

Hon. H. Tuckey: Would you increase the number of members of this House?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: No, I think the present number is quite sufficient, but I would alter the distribution.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Will you agree that the existing number of members of this Chamber is too great?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: No, that is quite another matter. Dealing now with the Licensing Court, I would remind the House that originally that tribunal was established for the purpose of reducing the number of licenses in existence. The court fulfilled that objective long ago, and in my opinion a great saving of money could be effected by entirely abolishing the Licensing Court and allowing the stipendiary magistracy to deal with matters that now go before that court. I want it to be understood that in making these references I am not reflecting upon the personnel of the court but am merely discussing the principle involved. Our stipendiary magistracy is on a very solid basis and throughout the magisterial districts the officials I have in mind are quite capable of carrying out the functions now fulfilled by members of the Licensing Court. I sincerely trust our laws will be enforced, and I will do all in my power to improve conditions generally. This I can do because, as was stated in public quite recently, I am entirely free and untrammelled by any party considerations in or outside this Chamber. I have much pleasure in supporting the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply.

On motion by Hon. H. V. Piesse, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.9 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 15th August, 1939.

				PAGE
Electorat, Swearing-in of member	99
Address-in-reply, fifth day	99

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

ELECTORAL—SWEARING-IN OF MEMBER.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am prepared to swear in the member for Nelson.

Mr. J. H. Smith took and subscribed the oath and signed the roll.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Fifth Day.

Debate resumed from the 10th August.

MR. W. HEGNEY (Pilbara) [4.38]: I do not think I can preface my remarks in a more appropriate way than by supplementing the comments of the Leader of the National Party upon the previous member for Pilbara. I ascertained that he was a very popular member of this Chamber; I also found that he was equally popular in his electorate. Mr. Welsh is a man of magnetic personality and is 100 per cent. Australian. While the members on this side of the House will no doubt be pleased politically that he did not win the last election, I can quite appreciate the high esteem in which every member of this Chamber held Mr. Welsh. You, Mr. Speaker, and the Chairman of Committees, have my sincerest congratulations upon your election to the responsible positions you hold. You both have had wide Parliamentary experience, and I feel sure that you will discharge the duties of your respective offices to the satisfaction of members. The two new Ministers also have my best wishes. The member for Kimberley is thoroughly acquainted with the North-West and is fully seized of the spirit dominating the people there. I have no doubt he will make an ideal Minister for the North-West, as did his predecessor.

I was rather impressed by the speeches of the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the National Party. Both appear to have the confidence of their followers and seem well fitted for the positions they hold on your left, Mr. Speaker, positions which I hope they will continue to retain for many years to come.

I desire to address myself to a few matters, mostly of a local character. It must be remembered that the Pilbara district is growing and that we are looking forward to a measure of prosperity in that part of the State, particularly as regards mining. Members will agree that people in the out-back centres of the State are reasonable and fair in the submission of their requirements. The proposals I shall submit are, as I have said, of local importance, and I think will be considered reasonable. The first concerns our water supplies. We have heard speeches from previous speakers on the question of water supplies for the agricultural and gold-fields areas. Port Hedland at present is supplied with water which is carted from Poondina by rail, a distance of 20 miles. The cost to the consumers is 3s. 6d. per 100 gallons. In addition, the residents are obliged to pay a further charge for water, which unfortunately is unfit to drink, from the local scheme. I understand that some time ago a survey was made of the Turner River, about 20 miles from Port Hedland; and that, after the report had been submitted to the appropriate Minister, the then Treasurer (Hon. P. Collier), actually approved of the construction of a water scheme for Port Hedland. If the scheme was considered necessary then—about eight or nine years ago—it is more than ever necessary now. Only a couple of months ago a flying boat, with Captain Taylor in charge, made a survey flight over the Indian Ocean as far as Africa. The boat took off from Port Hedland. Owing to the natural advantages of the port, the fuelling of the plane was carried out expeditiously. I submit it will not be long before Port Hedland is the most important port on our coast from a commercial and defence point of view; and, in all sincerity, I urge the Government to give favourable consideration to the inauguration of the water supply scheme. As regards the financing of the scheme, I suggest it may not be out of place to secure the co-operation of the Federal Government.

Mr. Marshall: Port Hedland is the natural port of that district.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: I am glad of that interjection. The town of Port Hedland is backed by a strong pastoral area, and in addition is the natural port for the whole of the mining district of Pilbara. I was pleased to note from the Speech that the Government proposes to extend the activities of the Workers' Homes Board. For some time there has been a shortage of housing accommodation in Port Hedland. I have in mind four young men who hold what might be termed permanent positions in the town and who are unable to obtain reasonable housing accommodation. If the Government could see its way to extend the activities of the board to the Port Hedland district, I believe the project would prove to be sound. Various people advocate an increase of population in the North-West, and no better way could be devised to achieve that end than by encouraging married couples to settle there.

Another matter of outstanding importance to the people and the progress of the district, more particularly at the Marble Bar end, is that of the mail service. Those who live in the metropolitan area would experience difficulty in trying to visualise the position of the people located at Marble Bar. The train from Hedland to Marble Bar is run to suit the convenience of the boats. In one week the train might leave Hedland on Wednesday, and in another week on Friday, and pastoralists are obliged to travel long distances to the sidings only to find that the train is not running until the following day. If the train does not proceed to Marble Bar on Wednesday, the mail to Nullagine is held up for approximately a fortnight. All that the people ask is that the mail service from Hedland to Marble Bar be run regularly every Wednesday. Business people in Marble Bar and its environs find the present irregularity of the services very inconvenient to the carrying on of their affairs. I trust that the Minister for Railways will take a broadminded view of the question and ensure that the people are given a regular service. Formerly a small special motor coach was put in commission between Hedland and Marble Bar so that a regular service would be provided.

The State Shipping Service is a matter of vital importance to the people of the North-West. At the inception of the service a great deal of hostility was displayed by Labour's opponents, but I doubt whether any member of the present Parliament would be prepared to suggest that the service should be discontinued. It has proved of considerable benefit to the people of the North-West, and they certainly appreciate what it has done for them. The concession fares granted to women and children are greatly appreciated by those concerned, and I suggest that the concessions, with limitations, should be granted to adults at certain periods to enable them to travel to and from the metropolis without incurring excessive expense. At times residents of the North experience difficulty in obtaining berths on the State vessels owing to the tourist traffic, which traffic of course, should be encouraged, and what is really required is another boat to run between Fremantle and Hedland. At the risk of incurring the hostility of members elsewhere, I suggest that the "Kybra" be taken from the south-eastern run, because the South-East and South-West are served by railways, and be utilised exclusively on the run between Fremantle and Hedland. Much freight now obtained by boats carrying black crews would thus be diverted to the State Shipping Service.

The season in the Pilbara and certain other pastoral districts has been a good one. At the same time difficulties similar to those confronting the wheatgrowers face the pastoralists. Wool prices are low, and one of the consequences is that shearers and shed workers generally find their periods of employment considerably curtailed. The reduction of certain freights and the remission of land rents has been a fine gesture on the part of the Government, and any other proposition submitted by the Government to alleviate the difficulties of the pastoralists will certainly receive my support.

As regards mining, it is gratifying to know that there are indications of a reasonable increase of population in the Pilbara district. A scheme known as the Government Prospecting Scheme has been in operation on the Eastern and Murchison Goldfields for some years, and I understand that as a result of this policy, much good has accrued to the State.

I suggest to the Minister for Mines that the scheme be extended to the Pilbara district. In the Nullagine, Eastern Creek, Bamboo Creek, Marble Bar and other areas, there are fair possibilities of further good shows being found, and only one decent discovery need be made to repay the Government for its outlay. There are men—those engaged in prospecting in that district are of a fine type—who would not avail themselves of any Government assistance because they are able to battle along on their own resources, but there are others who, given a little assistance in the direction I have mentioned, would be enabled to carry on prospecting and thus help the development of this outback part of the State. I am quite in agreement with the member for Mt. Magnet (Mr. Triat) in urging a reduction of State Battery treatment charges. In the Marble Bar district the charge is 2 dwts. 12 grains, and the Prospectors' Association is urging a reduction to 1 dwt. 8 grains.

Prices of commodities are excessively high in the district. Bushell's tea, for instance, at Nullagine costs 3s. 3d. per lb. Potatoes and onions cost 7s. per stone, and sugar 7d. per lb. Tinned meats and other foods are proportionately high in cost. Thus it will be seen that any relief granted to prospectors there will be for the benefit of the district.

The question of a loan to the Barton mine, some 14 or 15 miles from Nullagine, has been before the Mines Department. Some years ago a loan was granted to a private person to assist in the erection of a battery at the 20-mile. More recently the department has refused to grant an advance to Messrs. McKenna and Gallop of the Barton mine, who desire to erect a five-head battery. The discrimination shown has caused a certain amount of feeling along the Nullagine belt. I realise that the Minister for Mines must necessarily be guided by the reports and advice of his responsible officers, but in all sincerity I again appeal to the hon. gentleman and the department to reconsider their attitude. I wish to refer the Minister to the reports of Mr. Gibb Maitland, Mr. Blatchford and Mr. Montgomery, and to a report of more recent date by Mr. Finucane. I shall not touch on other matters relating to the Pilbara district, but would like to comment briefly on certain legislative proposals of the Government for this session.

In connection with superannuation a retiring age of 65 years has been laid down as a matter of Government policy. I understand that this applies to all employed in the Government service, whether on wages or salary. It is my emphatic opinion that everyone in Government employment, including the Public Service, should be subject to the same restriction.

Mr. Warner: Hear, hear. Members of Parliament, too!

Mr. W. HEGNEY: There should not be one law for the man on the basic wage and a different law for a man who happens to be high up in the Public Service and for some reason is retained after having reached the retiring age. I hold the opinion that no man is indispensable; that no matter what work he may be engaged upon, arrangements can easily be made to have him relieved when he reaches the age of 65 years. This retiring age having become law, I hope it will apply equally to all Government employees, whether on a salary of £1,000 a year or on the basic wage.

I am pleased to know that the Government intend to introduce legislation amending the qualification of electors for the Legislative Council. The platform of the movement with which I have the honour to be associated provides definitely that the franchise for the Legislative Council shall be adult franchise. I have often wondered why the Western Australian people have so long tolerated the present system. To this Chamber members are returned on the basis of adult franchise. On the other hand, in order that one may have a vote for the Legislative Council one must possess property up to the value of £50 or fulfil certain other requirements. What is the position from the Federal aspect? The Australian Parliament consists of two Houses, one of which, the Senate, may be likened to our Legislative Council.

Mr. Holman: It could not be like that!

Mr. W. HEGNEY: The Federal Parliament has full powers in relation to defence, finance, and other questions of Australia-wide importance; and yet both branches of that Legislature are elected on the simple basis of adult franchise. In spite of that fact, in the case of a State Parliament constituted of two Houses one must own property of a certain value or pay an annual rental of a certain amount before one can have a say in the election of members of

another place. That is equivalent to minority rule. I hope that the proposed Bill will drastically liberalise the franchise for the Upper House.

Employment and unemployment are matters of State-wide importance. The Premier's attitude regarding appropriation of loan moneys for public works or assistance to the wheat industry has my full concurrence. However, I do not believe that those engaged in the wheat industry desire to be assisted at the expense of men on part time or actually unemployed. Such a step, though assuredly it would not relieve the major problems confronting the wheat industry, would on the other hand accentuate the present unemployment position. I hope that conditions generally will shortly improve to such an extent as to enable the Government to place all men engaged on public works on a full-time basis. The wage earners now employed on public works have certainly borne the brunt of the depression. As regards the conditions of these workers, attention might be given to the supplying of flooring for tents and of stretchers for men obliged to camp on the job, more especially in the wetter districts during the winter months. I know that the Government is doing its utmost to engage men; but if anything could be done to alleviate the conditions of workers who are compelled to camp in the scrub, it would be money well spent.

This leads me to remark that the Government's attitude in regard to arbitration awards and industrial agreements has been most commendable. In its dealings with men on public works, the Government has observed the appropriate awards and agreements. That is in striking contrast with the attitude adopted by the Government of 1930-33.

The Minister for Labour: Of which Mr. Baxter, M.L.C., was a member.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: I have a vivid recollection of what took place in those years with regard to wages and industrial conditions. One of the first acts of the then Minister for Works, Mr. Lindsay, was to retire from the industrial agreement that existed between the Australian Workers' Union and the Minister for Works. In a letter to the union, the Minister used the word "retire"; but I have no hesitation in asserting that the better word to apply to his action would have been "repudiate." The agreement that had existed for some years,

although not actually registered in the Arbitration Court, had been arrived at by negotiation and private arbitration. It had been accepted by the various parties concerned for some years; but in 1930, when the National-Country Party Coalition Government took office, it was repudiated. Among the many matters provided for in the agreement was that a worker was entitled to one day's holiday pay for each calendar month of continuous service. The Government of the day overcame that obstacle by breaking the service of a worker before the calendar month expired.

Hon. C. G. Latham: That is being done to-day.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: On the contrary, the position to-day, as the result of negotiations with the Government, is that any worker engaged upon public works receives, if he has worked six full days, pro rata holiday pay. That is the difference between now and then. The men's service was broken prior to the expiration of the calendar month during the National-Country Party Government's regime, but to-day each Government worker receives pro rata holiday pay after six days' continuous service. That means a lot to men in receipt of the basic wage. This brings to mind a statement made in another place by an hon. member who was a Minister in the National-Country Party Government of 1930-33. I understand I am not permitted to mention names.

Members: Go on!

Mr. W. HEGNEY: I say it ill-becomes Mr. Baxter—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. W. HEGNEY: It ill-becomes the member representing the East Province in another place—

Mr. Needham: Which one?

Mr. Marshall: We all know the member referred to.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: It ill-becomes that hon. member to hold himself up to-day as the champion of arbitration. The vitriolic outburst of the member of another place was ill-timed and unwarranted in view of the performance of his Government during its term of office.

Mr. Thorn: He seems to have got a bite from you.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: That hon. member has his hands pretty full at the present time, and I do not propose to hold a post-mortem on his attitude beyond mentioning

that no consistency is evidenced in the charges he has levelled. I happen to know of the work of some of those whom he has thought fit to mention. As a member of the State Disputes Committee of the Australian Labour Party I have been associated with the officers concerned for 11 years. I can say quite sincerely that the men occupying those offices have done everything possible to preserve industrial peace. They have carried out their duties in a responsible manner, and at all times have worked in the interests of the people of the State. It may be desirable to emphasise that point in view of the attitude adopted by the hon. member of another place. Certainly it is just as well that the great bulk of the employers do not display such an obtuse mental outlook on matters of this description as that displayed by the member of the Legislative Council.

I hold that the result of the recent general elections was a manifestation of the public's confidence in the soundness of Labour's general policy as pursued for some years past. Despite the forces arrayed against the Government during the course of the election campaign, Labour's policy received marked endorsement. I have no doubt that the legislation that will be introduced during the next three years will have as its basis the welfare of the people of the State and of industry generally. As to my own electorate, there are, as I mentioned at the outset, indications of prosperous times ahead. People in that part of the State appreciate what the Government has done; and in view of the fact that some Ministers have visited my electorate, I believe they will take a reasonable and broadminded view of any proposals submitted on behalf of the Pilbara district. Personally I shall endeavour to pay strict attention to the business of the House. I shall adhere to the policy upon which I was elected to this Chamber, and shall do my best in the interests of the people of Western Australia generally.

MR. NORTH (Claremont) [5.6]: I wish first of all, Mr. Speaker, to congratulate you upon your appointment to your present high office. Ever since I have been a member of this Chamber, I have noticed that those elected to the Chair have always been men of prominence who have been powerful in debate. They have possessed strong voices