

regard to a considerable amount of work which it has been suggested should be done to the scheme, the object being to improve the catchment area and holding ground. The outlook of the local authority was that, in the hope of a spread of good seasons—last year being the first—from a rainfall point of view, it should not press the matter, as it was felt the Government had perhaps other matters on its hands requiring earlier attention during the period of the war. As I say the local authority expected to get a plentiful water supply, but was disappointed. So we are now reluctantly compelled to say to the Government, "War or no war, other jobs or no other jobs, please come and make arrangements for the work to be done to the Katanning water scheme, because if it is not done we shall have no water and the position will be even more serious than it has been in past years." I do not propose to dwell on the subject any further.

I shall conclude my remarks by expressing the hope that the Minister for Lands will soon be restored to health. We have had a number of discussions with him during the year, mostly with regard to the bulk handling of wheat in what is known as the Albany zone. The Minister has been able to arrange for considerable progress in the direction of bulk handling in the Albany zone and I trust his efforts will very shortly bear fruit. But I do think, with the member for Albany (Mr. Hill), who is on the right track, that a substantial alteration ought to be made in the boundaries of what is known as the Albany zone. On what basis, by what rule, by what yardstick, the present zone was defined I do not know. It seems to me, however, that from the point of view of railway convenience, suitability of grade and all the other factors which go to make up the area that should be the hinterland of a port, the port of Albany is deserving of a hinterland considerably larger than it now has.

Mr. Withers: You can get the wheat taken to Albany if you are prepared to pay extra freight.

Mr. WATTS: That is right.

Mr. Withers: That is what it means.

Mr. WATTS: I am not trying to steal anything from the hon. member.

Mr. Doney: It is based on mileage. If it were based on freight, it might be all right.

Mr. WATTS: It is based on mileage at present; and we are, I hope, entitled to our opinion—even if it is wrong—that there ought to be an alteration in the boundaries of the Albany zone. We are going to ask for such an alteration and if our request is granted, God bless us.

On motion by Mr. Wilson, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.17 p.m.

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

SWEARING-IN OF MEMBER.

Hon. C. B. Williams (South) took and subscribed the oath and signed the roll.

CONDOLENCE—CANBERRA AIR DISASTER.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [4.33]: It is with sincere regret that I submit the following motion:—

This House places on record its sense of the severe loss to the Commonwealth by the death of Brigadier the Hon. G. A. Street, Minister for the Army; the Hon. J. V. Fairbairn, Minister for the Air; the Hon. Sir Henry Gullett, Vice-President of the Executive Council; Lieut.-General Sir Brudenell White, Chief of the General Staff, and the other passengers and members of the crew killed in the air disaster near Canberra.

That the foregoing resolution be transmitted by the President to the Prime Minister, through the Premier's Department, with the request that the terms of the resolution be conveyed to the relatives of the deceased Ministers, and the passengers and members of the crew.

This tragedy has come as a shock to us all. It is a national calamity, and it has come at a time when the nation can ill afford the loss of men so eminent in their respective spheres of duty. They were, one and all, carrying a heavy burden of responsibility and authority, which, in these times, means so much to the Commonwealth and the Empire. They had earned the utmost confidence of the Commonwealth Government, to whom this colossal misfortune is a blow unparalleled in the history of our country, and we can appreciate the many difficulties which may arise from it. Our deepest sympathy goes out to the relatives of every one of those involved, and it may be some consolation to them when it is realised that the call came whilst they were engaged in the carrying out of the very highest and most important duties on behalf of their country and fellow men. I feel sure that every member of this House will agree with the sentiments expressed in the resolution which I have moved.

Question passed, members standing.

House adjourned at 4.38 p.m.

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Condolence: Canberra air disaster

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

CONDOLENCE—CANBERRA AIR DISASTER.

THE ACTING PREMIER (Hon. H. Millington—Mt. Hawthorn) [4.32]: I move—

That this House places on record its sense of the severe loss to the Commonwealth by the death of Brigadier the Hon. G. A. Street,

Minister for the Army; the Hon. J. V. Fairbairn, Minister for the Air; the Hon. Sir Henry Gullett, Vice-President of the Executive Council; Lieut.-General Sir Brudenell White, Chief of the General Staff, and the other passengers and members of the crew killed in the air disaster near Canberra.

That the foregoing resolution be transmitted by Mr. Speaker to the Prime Minister through the Premier's Department with the request that the terms of the resolution be conveyed to the relatives of the deceased Ministers and the other passengers and members of the crew.

It is with very deep regret that I move this motion. In spite of the continuous disasters with which we are brought into contact and in spite of the fact that we as men accommodate ourselves to the idea of final disintegration, this disaster comes as a shock, not only to us, but also, I should say, to the whole of the people of the Commonwealth. It is something to which we cannot readily accommodate our minds. Notable men are included amongst the victims of the disaster. The Prime Minister was intimately acquainted with the record and character, the knowledge and administrative ability of the men placed in control of the important portfolios of the air and of the army, and when we think that they were specially selected for those positions by men who knew them best, we must realise that Australia has suffered an incomparable loss at a time that makes the loss disastrous to the whole of the people of the nation. For some months past our eyes have been on the Commonwealth Government, upon which we depend for the defence of Australia, and these two Ministers were selected for those highly important portfolios. From every point of view the loss to the people of Australia is severe. The loss to their relatives is equally severe. News of the disaster came to us as a shock, and we all felt completely stunned by it. This is one of those occasions when words fail to convey our feelings, but I am sure that independently of what may be said, all members present this afternoon are in accord in mind and heart with the sympathy that the motion conveys. Having regard to the great loss Australia has suffered and to the fact that all Australia mourns that loss, this House is anxious to show its sympathy, and therefore on behalf of the House and the people of Western Australia I move the motion.