

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 31st July, 1952.

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MEETING OF THE ASSEMBLY.

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

SUMMONS FROM THE GOVERNOR.

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

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

QUESTIONS.

MARGARINE.

As to Increasing State Quota.

Mr. NEEDHAM (without notice) asked the Minister representing the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Is he aware that the margarine quota has been increased in the Eastern States?

(2) As butter, at 4s. 2d. per lb. can now be included in the luxury class, so far as people on lower incomes are concerned, will he favourably consider increasing the margarine quota in this State?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied:

(1) and (2) Yes, the Government is aware of the position and a Bill is now being prepared so that it can be introduced early this session.

MIDLAND JUNCTION WORKSHOPS.

As to Employment of Metal Tradesmen.

Mr. BRADY (without notice) asked the Minister for Immigration:

As pamphlets distributed at the Midland Junction workshops state that migrants from Western Europe, skilled in metal

world market is now in the vicinity of 22s. a bushel, we are told that the line should be taken up. I would like to deal extensively with this subject, and I take it I shall have an opportunity to do so later.

I understood from the Governor's Speech that there will be no need for rationing superphosphate this year. I sincerely hope there will not be, but I advise the Minister for Agriculture that if there has to be rationing, and if we really want increased production, then any tribunal created to ration superphosphate should not do so willynilly on a percentage basis. The capacity of a given area of land to produce should be taken into consideration. We have several instances in the farming areas of relatively small plots of land, using not a large quantity of superphosphate, which turn out a maximum amount of foodstuffs each year. The people owning those areas should not be penalised by a reduction in the amount of superphosphate they now get. In the past we have seen men on a quota of 20 tons being threatened with a reduction. In other places we see excessive quotas allowed where there is a minimum amount of production. Under those conditions, there is no inducement to the smaller man to produce to the utmost of his ability.

I was told I had to stop at a certain time today in order to allow people to go, but it was pretty late before I got on my feet. There is one matter I wish to mention, and it will take me only a couple of minutes, although I could talk on the subject for a long while. It refers to the compulsory oat pool legislation. We have fought two world wars, and the price paid in human life and wealth has been enormous. What were they fought for? They were the price of freedom; yet we have some thoroughly good men who have seen active service—something I unfortunately was never able to see—suggesting that there should be a compulsory oat pool. I say this in sorrow and not in anger: that we are apparently prepared to sacrifice our freedom for a mess of pottage.

Hon. C. H. HENNING (South-West: I formally second the motion.

On motion by Hon. G. Fraser, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 4.15 p.m.

trades work, are about to be landed at Fremantle to fill positions at the Midland Junction workshops, will he undertake to see that no positions are filled by these people until metal tradesmen already resident in Western Australia have been employed in vacant positions?

The MINISTER replied:

I have no knowledge of the pamphlet the hon. member states has been circulated, but consideration will be given to our resident metal trades workers.

ROAD DISTRICTS ACT.

As to Amending Legislation.

Mr. J. HEGNEY (without notice) asked the Minister for Local Government:

Bearing in mind the findings of the Royal Commission which was held some years ago, is it the intention of the Minister to bring down a Bill this session either to amend or consolidate the Road Districts Act?

The MINISTER replied:

A Bill is now being dealt with by the Crown Law Department, but when it will be ready for submission to the House, I am not yet in a position to state.

METAL TRADES STRIKE.

As to Broadcast by Premier.

Mr. GRIFFITH (without notice) asked the Premier:

As many members of the general public are not fully informed of the circumstances leading up to the metal trades strike, will he consider making a broadcast to the people of the State, giving full details of the strike?

Mr. Lawrence: Why do you not read the paper?

The PREMIER replied:

From the Government angle, I think full publicity has been given, especially in relation to the Government's action—

Mr. Hoar: What action?

The PREMIER:—or stand with regard to the metal trades strike.

Mr. Lawrence: There has not been any action.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: The Government's inaction!

The PREMIER: That can be well and truly debated.

Mr. Lawrence: It will be.

The PREMIER: The hon. member can attempt to do so if he so desires. I have clearly indicated the Government's attitude regarding the metal trades strike. The Government stands firm for arbitration and it has no intention of departing from that stand. Negotiations are now taking place and I hope that within the next day

or two the strike will end. If it does not, I think there is some merit in the suggestion made by the member for Canning.

BILL—FRIENDLY SOCIETIES ACT AMENDMENT.

The PREMIER: 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 "A Bill for an Act to amend the Friendly Societies Act, 1894-1948".

Leave given; Bill introduced and read a first time.

GOVERNOR'S OPENING SPEECH, DISTRIBUTION.

Mr. SPEAKER: Accompanied by hon. members of this Chamber, I attended His Excellency the Governor in the Legislative Council Chamber to hear the Speech which His Excellency was pleased to deliver to members of both Houses of Parliament. For the sake of greater accuracy, I have caused printed copies of the Speech to be distributed amongst members of this Chamber.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

First Day.

MR. GRIFFITH (Canning) [3.45]: I move—

That the following Address be presented to His Excellency the 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."

The Speech delivered by His Excellency the Governor, Hon. Sir Charles Gairdner, in another place this afternoon is, I hope, the first of many he will make to Parliament and to the people of the State. I would like to express my very keen appreciation of the fact that the late King, King George the Sixth, saw fit during his lifetime to appoint a Governor from the Motherland to come to this State. With the passing of His Majesty, the British Commonwealth of Nations lost a monarch who was an inspiration to his people and was much loved by them.

Following him, in the second Elizabethan period, comes Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, a young woman turning from the sad bereavement of her father's death to take up the task he had relinquished. Upon her now rests the responsibility in times as gravely dangerous as those which confronted her namesake 400 years ago.

This young Queen, the mother of two infant children, has been called upon to assume the tremendous and magnificent task of carrying out the duties associated with her position as lawful sovereign of Great Britain, Ireland, and the British Dominions beyond the seas, including the State of Western Australia.

We in Western Australia are part of the British Commonwealth of Nations, and today there is even a greater necessity than before for loyalty and co-operation among the people of the British Commonwealth. In Western Australia we look forward keenly to the visit of Her Majesty and the Duke of Edinburgh to our State.

The Governor's Speech makes reference to many matters concerning the development of this country. It particularly mentions the progress made by the Government in various fields. Some of the important matters referred to are land settlement, housing, transport, the North-West, railways and tramways, port development, water supplies, education, health, native affairs; and there are many other items.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Anything about housing two-unit families?

Mr. GRIFFITH: In order that the hon. member may have his afternoon tea at four o'clock, I will not answer his question.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Tell us something about two-unit families.

Mr. GRIFFITH: I would like to congratulate the Government on the progress it has shown.

Mr. Lawrence: You will get on!

Mr. GRIFFITH: I would like to do so because it is obvious that the members on the opposite side are too prejudiced to appreciate the progress that has been made. The Governor's Speech refers to industrial relationships and it is to this subject I desire to turn my attention. In recent years the relationship that has existed between employer and employee in Western Australia resulted in this State being very peaceful. But this relationship has been badly marred by the metal trades strike. We are now in the 23rd week of the strike—a strike which has caused the public a great deal of inconvenience; which has given rise to unemployment, and through which many women and children have suffered.

Mr. J. Hegney: The Government did nothing to try to settle it.

Mr. Yates: How would you know?

Mr. GRIFFITH: Through this strike, I repeat, many women and children have suffered. Western Australia will take years to recover from the effects of this metal trades strike, which was started, and has continued, to satisfy the dictates of certain union leaders.

Mr. Lawrence: All the more reason why the Government should have stepped in and settled it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The Government has not a clue.

Mr. GRIFFITH: What is the cause of this strike?

Several members interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. GRIFFITH: I doubt very much if the member for Middle Swan would know.

Mr. J. Hegney: I know a great deal more than you think.

Mr. GRIFFITH: Of course, the hon. member is not the brightest boy in the class.

The Premier: Do members on the other side of the House know anything about this pamphlet?

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The Premier should look after his blood pressure.

Mr. GRIFFITH: I am satisfied that there are many members of the public who do not know the real cause of the strike. It is for that reason that I asked the Premier the question I did, and I hope he will give consideration to making a detailed broadcast to the people so that they will know what has gone on in this State for the past 23 weeks. I propose briefly to summarise the events which led up to the strike. First of all, I would like to consider the matters of arbitration and conciliation. As I understand—

Mr. McCulloch: That would not be much.

Mr. GRIFFITH: As I understand it, arbitration and conciliation represent the means by which a difference of opinion may be settled between employer and employee. There are certain union leaders whose attitude seems to be that arbitration is all right so long as they get what they demand.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Did the Attorney General prepare your speech for you?

Mr. GRIFFITH: But when the Arbitration Court does not give them what they demand, then arbitration is of no value at all. In answer to the Leader of the Opposition, this speech was not prepared by the Attorney General.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: It sounds very much like it.

Mr. GRIFFITH: As far as the Leader of the Opposition is concerned, he is one who agrees that this strike should be settled by arbitration; he wrote a letter to the Press and said so.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: I strongly believe in it. But the Government had no clues, or the strike would have been settled long ago.

The Premier: By meeting the Communist leaders and toadying to them.

The Minister for Lands: The Leader of the Opposition seems to be devoid of clues.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. GRIFFITH: I propose to summarise the events which led up to the strike for the benefit of members of the Opposition who apparently do not know what happened.

Mr. J. Hegney: What about afternoon tea?

Mr. GRIFFITH: On the 26th November, 1951, after a general hearing, the State Arbitration Court issued an award covering private industry employment of members of the metal trades unions. At the same time—and these facts are irrefutable, because they are recorded in the proceedings of the court—the Galvin award was in the course of being heard and Mr. Justice Jackson—

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: You—

Mr. GRIFFITH: If the Leader of the Opposition will allow me to continue without interruption, I will tell him something that he apparently does not know. At the same time, Mr. Justice Jackson, who is President of the Arbitration Court here, asked the parties concerned whether they would like to wait for the Galvin award or would like his findings issued at that time. The union leaders said, "No, do not wait for the Galvin award; issue your findings." As a matter of fact, Mr. Gibson, whom I am sure members opposite know, said, "Why wait for the wise men of the East?" or words to that effect.

The Galvin award was issued on the 16th January, 1952, and although nobody here was working under that particular award, organised opposition from the Eastern States spread to this State. That is irrefutable. Nobody in this State in the Metal Trades Union worked under the Galvin award. The result of the award was a strike in all States. It is interesting to note that in the Eastern States unionists belonging to the metal trades unions there went out on strike for periods of up to nine weeks and then returned to work.

Mr. Lawrence: Why?

Mr. GRIFFITH: Not so in Western Australia. The member for South Fremantle could possibly answer his question better than I.

Mr. Lawrence: Possibly I could.

Mr. GRIFFITH: The unions in Western Australia have been directed to keep the strike going.

Mr. Lawrence: By whom?

Mr. GRIFFITH: And they have done so. Again the hon. member might be a better judge than I, in view of his affiliations—

Mr. Lawrence: Stand up to your statement!

Mr. GRIFFITH: In view of the hon. member's affiliations with certain people on the wharf, he would be a better judge than I.

Mr. Lawrence: I will deal with you on this question.

Mr. GRIFFITH: The Government has been asked to intervene in the dispute. The union leaders have asked the Government to override the Arbitration Court.

Mr. Lawrence: Why did not the Government get in early and do the job itself?

Mr. GRIFFITH: The Government has rightly refused to interfere with the functions of the Arbitration Court. The Government refused to deal with the striking unions on the question of margins.

Mr. Graham: Sat down and did nothing!

Mr. GRIFFITH: My word! You are a bright boy!

Mr. Graham: That is secondhand by now.

Mr. GRIFFITH: The Government offered to appoint a mediator in Mr. Schnaars.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: When?

Mr. GRIFFITH: The Government offered to appoint a mediator to discuss questions other than those dealing with margins.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: When did it do this?

Mr. GRIFFITH: Some weeks ago.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: No, some days ago.

Mr. GRIFFITH: He was to deal with questions other than margins. The Leader of the Opposition wrote a letter to "The West Australian" and said that the Government could hardly be expected to have any discussions with the strike leaders on the question of margins.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: I did not say that at all.

Mr. GRIFFITH: I did not want to have to quote from this extract, but I will.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: You have used the wrong word.

Mr. GRIFFITH: On the 10th June, 1952, the Leader of the Opposition—I presume it is he; it says "Mr. A. R. G. Hawke, Northam"—said this in the concluding paragraph of his letter—

It is hardly likely that the Government would agree to anything regarding margins.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: That is different altogether. It is totally different from what you said.

Mr. GRIFFITH: The letter read—

It is hardly likely the Government would agree to anything regarding margins for skill as it is clearly a matter for Arbitration Court decision.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: I still say that; but that is not what you said a moment ago.

Mr. GRIFFITH: There is no question about that.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The member for Canning should be careful not to misrepresent what someone has said.

Mr. GRIFFITH: The member for Canning has not misrepresented anything.

The Attorney General: Would the Leader of the Opposition interfere with the Arbitration Court on the question of margins? He will not answer that one.

Mr. GRIFFITH: That is what I was coming to. What did the Leader of the Opposition mean if he did not mean—

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The member for Canning said I stated in the Press report that the Government should not have any discussions with the union leaders about margins. I did not say that at all.

Mr. GRIFFITH: I did not say that.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: You did say that.

Mr. GRIFFITH: I said the Government should not have any consideration of the matter with the strike leaders on the question of margins. Neither it should.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The member for Canning used the word, "discussions."

Mr. GRIFFITH: The way was left wide open for negotiations by reason of the fact that the Premier said he would recommend to the President of the Arbitration Court that a mediator be appointed to discuss matters other than margins.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: When did he do this?

Mr. GRIFFITH: Some weeks ago.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Five days ago.

The Premier: In his own good time.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Twenty-six weeks too late.

The Premier: Not a day too late!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canning will proceed.

Mr. GRIFFITH: It seems evident that members opposite do not intend to allow me to finish this speech.

Mr. J. Hegney: What about afternoon tea?

The Premier: Go out and get something if you want it!

Mr. GRIFFITH: The member for Middle Swan would always think about afternoon tea rather than the affairs of his electorate.

Mr. J. Hegney: They are not so controversial.

Mr. GRIFFITH: This is controversial only because the hon. member is on the side of the strike leaders.

Mr. Styants: It is controversial because we will not agree with you.

Mr. GRIFFITH: There is no question that this strike has received strong communist support.

Mr. J. Hegney: Where from?

Mr. GRIFFITH: As a result, it has inflicted great hardship on our people.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: I hope that before you complete your speech, you will tell the House something about Government policy on high prices.

Mr. GRIFFITH: The only thing I will say on that is—

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: That it has not got one!

Mr. GRIFFITH: —that when the time comes that the hon. member is prepared to pay a man for what he produces and not for what he eats, there might be an answer to his question. Is this the sort of loyalty that we are entitled to? Is this the sort of co-operation that we can expect in order that our State may reach the stage of production necessary for its development? It is certainly not the spirit of arbitration that was envisaged by the late Alex McCallum when he was Minister for Works and introduced his amendments to the Arbitration Act over 20 years ago. I do believe that the average trade unionist in this country is a decent, hard-working individual.

Mr. J. Hegney: Really!

Mr. GRIFFITH: I do not include the hon. member. I believe that the average trade unionist is anxious to do a fair day's work for a fair day's pay.

Mr. J. Hegney: More than you ever did!

The Minister for Lands: The member for Middle Swan had better go quiet, or I will tell a story about him.

Mr. J. Hegney: You would not be game to get up!

Mr. GRIFFITH: I am sure the member for Middle Swan would have only an academic interest in hard work.

The Minister for Lands: He does not know what it means.

Mr. GRIFFITH: As I was trying to say, I believe the average trade unionist is a decent hard-working citizen who is anxious to do a fair day's work for a fair day's pay and in that way gain security for his wife and family.

Mr. Brady: When will he get a fair day's pay?

Mr. GRIFFITH: He will respect his fellow men and have regard for the laws of the land.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Tell us something about the average capitalist.

Mr. GRIFFITH: There are, however, people who wish to violate our laws and whose endeavour it is to make arbitration a positive farce by defying the laws of arbitration—and these people go unpunished! His Excellency's Speech makes mention of the fact that the Government will introduce a Bill to amend the Arbitration Act, and I trust that the measure will be brought before Parliament in good time and that it will have the desired effect. To those union leaders who provoke industrial unrest and endeavour to make arbitration a farce, I say: "Go back to work and if you have a grievance, take it to the Arbitration Court. When that court has issued its finding, you should be satisfied to accept its verdict."

Mr. Lawrence: Perhaps the court is not infallible.

Mr. GRIFFITH: Let us keep on working and try to preserve Western Australia as the great place in which to live that it is today.

Mr. MANNING (Harvey): I formally second the motion.

On motion by Hon. A. R. G. Hawke, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE PREMIER (Hon. D. R. McLarty—Murray): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 4.30 p.m. on Tuesday, the 5th August.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 4.7 p.m.

Legislative Council

Tuesday, 5th August, 1952.

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

DEMISE OF HIS MAJESTY KING GEORGE VI.; ACCESSION OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II.

Message in Reply.

The PRESIDENT: I have received the following Message from His Excellency the Governor:—

The Governor has the honour to advise the Legislative Council of Western Australia that he has received the following acknowledgment by the Assistant Private Secretary to the Queen to the resolutions of condolence and congratulation passed by the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Western Australia:—

Her Majesty desires me to convey through you her warm and sincere thanks to the members of the Legislative Council in the Parliament of the State of Western Australia for their resolutions of condolence and congratulations, which have afforded Her Majesty the utmost encouragement and support and which she very greatly appreciates.

CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES.

Election of Hon. J. A. Dimmitt.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I move—

That Hon. J. A. Dimmitt be elected as Chairman of Committees.

Question put and passed.