

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES.

Second Session of the Twentieth Parliament

Parliament was prorogued on the 28th June, 1951, to the 2nd August, 1951, when it met for the despatch of business.

Parliament was opened by His Excellency the Administrator.

Legislative Council

Thursday, 2nd August, 1951.

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OPENING OF PARLIAMENT.

The Legislative Council met at 3 p.m.

The PRESIDENT took the Chair.

PROCLAMATION.

The Clerk of Parliaments (Mr. A. B. Sparks) read the proclamation of His Excellency the Governor summoning the second session of the Twentieth Parliament.

ADMINISTRATOR'S OPENING SPEECH.

His Excellency the Administrator entered the Council Chamber at 3.6 p.m. and, 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 pleasure that I open the Second Session of the Twentieth Parliament for the transaction of public business.

The announcement that the visit of Their Majesties the King and Queen and Her Royal Highness the Princess Margaret, which was postponed because of His Majesty's health, will take place in March next year, has given great satisfaction to the people of this State. A most loyal welcome to the Royal visitors is assured.

It is with the deepest regret that I refer to the death of the Honourable Sir James Mitchell, G.C.M.G., whose term of office as Governor of Western Australia expired on the 30th June this year.

Sir James Mitchell devoted a lifetime of service to Western Australia. He entered Parliament in 1905 and represented the constituency of Northam continuously until 1933. He served as a Minister of the Crown for over 14 years, Premier for eight years and Leader of the Opposition for six years. In 1933 he was appointed Lieutenant-Governor and occupied that position until his appointment as Governor in 1948.

The whole State mourns the loss of this great statesman who not only contributed so much to Western Australia's development and progress but also earned the lasting respect and affection of the people.

His Majesty the King has been pleased to appoint Lieutenant-General Sir Charles Gairdner, K.C.M.G., C.B., C.B.E., as Governor, and he is expected to arrive in this State on the 6th November this year.

The State has also suffered a great loss by the deaths of the Honourables W. J. Mann and H. Tuckey, both members of the Legislative Council, and Messrs. T. Fox and H. V. Shearn, members of the Legislative Assembly. As members of the State Parliament they were held in high public esteem and each rendered many years of distinguished service to Western Australia.

The recent visit of the Honourable the Premier to the United Kingdom has stimulated the keen interest which he found there in the State's progress and prospects. The Premier made valuable contacts with firms concerned in supplying Government requirements and was successful in arranging the early despatch of a substantial quantity of goods urgently required in Western Australia.

The State Government is co-operating with the Commonwealth Government in suitably celebrating the Jubilee of Federation.

The serious international situation is causing manpower and materials urgently needed for civil projects to be diverted for defence purposes. The Government will co-operate with the Commonwealth to prepare the Australian economy against the possibility of war.

The efforts of Ministers are constantly directed towards the greater development of the State's natural resources. Despite the limitation imposed by shortages of manpower and essential materials, especially steel, substantial progress has been made in the fields of power, water supplies, land settlement, and transport. Western Australia holds an enviable record of industrial peace.

The announcement that the Commonwealth will collaborate fully with the States on the urgent and important matter of food production and in promoting the stabilisation of our rural industries is welcomed by my advisers.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly—

The revenue for the financial year 1950-1951 was £28,156,181 and the expenditure £27,996,834, leaving a surplus of £159,347. Forty per cent. of the total revenue for the year was received by way of income tax reimbursements from the Commonwealth and special grants recommended by the Grants Commission.

Treasury officers of the Commonwealth and States have been examining the problem of Commonwealth-State financial relations and their report will be presented to a conference between the Prime Minister and the Premiers. It is hoped that a solution will be found to the present unsatisfactory arrangement under which the States have become increasingly dependent on the Commonwealth and vulnerable to any changes in its willingness and ability to provide financial assistance.

Mr. President and Honourable Members of the Legislative Council—

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly—

An early opening of the season with widespread and substantial falls of rain in May and June has resulted in good growth of pastures and crops. Heavy rainfall in the North-West, after a sequence of dry seasons, was especially timely and beneficial to the pastoral and banana industries.

The restriction in supplies of superphosphate, due to the reduced amount of sulphur available from oversea sources, threatens to affect rural production adversely unless substitutes for sulphur become available in sufficient quantities. Every effort is being made to increase the production of pyrites for this purpose.

You will be asked to give consideration to legislation to enable the Government to control the distribution of superphosphate.

Under legislation passed last session, the Agriculture Protection Board has been established to administer vermin and noxious weeds control.

The vigorous land settlement policy is showing encouraging results and will be continued, particularly on Crown lands in safe rainfall areas. An area west of the Midland railway and extending northwards to Yandanooka is being classified. When this is completed the land will be made available for development.

Legislation will be placed before you to validate the War Service Land Settlement Agreement. Provision will be made in the Bill to enable ex-servicemen to be granted freehold of farms without undue loss to the Commonwealth or State Governments. To date 570 estates, representing 800 farms, have been purchased for war service land settlement, at a cost of £3,136,000.

The Migration Agreement between the United Kingdom and Australian Governments has been extended. Nearly 12,000 migrants under the assisted passage scheme have arrived in the State. Building tradesmen selected to fill group nominations are now arriving and they will be of valuable assistance to the building programme.

Activity in the goldmining industry is being hampered by increased costs and the continued shortage of labour. Strong representations have been made to the Commonwealth Government with the view to obtaining an increase in the price of gold, and some long-term plan to ensure stability in the industry. Efforts are being made to obtain additional labour from immigration sources. Other minerals, such as lead, asbestos, clay, feldspar, gypsum, iron-ore, manganese, and pyrites, are being produced on a larger scale.

The record production of nearly 815,000 tons of coal last year represented an increase of 64,000 tons over the previous year. The Government recognises that open-cut mining is a temporary expedient to produce more coal quickly and that progressive development of deep mining at Collie must be carried out.

The result of the sinking of a test oil well at North-West Cape by the Ampol Petroleum Company will be watched with the greatest interest.

Legislation will be introduced to bring the Petroleum Act up to date in regard to present-day oil search practice. Proposals will also be placed before you to amalgamate and amend existing legislation relating to mining diseases.

Secondary industry is steadily expanding, mainly through the extension of existing establishments. Every effort is being made to attract new industries and negotiations are proceeding with important firms.

Because of the fundamental need for steel in phases of the State's development, the establishment of a steel industry in

the State is regarded by the Government as being of the utmost importance. In a preliminary report, Messrs. Brasserts Limited of New York have advised that there are no insuperable problems to prevent the establishment of an integrated iron and steel industry on sound economic lines. The final report is awaited.

Plans are well advanced to raise the production of pig iron at Wundowie from the present annual output of 11,000 tons to 18,000 tons. Local foundries are being kept fully supplied with pig iron from this source.

Assistance is being sought from the Commonwealth to carry out an essential research programme with the view to locating fishing grounds nearer to Albany. It is expected that 1,200 whales will be taken and treated this season by the Commonwealth Station and by the station at Point Cloates. Last year crayfish tails exported to the U.S.A. realised 1½ million dollars.

While the importance of immigration to the development and defence of our country is fully recognised, the steep increase in population has added to the problem of providing houses, hospitals and schools. A steady increase in the construction of homes is being maintained. Last year 4,360 homes were completed, an increase of 1,070 on the previous year's figures. A target of 6,000 dwellings, including those imported, is set for 1951. The gradual easing of building controls has continued to the extent that the improving materials supply position will allow. Need to obtain permits to build homes up to an area of 15 squares has been discontinued.

The construction of large industrial and commercial buildings must be restricted whilst there is a heavy leeway in the building of homes, hospitals and schools, but as soon as circumstances permit, opportunities will be extended in that direction.

New timber mills which are gradually commencing operations will have an important influence on timber production. Protection and regeneration of our forests is being continued. Pine planting is being carried out at the rate of 2,000 acres per year. The report of the Royal Commission on Forestry is awaited.

The extensive railway rehabilitation programme is beginning to show results. "W" class light-line locomotives, 60 of which are on order, are arriving from the United Kingdom. An order will shortly be placed for further heavy locomotives. Orders have been placed for 48 main-line diesel-electric locomotives, and delivery is expected to commence early in 1953. Over 3,000 wagons of various types are on order from firms in Western Australia, New South Wales and the United Kingdom, and tenders are being invited for 88 bogie coaches to supplement passenger rolling stock.

The Collie Railway Yards are being reorganised to cope with expanding coal production, and a commencement will be made shortly with the relaying of the South-Western railway with 80 lb. rails and the installation thereon of centralised traffic control to increase track capacity.

Approval has been given to the construction of a railway marshalling yard and locomotive depot at Bassendean. The transfer of the Perth Goods Yard to East Perth will relieve rail and road congestion in the centre of the city. Modernisation of the Railway Workshops at Midland Junction is proceeding.

Due to the inability of the Railways Commission to handle all the freight offering, road transport of primary produce and superphosphate continues. The cumulative effect on the State's road system is giving serious cause for alarm and steps have been taken to control the speed and loading of large transport vehicles.

The provision of temporary parking areas and the abolition of angle parking in St. George's-terrace will relieve traffic congestion in the city.

The progressive replacement of trams with trolley buses and omnibuses on certain routes is continuing.

The Government is proceeding with the implementation of the Tydeman plan for the development of Fremantle Harbour. Improvements for the handling of cargo have already been effected by mechanisation on the wharves and six berths on the North Quay will be equipped for handling general as well as bulk cargo.

The new suction dredge "Sir James Mitchell" is at work on the first stage of the development of Albany Harbour. This work will be expedited as a result of the acceptance by the Government of a tender for the dredging of 1,000,000 cubic yards, the contract for which it is anticipated will be completed by 1952.

The extension of the main breakwater at Bunbury Harbour is in progress and the cutting of a channel from Leschenault Estuary to the sea near Turkey Point has been completed.

The State Government welcomes the arrangements made by the Commonwealth Government for an expert on port control in Britain and abroad to be made available to advise on factors affecting the turn-round of ships.

The policy of giving particular attention to the conservation and distribution of water, which means so much in the development of the State, is being continued. The raising of Mundaring Weir has been completed and other major improvements are being effected in the supply of water to the Eastern Goldfields.

Plant is being moved in preparation for the work of raising the Wellington Dam. Every endeavour is being made to proceed with the Comprehensive Water Scheme as

fast as the materials problem will allow. Provision of water supplies for country towns and key dams in the agricultural areas is proceeding.

Continued progress is being made with irrigation works in the South-West and with drainage works in both the South-West and at Torbay.

Water supplies are also being expanded to meet the needs of the increasing population in the metropolitan area. A new service reservoir has been constructed at Mt. Yokine and another has been commenced.

Sewerage reticulation mains have, where possible, been extended into areas where intensive housing projects are being developed. The provision of sewerage facilities in country towns is proceeding.

Plans have been prepared for an increased programme for the bituminous surfacing of roads. Favourable consideration will be given to the allocation of funds for sealing sections of feeder roads carrying heavy traffic to railways where maintenance costs are unduly high.

The first 25,000 kilowatt turbo alternator in "A" section of the South Fremantle Power Station was brought into operation on the 13th May. Work is being concentrated on the second unit in this section. Construction of the "B" section, in which two similar units will be installed, is in hand.

The progressive conversion of power supplies from 40 to 50 cycles will commence as soon as the second 25,000 kilowatt alternator is placed in satisfactory operation.

Construction work in connection with the South-West Power Scheme is progressing and it is anticipated that before the end of the year electricity generated at Collie will be transmitted to Bunbury and a number of other South-West towns.

Strong representations have been made to the Commonwealth Government to grant taxation relief in the North-West as an incentive to people to settle there. The provision of new town water supplies and improvements to existing supplies are being carried out in the North as conditions allow.

The Air-beef Scheme is in operation again this year and an increased output from the inland abattoirs at Glenroy is expected.

Research operations at the Ord River Station are continuing.

Surveys in connection with a deep water port at Point Torment near Derby have been completed.

It is expected that the new vessel "Dongara," which will be renamed "Kabbarli," will be in service on the North-West coast in October this year. Tenders received for the construction of another new vessel are now under consideration.

New school buildings are being erected as speedily as the building position will permit, to replace outmoded structures and to provide for the expanded enrolment occasioned by the high post-war birthrate and the population increase. Orders have been placed for the purchase of 160 prefabricated classrooms from overseas. A vigorous campaign is being conducted to attract entrants to the teaching profession.

The Government will continue to provide a proportion of building resources to meet increasing hospital requirements. Permanent structures are being erected where the need is most urgent. Elsewhere temporary provision will be made, pending the commencement of permanent buildings. The construction of the second portion of the Royal Perth Hospital is proceeding as quickly as steel supplies will permit. Extensions to the ward accommodation at King Edward Memorial Maternity Hospital will commence this financial year. Negotiations have been opened with a contracting firm from overseas to construct hospital buildings, using mainly imported labour and materials.

The completion and occupation this year of the modern Home at Mt. Henry will assist to meet a long-felt need for up-to-date accommodation for aged women.

Increased subsidies are being paid on behalf of State wards, together with a liberal clothing allowance and increased assistance for higher education. It is proposed to establish hostels for boys and girls in the metropolitan area to accommodate those placed in employment.

The humanitarian interest by the public in natives is gaining impetus. The development of the new policy in this State in connection with native affairs is being closely watched throughout the Commonwealth. The Public Health Department has assumed complete responsibility for the health of the native population and a State-wide nutritional survey has been undertaken. Increased financial assistance to Native Missions has been provided.

The limiting factor in the expansion of the tourist trade is the insufficiency of accommodation.

The report of the Royal Commission on the Local Government Bill has been considered by the Government and legislation will be drafted for submission to Parliament next year. The boundaries of certain country municipalities and road districts are being adjusted in accordance with the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Local Government boundaries.

A Bill will be placed before you to continue the operation of the Prices Control Act.

A Bill is to be introduced to amend the Fire Brigades Act.

You will be asked to consider measures to increase the amount of compensation payable under the Workers' Compensation Act and to grant increases in pensions payable to retired Government employees.

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

His Excellency and members of the Legislative Assembly then withdrew from the Chamber.

[The President resumed the Chair.]

SWEARING-IN OF MEMBERS.

The Clerk announced having received the return of writs for the vacancies in the South-West Province caused by the death of Hon. H. Tuckey and Hon. W. J. Mann, which showed that Charles Harriot Henning and James Murray had been duly elected.

Hon. C. H. Henning and Hon. J. Murray took and subscribed the oath and signed the roll.

BILL—PETROLEUM ACT AMENDMENT.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: 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 Petroleum Act, 1936-1949."

Leave given; Bill introduced and read a first time.

ADMINISTRATOR'S OPENING SPEECH, DISTRIBUTION.

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

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

First Day.

HON. C. H. HENNING (South-West) [3.50]: I move—

That the following Address be presented to His Excellency the Administrator in reply to the Speech he has been pleased to deliver to Parliament:—"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."

May I be permitted to congratulate you, Sir, on the high honour which His Majesty has recently been pleased to confer upon you. It is indeed gratifying that your life work has been so aptly recognised. It is also extremely gratifying to know that the health of His Majesty has improved sufficiently for him to visit Western Australia next year. His proposed visit is arousing the greatest interest, and we are all confident that the loyalty to and interest in the throne which we have always shown in Western Australia will be displayed during His Majesty's stay, particularly as it will be the first time in history that a reigning sovereign will have visited our shores.

I would also like to pay a tribute to the memory of Sir James Mitchell, one of our greatest sons. The State is much poorer for his loss. His tenacity of purpose, his love of humanity and his great love for his native land carried him to the greatest heights that any son of this State can attain. We will all miss him. He was known and loved by young and old. Those who met him found that at heart he was one of them; ordinarily, a most simple man. The development of Western Australia, in which he played so great a part, is a fitting memorial to him. I am here as a result of the regrettable death of Mr. Hobart Tuckey. He served his State in this House, and in various local affairs, for many years. I hope that I will be an able successor

In November we will be welcoming our new Governor, a gentleman of great military standing, and a man with all the attributes which should appeal to Australians. It was my privilege, some 14 or 15 years ago, to be a guest at the mess to which he belonged. The esteem in which he was held by the members of his unit will, I am sure, be reflected in the esteem in which he will be held in Western Australia before he has been long in this State. It is pleasing to note that coal production has reached a record figure. The greatest praise is due to those who made that production possible. I am glad to observe that every effort is to be made to ensure that deep mining is developed and carried on; because, after all, when we look at those figures, we find that production from deep mining today is no greater than it was 10 years ago, and open cuts were started purely and simply because of a war emergency.

It is good to see that the timber industry is progressing and that further mills are being opened. I hope that too much notice will not be taken of the production of scantlings, because there are other industries besides the building industry that require due consideration. One of these industries is that of fruitgrowing. It is extremely difficult to get cases, and without cases we cannot market or export our products from this industry. In the past, the State timber mills set a remark-

able example in producing well over 1,000,000 cases. Let us hope that they will again come up to that mark and that before long we will be able to produce the number of cases required in Western Australia—that is, anything between 2,000,000 and 3,000,000.

Irrigation work is proceeding very well. Land that comes under irrigation will produce almost immediately, but in those irrigation districts we are faced with the difficulty of getting plant to prepare the land to receive water. Last year, 594 acres only were prepared with four machines. Two machines were in splendid order but the other two were in bad condition. That land has been rated and is in production. This year applications have been received for over 800 acres of land to be prepared, but we have only two machines available. The result will be that the land will be rated but the pasture cannot be grown because we will not be able to apply the water properly. Therefore, I hope that every pressure will be brought upon the Government to ensure the supply of extra graders which can be used for only four or five months, during the dry season.

The superphosphate question is a serious one not only for the State, but also for all producers, because it is in fact the life-blood of our primary industries. We do not appear to know what is to be the ultimate curtailment of sulphur supplies, but we do know that in Western Australia we have a substitute in pyrites. It takes approximately one ton of pyrites to make $4\frac{1}{2}$ tons of superphosphate, but that will mean a terrific strain on our railway system because we will require about 100,000 tons of pyrites per annum when the manufacturing plant has been converted and when the railways can handle the transport of this material. I have no doubt that the manufacturing plant will, in due course, be converted, but I am not prepared to say that when the time comes to handle this product, the railways will be able to do so. Last year, well over 1,000 new items of rollingstock were put into use, but 100 more than that number were withdrawn.

To my mind an investigation should be made into the possibility of using sea transport of pyrites in conjunction with that of coal. These investigations should be made by an independent engineer—one from outside the State and one who has experience in the use of sea transport. The Joint Coal Board in New South Wales has said that in that State it has been found far more economical to transport coal by sea than by rail. The distances from the mines there to Newcastle are comparable with the distances from Collie to Bunbury which, I believe, should be set up as a coal-handling port. Last year, I understand, the Commission inquired into this matter and its recommendation was that there should be an investigation such as I suggested earlier.

I noted with much pleasure the promised collaboration between the State and the Commonwealth when dealing with food production. That is particularly required in the South-West. Recently it was announced that a scheme would be put in hand, next October it was hoped, to deal with about 80,000 acres of land—that is, clearing debris and logs. The tractors available are very small ones of about 40 or 50 horsepower, and they are totally incapable of clearing new country. I admit that these tractors will, when the work is completed, make two blades of grass grow where one grew previously, but the pressing need of the South-West is to make grass grow where nothing but timber has grown before. I consider it is absolutely essential, and there are thousands in the South-West who agree with me, to have long-range and ambitious planning—planning that can be divided into two parts: Firstly, the opening up and increasing of the productive area of existing holdings; and secondly, the starting of new settlement. I propose to deal fairly shortly now with increasing productivity on the new holdings. That is one of the two factors affecting the dairying industry, the other being price. I understand that an opportunity will occur at a later date to deal with the question of price.

The butterfat producer is on a Federal basis of 40 cows and 8,000 to 10,000 lb. of butterfat production. That applies throughout Australia, yet in this State our average herd is 23, our production being 3,800 to 4,000 lb. per farm. The production over the last ten years has been practically static. Admittedly, there has been an increase of 8 per cent., but in that time our population has increased by 17 per cent. Yet, by 1960, the Commonwealth expects a population of 10,000,000, and on that basis we in Western Australia can expect over 700,000 or an increase of 27 per cent. At the present time we are importing considerably over half a million pounds' worth of dairy produce—dried and powdered milk, invalid foods, and so on. What is the position going to be like if we do not do something for the dairying industry? The question will arise: Can we afford to neglect that industry? Can we afford the loss from the slaughtering of herds? I maintain that if the industry is neglected, it will be a national calamity.

Let us look at the position. We have far too many under-standard farms. In one road board area alone there are over 460 farms with an average of 220 acres. Only one-third of the holding is cleared and there are only 18 cows or fewer per holding. That is a most uneconomic unit. To improve and increase the capacity of those places is not only of importance to the State; it is definitely vital to the farmer. His lack of clearing and of pasture naturally reduces his standard of living. His standard of living is reduced because he has certain commitments to

meet. Not only is that standard of living lowered, but there is a psychological effect upon the young people who should be our future farmers. They have no security and no hope of independence, and any chance of success for them is most remote. These men, the best we have in the country, are drifting away from the land through lack of opportunity.

I consider that it is necessary for us to undertake a plan that will cost millions of pounds. I am not concerned in the slightest about the cost, because I feel that if we do not develop this country the day is not far distant when somebody else will come in to do it. The solution of the problem is reasonably simple. In the first place, we require a pool of 50 heavy tractors, not 40 or 50 horsepower tractors, but tractors of from 110 to 140 horsepower. The cost of those would be about £500,000, because they are worth about £10,000 each. That, however, would be only the start of the undertaking. The effective life of the tractors would be approximately 15,000 to 17,000 acres per tractor. With 50 of them we could clear without any trouble 250,000 acres of existing farms and could undertake the clearing of another 500,000 acres of new land.

We have also to consider the ability of the farmer to pay for these things. That is not possible on most sub-standard farms except on a long-term basis. This State receives a disabilities grant from the Commonwealth because of its disadvantages in relation to the other States. The dairy industry, in comparison with other industries, is in the same boat as that in which this State finds itself in relation to the other States. Money should be available for payment to private enterprise which should be encouraged in every way to open up this country. The farmer should be allowed terms as liberal as those which are granted him when he takes up conditional purchase land. I hope that at a later date I shall be able to elaborate on this suggestion. We have just lost our greatest son of the twentieth century. What would be a more fitting tribute or a better memorial to Sir James Mitchell than to develop the land he loved so well?

HON. N. E. BAXTER (Central): I formally second the motion.

On motion by Hon. E. H. Gray, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 4.10 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 2nd August, 1951.

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MEETING OF THE ASSEMBLY.

The Legislative Assembly met at 3 p.m., pursuant to proclamation by His Excellency the Governor, which was read by the Clerk (Mr. F. E. Islip).

SUMMONS FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR.

The Speaker and 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 the return of writs for the vacancies in the Maylands and the South Fremantle electorates caused by the death of Mr. H. V. Shearn and Mr. T. Fox, which show that Edward Peate Oldfield and Phillip Richard Lawrence have been duly elected.

Mr. Oldfield and Mr. Lawrence took and subscribed the oath and signed the roll.