

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 10th August, 1926.

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ELECTION OF PRESIDENT.

The Clerk of Parliaments reported that, following upon the resignation as President of the Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom, the office of President was vacant.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. J. W. Hickey—Central) [4.32]: I propose to the Council that the Hon. J. W. Kirwan be elected as our President.

HON. SIR EDWARD WITTENOOM (North) [4.33]: I have much pleasure in seconding the motion.

HON. J. W. KIRWAN: I thank members for the honour it has been proposed to confer on me, and submit myself to the will of the Council.

No other member having been proposed,

THE PRESIDENT ELECT said: The Standing Orders provide that I should, before taking my seat, acknowledge the honour that has been conferred upon me. It is a great honour, one that I much appreciate. The Legislative Council is the oldest institution in the State. It was established some 15 months after the first settlers reached the Swan River. Since then, its constitution has undergone many changes. Its history is the constitutional history of Western Australia, a history of steady constitutional progress up to the freedom we enjoy to-day. It has been associated not only with all the country's legislation and administration, but also with the wonderful industrial and commercial developments that have been witnessed in the western part of the continent over a period that is now approaching close to 100 years. It is indeed a high honour to be associated with a body with the record of the Legislative Council, especially in the capacity of its President. The men who in the past have presided over the deliberations of this Council were men who served the community well and faithfully. The first to preside

over its deliberations was the founder of the colony, Sir James Stirling. He was succeeded by a long line of able men, and, since the institution of Responsible Government, the Council has had as Presidents men so well and favourably known as Sir Thomas Cockburn-Campbell, Sir George Shenton, Sir Henry Briggs, Senator Kingsmill, and Sir Edward Wittenoom. To follow in the footsteps of such men is not a task to be lightly undertaken. It is a task that I might be deferred from attempting, were it not that, when submitting myself to the will of the Council, I was fortified by the knowledge that the members of this Chamber have always been animated by the determination firmly to maintain the best traditions of parliamentary government, as laid down by the Mother of Parliaments at Westminster, and, irrespective of their political differences, to carry out the country's business with decorum and dignity. Hon. members have conferred upon me the highest parliamentary office within their power, and, in again thanking them, I am convinced that they will assist me in my earnest desire to uphold the high standard that has ever characterised the deliberations of this Chamber. The Standing Orders provide that the sitting of the Council shall be suspended while the President elect, and such members as may desire to accompany him, shall present himself to His Excellency the Governor as the chosen President of the Council.

Sitting suspended from 4.36 p.m. to 5.15 p.m.

PRESENTATION OF PRESIDENT ELECT.

THE PRESIDENT: I desire to inform the House that I have waited upon and have been presented to His Excellency the Governor as President elect of the Legislative Council, and His Excellency has been pleased to signify his approval of the choice of the Council.

CONGRATULATIONS.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. J. W. Hickey—Central) [5.17]: I have had the opportunity on many occasions of addressing you, Sir, as the acting or deputy President, but this is the first time I have had the privilege of being able to address you as President of the Council. Permit me, as the representative of the Government in this House, to offer you my congratula-

tions on the high honour that has been conferred on you. Having made a few remarks previously in this regard, I cannot perhaps do better than repeat that in the opinion of the Council you are thoroughly fit to hold the office of President, and that in my opinion you will discharge the duties associated with that office with distinct credit to yourself and advantage to the Council and the State. Your long connection with Parliament eminently fits you for the position. In addition, your long experience and study of constitutional law is a further asset. Having been, for a long term of years, in the hurly-burly of the political arena, you must naturally be au fait with its environment, and as a result you will be tolerant towards some of us who might be found guilty of getting off the beaten track. We offer you our hearty congratulations and feel sure that you will carry out the traditions of the position. When one has gone through the vicissitudes of Parliamentary life, and at the turning point, so to speak, assumes the high and honourable office of President, one can feel satisfied that he has done something for his fellows. I again offer you my hearty congratulations.

HON. SIR EDWARD WITTENOOM

(North) [5.20]: I have much pleasure in adding my congratulations to those that have been offered by the Minister and to express my appreciation of the fact that you have been chosen to fill the office of President. As has been said before, it is the highest political position in the gift of Parliament, and I feel confident, from my knowledge of you, that you will carry out the duties associated with the position to the satisfaction of hon. members and with credit to yourself. I consider that for three reasons you are eminently fitted for the position. The first is that your profession as a journalist enables you to keep yourself thoroughly acquainted with the questions of the day, and to possess a knowledge of everything that is going on. In that way you are able to adapt yourself to all the matters that may arise in this House. The second qualification is that having been Chairman of Committees for a long time, you have a complete knowledge of constitutional practice, and you will thus be able to carry out your duties with satisfaction to members and to yourself. Thirdly, and this is by no means the least important consideration: you were one of the committee appointed last session to revise the Stand-

ing Orders. You, with Mr. Lovekin and the Clerk of the House, brought the Standing Orders up to date. Therefore, no one can have a better knowledge of those Standing Orders than yourself. Further, you, as Chairman of Committees, and I as President, worked harmoniously together, and I may say, without vanity, we shared a community of opinion. Bearing all these things in mind, I am certain that you will carry out the duties of your high office to the satisfaction of members and with credit to yourself. I congratulate you.

HON. J. E. DODD (South) [5.23]: I desire to associate myself with the congratulations that have been extended to you on your election as President of the Council. As your oldest colleague, I think I can also express myself on behalf of the other members from the goldfields. I have met you in many capacities, first as an opponent for the South Province seat. During the last 16 years I have been one of your colleagues, and for some time past have sat under you as Chairman of Committees. I can honestly say that by reason of your courtesy and ability as well as your impartiality, members of the Council were fully justified in selecting you to fill the high and honourable position you now hold. I am sure of this, that your friends on the goldfields and others who know you, will rejoice to learn that yours was the unanimous choice of the members of this House. I wish you a long and happy occupation of the office.

HON. A. J. H. SAW (Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.24]: I desire to add my congratulations to those that have already been extended to you. Unfortunately I was not in my seat when Sir Edward Wittenoom announced to the House that it was his intention to retire from the office of President, and consequently I have not had the opportunity to convey to him my regret at his having thought fit to take that step. We are glad to hear that he did not resign for reasons of health, but that it was merely in order that he might enjoy greater leisure. We were also pleased to learn that he had decided to resume his seat as a private member on the floor of the House. We were very glad indeed to hear that, and we trust that he will have many years of leisure before him. Incidentally, may I congratulate him on the added interest that has been given to his life since this Council last met.

Members: Hear, hear!

HON. A. J. H. SAW: I understand that he will employ some of those hours of leisure in rocking the cradle. I am sure that your election to the honourable position of President has met with the approval of every member of the House. As has been stated, your long years of service in this House, your attention to procedure and to constitutional law, as well as the manner in which you filled the office of Chairman of Committees, undoubtedly singled you out as a fitting person to assume the office of President on its becoming vacant. We all realise that under your guidance this Council will continue to enjoy the confidence and esteem of the people of Western Australia, which it has undoubtedly deserved, and which it holds at the present time. There have been many distinguished occupants of the Presidential Chair, and I am quite certain that you will worthily carry out the traditions of the position and that your elevation to it will enhance the dignity and decorum of the House.

HON. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [5.27]: I too, would like to add a few words to those that have been offered by members on your appointment to fill the position of President. We have sat together in this House for many years and I consider it fitting that you should have been selected from amongst us. Your advice has always been available to all who desired it and your addresses in the course of the debates have been on the highest plane, and a guidance to us. We can congratulate ourselves that we have a person of your calibre to fill the high office of President, a position that you will fill with credit to yourself and with honour to the Council.

HON. J. NICHOLSON (Metropolitan) [5.28]: As one who has sat beside you for many years, I may be permitted to add my meed of praise, at the choice that has been made. The occasion is unique in the history of the Council by reason of the fact that the President after having resigned, resumed his seat on the floor of the House. Usually on such occasions we find that the events which cause the retirement of a member are for reasons other than those announced by your predecessor. It is a happy circumstance indeed that we have Sir Edward Wittenoom again fulfilling those duties he was called upon to carry out in the past. It is also a happy circumstance that he is still possessed of that great measure of health that will en-

able him in the future to discharge those duties with vigour in the interests of his constituents. I can only reiterate what has been said by other speakers. Your unvarying courtesy at all times, not only to me but to other members as well, is one of the marked traits of your character. Your upright dealings and candour in connection with every matter coming before the House are such, combined with your ability, as mark you out signally for the high office of President. May I wish for you, as I do most sincerely, long years of occupancy of your present high office.

THE PRESIDENT [5.32]: I have already expressed my thanks for the very high honour that has been conferred upon me. I appreciate the honour still more because it has come to me unanimously from those with whom I have worked in this Chamber for the past 18 years. While thanking hon. members for that great honour, and whilst appreciating my appointment, at the same time I must express regret at its occasion. I join with those who have expressed regret that Sir Edward Wittenoom has seen fit to vacate this Chair, and the only consolation we have is that we are not losing his services. His potent voice will be heard from the floor of the Chamber and his ripe judgment will certainly materially assist our deliberations. While I am in the position of President, it will be my earnest endeavour to be strictly impartial and to correctly interpret the Standing Orders. The Standing Orders may be found sometimes to be irksome, but hon. members who may find them irksome, have their own means by which they can be amended. While the Standing Orders are as they are, I have to interpret them in accordance with their strict letter. I have to thank the retiring President for the great assistance he rendered me during the years I served under him as Chairman of Committees. He helped me in many ways and was kind and considerate. I certainly join with those who have expressed to him good wishes and congratulations on the happy event that has taken place since we last met. I once more thank hon. members for the honour they have conferred upon me, and I certainly hope to be able to conduct the business of the House in such a way that when my time comes to cease to be President, there will be no member who will have reason to regret voting me to my present position.

QUESTION—POLICE, POINT DUTY.

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM asked the Honorary Minister: 1, How many police officers are engaged on point duty, regulating the traffic of the City of Perth and suburbs? 2, What is the cost to the Police Department? 3, Is it the intention of the Commissioner of Police to continue employing such an exceptionally well-trained and efficient body of men on point and traffic duty instead of utilising them in protecting the public from the lawless members of the community? 4, Could not lame returned soldiers carry out the point duties?

The HONORARY MINISTER replied: 1, Ten. 2, £3,280 per annum. 3, Yes. 4, No.

QUESTION—RAILWAYS, WOMEN AS DRIVERS.

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM asked the Honorary Minister: Is there any truth in the report that it is the intention of the Commissioner of Railways to permit women, as well as men, to drive locomotives on the Government railways?

The HONORARY MINISTER replied: No.

House adjourned at 5.30 p.m.

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

MOTION—FINANCIAL RELATIONS, COMMONWEALTH AND STATES.

Standing Orders Suspension.

THE PREMIER (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [4.36]: I move—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable Notice of Motion No. 7, dealing with the financial rela-

tions between the Commonwealth and the States, to be taken into consideration forthwith.

MR. SPEAKER: I may point out that this motion requires an absolute majority of the House to carry it.

MR. THOMSON (Katanning) [4.37]: Before agreeing to the suspension of the Standing Orders, I would like to have an assurance from the Premier that it is not his intention to go right through the subject and dispose of it at this sitting. The matter is of great importance, but in view of the fact that the Commonwealth Bill has been adjourned for a period of 12 months I see no urgent necessity for the suspension of our Standing Orders. If the Premier, after he has put his case, is ready to grant to either the Leader of the Opposition or myself the adjournment of the debate, I shall have no objection to offer to the suspension of the Standing Orders.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I am ready to go on.

THE PREMIER [4.39]: The fate of the motion is not a matter which I can determine. Once moved, the motion will be in the hands of the House, and what will be done then it is not within my province to say. I may add, however, that it was my personal desire and intention to proceed with the matter to a conclusion at this sitting. I have no wish, of course, to inconvenience any member.

Mr. Thomson: Our conference is sitting, and we have not very much time to spare. Moreover, the subject is of great importance.

The PREMIER: The conference started only to-day. When I made my announcement last Thursday, I was under the impression that my proposal would suit the convenience of members.

MR. E. B. JOHNSTON (Williams-Narrogin) [4.41]: In the circumstances I must oppose the motion. The question is most important, and the Government have supplied a mass of information. If the motion is disposed of at one sitting, we shall not have an opportunity of looking up and quoting other figures which can be adduced in reply to those which the Premier is about to bring forward. If the motion came on in the ordinary way, it