

Party member elected to Parliament. At that election he defeated two very well-known men, one of whom had been a member of the Legislative Council. Mr. Baxter was elected by a majority of 648 votes. He was an unknown man and was elected against two well-known identities. Thus his entry to Parliament cannot be described as accidental. In 1919 he accepted a portfolio and was returned unopposed. In 1920, six years after his first election, he was returned unopposed, a result also achieved in 1926. In 1930 Mr. Baxter again accepted a portfolio and was returned unopposed. In 1932 he was again elected without opposition. He has been in Parliament for over 20 years, of which period seven years were spent in serving the country in different Administrations. In those circumstances, it will be seen that in the Legislative Council, Mr. Baxter rendered services somewhat similar to those of the Father of the Legislative Assembly, the present Minister for Lands (Hon. M. F. Troy). If he is to be classed as an accidental Minister, I do not know of anyone, who has held a portfolio, who would not come within that category. The sarcastic reference the hon. member made to Mr. Baxter was entirely unjustified and in my opinion was to be regretted.

MR. WELSH (Pilbara) [5.0]: It gives me great pleasure to join other members in congratulating you, Mr. Speaker, on your appointment to the position you now hold. I realise the Government will have a very anxious and troublous period during the next three years, and it is due to all of us to give them every assistance we can, to overcome the difficulties that may arise. The Minister for Mines is to be commended for launching the prospecting scheme. To my mind that will have a two-fold advantage; the first will be to absorb the unemployed and the second to give a stimulus to the mining industry which is badly needed. After all, it is mainly to the mining industry that we can look to pull us out of our financial troubles. I sincerely hope that the scheme will be extended to my electorate. Mining in the Pilbara electorate is in a more satisfactory condition than it was a few years ago. In the North most of the claims are held by parties of working men who have laboured under adverse circumstances, and some of the claims had to be abandoned because of the low price

of gold. The advancement that has taken place recently has been mainly due to the increased price of gold. The Pilbara field is served by two State batteries, one at Marble Bar and the other at Bamboo Creek. If crushing facilities were provided at Nullagine they would be of great advantage. At the present time ore has to be carted to Marble Bar for treatment. If a small battery were erected at Nullagine it would be a distinct advantage to the industry. A battery manager attends at the Marble Bar battery with his team of men to start operations when stone is there to be crushed. He has a house in which to live but the employees are left to fend for themselves. They take tents and pitch camps. Under the Shearers' Hut Accommodation Act, pastoralists are bound to provide proper accommodation for shearers while they are on the station. There is no reason why there should not be similar provision made for those who are attending State batteries. The climatic conditions are pretty rigid at times, and therefore any consideration that could be shown to these men would be appreciated. Some years ago bores were put down to assist prospectors, but when the industry started to languish the bores were neglected. A little money judiciously spent would now bring them into working order again. If any money can be made available it should be devoted to reconditioning these bores.

The Minister for Mines: Water bores, you mean.

MR. WELSH: Yes. In summer time the conditions are very trying and the distances between available water are considerable. There is a big auriferous area in this part of the State that could be exploited. The shows there have been worked without the assistance of outside capital. All the help that the men have had has been from the local storekeepers from crushing to crushing. By battling along as they have been doing the men have been put where they are to-day. A few days ago I read in the newspaper a statement by the Commissioner of Railways to the effect that the Marble Bar-Port Hedland railway, because of the high capital cost of the line, should no longer be maintained. This railway was originally built to foster the mining and pastoral industries, and I claim that its retention is justified to-day. From a mining point of view it has established itself, and as regards the pastoral industry it has also been successful. It has been responsible for areas being taken up

125 miles south of Marble Bar that would otherwise never have been looked at as sheep propositions. In the Pilbara district there are more and smaller holdings carrying a larger proportion of men and more sheep to a given acreage than are to be found in any other district in Western Australia. There again the railway has justified itself. On the other hand, Port Hedland, which is the only port for the Pilbara field, has no supply of drinking water; the only water available is scheme water, and that is unfit for human consumption. The railway is utilised during the hot dry months to carry water 20 miles and sometimes between 50 and 60 miles into Port Hedland, where it is sold to the residents for 2s. per 100 gallons. This important fact, in itself, justifies the continuance of the line. The capital cost of the line is excessive, largely due to the erection of several large sheds which have never been used. The Commissioner distinctly states that the line pays more than working expenses; therefore is it not futile to declare that it should be closed down? If the line were taken up to-morrow interest on the capital outlay would still have to be met, so I think that is a pretty good argument for leaving the railway there. The pastoral industry utilises the line to carry wool; thousands of bales are conveyed over it. Higher freight rates are charged on that line than are charged on any other railway in the State and probably in Australia. The jetty charges are also abnormally high in comparison with the charges in other parts of the State. The pastoral industry has been in a parlous condition during the last three years, and it has taken those engaged in it all their time to make ends meet. In many cases ends have not met. The lack of funds has been detrimental to security. There will be a day of reckoning for many of us to make good the repair that should have been carried out in the last few years. The last wool sale was a ray of sunshine, and I hope the prices obtained on that occasion will be maintained. The people in the southern areas hardly realise the difficulties under which those in the northern areas live. At times it is absolutely impossible for residents to get necessary fresh food such as vegetables, butter and fruit. During last summer we had practically a monthly steamer service, which meant that only the coastal towns could get what they required. Women

who are bringing up families away from the ports are unable to get the vegetables they need to keep them in decent health. The member for Gascoyne mentioned one instance where potatoes were bought in Perth for £3 a ton and by the time they reached the individual to whom he referred the cost was increased to £20, and in addition there was waste in transit. It is a general feeling in the North-West that there has been a lack of sympathetic treatment on the part of successive Governments. Apparently they have considered the North-West too far away from Perth to give it the treatment it deserved. There has not been anything like the amount put back in the country that has been taken out of it. I hope that in the future we shall receive more sympathetic treatment than has been meted out to us in the past. I am not for a moment contending that the South-West has had all the consideration, but I can say that while a great deal has been done for the northern areas we are entitled to better conditions than have been extended to us. Regarding all the talk we have heard about the North being handed over to the Japanese, I consider it is all balderdash. As far as the chartered company taking over a portion of the territory, that may be all right, but to hand it over to the Commonwealth, I say, certainly not. If we cannot develop the North, the Commonwealth will not be able to do so. They have had their opportunity in the Northern Territory and their failure has been lamentable. I do not intend to detain the House any longer, except to say I hope that from now on the North-West will receive more sympathetic treatment than has been accorded it in the past.

The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

HON. J. CUNNINGHAM (Kalgoorlie) [5.13]: I am going to ask you, Sir, to convey to the Speaker my congratulations upon his election to the high and honourable position to which he has been elevated. I also desire to extend to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my congratulations. I have known you for quite a number of years, and I am sure the House has made a good choice in appointing you Chairman of Committees. I also desire to congratulate the Ministers who form the Government. The Ministry are faced with a most difficult position, financial as