

# PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES.

## SECOND SESSION OF THE EIGHTEENTH PARLIAMENT.

*The Parliament was prorogued on the 20th June, 1945, to the 26th, July, 1945, when it met for the despatch of business.*

*Parliament was opened by His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor.*

### Legislative Council.

Thursday, 26th July, 1945.

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### OPENING OF PARLIAMENT.

The Legislative Council met at 3 p.m.

#### PROCLAMATION.

The Clerk of Parliaments (Mr. L. L. Leake) read the Proclamation summoning the second session of the Eighteenth Parliament.

#### LIEUT.-GOVERNOR'S OPENING SPEECH.

His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor entered the Council Chamber at 3.2 p.m., and, the members of the Legislative Assembly having also attended in the Chamber obediently to summons, His Excellency was pleased to deliver the following Speech:—

*Mr. President and Honourable Members of the Legislative Council—*

*Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly—*

It is with profound sorrow that I refer to the passing of the Right Honourable John Curtin, P.C., Prime Minister of the Commonwealth. Mr. Curtin was the first Western Australian to occupy that high office. In a period of unparalleled difficulty

he brought to it qualities which won for him the respect, admiration and esteem of the people, not only of Australia, but of all the United Nations.

Since last session Parliament and the State have suffered by the loss, while on active service, of Captain H. S. Raphael, who faithfully represented Victoria Park in the Legislative Assembly since 1930. It is with deep regret also that I record the fact that the Royal Australian Air Force have announced Flight Lieutenant J. V. Newton to be presumed dead as the result of air operations over Germany. Flight Lieutenant Newton was elected to the Legislative Assembly for Greenough while on active service, but gave his life in the service of his country before he was able to take his seat.

The State has been honoured by an official visit from the Governor General, His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester, and Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Gloucester. The deep loyalty to the Throne and affection for members of the Royal Family were abundantly demonstrated by the warmth and enthusiasm of the welcome accorded by our people to the Royal Visitors.

With the successful conclusion of the war in Europe and the great progress in the Pacific, we all fervently hope that the time is fast approaching when final victory will enable the men and women of the Services to return to their homes. The twin tasks of rehabilitation and post-war reconstruction, therefore, become even more pressing, and Ministers continue to devote ever increasing time and attention to these vital aspects of Government activity. In the meantime our Forces are engaged in

deadly warfare against the enemy and our thoughts are with those for whom it is a time of constant anxiety, just as our heartfelt sympathy is extended to those who have already suffered the full and grievous loss which war exacts.

Agreement in connection with the principles involved in the establishment and operation of a War Service Land Settlement Scheme was reached at the Premiers' Conference in October, 1944, and as soon as details are finalised legislation will be placed before you to give effect to it. The Director of Land Settlement has now been appointed and considerable progress has been made in preparation for post-war settlement. Reverted Agricultural Bank holdings have been set aside for this purpose and are being reconditioned. Areas of Crown land have been selected and preliminary consideration given to the acquisition of suitable private properties.

An extensive post-war works programme has been submitted to the National Works Council and proposals estimated to cost £13,000,000 approved. Further investigations have been carried out regarding the proposed comprehensive agricultural areas water scheme. A strong case has been prepared for submission to the Commonwealth Government for financial assistance to enable the scheme to proceed early in the post-war period.

The acute housing shortage is receiving earnest consideration and attention and legislation will be submitted to you to ratify an agreement made between the Commonwealth and the State Governments to share in losses which may arise from the War Housing Scheme now in operation. Under this scheme 475 houses were approved for Western Australia to the 30th June last, of which 74 have been built and occupied, and 117 are under construction. Houses have been approved for the metropolitan area and various country towns.

The outstanding difficulty in hastening the building programme has been the extreme shortage of manpower and material, notably bricks, and action has been taken to increase substantially the number of bricks produced. The Commonwealth Government is releasing an increasing number of men from the Armed Forces, which will assist in overcoming the shortage of labour.

The Government has arranged to build houses under day labour conditions. A Construction Manager has been appointed and an early commencement will be made with a group of houses in the metropolitan area. If necessary, men will be transferred from other Government work to house building. This programme will supplement the work of private building contractors.

*Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly—*

Revenue for 1944-1945 exceeded expenditure by £4,490 after some provision was again made for arrears of maintenance. Surpluses have now been recorded for five successive years.

Loan expenditure is still restricted by war requirements but it is hoped that greater activity on developmental projects will be possible in the near future.

*Mr. President and Honourable Members of the Legislative Council—*

*Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly—*

The season has developed most favourably with copious rains over the whole of the agricultural and part of the pastoral areas. Although the manpower position on some farms has been eased, agricultural activities are still hampered by shortage of suitable labour.

Stocks of wheat in the Commonwealth are at a dangerously low level and an increase in production is vital in Western Australia so that this industry may again take its prominent place in our economic life. Fortunately Western Australia has been able to assist in supplying fodder, including wheat, chaff and oats, to drought stricken areas in other parts of Australia.

The erection of gantries and conveyor systems for the loading of bulk wheat from the Australian Wheat Board's Hospital at North Fremantle direct into ships is proceeding. The portion of the system now being constructed by the Government will form part of the completed terminal scheme at the port.

The Rural and Industries Bank Act passed last session was proclaimed to come into operation from the 1st July and Commissioners have been appointed. This legislation will give to settlers who formerly had fixed mortgages the very many benefits as-

sociated with overdraft accounts. A much wider field in rural banking business, which will be of general benefit to the State, will be achieved in the operations of this new institution.

While soil erosion has not yet become a serious problem in Western Australia, the Government recognises that every reasonable precaution should be taken. Consideration is being given to measures whereby a soil conservation service may be instituted, and legislation for this purpose is being drafted.

During the recent dry period in agricultural areas boring plants were provided and water was transported by rail and road. Several departmentally constructed dams were reconditioned prior to the first winter rains and a progressive programme has been planned for increasing water storages for stock in a number of key centres.

State owned engineering establishments have been fully employed on vital work, much of it directly associated with the war effort, and ten of the 14 wooden vessels ordered by the Commonwealth Government have been constructed at the State Shipyard and successfully launched.

The main recommendations of the Electricity Advisory Committee covering proposals to establish an electric power scheme in the South-West and Great Southern Districts have been approved, and the necessary legislation will be introduced in the near future.

Despite severe wartime difficulties, the policy of encouraging the expansion of secondary industry has been successfully pursued, and employment in industrial establishments has reached a record level. Special attention is being given to projects in rural districts and the decision to proceed with the South-West Power Scheme will have an important bearing on the plan for an integrated industrial group in the South-West.

Progress is being made with the erection at Wundowie of a large scale wood distillation and charcoal iron pilot plant. Potash produced at the State Alunite Works at Chandler has made a valuable contribution to the State's requirements of fertilisers, and the large scale pilot plant to test a process for producing refined alumina from

the residues should be in operation at an early date.

Many ventures undertaken by private enterprise with the assistance and encouragement of the Government are making gratifying progress, and more Eastern States companies are extending their activities to Western Australia.

The recent increase in the price of gold to the record figure of £10 15s. 3d. per fine ounce enhances the encouraging prospects of the great gold mining industry. The rehabilitation of the industry has been the subject of earnest discussion between representatives of the Government, the owners and the employees. In the meantime mines which have been compelled to cease production, because of wartime difficulties, are being maintained so that they may recommence operations as early as possible. Following recent representations the Commonwealth Government has agreed to provide a further £50,000 for this purpose. Despite the curtailment of activities due to the war, the value of gold production for 1944 was almost £5,000,000.

The production of important strategic minerals utilised in the war effort continues. The exploitation of the deposits of blue asbestos in the Hammersley Ranges, in which the Government is rendering valuable assistance, will materially assist in the development of the North-West. A copper smelting plant is being established in the Ravensthorpe district. Further financial assistance has been provided for the search for oil, and additional exploratory operations will soon be undertaken. Every effort is being made to increase production of coal at Collieries to meet the vital demand, and the Stockton open cut mine and the Wyvern Colliery, projects sponsored by the Government, are now regular producers.

The Railway Department is actively engaged on preparation for post-war requirements. Apart from extensive deferred maintenance, plans embrace many methods of providing improved passenger and goods services. Already 21 new Garratt locomotives have been obtained and orders placed for six new Diesel electric trains with additional haulage capacity. All aspects of the report recently presented to the Commonwealth Government on the standardisation

of railway gauges are being closely considered.

Tenders have been accepted for plant for the new power station to be erected at South Fremantle, and preparation of the site is in hand. Consideration is being given to legislation for the creation of an Electricity Commission to control all State owned electrical projects.

The improved war situation has produced a return to more normal conditions in the North-West. Many women and children have returned to their homes, State schools have been re-opened, and the Wyndham Meatworks have again commenced operations. The Government has appointed a widely representative Committee to report on measures to encourage increased production and population in the North-West, and to investigate prospects of improving amenities and conditions of residents.

Investigations have been continued regarding the proposed irrigation settlement adjacent to the Ord River and drilling operations to test foundations at the dam site are proceeding. Initial experiments in pasture improvement have been encouraging and a new experimental site has been reserved which will permit an enlarged scope of investigations.

Plans are well advanced to give effect to the decision to raise the school leaving age and also undertake the educational rehabilitation of discharged service personnel. Technical education is constantly being expanded and valuable service is being rendered by the Vocational Guidance Bureau. Facilities for education in agricultural subjects are to be extended and Area Schools will be established in suitable localities.

It is hoped that the recently appointed Commissioner of Public Health will assume duty at an early date. The Hospital Planning Committee has visited several parts of the State and is compiling proposals for hospital development. Local Committees have been relieved of payment of salaries of Infant Health Nurses and will be able to concentrate on improving premises and equipment. Dentists sent to the North-West have been of wide service in attending to the teeth of children and carrying out emergency work for adults.

Nearly 6,000 people have taken advantage of the services of a Government officer made

available to advise on problems arising between landlords and tenants. An Inspector has recently been appointed to investigate complaints and advise on fair rents.

While timber production is improving, it is still unequal to the demand. Plans have been made for a return to normal trading on the cessation of hostilities and for making up the wartime leeway in forest development and afforestation.

Measures dealing with the franchise of the Legislative Council, the resolving of deadlocks between the two Houses, and the creation of a promotions appeal board for Government employees will be submitted to you. They will be similar in principle to Bills which failed to pass last year.

In addition to the measures which I have already indicated, a comprehensive programme of legislation has been prepared for your consideration.

I now declare this session of Parliament open and trust that Providence may bless your labours.

His Excellency then withdrew from the Chamber.

*[The President took the Chair.]*

## **BILL—WAR FUNDS REGULATION ACT AMENDMENT.**

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [3.28]: In order to assert and maintain the undoubted rights and privileges of this House to initiate legislation, I move, without notice, for leave to introduce a Bill entitled "An Act to amend the War Funds Regulation Act, 1939."

Leave given; Bill introduced, and read a first time.

## **LIEUT.-GOVERNOR'S SPEECH, DISTRIBUTION.**

**THE PRESIDENT:** For the sake of greater accuracy, I have obtained from His Excellency the Lieut.-Governor printed copies of the Speech he has been pleased to deliver to Parliament. These will be distributed amongst hon. members.

## **ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.**

*First Day.*

**HON. E. M. HEENAN** (North-East) [3.31]: I move—

That the following Address be presented to His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor in re-

ply to the Speech he has been pleased to deliver:—"May it please Your Excellency: We, the members of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of the State of Western Australia, in Parliament assembled, beg to express our loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign and to thank Your Excellency for the Speech you have been pleased to deliver to Parliament."

Before proceeding to deal with various matters, I would like to pay my humble tribute to the late lamented Prime Minister of Australia. John Curtin came to Western Australia as a young man. He lived and worked here for the greater part of his life. He was personally known to almost all of us and he loved and cherished this State as his home. It will always be a matter of pride for Western Australians that they sent to the Commonwealth Parliament this man who, in Australia's darkest years, rose to the highest concepts of statesmanship and led his country safely through the gravest crisis it has ever faced. His faith in Australia's future, his life of hard work and endeavour, his dignity and integrity and his unswerving loyalty set an example to the people of Australia that, if followed, will be his greatest monument and will assure them of triumph over all the problems and uncertainties of to-morrow.

I desire also to refer to the announcement which appeared in this morning's issue of "The West Australian," and which I feel sure will be received with regret not only throughout this State but throughout the whole of the Commonwealth, namely, the imminent resignation of the Premier, Hon. J. C. Willcock. I think I will be voicing the general opinion when I say that throughout his long term as Premier, Mr. Willcock set a standard that has earned him the trust and respect of all sections of the community. He leaves behind him a record of service to this State that will always be remembered with gratitude by the people and will assure to him an honoured place in the history of our country. I hope that, as a consequence of the step he is about to take, his health will be conserved and that he will be long spared to grace this Parliament as a private member.

Fortunately the war years seem to be drawing to a close and, thanks to the valiant efforts and sacrifices of our Armed Forces, and of those of our Allies, there is some justification for hoping that hostilities will

soon cease. However, there is still a struggle of the greatest magnitude on our hands, and until final victory is achieved first things must continue to come first, and there must be no let-up in our war effort. At the same time, everything should be in readiness for the big change over that the declaration of peace will bring. When the boys come back there must be an ordered return to civilian life and opportunities must be provided to find them their rightful place in the society which their blood and sacrifices have won for us. Here in Western Australia we have the largest expanse of territory with a handful of population and an immense amount of development to be done. This State will have a golden opportunity to make vast progress in the post-war years, and the ball is now at our feet.

Like the position in other parts of Australia, the most pressing need here is the provision of housing for our people; and it is pleasing to note that the State and Commonwealth Governments have a full realisation of its importance. Home life must be restored to its rightful place in the community if we are to combat many of the ugly evils which are threatening to undermine our national life. It is to be hoped that when the building of houses is properly under way, due regard will be paid to the necessities of people in the country. Approximately one half of the people of Australia are living in the capital cities. Our policy in the future definitely should be to decentralise, and one of the first steps in this direction, I submit, is to give people who have the courage to live in the country every facility to build and own their own homes. The need for better housing is especially critical on the Goldfields and with the imminent resurgence of the mining industry this problem needs urgent attention. The proportion of sub-standard houses there is probably higher than in any other part of Australia, and the extremes of climate make the need for good housing most imperative.

The present record price of £10 15s. 3d. per fine ounce for gold indicates what vast possibilities we have in our mining industry. For years past our general policy towards the Goldfields has been based on the assumption that the mining industry will

collapse; but all the indications now go to prove that there will be a great revival in the industry and that once again it will bring untold prosperity to this State. In support of this statement I would mention that figures recently compiled show that the principal mines on the Golden Mile alone have established ore reserves of over 9,000,000 tons, of a present approximate value of £25,000,000. It is only right, therefore, that the Government should do all in its power to foster the revival of the mining industry and to go as far as it possibly can in improving the lot of those who are employed in it. What the industry has accomplished for this State is not generally remembered, and it may be timely to recall that up to date approximately 50,000,000 ounces of gold have been produced of an approximate value of £A272,000,000. The effects of war, however, particularly the shortage of manpower, have brought about a big halt in recent years and at the present time the number of men employed is still only around the 4,500 mark. It has been stated on good authority that when the industry is again properly under way employment can be found for 20,000 men.

I am very pleased to note that a move is to be made in the direction of obtaining a higher priority for the mining industry. In the immediate post-war years it seems certain that there will be full employment. Houses and hospitals are urgently needed; our railway system is in drastic need of overhaul; water supplies in the country are an urgent necessity, and so on. But this form of employment will not last for ever; and then again we must bring some revenue into the country. It is here that we are so fortunate in having an industry which can produce millions of pounds annually whilst opening up towns and providing employment in far distant parts of the State where population is so badly needed. I hope, therefore, that this Parliament will assist as far as it possibly can, the move to have due recognition given to the industry in the matter of a higher priority so that adequate manpower may be made available.

Incidental to mining is the unsatisfactory position that prevails with regard to payments made to turned-down miners under the provisions of the Mine Workers' Relief

Fund. The payments made to these men are by way of compensation for the loss of their health, and the amounts payable are £1 5s. a week for a man, £1 for his wife and 7s. 6d. for each dependant child, with a maximum total of £3 10s. a week. However, when a beneficiary becomes eligible for an invalid or old age pension, he, or she, does not receive the full additional amount of the pension. The reason for this is that payments made to him under the Mine Workers' Relief Act are regarded as income and are held against him.

Hon. A. Thomson: Shocking!

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: The net result is that the receipt of an invalid or old age pension relieves the Mine Workers' Relief Fund considerably, but the turned-down miner does not receive the full benefit. This unfortunate position is due solely to the provisions in the Commonwealth Invalid and Old Age Pensions Act which define the word "income" and which also limit a pensioner's permissible income to 12s. 6d. per week. The situation as it affects turned-down miners is very unfortunate because these men need special diet and their health makes it almost essential for them to live on the Goldfields, where the climate agrees with them but where the cost of living is probably the highest in the State. I know that the Government has already taken steps in an endeavour to have the position altered and that Mr. Victor Johnson, M.H.R. and other Federal members have given it their best attention. However, I hope that the Government will continue to press the matter, because a most deserving section of the mining community is being badly penalised.

Before concluding my remarks, I would like to draw the Minister's attention to the parlous condition of the prospecting industry. It is now almost non-existent owing to the shortage of cars, tyres, petrol and so forth proving too great a handicap for those men to remain in the bush. The pity of it is that many of our old experienced prospectors are passing away and taking with them knowledge and experience which can never be replaced. We must always remember that the prospector is the sine qua non of the mining industry, for without him no new mines are discovered and no new townships are opened up. I do hope that everything possible will be done for the

prospectors who are still in the bush, and that the Government's assistance scheme will be enlarged and improved. Money spent in this direction is likely to be returned a hundredfold because, one new mine usually means the growth of a new township, the employment of hundreds of men and so on.

While on this subject, I would like the Minister to inquire into the possibility of installing modern facilities at the Kalgoorlie State Battery for the treatment of sulphide ore. In pre-war years, prospectors could have their sulphide and other refractory ores treated at the South Kalgurli Mine, but these facilities no longer exist. The position is that when a prospector reaches the sulphide zone, further mining is almost beyond him and he is forced either to give up or to sell out to a company, if he has the opportunity. Modern treatment methods at the Kalgoorlie State Battery for sulphide ore would be a great aid to prospectors and of general benefit to the mining industry.

**HON. W. R. HALL** (North-East): I formally second the motion.

On motion by Hon. C. F. Baxter, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 3.48 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly.

*Thursday, 26th July, 1945.*

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### MEETING OF THE ASSEMBLY.

The Legislative Assembly met at 3 p.m., pursuant to Proclamation, which was read by the Clerk (Mr. F. G. Steere).

### SUMMONS FROM THE LIEUT. GOVERNOR.

The Speaker and hon. members, in response to summons, proceeded to the Legislative Council Chamber and, having heard His Excellency deliver the opening Speech (*vide* Council report *ante*), they returned to the Assembly Chamber.

### ELECTORAL—SWEARING-IN OF MEMBER.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received the return of a writ for the vacancy in the Victoria Park electorate caused by the death of Howard Stirling Raphael, showing that William Raymond Read has been duly elected. I am prepared to swear in the hon. member.

Mr. Read took and subscribed the oath and signed the roll.

### QUESTIONS.

#### NATIONAL SECURITY REGULATIONS.

*As to Release of Building Materials.*

Mr. MARSHALL (without notice) asked the Minister for Works: Is the Minister aware that within a radius of half-a-mile of the Town Hall of the City of Perth numerous eating-houses have come into existence involving the consumption of a huge quantity of material for the purpose of renovating and fitting-out such premises, also involving huge quantities of rationed goods and labour, these places being controlled principally by foreigners, while people of British origin and Australian-born subjects often find it necessary to restrict their hours of trading and to close during certain days of the week because of the impossibility of securing rationed goods and labour?

The MINISTER replied: I have no exact knowledge as to what quantities of materials and rationed goods may have been so used. I think, in addition, members are aware that no Minister of the State Government has any control over matters of this kind, but if the member for Murchison is prepared to make available some specific information as to the people concerned in the operation of these business undertakings, I will be quite pleased to have the necessary inquiries made for the purpose of ascertaining whether the building materials and rationed goods have been made available on justifiable grounds.