

# PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES.

(HANSARD)

## Fourth Session of the Twenty-First Parliament.

*Parliament was prorogued on the 22nd June, 1955, to the 4th August, 1955, when it met for the despatch of business.*

*Parliament was opened by His Excellency the Governor.*

### Legislative Council

Thursday, 4th August, 1955.

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Parliament and the State have suffered by the untimely passing of the Honourables C. H. Henning and R. J. Boylen, members of the Legislative Council. They both rendered distinguished service to Western Australia.

The economic condition of the State continues to be sound. There has been a satisfactory sale for our primary products with the exception of wheat. Secondary industry is rapidly increasing its production. Full employment continues. Our population is increasing at a faster rate than that of any other State. We are experiencing a period of outstanding development and progress which will be a landmark in the State's history.

Western Australia has enjoyed a year free from industrial disputes of a major nature. Government employees are receiving the benefit of increased margins. However, the serious problem of rising prices and the pegged quarterly basic wage adjustments remains. Bills will be placed before you to provide for price control and the automatic quarterly adjustment of the basic wage. Amending rents and tenancies legislation will also be introduced.

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

Revenue for the financial year 1954-1955 amounted to £45,719,845 and expenditure to £46,203,889, leaving a deficit of £484,044. Loan expenditure amounted to £16,525,000. Loan funds available to the State for the current year are certain to be below the figure required to meet urgent needs.

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

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

The current season in the south-west districts is particularly good. In the wheat belt a timely break of the season assured good planting. Excellent growing

#### 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 fourth session of the Twenty-first Parliament.

#### GOVERNOR'S OPENING SPEECH.

His Excellency the Governor entered the Council Chamber at 3.5 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 fourth session of the Twenty-first Parliament of Western Australia.

conditions have continued in the southern districts and although shortage of rain and heavy frosts have temporarily retarded growth in the northern and eastern wheat areas, there are prospects of at least normal returns from both crops and stock.

The national economy requires that our exports from primary production should at least be maintained. The return to free trading for the purchase of food-stuffs by Great Britain, makes quality and cost of production critical factors in effecting competitive sales overseas. The activities of Government departments, particularly the scientific services of the Department of Agriculture, will be intensified in an endeavour to assist growers to meet the problems involved.

The demand for Crown land continues and during the forthcoming year areas will be made available for selection at Esperance and in the Hill River District.

About 45,000 acres of the recently purchased estate between Bakers Hill and York will soon be available for closer settlement.

Nine-hundred ex-servicemen have been placed on farms under the War Service Land Settlement Scheme, and the work of developing approximately 350 farms, which should meet the requirements of the remaining applicants, is proceeding.

Approximately 93,500 migrants have arrived in Western Australia since July, 1947. Nomination for British migrants under the assisted passage scheme have increased to an average of 270 persons per month.

Goldmining activity has been well maintained. The Big Bell mine has closed, but operations at Bullfinch are extending and Norseman continues to show impressive results. A new State Battery is operating successfully at Menzies.

The Government drilling programme is being extended, six diamond drills operating in various areas.

The Government, together with all concerned in the coal industry, is giving earnest attention to the problem of meeting competition from other fuels in order to ensure the best economic use of our coal deposits.

The search for oil continues and extensive programmes of exploration have been undertaken.

The industrial possibilities of Western Australia are increasingly being realised both overseas and in the Eastern States, and judging from frequent inquiries covering a wide range of industry, it can be anticipated that industrial expansion will be even further accelerated.

Fourteen-hundred tons of Wundowie charcoal pig iron were exported overseas during the last 12 months and all surplus production for the next 12 months is already booked for shipment abroad. Orders

for an additional 30,000 tons have so far been refused because of a lack of production capacity at Wundowie.

Ministers are now giving close consideration to proposals which aim at greatly expanding the industry's capacity to produce pig iron.

The total value of last year's production from the fishing industry, including crayfishing, whaling and pearl-shell, was £3,202,500.

Determined and successful effects have been made to improve housing conditions throughout the State and the State Housing Commission last year completed the record number of 4,000 houses.

Approximately 60 houses have been built for native families and more will be provided this year. Good progress has been made in the erection of homes in North-West towns.

During the year the State Housing Commission housed 600 families suffering eviction.

Advice and financial assistance have been given to the manufacturers of building materials and there is now no shortage of the materials produced in this State.

Funds will be made available under the recent amendment to the State Housing Act for supplementary assistance to home builders.

A Bill will be submitted to ratify the agreement with the Commonwealth Government for the sale of rental homes.

Sawn timber production is being maintained at record figures and timber supplies are generally satisfactory.

Additional areas have been dedicated as State forests and pine plantations are being extended.

Railway passenger and freight train time schedules have been considerably reduced by the introduction of diesel locomotives and rail-cars. The faster and more frequent services have resulted in a heavy increase in suburban patronage. The net revenue position of the railways has substantially improved.

Many extensions and improvements have been made in the metropolitan passenger services operated by the Tramways Department.

Several bus shelters are now in use and others will shortly be provided.

The Metropolitan Regional Plan has been completed and a committee representing the Government, the Opposition and local authorities, has been appointed to examine and report on the proposals. Development in all parts of the region is proceeding rapidly and Ministers appreciate the importance and urgency of this problem.

Action is being taken to carry out alterations to metropolitan local government boundaries, which will reduce the number of metropolitan local authorities to six.

A Bill will be introduced to protect the rights of officers affected by the amalgamation.

The Local Government Bill, introduced last session will be submitted for further consideration.

Special attention has been given to the expansion and improvement of country water supplies.

Considerable work has been carried out on the comprehensive water scheme. It is expected that the pipeline between Wellington Dam and Narrogin will be completed before June, 1956, 62 out of 80 miles having now been laid. A request has been submitted to the Commonwealth Government that the Commonwealth £ for £ subsidy should be extended to cover the revised estimate of cost and also that the full amount of the subsidy already approved should be made available to the State immediately.

A commencement has been made with the Serpentine project and extensive work is being carried out to meet the constantly increasing demand for water and sewerage in the metropolitan area.

A Bill will be introduced to assist in maintaining the Swan River in a clean and healthy condition.

Dredging of the first stage of the channels through the Success and Parmelia Banks was completed to enable the first oil tanker to berth at the Kwinana Refinery jetty in January.

The first vessel berthed at the new No. 1 Wharf, at Albany in March.

A record sum of £4,400,000 was expended last year by the Main Roads Department and 450 miles of road were surfaced with bitumen. In the North-West expenditure on roads was over £600,000.

Legislation will be introduced providing for the indenture to the Main Roads Department of cadet engineers.

Two public loans totalling £2,760,000 floated by the State Electricity Commission were fully subscribed.

The electric power position continues to be satisfactory. All major plant at the South Fremantle power station has been placed in service and considerable work is proceeding at the East Perth and Bunbury stations. Nearly 1,000 farmers have been connected to the South-West Power Scheme.

Following a resolution passed last session a delegation representing all parties in the State Parliament interviewed

the Prime Minister in June and placed before him proposals for Commonwealth assistance in the development of the North-West and Kimberleys. It is hoped that favourable decisions will be forthcoming.

The passenger vessel "Koojarra" is expected to be in commission early in 1956 and an order has been placed for another passenger vessel to be delivered by the middle of 1957. Immediate relief in the movement of cargo has been obtained by the charter of two Commonwealth-owned vessels.

It is anticipated that 29,000 head of cattle will be treated this year by the Wyndham Meat Works. Exceptionally good rains have fallen and weights and quality of cattle are very good.

The record number of 207 classrooms erected during 1954 eased overcrowding to some extent and catered for the greatly increased school enrolments of about 6,000 per annum. More classrooms are urgently required.

Building has commenced on four new metropolitan high schools. Four more in the metropolitan area and three country high schools are planned for the near future. Secondary education in rural areas is now provided by eight high schools and 26 junior high schools.

Considerable developments are taking place in technical education. A heavy metal trades school is in course of erection at Wembley and extension to the building trades section at Leederville and a new automotive trade school are to be commenced in the coming year.

The Government has accepted the recommendations of a committee appointed to inquire into the establishment of a medical school in the University of Western Australia. Work on conversion of buildings has commenced and it is planned to begin clinical teaching in 1957.

Hospital improvements throughout the State are being undertaken to the full extent of loan funds available for this purpose. A new maternity hospital has been opened at Midland Junction and work has commenced on a 200 bed chest hospital at Hollywood. The construction of the second section of the Royal Perth Hospital is expected to be completed by June, 1956.

A decision on the selection of a site for a new mental hospital will be made at an early date. New building construction now proceeding at Lemnos and Whitby Falls will relieve some of the overcrowding in mental hospitals and it is anticipated that reconstruction at Claremont will permit of a reception hospital being opened during this financial year.

Further advances in the prevention and treatment of psychiatric illness will be made when a new clinic is opened in West Perth late in the year.

The Government is securing premises for the short term care of mentally incurable children to provide relief for parents.

The Native Welfare Act passed last session marks a progressive step in the welfare, advancement and assimilation of the native population and many restrictive and punitive measures derogatory to the interests of the natives have been removed.

Financial assistance has been rendered to religious missions in their important work for the native welfare.

Reorganisation is proceeding to improve and enlarge the activities of the Child Welfare Department.

Funds have been set aside for the provision of two training centres for delinquent boys. These institutions will provide general education and specialised training to remedy the maladjustments which lead to delinquency. The Child Welfare Reception Home is to be remodelled and renovated in accordance with modern requirements.

Other legislation will include—

A Bill to increase benefits under the Workers' Compensation Act.

A Bill to enable the State Insurance Office to undertake general insurance.

A Bill to encourage the Junior Farmers' Movement.

A Bill to control the use of spear fishing guns to ensure safety on beaches and in restricted areas.

Bills dealing with superannuation and coalmine workers' pensions.

A Libraries Bill.

A Bill to amend the Soil Conservation Act.

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 resumed the Chair.]

## QUESTIONS.

### BLUE ASBESTOS.

#### Marketing.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER (without notice) asked the Minister for the North-West: Has he received any communications from the Federal Government in connection with the marketing of blue asbestos from Wittenoom Gorge?

The MINISTER replied:

No word has yet been received from the Prime Minister in connection with the request.

## INDICTABLE CHILDBIRTH CASES.

### Summary Trial.

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON (without notice) asked the Chief Secretary:

Can he advise the House whether any decision has been made with regard to my question asked last session, i.e.: That steps be taken to have indictable child-birth cases concerning unmarried mothers tried summarily instead of by the Criminal Court?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

Before dealing with the question, might I suggest to members that they give notice of questions, because the Ministers in this Chamber are placed at a very grave disadvantage in that they may be, have been and will be, unless members play the game with them, asked questions about departments with which they have no dealings at all, other than from a Cabinet point of view. Also, from the questioners' standpoint, it is much more desirable that they give notice of the questions because they will then have given full thought to their questions before asking them, and will be assured of getting full answers. When we give answers to questions we like to know that we are giving the full information as desired by members. We do not like a half-baked story. If it becomes an ordinary practice for members to ask questions without notice, it will be possible for members to get the idea that the Ministers in this Chamber are walking encyclopaedias whereas, as a matter of fact, we are not even quiz kids. I hope that members will give notice of questions when, both from their point of view and that of the Minister, much more satisfactory answers will be given.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: The Minister is not in order in making a statement of the position now.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I was merely leading up to the answer to the question asked. I conclude by saying I would like the hon. member to put her question on the notice paper.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT BILL.

*Interest by Local Authorities and Passage.*

Hon. E. M. DAVIES (without notice) asked the Minister for Local Government:

(1) Are local authorities exhibiting any great interest in the Local Government Bill?

(2) Will the Government proceed with the Bill this session?

(3) Has the Minister any idea when the Bill is likely to be passed?

The MINISTER replied:

There can be exceptions to all rules, and naturally, this is one because it affects one of my own departments. The replies are:

- (1) Yes, there is keen interest throughout the State regarding the Local Government Bill. As a matter of fact, in all portions of the State that I have visited, I have found very keen interest by the local authorities. They have questioned me considerably about it. Only the other day I received a letter from one of the largest municipalities outside of the metropolitan area, in which it pointed out to me that it was desirous of making a by-law, but the Municipal Corporations Act of today did not permit of its doing so, although under the Road Districts Act it is possible for a road board to make the same by-law. The municipality also pointed out—as I knew, of course, this being my own Bill—that provision was made in the new Local Government Bill to cover that point. The municipality's final question was whether we would get the Bill through as quickly as possible.
- (2) Yes, the Government does intend at the earliest possible moment, to proceed with the Local Government Bill. It will be taken up in the Legislative Assembly at the point at which it was finished last year.
- (3) I would not like to hazard a guess or make a statement as to when it will go through Parliament. That is something which is entirely in the hands of members. I cannot see any great obstacle to the Bill passing through all stages in both Houses this session.

#### TRAFFIC.

##### *Position of Stop Signs.*

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON (without notice) asked the Chief Secretary:

Will the Minister reconsider re-placing some stop signs which unnecessarily hamper motorists while not having much value as safety measures at those points.

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

This question affects my department and in reply I say, yes, we will consider re-erecting the signs at various spots, and also investigating areas where there have been complaints that signs are unnecessarily posted. I say to the hon. member that attention will be given to that phase.

#### BILL—CEMETERIES ACT AMENDMENT

The CHIEF SECRETARY: 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 for "An Act to amend the Cemeteries Act, 1897-1946."

Leave given; Bill introduced and read a first time.

#### GOVERNOR'S SPEECH, DISTRIBUTION.

The PRESIDENT: For the sake of greater accuracy, I have obtained copies of the Speech that His Excellency the Governor has been pleased to deliver to Parliament. These will be distributed amongst members.

#### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

##### *First Day.*

HON. J. D. TEAHAN (North-East) [3.40]: 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 Council 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.

Along with His Excellency, I wish to record my regret at the passing of two members of this Chamber; I refer to the late Hon. R. J. Boylen and the late Hon. C. H. Henning. Both of them were held in high esteem in this Chamber and each contributed in no small way to the debates.

I noted from His Excellency's Speech that it is the Government's intention this year to introduce legislation for an automatic adjustment of the basic wage. In my opinion, no need is greater than an increase in wages for the working man.

Hon. G. Bennetts: And the pensioners.

Hon. J. D. TEAHAN: Two years ago the Federal Arbitration Court in its wisdom decided that if there were no further automatic adjustments to the basic wage perhaps the economy of Australia would be stabilised. While many did not wish this step to be put into practice, I am sure the workers decided that if our economy could be stabilised in that way, they would forgo any increase in wages. Unfortunately that pious hope has not been fulfilled, and today the worker finds that his wages are 30s. a week below what they should be. That has left him in a sorry plight, and I often wonder how a man on the lower rung of the ladder, or on the basic wage, carries on. Perhaps I should say I wonder how the woman of the house carries on, because she is responsible for stretching the sum she receives to cover the needs of her family.

Most of us have read articles which recently appeared in one of our newspapers and which were designed to show how persons lived on certain incomes. After reading those articles, I think it is a miracle how people can make do on the money some of them receive, particularly those on the basic wage. I should say that some of those ladies have missed their vocation, and, instead of being housewives, should be State Treasurers, because I am certain the Treasurer would like some advice on how to make £12 cover various goods and services in the same way as some of these housewives have had to do. This becomes even more apparent when we consider the question of rents. I have made a short survey of the position, and it appears that the average rental is about £4 a week.

Hon. A. R. Jones: They do not all pay rent.

Hon. J. D. TEAHAN: That is true; but the average rent is £4 a week and that is not for a grand house. I had a look at a few of them that are not close to the city, and I was informed by the house-holders that they were paying an average of about £3 18s. a week, which is near enough to £4. I would not like to be called upon to pay £8 a fortnight from the basic wage. In addition, there is the extra expense of travelling to and from work for people who live removed from the city, and I would say that that cost would be about £1 a week.

I also note that the Government intends to introduce a Bill to cover price control in this State. This State is one of the few—in fact I think it is the only one other than Victoria—which have no control over prices in some form or another. Even South Australia which, for many years, has had an anti-Labour Government, has price control, and it exercises that control over a number of ordinary household items. So I wish the Government well in its bid to introduce this legislation, and I feel sure that some of the arguments that have been used in this Chamber in the past in opposition to this step will fade away on this occasion.

Perhaps I should thank you, Mr. President, for reminding me that in the House today is Mr. J. W. Langsford who was one of the early members of this Chamber. I believe he was elected in 1904 and can claim the honour of being the oldest living ex-member of the Legislative Council. I hope he will live for many years so that he can attend functions such as these.

The Government has achieved a fine record with housing, and His Excellency mentioned that the State Housing Commission has built 4,000 homes this year. That is a notable achievement, and it is pleasing to see that this year the Government intends to give greater assistance to home-builders. We often hear people talk about

"isms" and the various ideologies. But a matter of dissatisfaction among many people is the fact that they do not own their homes. If a person owns his home, he takes a pride in it. It should be the aim of all Governments, as it has been the aim of this one, to provide every person with a home of his own, and we will all be happy to see that state of affairs come to pass. I wish the Government every success in this field, and I hope that its figures for home-building next year will be as good as they have been for the last year.

In the field of education I was pleased—as I am certain everybody else was—to note that the Premier and his Government have decided to accept the recommendations of a committee for the establishment of a medical school at the University of Western Australia. Dr. Hislop, who is a member of this Chamber, is most interested in this subject, and the establishment of a medical school is a hobby-horse of his. I am glad to see that the Government intends to proceed with the building of a school and to know that plans are being prepared. Let us hope that the day is not far distant when graduates from that school will be giving service to this State, to Australia and to the rest of the world. I am certain it will turn out graduates equal to any that come from older institutions.

It is also pleasing to note that quite a number of high schools are being established, and I refer particularly to junior high schools. In my own district there are two. They are being well attended and certainly fill a long-felt want. They have obviated the necessity of children being obliged to travel long distances in order to attend such institutions.

While that was a most optimistic note in the Governor's Speech, it was certainly not pleasing to read that the University Senate had decided to raise the entrance fees for the Junior and Leaving examinations. I am not finding fault with the University Senate, because its resources are limited and it has to cut its coat according to its cloth. But it certainly does not make the task of those who have to find the finance any easier. My hope is that the Treasurer may see fit to make some grant to the University Senate that will enable the children to participate in those examinations with only a nominal fee or, better still, no fee at all.

Why should there be an entrance fee? It is not very long ago that the entrance fee was £1. I think that, at present, it is £3 10s. for the Junior examination, and that for the Leaving is higher. On those families who have two members taking the examinations—one may be taking the Junior and the other the Leaving—it would be a great impost, especially when they have to make sacrifices during the year to see their children have all the necessities of school life—books, etc.—and

then at the end find they have to face the heavy task of providing entrance fees. I hope some way will be found out of that difficulty in the future.

Turning now to hospitals, I fully agree with the attention the Government has given to country hospitals. Many times I have travelled with the Minister for Health, and it is indeed satisfying to note the interest and sympathy he has for small country hospitals. Places like Laverton, Wiluna and Cue have no doctor at hand, and a country hospital is all the more necessary. Unfortunately, in most of the places, the buildings are nothing to be proud of. So we hope the time is not far distant when more attention will be given to this matter.

I must make reference to the hospital at Meekatharra. The building that has served at Meekatharra was little better than a camp. It was hessian-lined and a very poor structure. We often wonder how doctors, matrons and nurses carried on under such circumstances; and the more I see of places like this, and the more one comes in contact with the nursing staff, the greater regard one has for their profession and for them. Their salary seems to be their least consideration. They would certainly like the conditions to be better, but their main thought seems to be for their patients.

Travelling to the smaller hospitals, as I have done, one comes away with a very high regard for the nursing profession. Very often a call is made at a hospital and on inquiry as to what a particular building is—it may look for all the world like a laundry, or a shed—the reply is, "That that is where the night sister sleeps because it is quiet." That is not in keeping with what is desired at this time.

I have seen the Meekatharra hospital in the various stages of construction, and it looks as though it is going to be one of the most efficient hospitals outside Perth. The comfort of the patient is being considered, and the living quarters are such that anyone would be proud to dwell in them. Such buildings as these will not only be instrumental in bringing comfort to the patients and improving the efficiency of the staff, but will also prove much more attractive to nurses. Those nurses who have been a little slow to move into the country districts will be better catered for in the future.

The infant health clinics are doing a wonderful job, and it is most pleasing to the mothers and everyone else to see these centres being established. One has recently been opened in my own home town of Boulder, and it is doing a wonderful job. It is also most heartening to note that there will be a mobile clinic which will travel along the Trans-line. It will bring a great deal of comfort to mothers who may be isolated and perhaps have no medical aid other than to see the clinic sister once a month or so.

I would now like to turn my attention to the mining industry. I have attended a number of meetings with prospectors recently; and while prospecting is at a low ebb at the moment, those who are there are the pioneers. In fact, to be a prospector entails hard work, isolation and privation, and only the hardy types and good citizens are attracted to it. For that reason I would ask the Government, and the Minister for Mines to be gracious when dealing with the requests of these people; to be generous to them, because then the State will reap the benefit. The Government has certainly been generous inasmuch as a very efficient and up-to-date State battery has been built at Menzies, and others are being modernised to such an extent that greater extraction can be expected by the prospectors who complain little but who are glad to have these batteries modernised.

I would like to make some reference to the pastoral industry, particularly as it affects the Murchison district. I know the district very well and I have travelled in it several times in my short period as a member of Parliament. There is one thing I would like to see—and I am certain the pastoralists would also like to see it—and that is a research station in places like Wiluna. Wiluna is a very fertile part of this country; and I feel certain if some research were undertaken, it would have greater holding and carrying capacity.

While on the question of pastoralists, I must congratulate the Government on being so helpful to the pastoralists at Meekatharra at a time when it seemed they would be stricken with the drought. They had some anxious moments until the rain came at the right time and they were relieved of their anxiety. I know that because of that the Government has made arrangements to meet any similar eventuality in the future, which would enable stock to be railed at a lesser freight than it is at the moment, and whereby livestock could be carried free or at a very low charge. The Government must be congratulated on its very ready assistance in that matter.

This afternoon is a social one for many of us and I understand there is afternoon tea to follow. Accordingly I conclude by wishing the Government a successful year.

**HON. E. M. HEENAN** (North-East): I formally second the motion.

On motion by Hon. C. H. Simpson, debate adjourned.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. G. Fraser—West): I can see that members are becoming exhausted through having had to restrain themselves so long this afternoon, so I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 4.1 p.m.*