

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 7th June, 1928.

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MEETING OF ASSEMBLY.

The Legislative Assembly met at 3 p.m. pursuant to proclamation by His Excellency the Governor, which proclamation was read by the Clerk.

The SPEAKER took the Chair.

SUMMONS FROM DEPUTY 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.

SWEARING-IN OF MEMBERS.

MR. SPEAKER: I have received a return of writs issued for the election of members to serve for the electoral districts of Kalgoolie and Leederville, and from the returns endorsed thereon it appears that the Hon. James Cunningham and the Hon. Harold Millington have been duly elected for the respective districts. I am prepared to swear the hon. members.

The members elected were present, and took and subscribed the oath as provided by statute, and signed the roll.

BILL—WORKERS' HOMES ACT AMENDMENT.

THE PREMIER (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [3.15]: In order to assert and maintain the undoubted rights and privileges of this House to initiate legislation, I move, without notice, for leave to intro-

duce a Bill entitled "An Act to amend the Workers' Homes Act."

Leave given; Bill introduced and read a first time.

DEPUTY GOVERNOR'S OPENING SPEECH.

MR. SPEAKER: In company with hon. members of this Chamber, I attended His Excellency the Deputy Governor in the Legislative Council Chamber to hear the speech His Excellency was pleased to deliver to both Houses of Parliament. For greater accuracy I have had printed copies of the Speech distributed amongst members of this Chamber.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

MR. PANTON (Menzies) [3.17]: I move—

That the following address be presented to His Excellency the Deputy Governor in reply to the Speech he has been pleased to deliver to Parliament:—"May it please Your Excellency. We, the members of the Legislative Assembly 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."

MR. CLYDESDALE (Canning) [3.18]: I second the motion.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [3.19]: The Speech delivered to us by His Excellency is certainly the shortest we have ever listened to from any Governor, and must also be regarded as one of the most important. May I congratulate the two hon. gentlemen who moved and seconded the adoption of the Address-in-Reply on the excellent speeches they made? They have not done better since they have been members of this House.

Mr. Panton: We set you a good example.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not intend to delay the House for more than a few minutes. I would not even delay the proceedings to that extent, were it not desirable to correct some wrong impressions that are abroad. I know it is useless to discuss the Financial Agreement at the present juncture, because we shall have an oppor-

tunity to do so next week. Hon. members will have noticed that the Financial Agreement is the only item mentioned in the Deputy Governor's Speech, and I suppose it is really the only matter we can discuss during this session. However, it will take me a few minutes to correct some of the wrong impressions to which I have referred. I had hoped that hon. members who have spoken would have saved me the necessity for doing so, by correcting those impressions for me.

Mr. Panton: Had you mentioned it to me, I would have been pleased to do so.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Of course the Premier had no alternative but to submit the Financial Agreement to the House for consideration. I hope it will be dealt with along non-party lines. One impression I wish to correct is that we who do not see eye to eye with the Government, are anti-Federalists, and that we are only opposing it because we are against Federation. I am not opposed to Federation while the Federal authorities confine themselves to those matters in regard to which we agreed to federate. I do not object to the Federal Government controlling defence, the Customs House, the Post Office, and those other activities that we expect them to control under the terms of the Constitution. On the other hand, I do object to the Federal Government attempting to do things that the Federal Constitution does not give them authority to do.

Hon. W. J. George: They would do anything.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Possibly they could do anything they liked.

Mr. Marshall: We agree with you on that point.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It is not anti-Federal to place the State before party. If there are those who do not believe that that is so, then I suppose they will regard others who adopt that attitude as anti-Federal. Certainly it is not anti-Federal to ask that the Federal Constitution shall govern Federal activities. We can applaud the setting aside of £7,584,000 for distribution amongst the States, but it is not anti-Federal to ask that such a huge sum of money shall be distributed on a more equitable basis than is suggested in the Act passed by the Federal Government.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Have you another speech prepared to deliver on the Bill when it is before us?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No, I am depending on the hon. member to give me a lead!

Mr. Kenneally: Is that necessary?

Mr. Marshall: Apparently it must be.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It is not anti-Federal to object to the surrender of our financial freedom for all time. After all, the document is not an agreement, because it is anti-Federal; the Federal Government are not bound by it, and those whose revenue is to be taken are the people themselves. Of course the referendum question will be discussed when we come to the Bill. I think it is right that the public should realise we are not facing the consideration of the Bill to come before us in any spirit of hostility towards the Federal Constitution. It has been said—and this should be corrected too—that the per capita payment system would strengthen the stronger States and weaken the weaker States as time progressed. Of course the per capita payments were based upon the population of each of the several States, not upon the opulence of those States, as has been suggested. Naturally the larger States would pay a greater amount per capita in customs and excise duties, than the smaller States. If two motor cars were imported into a large State as against one imported into a small State, naturally the larger State would pay considerably more by way of duty than the smaller State. It has been suggested that New South Wales, because it is a rich State, would benefit more under the per capita payment system than a poorer State such as Tasmania. I think it was the Premier of Queensland who made that remark. It is true that opulent New South Wales would pay more per capita through the customs than the poorer State would contribute to the Federal Treasury, but on the other hand the smaller State would receive as much per capita as New South Wales under that system, so that the advantage would be with Tasmania. It has also been said that at the 1923 conference, all the State Premiers, with the exception of the Premier of New South Wales, intimated their willingness to accept the financial proposals. I was present at that conference and although I know that the records would indicate that we were agreed, I also know that that suggestion is

incorrect. We who attended from Western Australia did not agree to the proposals on that occasion. The Premier knows that the consideration of the Financial Agreement is of the utmost importance to the State. It will take some days, and I hope he will not seek to hurry the discussion of the Bill. I trust that after he has delivered his speech, he will give hon. members time to go thoroughly into the agreement. I am sure he will do so. While I will be prepared to follow him on Wednesday next, I hope if hon. members are not quite prepared to continue the discussion on the following day, he will allow the matter to stand over until the following week. I presume all the discussion will, practically speaking, be on the Bill itself and that very little time will be devoted to it in Committee. We must accept or reject the agreement. It is an extraordinary thing that in the two States where the Labour Party are sitting in opposition, they are opposed to the agreement, whilst in this State, where the Nationalists are sitting in opposition, we too shall be bound to oppose the measure.

Mr. Marshall: I was with you until you spoke.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not want the hon. member with me. I would be wrong if he were with me on all occasions.

Mr. Marshall: You will want my vote if you are to carry out your desires.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not think I would deserve to win if I had the hon member wholeheartedly with me! Of course we all know he has an independent mind, well stored with information respecting the many important questions we shall have to consider! I hope he will be able to give the House a lead when we come to deal with many of the knotty points that will arise in connection with the Bill. I have no wish to detain the House any longer because we shall be dealing with one measure only during this session, and we shall have a later opportunity of dealing with such other matters as we may desire when the ordinary session commences next month.

MR. ANGELO (Gascoyne) [3.28]: When the first announcement was made in the Press that a special session of Parliament was to be called together, we were given to understand that there were two

subjects that would be discussed. One related to the Financial Agreement and the other was the suggestion of the Federal Government to take over the North-West. We find, however, that the session is to be restricted to the consideration of the Financial Agreement alone. I would ask the Premier if, when he is speaking on the Federal Agreement, he will indicate whether any proposal has been submitted to the Federal Government regarding the North-West. It will be remembered that when the question was last before the House the Premier gave us to definitely understand that he would discuss with the Prime Minister any proposal that might be brought forward for handing over that portion of the State lying north of the 20th parallel. As the Premier is aware, it takes a considerable time for information to reach far distant parts in the North-West and North. If he could give some indication of the position when discussing the Financial Agreement -- it will be realised that the control of the North-West is wrapped up a good deal in the consideration of that agreement—such information as he may make available can be promulgated throughout the northern part of the State and members representing constituencies concerned may be able to gain some idea of what their electors think of the proposals. If the Premier can do that he will earn the gratitude of North-West members, and the people of that part of the State.

Question put and passed; the Address-in-Reply adopted.

ADJOURNMENT.

THE PREMIER (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [3.30]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until 4.30 p.m. on Tuesday next.

Question put and passed.

THE PREMIER (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [3.31]: Before the House adjourns I desire to intimate that the Bill dealing with the Financial Agreement will be distributed immediately instead of being held back, as is usual, until the second reading is moved. This is done in order that members may have an opportunity of studying the Bill during the week-end.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We cannot get through that agreement during the week end.

The PREMIER: It will perhaps facilitate discussion next week. In reply to the Leader of the Opposition, as to the opportunities that will be afforded to members for a full and fair discussion upon the Bill, I can say at once that there is no desire on the part of the Government to press the debate unduly, and that full and ample time and opportunity will be given to every member to make himself acquainted with the measure and to take part in the discussion. I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 3.33 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 12th June, 1928.

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

QUESTION—MAIN ROADS BOARD, POWERS.

Hon. W. J. GEORGE asked the Premier: Is it his intention to lay upon the Table all papers dealing with the appointment of the members of the Main Roads Board and defining the respective powers of the Minister and the board?

The PREMIER replied: The respective powers of the Minister and the Board are defined by the Act. It is not intended to lay the papers upon the Table of the House.

QUESTIONS (3)—LAND.

Blocks for Selection.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON asked the Minister for Lands: 1, How soon does the Land Board expect to decide the result of the applications for the 200 blocks that were thrown open for selection on or about the 15th April last? 2, Is the Land Board aware that a large number of prospective settlers who are anxious to start improvements are kept idle in the meantime? 3, Can the decisions be expedited?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, The middle of July. 2, Yes. 3, Steps have already been taken to have Land Board matters expedited in future.

Properties acquired for Closer Settlement.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON asked the Minister for Lands: How many properties have been acquired by the Government under the provisions of the Closer Settlement Act, 1927?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: No properties have so far been purchased under this Act.

Herdsman's Lake Blocks.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Lands: When will blocks surveyed at Herdsman's Lake be made available for settlement?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: Steps are now being taken to finalise the acquisition of the land necessary for residential purposes. So soon as this is completed the land will be made available for selection.

QUESTION—WHEAT, EXPORT.

Mr. SLEEMAN asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Is he aware that on the wharves at Fremantle there is enough wheat being wasted to feed the unemployed of the metropolitan area? 2, Is he further aware that a lot of bad condition wheat is being sent away on the boats already this season? 3, Is it his intention to take steps to prevent a recurrence of last year's trouble in regard to bad wheat being shipped from this State, thereby spoiling the good name of the State abroad?