

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.
THIRD DAY OF DEBATE.

Resumed from the previous day.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE (South): I am sure we are all pleased at His Majesty's recovery from his recent illness. In common with all loyal subjects, we hope that the King is sufficiently restored to withstand the strain of the coronation ceremonies shortly to take place. As a goldfields representative, I can assure the House that the approaching departure of Sir Arthur Lawley is viewed with extreme regret by the mining community. It is recognised that the State loses a good friend in our departing Governor. Sir Arthur Lawley is most popular on the goldfields. He has gone farther out than any previous Governor. While, perhaps, that fact may be due in part to the circumstance that the country is now more opened up, still His Excellency has taken the trouble to visit outlying fields, and has in other ways shown great interest in the gold-mining industry. I trust—indeed I feel sure—that Sir Arthur Lawley will do well in the Transvaal. He is a man of great administrative ability, and doubtless his sojourn in the new colony will be as happy as his sojourn here has been. His Excellency has my good wishes in that behalf. I must refer, even though briefly, to the death of our late Premier. Mr. Leake was one of my closest friends. I met him early in my West Australian career, and to the day of his death I always found him a good friend. I do not think the deceased gentleman had a single enemy in the State. I think one and all of us will indorse the sentiments expressed by the leader of the House regarding the lamented death of Mr. Leake. Turning now to the railway muddle, I must say at the outset that I am strongly opposed to Mr. George's appointment. Seeing that appointment was made so shortly before the meeting of Parliament, I think the least the Government could have done was to wait a little longer and give the Legislature an opportunity of expressing its views on the business. I have had a good deal of railway experience. I was brought up in a railway firm, and I have been connected with the South Australian railways. My knowledge of railway matters enables me to say emphatically that appointments of this nature should

not be made hurriedly. At one time the South Australian railways were in much the same state of muddle and confusion as ours are at the present time. Then advertisements were inserted in the London newspapers, calling for applications for the management of the system, and the very best man obtainable was appointed. The position was conferred on Mr. J. H. Smith, who was made a Railway Commissioner.

HON. W. T. LOTON: Rather an uncommon name.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: Mr. Smith certainly put the railways on a good working basis. Mr. George, who has been appointed Railway Commissioner for this State, is not too well known. As regards Mr. George's fitness to control the railways, all I can say for him is that he is a fitter or an engineer.

HON. W. T. LOTON: He is a "smith," too.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: I have heard that he is a blacksmith; and I am also told that he is a storekeeper and an accountant. Evidently, Mr. George is a man of many and varied capabilities. I think, however, that in filling such an important post the greatest care should have been exercised to appoint the very best man procurable. Undoubtedly, great dissatisfaction exists throughout the State with regard to the management of the Railway Department. That dissatisfaction exists not only among the railway servants, but also, and in no slight degree, among the business men who come in contact with the department. I certainly consider Parliament should have been given an opportunity of expressing its opinion before the appointment was made. Personal knowledge enables me to state that on the goldfields the appointment is most unpopular. Everyone is asking, "What job are the Government up to now?" The universal question on the goldfields is, "What is the reason of this hurried appointment, seeing that Parliament was about to be summoned?" From a perusal of last session's *Hansard*, and from my recollection of speeches delivered in another place, I should be inclined to say that of all men in Western Australia Mr. George is the most unfitted for the post of Commissioner of Railways. I

have before me a record of a debate which occurred in another place, and in the course of which Mr. W. J. George was actually accused of fraud—of defrauding the railways of revenue. Such charges being on record—[MEMBER: Were they proved?]²—the least the Government could do was to await the meeting of Parliament before making the appointment, so that if, in fact, an attempt had been made by Mr. George to defraud the Railway Department, Parliament might have an opportunity of pronouncing its views on the subject. Instead of that, however, we find Mr. George appointed and given a high salary without Parliament being consulted at all. Mr. George, in short, gets a very good billet without anybody's knowledge. I certainly think the matter has been altogether too hastily dealt with. I have met many people who consider Mr. George a good mechanical man; but good mechanical men are not wanted in the Railway Department. The man we have at the head of mechanical affairs is possessed of high ability.

HON. J. D. CONNOLLY: Question?

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: I know that our present Mechanical Engineer was one of the men chosen to examine and report on the South Australian Railways at a time when they were in a very bad state. The hon. member who interjects "question" only shows his own ignorance. Mr. Rotheram and Mr. Thow were selected to make an investigation, and I know that Mr. Rotheram's standing in his profession is the highest possible. I had good opportunity of knowledge in this matter, because I was at the time a mechanical draftsman in the South Australian Railway Department. The mechanical engineer has his own particular branch of work. If, for example, a marine engineer be employed to supervise the construction of locomotives, things will very soon be "in the soup." I do trust Mr. Moss will, to the utmost of his power, assist the House with his legal knowledge in devising some means of annulling Mr. George's appointment, for I cannot but regard that appointment as likely to prove disastrous to the railway system. That is my candid opinion. There is one aspect, particularly, in which the conduct of Mr. George does not appeal to me as a public man. At the

time of his appointment he was a member of Parliament.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: Does that make the man any worse?

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: I am afraid so. (Laughter.) I think a member of Parliament who runs after the powers that be in order to get an appointment, shows the most despicable nature possible. I did not enter Parliament for the purpose of profit, and I am sure Mr. Burgess did not do so either.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: That's so.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: We enter Parliament for the purpose of doing our best on behalf of the State. Such, I take it, is at any rate the general sentiment of members of Parliament. Evidently, however, the case is otherwise with Mr. George. His bitter personal attacks on certain members of the present Ministry show that he is not, or was not, by any means a friend of theirs. I do not care to make a direct assertion, but it does seem to me that there must have been a *quid pro quo* somewhere or other in connection with Mr. George's appointment.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: It is not the first time a member of Parliament has been appointed to a position.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: I am prepared to say that the appointment has not been by any means an honourable one. That is my opinion of the matter. I am glad the whole question has been discussed. We have no evidence before the House that Mr. George is a great railway man, and I do not think that any one will admit that this country is in a position to try experiments. If the Government wished to give Mr. George an appointment for his past parliamentary services, why not make him inspector of bees for instance, because I understand he is a good authority on bees, or chief inspector of wood-chopping, as an honourable member suggests. I hope something will be done to annul this appointment. If after Parliament has perused the papers and considered the question from all points of view members think fit to approve of the appointment, well and good; but I think everybody considers this appointment should not have been made before Parliament met. A great deal has been said

about the latter portion of paragraph 9 of the Governor's Speech, which says:—

Adequate provision, however, will be made to leave with Parliament the full power of controlling rates and of dealing with all questions involving the interests of the railway servants of the State.

I think Parliament should have some say with regard to the Commissioner of Railways or the board of Commissioners, as the case may be, because the three men who are appointed may say to themselves, "We have absolute control for five years, and we will do as we like." Speaking from experience, when Mr. J. H. Smith was appointed Commissioner of Railways in South Australia, it was remarkable the number of Smiths who got billets. You could with safety approach an engine driver, or a porter, or any other employee by the name of Smith, and you would not be far wrong. Some controlling influence should be held by Parliament so that at any time, if thought proper, the Government could step in and remove them from their positions. I do not anticipate that such a thing will be necessary, but there should be that power. In Adelaide the Government took advantage of such a power, and we should have the same rule here. With regard to the railway servants, I think the Commissioners should have full control over them, also over the rates. The Commissioners will be responsible for the payment of the sinking fund and interest on the money expended on the railways, and the business men who are appointed as Commissioners should have the fullest possible control over the department. Regarding paragraph 10, I think one of the worst evils that could befall a country is to alter its constitution. I do not see any necessity for such a thing at the present time. This country is going ahead by leaps and bounds; population is flowing in on all sides. We find from Pilbarra in the North, or higher than that, from Nullagine, I think it is, people are finding gold, and the population is increasing largely. There is no need to alter the constitution of the country this session.

HON. J. D. CONNOLLY: Is there no necessity for redistribution?

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: I think some of the districts returning members to the Assembly should be amalgamated,

but I am against pocket boroughs, as they are called.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: What about representing the industries?

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: That is right enough; but because there are a thousand bullocks in one portion of the country the same voting power should not be given to that district as if there were a thousand men there. I find that Kimberley East has 171 voters, and Kimberley West 281 voters.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: What is the wealth there?

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: Any amount of wealth.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: That requires representing.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: We do not begrudge the people the wealth they have, but if there are only 171 voters in a constituency, I think it is hardly right that they should have a whole member to themselves. If you go to any portion of Perth you will find that two thousand or three thousand electors only have the same representation in Parliament as 171 up North. That is not fair, it is distinctly unfair. Consequently, I think if the populous districts of the State had more representation, and the less populous districts of the State less representation in Parliament, it would be all the better. I do not believe altogether in Parliament being elected on a population basis, but I think the boundaries of the Northern districts should be altered. I do not see any immediate need to hurry on an alteration of the constitution. As far as I am concerned I am willing to let the whole matter stand until next session. The country is on the up-grade; population is flowing in, and I anticipate seeing as many thousands as there are hundreds up North within the next two years. There is no necessity to alter the constitution at the present time; but the cry is a popular one, and those in favour of amendment are making an extreme use of the argument. In paragraph 13 mention is made of a harbour board. For my part I cannot see why a harbour board should not be established, and have control of all harbours, jetties, buoys, lighthouses, and everything appertaining to marine work.

HON. H. BRIGGS: The Federal Government have the control of the lighthouses.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: At any rate, a marine board could control harbours and jetties, and Parliament would always have a report about them. I would favour a marine board much on the same lines as that established in South Australia.

HON. M. L. MOSS: A marine board will soon come, under the Federal Legislature.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: This is a matter I shall be glad to allow Captain Laurie to have his say about, and I shall be pleased to follow him, as he knows more about marine matters than I do. However, I may say that the marine board in South Australia has worked very well indeed. I am glad to know that the railway line from Menzies to Leonora is finished. There is no doubt that the policy of the Government in pushing railways well into the interior, where the mines are situated, is a good one. I wish a scheme could be drawn up by which the railways could be worked less expensively. I do not think there should be such expensive station buildings as are now erected. On the Mundaring line one finds buildings which have cost fifteen hundred or two thousand pounds, where there are only a few people to go to the station. When railways are first built, temporary station buildings should be erected, and later, when population finds its way to these centres, then permanent buildings can be put up. I find that Goongarrie has a splendid station, much better than that at Boorabbin, only three or four hundred people a month passing through. At these places temporary accommodation should be erected for the people in the first place, and the more permanent buildings put up later on when the district is settled. There is no doubt that our railways are run very expensively in the back country, and I do not see the necessity for such heavy expenditure. Every station-master has a porter and probably a lamp-cleaner to assist him; three men to run a station which does not pay for itself. I suggest that the lines be blocked in a proper manner and through trains arranged, also that less expensive stations be erected.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: They are cutting down the expenditure all through.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: It should be cut down, and the Government ought to

cut down the rates. I think it will be admitted that the line to the eastern goldfields is overtaxed. I feel sure that as the north-eastern districts are opened up, the present line from here to Kalgoorlie will not be able to carry all the goods required to supply the fields. I would suggest to the Government that they bring in a Bill for the construction of the Coolgardie-Esperance railway; in which case goods coming from the Eastern States could be carried *via* Esperance.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: You will want to go to South Australia altogether, then.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: Oh, no. I would not part with my friend Mr. Burgess.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: I would not trust you.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: Along the Esperance route there is a flourishing goldfield.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: Not increasing.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: Yes.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: When?

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: Since last year. The field is not going back; but the people cannot get their stuff cheap enough. They have over a hundred miles of sand to cover, and they cannot get their supplies to enable them to work the mines cheaply.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: It has been contended that there is wood enough along the Esperance route to pay for the railway.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: So there is. Before twelve months are over we shall have to look for firewood for the Kalgoorlie mines. Why not construct a line from Esperance and let some of the heavy jarrah come from Albany?

HON. R. G. BURGESS: There is no jarrah there.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: Well, karri. It is good timber, and there is plenty of it.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: Karri is useless.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: It is very good timber; and it could be put through the port of Esperance and sent up to Kalgoorlie cheaply. The mines along the route are languishing for a railway, which, if constructed, would make the field a paying one. The land between Esperance and Norseman is good for agricultural purposes; still I do not think the agricultural interests between

Norseman and Esperance will vie with the coastal districts. I think there is room for all. How much better it would be to put ten or fifteen thousand people between Esperance and Coolgardie, and let them grow cabbages and potatoes for the people. Anyone who has read the report of the Government Inspector sent down there, I mean Mr. White—

HON. R. G. BURGESS: I have read it.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: I hope you were pleased with it.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: I have been there myself.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: Inspector White says that the country is well suited for agriculture, and that there is sufficient land to grow foodstuffs to supply all the goldfields from Kalgoorlie onwards.

A MEMBER: What about the rainfall?

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: I have that too. I find that the average rainfall, during the last thirteen years to 1901, has been 23 inches between Norseman and Esperance. All the advantages which nature can give towards the making of a good agricultural district are given to Esperance and its neighbourhood. Then why not allow Esperance this line for the purpose of supplying the goldfields? The coastal farmers cannot, at the present time, supply the wants of the mining community. I say to them, "You cannot supply the goldfields."

HON. R. G. BURGESS: We can supply the whole country.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: You fail to do so, anyhow. We have to import goods through Fremantle. You compel us to carry our goods about 1,500 miles farther than is necessary. The Esperance railway will have plenty of traffic for years and years to come. Any public works for the benefit of Perth and Fremantle I shall gladly support. I recognise that Perth is the capital of the State, and therefore any public works for the advancement of Perth or its port, Fremantle, will have my ready support. For goodness' sake, however, give us goldfields residents some facilities for landing our goods at the place of consumption at the cheapest possible cost! We are undoubtedly entitled to the easiest possible communication with the coast. I am sure the farming interests will give due heed to the goldfields interests, and treat them in a fair and even a generous

manner. When a Bill for the Esperance line comes before the House, my friend Mr. Burgess, I feel sure, will never vote against it.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: Won't I? I'll stay here for a week and speak against it.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: That railway will come, as sure as Mr. Burgess is born.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: Yes; but not just yet.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: I can assure Mr. Burgess that the case of the goldfields is a most deserving one.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: Wait till you hear the other side of the story.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: Returning to the general railway question, I have to point out that the increased rates constitute a most burdensome tax on the mining industry. Last year the goldfields treated 1,416,564 tons for a yield of 1,662,694 ounces of gold. This year the same yield from the same tonnage will cost an additional £40,000 to produce, in consequence of the increase in railway freights, which therefore, hon. members will surely recognise, constitute an undue tax on the gold-mining industry:

HON. R. G. BURGESS: Better reduce existing rates than build another railway.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: The trouble is, Mr. Burgess does not say whether he is in favour of that course or any other. At all events, I assure hon. members that the mining industry cannot stand these increased rates. A warning note was sounded but a few days ago, when a labour dispute arose at Kalgoorlie. For goodness' sake, let us do everything possible to prevent a strike! We want no strikes here. I went through the Broken Hill strike, which crippled South Australia for four years; in fact, I doubt whether that State has yet recovered from the disastrous effects of the disturbance. A warning note, I say, was sounded when recently, at Kalgoorlie, Labour said to Capital, "We are going to refer such and such a matter to arbitration." It is impossible to say whether the award of the Arbitration Court will be adhered to. The men concerned have to live, and I assure hon. members that a worker cannot support his wife and family on the goldfields for less than £3 a week. That amount is little enough, and the increased railway

rates, I have to point out, have made the position worse. The workers were already discontented, and the increased rates have made them more discontented. The tremendous freights imposed in connection with the working of our mines mean trouble ahead. It will be far better for the State as a whole to give the goldfields the Esperance line, so that goods may be landed in mining centres at the lowest possible cost. As sure as fate, the eastern goldfields line will have to be duplicated: it cannot cope with the goods traffic now. Any hon. member travelling between Coolgardie and Perth will observe that his train at every station crosses another train laden with goods.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: That difficulty is easily enough arranged. I thought you knew something about railways?

HON. F. T. O. BRIMAGE: I only wish the hon. member would arrange the matter.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: I would, if I were Commissioner.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: No doubt the trouble could be easily overcome by making the running time of the express between Perth and Kalgoorlie 17 or 18 hours, instead of 12 or 14. Let hon. members look at the cost of conveying 500 or 600 tons of goods from Fremantle to the fields. Let them heed the increase in the wages sheet occasioned by the stoppages at sidings, extending occasionally over two and even three hours. The road is continually blocked to goods trains by passenger traffic. Thus it comes about that cargoes cannot be got through. The only solution of the difficulty is either to duplicate the eastern goldfields line, or to build the Esperance railway. As regards the Esperance railway, you cannot grow "spuds" in Western Australia; and therefore—

HON. R. G. BURGESS: Well, now, where is Esperance Bay?

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: We do not want to get our potatoes from Esperance; but we do want to get them cheaply from South Australia *via* Esperance. What necessity is there for bringing potatoes to the goldfields *via* Fremantle? What benefit do Fremantle and Perth derive from such a course? Absolutely none. The coastal farmers cannot grow enough flour for the goldfields. We are compelled to import flour, wheat, and fruit. The

coastal districts cannot grow enough fruit for the goldfields. Then why not give the mining community the benefit of the shorter route? The residents of the goldfields will eat all the fruit that can be grown in the coastal districts, and plenty more.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: Will you guarantee that?

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: Yes; we will guarantee that. I referred just now to the fuel difficulty on the goldfields. That difficulty is becoming more acute every day. At present we are denuding rising mining centres of their fuel, instead of running a railway south of Coolgardie and taking the timber off waste lands. Between Coolgardie and Norseman there is a splendid belt of timber, which, if the Esperance Bay to Coolgardie railway were built, would yield a plentiful supply of fuel for the Kalgoorlie mines, thus relieving the great pressure experienced at the present time. For the life of me I cannot see what harm the construction of that line would work to Perth and Fremantle. Before the matter is done with, we shall have even Mr. Moss's support for the project. The goldfields and the coastal districts are now on a friendly footing. The farmers wish us all the good we can get, and we reciprocate the feeling. The farmers can rely on goldfields members doing their best to see that all Western Australian produce is consumed before any produce is imported. I do earnestly entreat the agricultural members, however, to consider whether, if they want the State to go ahead rapidly—go ahead it will in any case, but if they want it to go ahead rapidly—they should not do their utmost to assist us in getting food to the mining centres as quickly and as cheaply as possible. The greater the facilities for the development of the mining industry, the more rapid will be the increase of population and the advance of the country. There lies the true means of making Western Australia even a far greater country than it is to-day. I appeal to country members. I know them, and they know me; and I assure them that the best of good feeling prevails on the goldfields towards the coastal districts. We would not do you any harm if we could. All we ask is that fair play be given us, so that we may develop our industry and work our mines to the best

advantage, and for the most profitable return to those who have invested in them.

HON. J. M. DREW (Central): I greatly regret that at the very opening of this session we should be met with occasion for expressing our deep sorrow at the loss of a Premier of the State who, at the close of the last session, was in the full bloom of vigorous health. I refer to the death of Mr. Leake. In every part of Western Australia that gentleman's death has been felt as a national calamity. As a lawyer Mr. Leake occupied a foremost place in his profession. As a politician he would, I venture to believe, in course of time have risen to eminence among Australian statesmen; and I think every person, no matter what his political opinions may be, will admit that, as a man, Mr. Leake was esteemed and admired throughout the country. The death of the Premier who has administered the affairs of the State for the past year necessitates the curtailment of my speech. There is an old Latin adage which reminds us that of the dead we must speak nothing but what is good. In the circumstances I draw a veil over Mr. Leake's political shortcomings and look only at the best and brightest side of his political character. As for the new Premier, Mr. James has been associated with the political life of Western Australia ever since the advent of Responsible Government, and he has been identified with much of the progressive legislation which has found a place on the statute book. Since his introduction to Western Australian political life, our new Premier has proved himself a true and consistent friend of liberalism. A perusal of the Governor's Speech shows that document to have, in many respects, the true statesman-like ring. The keynote of the Speech is, "We want no centralisation." Of all districts of this State the province which I represent has suffered most from the effects of the policy of centralisation pursued in the past; and, therefore, the keynote of the Speech, as I interpret it, will be most welcome to every resident of the district which I have the honour to represent. I want no centralisation. The policy of previous administrators has been to make all roads lead to the port of Fremantle. What do we find as a result of that policy? That at the

present time Geraldton is utterly deprived of the Lawlers and East Murchison gold-fields trade. Although the distance from Geraldton to Lawlers is only 366 miles, yet Fremantle, distant 632 miles from the latter place, has gained the whole of the trade of the Lawlers district. Although Geraldton is 266 miles closer to Lawlers than is Fremantle, yet Fremantle has secured all the trade which legitimately belongs to Geraldton. At the present time Geraldton produce is being conveyed to Lawlers *via* Fremantle and Leonora, a distance of 906 miles; it is being conveyed to Menzies, a distance of 820 miles from the Geraldton district, although we have Lawlers only 366 miles away, and Menzies only 430. I am glad to think that we are likely to have a change of policy in regard to centralisation. From His Excellency's Speech I see that an amendment of the Constitution is contemplated, and I take it from what I have read that the change is in the direction of a reduction of the number of members of both Houses. When we recollect that it is only two years ago that the membership of this House was increased from 20 to 30 members, and that of the Assembly from 44 to 50 members, the question arises, what has occurred in the meantime to justify this step on the part of the Government.

HON. B. C. O'BRIEN: The establishment of the Federal Parliament.

HON. J. M. DREW: Has our population decreased since the former amendment of the Constitution Act? I have gone into this matter, and I find that not only has the population not decreased, but that it has increased to the tune of at least 20,000 souls. Has our wealth depreciated? It cannot be said that the wealth of Western Australia has depreciated since the amendment of the Constitution was passed. The wealth of Western Australia has increased enormously since the Bill, giving an increase of membership to both houses of Parliament, was passed by the Legislature. What then is the reason for this intended reduction? There is an excuse given, and it is that we have Federation now, and there is no occasion in consequence to have such a large number of members in the local Legislature. I for one refuse to accept that dictum. I have not such an over-