

whilst the work that has been done in connection with improved Harbour and Lighting facilities on our Coast will be of the greatest value.

Your work in connection with the passing of Measures dealing with the Aborigines, the Amendments of the Land Act, the Government Savings Bank, and the Agricultural Bank have proved of material advantage to the community.

The Mines Regulation Act, the Government Railways Act, the Municipal Institutions Act, the Electoral Act, and the State Children Act are also measures of special value, and have resulted in simplifying the Law in relation to these matters, and in placing them on a more satisfactory footing.

This work has made heavy demands on your time, and my Advisers desire to thank Members for the sacrifices so willingly made, and to express the hope that the Electors will appreciate the valuable results that have been accomplished.

Mr. Speaker and Gentlemen of the Legislative Assembly—

I thank you in the name of His Majesty, for the liberal provision you have made for carrying on the various Departments of the Government during the interval that must necessarily elapse between now and the summoning of a new Parliament.

Mr. President and Honourable Gentlemen of the Legislative Council—

Mr. Speaker and Gentlemen of the Legislative Assembly—

Prior to the assembling of the next Parliament the people of this State will have an opportunity of extending a hearty welcome to the Representatives of that great Republic whose aims and aspirations are so much in accord with those of Great Britain and her Dominions in these Southern Seas, and the presence of whose Fleet in our waters is an evidence of a cordiality which is heartily reciprocated throughout the Commonwealth.

I now prorogue this Parliament to Saturday, the 12th day of September next.

The Session then closed.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 12th August, 1908.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 2.30 o'clock p.m.

Prayers.

URGENCY MOTION—TIMBER WORKERS' AGREEMENT.

Alleged Breach.

Mr. SPEAKER announced the receipt of a notice from the member for Murchison (Mr. Holman), that he intended to move the adjournment of the House for the purpose of calling attention to the critical state of affairs in connection with the timber industry.

A sufficient number of members having risen—

Mr. J. B. HOLMAN (Murchison) said: I regret that the time is so limited in which to discuss this important matter: but I consider it my duty, now that the session is about to end, to give the Premier an opportunity to do what we consider justice to the thousands of people connected with the timber industry. The Premier knows the facts of the case, for I have written and spoken to him several times in connection with this matter. It is the desire of all those engaged in the timber industry, that as business is flourishing, everything possible should be done to keep the industry going in the best possible manner, in the interests of these people and of the State as a whole. The agreement, which resulted in the settlement of the timber trouble last year, has been gone into very seriously and concisely by those directly interested. Certain promises were made on the settlement of the trouble, whereby the men were to receive certain advantages; but up to the present the employers have refused absolutely to give the men what they are entitled to. The position now is that after waiting for 14 months for what was agreed to in June, 1907, to be given, the

men find they have not received that to which they are entitled, and the position has reached a most critical stage. We desire to do all we can to prevent trouble, and at the same time to see justice done to the people engaged in the industry. Members will recollect that I asked the Premier a question in connection with this matter a week or two ago. In response to that question he read a letter he had received from the general manager of Millars' Karri & Jarrah Company, in which it is said:—

"In thanking you for your letter I trust I need scarcely assure you that it is, and always has been, not only my desire but also that of everyone associated with the management of the Company to carry out the terms of the agreement with the workers, concluded in June last, in a fair and liberal spirit."

In that letter the company say they will carry out the agreement; but I will show that they have absolutely failed to do so. Under Clause 2 of the agreement arrived at last June 12 months, it is provided:—

"Within a period of three months from the date hereof the Company shall give to the unions the right to take over one or more of their mills to work upon a co-operative system, the basis of which is to be the supply by the unions of sawn timber delivered on trucks at the mills."

Clause 11A says:—

"The said company shall, within fourteen days of the date of the signing of this agreement, supply the unions with a full statement in detail showing the actual cost of production of the said timber for the previous two years."

Since the question was asked, both Mr. Bath and I waited on the management and placed the requests of the men before them. In connection with Clause 11a, we have received from the Company the following reply:—

"No purpose would be served by supplying the mill cost for 1905 and 1906 at the present stage."

Therefore it will be seen that the Company absolutely refuse to give the information they were supposed by the agree-

ment to supply within 14 days of the termination of the trouble. Dissatisfaction has been shown in other directions, and the workers at the mills have tried to get what they were entitled to under the agreement, but without success. We have communications from the milling centres stating there are rumours spread about the mills to the effect that in the event of the unions pressing the co-operative scheme, the Company threaten that they will close down the mills for 12 months. These rumours are spread about with the idea of endeavouring to intimidate the men and prevent them from securing what they are entitled to under the agreement. On every possible occasion I have sent information to the Premier with regard to this question, and have tried to get the Government to take the matter up. It is a well-known fact that before the commencement of the trouble last year concessions amounting to £17,000 or £18,000 a year were given to the industry, and that immediately after the settlement of the trouble a further concession, which would amount to about £4,000 a year, was granted to the Combine and other companies. I only want at this juncture to deal with the most important issues in connection with the trouble, but what we desire to ask is whether the workers in the timber industry are going to be protected, or is the State going to give £20,000 or £25,000 a year to an industry without seeing that protection is afforded to the workers? I wrote a letter to the Premier, in which I made direct charges of absolute fraud against Millars' Company. I stated that the revenue was being defrauded by an evasion of the stamp duty on receipts, and that other matters unfair to the workers had occurred. These are statements which should not be allowed to go by without inquiry. I can produce receipts given in connection with these matters to show that what I say is absolutely correct. Again, in connection with the agreement of June last year, it was set down that provisions should be supplied from the stores of the Combine at 10 per cent. above the prices current in Perth. This has not been carried out except within the last week or two. I

may say that at some mills where there was opposition the men were supplied with stores at fair prices, but at other mills where there was no opposition there was up to a 1d. a lb. overcharged on sugar, rice, and other necessaries. I do not desire to go fully into the matter to-day; I merely wish to call the attention of members to the fact that unless these men have justice done to them the probabilities are there will be serious trouble in the future. In common with other members of this House, I desire to prevent any trouble in any part of the State, but there are times when it is necessary to take strong action to see that the interests of the people of the State are protected. That is all we desire to see at the present time. Again, in connection with the co-operative movement, practically all the men consented to take over the mills on the conditions contained in the agreement. It was put forward that there would be a considerable increase in the men's wages by so doing, and every preparation was made to take over the mills. At times draft agreements were submitted to both sides and were practically agreed to, but when Millars' management saw that the men were serious in taking over the mills they absolutely repudiated the arrangement. They caused a considerable amount of delay by sending the agreement home for the consideration of their London directors, and then they submitted to us an agreement absolutely impossible to accept, because the conditions laid down in it were quite foreign to the proposition set forth when the timber dispute was settled in June of last year. I have no desire to delay the House; in fact I would have moved the adjournment yesterday had I known that the prorogation was so close at hand; but I wish it to be understood that the men have no desire to cause any industrial trouble, though I can assure members that unless the men get justice I am prepared to go down to the mills and advocate their ceasing work before I would see them treated as they have been treated in the past. The management say that since the trouble was concluded in June last the men have done better work than was ever done before, and have turned

out more timber; in fact, the words of the management are that they could not ask the men to do any more work than they have done during the last 12 months. The men have obeyed and carried out the agreement right loyally; but unless they can obtain justice in the near future, it will be an impossibility to expect them to work in future with the same heart as they have put into their work during the last 12 months; and if, knowing that they are badly treated, they decide to reduce their work by 20 or 30 per cent., it will bring about a serious state of affairs in the timber industry. Rather than see these men sacrificed as they have been in the past, I will be prepared to take any step to see that they receive the protection to which they are entitled. I have the whole of the papers, and I am quite ready to prove to the Government, or to anybody interested in the matter, that the case of the men is absolutely just. I appeal to the Government and to the people of the State to see that these men have that justice dealt out to them that all men are entitled to. I am sorry I have not the time to go into the matter more fully because it is an important question, but I will be pleased to show any members every piece of correspondence and all the details in connection with the matter, being satisfied that if anyone knows the exact position of affairs he must of necessity give men loyal support and assistance in this case. I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Mr. M. F. Troy: I second the motion.

The PREMIER (Hon. N. J. Moore): I regret that the hon. member did not take the opportunity of advising me that he intended to move the adjournment of the House, because I might have approached him with a view to getting information, and I might have obtained some information myself in regard to the statements the hon. member has made. It is true the Government to some extent were participants in the settlement brought about in June of last year, inasmuch as it was decided at the conference that, provided the Government made

a certain rebate, namely a 10 per cent. rebate on full train loads, Millars' Combine were prepared to pay an extra 3d. to the men. The suggestion for that rebate, I believe, was concurred in by the hon. member who has just spoken; at least I was under the impression that it was made with his concurrence. The hon. member wrote to me; and as I intimated in reply to a question by him the other day, I forwarded a copy of his letter to Millars' Combine, stating that Mr. Holman had made certain charges in connection with an alleged breach of agreement, and trusting that the Combine would make every inquiry with a view of seeing whether these charges were substantiated and asking if they were substantiated, that they would take steps to have the matter adjusted, in order that a repetition of the unfortunate trouble which had such far-reaching effects last year might be averted. In reply to my letter, Millars stated they were prepared, if Mr. Holman brought specific instances under their notice, to endeavour to remedy them. At the time of writing the principal disagreement was in regard to stores, but I understand from what has fallen from the hon. member this has been adjusted during the last two or three weeks.

Mr. Holman: Partly. Things are better now; but I am not dealing with the question of stores.

The PREMIER: Apparently the trouble at the present time is that Millars have not handed over in accordance with the agreement, of which I have not the particulars, certain of the mills to be worked under the piecework system. As far as I can recollect, the idea was that up to the time of the timber leaving the mill, the men were to be paid on an average of the cost that Millars had paid during the preceding two years. I need hardly say that there is no one more anxious than I am to prevent a repetition of what occurred last year. Possibly none more than my constituents could be so much affected adversely by a recurrence of what occurred last year, and no steps will be wanting on my part to prevent it if possible. I can only say that I hope before anything is done the

hon. member will follow out the suggestions made in this letter. Possibly he can do it through me; or if he thinks it advisable we might endeavour to arrange some conference; and if not all the mills, possibly it might be arranged for at least one mill to be worked under this piecework system so, that the men may have an opportunity of satisfying themselves whether the scheme is practicable or not. It has been argued on some sides that it would not be practicable to carry it out. I would not be prepared to say whether that is so or not, though possibly I know as much about working saw mills as most members of the House. There is much to be said on the other side, but the fact remains that a certain agreement was entered into. Mr. Teesdale Smith, at that time, was the representative of the Company, and I take it that those who now represent the Company must, of necessity, be bound by the agreement entered into, whether they consider it practicable or not. I am satisfied that all members trust no trouble will result, and I am glad to hear from the member for Murchison that he personally desires to prevent any trouble. I can only say that if he likes, on any occasion, to discuss the matter with me, I will do all I can to see that the agreement is carried out as far as possible, so as to avoid any repetition of the trouble we had last year.

Mr. J. B. HOLMAN (in reply): I am pleased to hear the Premier give that promise. I am satisfied there will be a conference when this question will be threshed out and definitely decided upon. Anything done must be completed before then, as decisive action will be taken when that conference is held. The whole matter has been placed in my hands and I am not prepared to see the interests of the men sacrificed. The workers must get justice. The Premier is not quite correct when he said Mr. Bath and I agreed to any railway concessions being made to the Company. It was well known then that we absolutely refused to consider the question of granting a railway concession to the Company.

The Premier: Did you not authorise Mr. Haynes?

Mr. HOLMAN: Certainly not. He only watched the position as a legal man. Mr. Smith said he would have to get certain concessions. The report of the proceedings at the conference states as follows:—

"Both Messrs. Holman and Bath declined to co-operate at the present time in any such proposal. They agreed that, if by the institution of a train-load rate the Railway Department would not lose profit, such a rate was justifiable, irrespective of the timber trouble, and that the Government could not be in any way blamed for adopting such a rate."

When the previous concession was given the Company the whole of the men directly interested absolutely refused to co-operate with the Company in getting the concession, for they argued that if the concession were granted by reducing the rates, the men employed in the Railway Department would have to suffer a reduction in consequence. Rather than do that the timber workers declined to co-operate with the Company in that respect, or to sympathise with any proposal to reduce the railway and wharfage freights.

The Premier: Did you say that Mr. Haynes had no authority in saying you agreed to this rebate?

Mr. HOLMAN: Certainly; he had absolutely no authority. I have a report of the conference published at the time, as I have already read. I will give the Premier every information and show him the correspondence, and will ask him to place the forces of the Government behind us. We will do all we can to prevent trouble taking place in the timber or any other industry. I beg leave to withdraw the motion for the adjournment of the House.

Motion by leave withdrawn.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Premier: Papers dealing with the Perth Markets. Report of Proceedings of the Interstate Conference.

QUESTION—BAIL MONEY, ESTREATING.

Mr. SCADDAN asked the Attorney General: 1, Have the efforts of the bondsmen, Messrs. Boileau and McAuliffe, to bring the absconder Simpson to justice been successful? 2, If unsuccessful, will the bail bonds be estreated?

The PREMIER (for the Attorney General) replied: 1, Not so far. 2, The question of estreating the bonds will not be determined solely by the fact that the efforts of the bondsmen to secure arrest of the absconding man Simpson have been unsuccessful. The general merits of the case will also be taken into consideration.

PROROGATION.

Black Rod appeared at the Bar at 3.15 o'clock, and in the name of His Excellency the Governor's Commissioner, the Lieutenant Governor, commanded the attendance of members in the Legislative Council Chamber, to hear His Excellency's reasons for proroguing Parliament.

Mr. Speaker and hon. members proceeded accordingly to the Council Chamber, where His Excellency's Commissioner was pleased to give assent to the Supply Bill, and to other Bills of the session which had been completed and passed. The Commissioner then delivered an Address, proroguing Parliament to Saturday, the 12th day of September, 1908 (*vide* Council proceedings, *ante*).

The Session then closed.