horticulture. Most of our potatoes are grown in the Manjimup-Pemberton area and therefore we need greater research through this belt. Accordingly, I feel that the intensive horticultural research could be carried out south of Manjimup, and I suggest that, for want of a better place, a block of land could be acquired in the Eastbrook area, which is fairly representative and is probably the centre of the intensive cultivation area.

Whatever block might be purchased for this use, it would need to be something of the order of 400 acres. A little larger area would be more ideal. The suggested area

would be sufficient to carry out a more comprehensive research into horticulture, especially potatoes.

There is another aspect of farming in the high rainfall area which is equally important. This is the matter of the stock-carrying capacity in respect of dairy cattle, beef cattle, and sheep—although sheep are comparatively newcomers to the south-west farming scene. The number of sheep is increasing rapidly, and it has already been found by research that the carrying capacity is quite considerable and the limit has not yet been reached. I admit that a certain amount of research has already been made with regard to sheep—not only in the dry areas, but also in the heavy rainfall area. But the surface has only been scratched. We must further this research to cover dairy cattle and beef cattle.

We realise that cattle have been in the area since the days of the early settlers, and they will always be in the area. Here we have the most productive area in Western Australia, horticulturally, and we know so little about the carrying capacity for cattle. This seems to me to be completely wrong.

Another point concerning the siting of a research station in the heavy rainfall area is that, with the availability of sufficient water, experiments should be carried out on irrigation for pasture. I realise that irrigation for pasture is nothing new to Western Australia. We have it at Dardanup and Waroona, but that country is entirely different to the lower south-west. If we can carry out sufficient research into this problem I am sure our dairy cattle figures will be greatly enhanced in the future.

I would suggest that the research station could be sited in the heavy rainfall area, perhaps with substations to the north on leased private property for carrying out research on the conditions affecting the slightly drier areas. Even as it stands today, I feel that the existing research station could well dispose of half its acreage, which is serving no purpose and is not being used.

Turning to decentralisation of industry, I was privileged to attend a seminar at Manjimup during last May. I realise that similar seminars have been held in other parts of the State, and I thoroughly commend their purpose. The seminar at Manjimup was well attended by some 40 citizens and representatives, and assistance was recommended for some 30 existing or new industries in the Warren area. In determining the priority of the first six industries considered most suitable for the Warren area, it was quite enlightening to find that three groups, independent of each other, came up with very similar recommendations, and the first six listed from each group practically tallied.

That was a good test of what was best for the area; and I am glad to say that as a result of this practical example of local citizens earnestly setting out to help the community, a committee was formed and is functioning now. It is tackling the problem extremely well and I would be surprised if some early success was not achieved.

I feel that all who attended the seminar were privileged and gained a wider appreciation of local problems; and I am glad that I attended. I commend these seminars to other centres. I would like to pay particular tribute to the officers of the Department of Industrial Development and the Perth Technical School for their guidance and co-operation in the conducting of the seminar and in respect of the queries arising therefrom.

Above all, the theme must be to encourage more people to obtain their living in the country areas. This can only be achieved successfully by the local citizens recognising their responsibilities to their families, to their own communities, and to their State. Much can be done at Government level to overcome this problem, but in the final analysis it rests with the individual. Individuals make up our community and our State; the State does not make up the communities. This brings to me the original theme: That we must do all we can at all times for the welfare and progress of the citizens in the south-west, who play such a vital part in the well-being and economy of this great State of ours, Western Australia.

THE HON. H. R. ROBINSON (North Metropolitan) [3.8 p.m.]: In supporting the motion I wish to add a few brief comments of my own. In the first place I would like to congratulate Mr. MacKinnon on his election to the Ministry. Mr. MacKinnon has had many years' experience in the House and is a particularly hard worker. I am quite sure that in his capacity of Minister he will acquit himself well and that members of this House will help him wherever possible.

To the members who were re-elected at the February elections I would like to add my congratulations; and to the new members that have come to this House I offer my congratulations and I hope their stay will be an enjoyable period of service to the community. To Mr. Baxter I offer my congratulations on his election as Chairman of Committees.

I listened with interest to the remarks made by Mr. Wise in connection with the development of the north-west. Only a few weeks ago I had the privilege of serving on the all-party committee inquiring into the goldmining industry. We visited certain sections of the north-west, particularly Port Hedland. We flew there, and further out to Marble Bar. On the