

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

Second Session of the Twenty-Second Parliament,

Parliament was prorogued on the 29th ~~May~~, 1957, to the 4th July, 1957, when it met for the despatch of business.

Parliament was opened by His Excellency the Governor.

OPENING OF PARLIAMENT

Legislative Council

Thursday, 4th July, 1957.

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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. J. B. Roberts) read the proclamation of His Excellency the Governor summoning the second session of the Twenty-second 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:

Parliament has been called together earlier this year in the hope that the session will conclude correspondingly earlier and that undue congestion of business will be avoided.

The economic condition of the State is sound and encouraging. Primary industry generally remains prosperous and increased production is being achieved by secondary industry.

More attention is being paid to this State by overseas interests. It is hoped to attract outside capital in greater measure to assist with the task of our development. This is all the more important because Western Australia, in common with other States, is unable to secure through the Loan Council the Loan funds it requires for essential works.

The Constitution Review Committee established by the Commonwealth Parliament has recently pursued its inquiries in Perth and the Premier presented the views of the Government on a number of important subjects. The report of the Committee will be awaited with interest.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly:

Revenue for the financial year 1956-1957 was £54,330,934 and expenditure £56,243,302, leaving a deficit of £1,912,368.

Mr. President and Honourable Members of the Legislative Council:

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly:

In the sheep and cereal districts, the season opened later than usual, but substantial rains were recorded towards the end of May and by mid June conditions were excellent. In the dairying districts of the South-West the season so far has been ideal.

The first block of the Department of Agriculture's new Laboratories at South Perth should be ready by the end of this year. Research Station activities continue to expand.

The Argentine ant eradication campaign initiated in 1954 is twelve months ahead of schedule.

The demand for Crown lands, particularly along the coastal plain from Geraldton to Esperance, remains keen. An agreement has been made with Esperance Plains (Aust.) Pty. Ltd., for that company to purchase and develop 1,500,000 acres of vacant Crown land east and west of Esperance.

The country between Jerramungup and Ravensthorpe is to be classified and will probably yield about 500,000 acres of good quality plain with an average rainfall of from 15 inches to 20 inches.

During the last 12 months the area of virgin Crown Lands treated under the War Service Land Settlement Scheme has been the greatest since its inception.

Very hot weather in March caused severe bush fires in some parts of the State. The rural volunteer fire fighting organisation rendered excellent service. Amendments to the Bush Fires Act will be placed before you.

Because of the employment position, it has been necessary to curtail the intake of migrants, but British migration has been maintained.

The Rural and Industries Bank has not found it necessary to restrict credit in line with general banking trends. A Savings Bank Division has been launched with outstanding success.

Gold production has been maintained, but increasing costs are affecting marginal producers. An approach to the Commonwealth for an increased subsidy has been made by the industry and the State Government. Government drilling continues to produce good results, particularly in the Pilbara district.

An extensive programme of exploration and drilling is being maintained by companies engaged in the search for oil.

Production of titanium has commenced at Bunbury and Capel and great interest is being shown in the search for further economic deposits of this mineral.

Bills will be introduced to amend the Mine Workers' Relief Act and the Coal Mine Workers (Pensions) Act.

It is proposed to set up a special hydrological section in the Mines Department to explore the State's water supplies.

The strong overseas demand for high grade charcoal iron produced at Wundowie has continued at satisfactory price levels. Good progress is being made with erection of the second blast furnace and equipment at Wundowie to increase production from 14,000 to 36,000 tons per year.

Negotiations have been instituted for the sale and export of 1,000,000 tons of iron ore to Japan over a period of two and one-half years, the net proceeds to be devoted towards establishing a large scale charcoal iron industry in the South-West. The required export licence has been sought from the Commonwealth Government.

The Trade and Industries Promotion Council is pursuing an energetic campaign for the greater use of locally produced goods, with encouraging results. Excellent work is being performed by the enthusiastic All-Women's Committee.

Legislation will be introduced to authorise the distinctive labelling of Western Australian made goods.

Figures for the first nine months of this year show that exports exceeded imports by £24,700,000 compared with an adverse trade balance of £14,500,000 for the same period of last year. Exports of wool and wheat contributed £34,000,000 to this improvement.

Financial assistance amounting to approximately £300,000 has been made available to established industries during the past year.

Activity has been maintained in the fishing industry, including crayfishing, pearling, and whaling.

The Government has continued with its housing programme to the maximum of available Loan funds and has over 1,800 homes under construction.

Recent increased activity under the various housing schemes has been a major factor in relieving unemployment in the building trade.

The new Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement gives greater freedom to the State in determining terms of sale. Fifty per cent. of the homes now being erected under this agreement are being sold on easy terms.

One-third of the homes erected by the Commission this year have been built in country districts.

After a period of recession, the timber industry has revived considerably as the result of an increase in overseas exports. Action is being taken to step up the sale of karri in the Australian market.

Railway revenue for the year was the highest on record, but still fell short of expenditure by £4,649,145. Costs have been steadily rising, but rail freights are still at the same level as in 1953.

As authorised by Parliament, rail services on some branch lines have been suspended for a trial period of alternative road transport.

A Bill will be brought forward to amend the Transport Co-ordination Act, to give reasonable protection to the Railways.

A Royal Commission is engaged on an investigation into Railway administration.

Some privately owned metropolitan road transport services are experiencing financial difficulties. Legislation has been prepared to create a Metropolitan Passenger Transport Trust to acquire transport services and to eliminate duplication and overlapping.

Ninety-six suburban bus shelters have been erected with Government subsidy and a further 20 have been approved.

A more orderly method of parking for central Perth was inaugurated in November and under new legislation parking

meters will be installed by the City Council at an early date and car parks provided.

With a view to more accurately determining the city's traffic needs, an origin and destination survey was recently undertaken.

The Local Government Bill will be proceeded with as early as possible.

Measures for further implementation of the Metropolitan Region Plan are under consideration.

Progress has been made on country water supplies and irrigation works. The Kellerberrin North main has given relief to portion of the No. 1 District. The pipe line from Narrogin to Pingelly has been completed and work commenced on the Narrogin-Katanning main. New water supply schemes are in operation at Bridgetown, Mt. Barker and Cranbrook and supplies are being developed at Onslow and Lake Grace. The Wellington Dam is being raised and irrigation channels enlarged.

The new State Government Insurance Office building and many hospitals, schools and other works were completed during the year. Among the larger works now under construction are the Royal Perth Hospital, which is almost completed, the new Chest Hospital at Hollywood, and several new high schools.

Major works planned for 1957-1958 include the new Albany Regional Hospital, the new University Engineering School, and further schools.

During 1956-1957 a sum of £6,100,000 was provided for expenditure from Petrol Funds on the State's road system. Over £750,000 was allocated to the North-West.

A tender for the erection of the Narrows Bridge was accepted and work commenced. Considerable progress has been made with the associated reclamation works.

The Serpentine water project is proceeding satisfactorily and will provide additional water for the Fremantle area in the coming summer.

Main Drainage is being constructed in some districts subject to heavy winter flooding.

The need for additional berths within the Fremantle Inner Harbour has been demonstrated by the sustained pressure of shipping. It is hoped the No. 10 Berth will be completed by the end of the year.

At Albany the No. 2 Berth is nearing completion. The Transit Shed at Bunbury is completed, and work is proceeding on a 600-ton slipway at Fremantle.

The first unit of the Bunbury Power Station has been put on load and will be available to meet the peak demand of this winter. Construction of two further

units is proceeding and tenders will be called for an additional unit. The State Electricity Commission has interconnected the Collie Power Station, the Bunbury Power Station and the Wellington Dam Hydro Electric Power Station with the two metropolitan stations.

Despite repeated endeavours, it has not been possible to secure a decision from the Commonwealth Government on a number of major proposals for North-West development submitted in 1955 by the All-Party Delegation of this Parliament.

As a result of widespread rains, seasonal prospects for the North-West as a whole are the brightest for several years.

The Wyndham Meatworks expect to treat 31,000 head of cattle during this season.

The passenger ship "Koolama" now being built in Scotland, should be delivered to the State Shipping Service at the end of the year. Work has commenced on converting the "Delamere" from coal to oil fuel, on the provision of refrigerated space, and on accommodation for 400 head of cattle. The over-age vessels "Koolinda" and "Kybra" are to be disposed of next year.

The main need for school accommodation is now in the high school field. During the present financial year ten high schools will be under construction.

The Wembley Trades School was completed last year. An Automotive Trades School is to be built and facilities for the building trades at Leederville Technical School are to be expanded. A start will probably be made on the development of a new site for the Perth Technical College.

The teacher shortage has been overtaken.

The University Medical School has been established. Clinical teaching for Sixth Year Medical Students has commenced.

By early next year virtually all children in the State up to the age of 15 will have been given complete immunisation against poliomyelitis.

The Health Education Council formed in 1956, is expanding its activities throughout the State.

Steps have been taken to appoint an Advisory Committee under the Radioactive Substances Act to protect the community from undue and unnecessary radiation.

The Native Welfare Act will be amended to improve the status of natives. Improvements to native reserves will be extended with a view to providing ablutions and accommodation.

Further recruitment will bring the Police Force to a strength of 985.

Legislation will be submitted to continue and to amend the Betting Control Act.

During the year the Child Welfare Department in conjunction with the Church of England, has increased and improved reformatory accommodation for boys. The erection of a closed reformatory for more difficult boys will proceed.

Amending legislation will be introduced to clarify the position of offenders against children, to give them the right of trial by jury for serious offences.

Satisfactory industrial relations continue to maintain peace in industry.

A Bill will be introduced to provide for long service leave for workers in private industry.

Legislation will again be introduced to enable the State Government Insurance Office to engage in general insurance.

Progress is being made with planning for Civil Defence.

Tourist activity has continued its post-war upward trend.

Other legislation to be placed before you will include—

A Bill to continue and amend the Unfair Trading and Profit Control Act;

A Bill to amend the Land Agents Act;

A Bill to amend the Companies Act;

A Bill to amend the Electoral Act;

A Bill to provide for the establishment of a Public Service Board;

A Bill to amend the Stipendiary Magistrates Act;

A Bill to amend the Jury Act; and

Bills to amend legislation affecting the interests of workers, primary producers, and others.

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.]

BILL—INTERPRETATION 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 Interpretation Act, 1918-1954, so as to authorise service of certain documents by certified mail."

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 which His Excellency the Governor has been pleased to deliver to Parliament. These will be distributed amongst members.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

First Day.

HON. W. R. HALL (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.

I notice that, in the Governor's Speech, reference is made to gold production. An extract from the Speech reads—

Gold production has been maintained, but increasing costs are affecting marginal producers. An approach to the Commonwealth for an increased subsidy has been made by the industry and the State Government.

In the Speech it is also stated that the Government has been carrying out drilling operations throughout the mining areas.

As a representative of the North-East Province and of a mining constituency, it would only be natural for me, during this short time I have at my disposal this afternoon, to have something to say on matters that affect the mining industry of Western Australia. Despite representations that have been made to the International Monetary Fund by members of the State Government—particularly by the Minister for Mines, Hon. L. F. Kelly—and also by members of the Commonwealth Government for an increase in the price of gold, I regret to say it appears that the International Monetary Fund is not going to increase the price of gold whatsoever.

Such a decision means that some action will have to be taken in regard to some of those mines which are operating on very low values and which are giving only a marginal production. If they are to survive, some steps will have to be taken to grant them a subsidy, a bonus or a bounty. We know that for many years past gold has been used by all nations of the world to obtain credits and for the making of international payments, and there is no doubt that it will always

be in great demand. It is unfortunate that several towns in the North-East Province and other towns throughout the goldfields of this State have mines which show very low values and which look like closing down unless a higher subsidy or a bonus is made available to them.

Over the last few years the State Government has given great assistance to the goldmining industry by virtue of its having lent various mines a considerable amount of money. The Government has also undertaken diamond drilling operations in various parts of the State. On this aspect I will touch later if I have time. Also, the Commonwealth Government has, by an Act of Parliament, granted what is virtually a subsidy to those mines which are producing values that do not come up to standard and are on the borderline. Nevertheless this assistance is not sufficient to enable them to survive.

At this stage I might point out that the mining industry, as is well known, pulled the State of Western Australia out of the mire during the days of the depression. Whilst we hope that the present prosperous conditions—which have been due, in the main, to our wool and wheat production—will remain with us, we also hope that the goldmining industry will take a turn for the better and that something will be done to get this industry back into the prosperous state it was in some years ago. I might also mention that there are many mines on the Golden Mile which are actually good producers and which are on high values. Their gold production is quite substantial and represents a good deal of wealth. We need not worry about them so much as the mines which are operating on low-grade ore.

For instance, during 1953, the total value of the gold yield in this State, in Australian currency, was £12,754,770. In 1954 the value of the yield in Australian currency was £13,429,834. In 1955 the figure was over £13,000,000, and in 1956 over £12,000,000 was received in Australian currency from the gold yield in this State. These figures are amazing when one turns one's mind back to 1903 when, in Australian currency, the gold yield amounted to £9,920,248. In that year there were 20,716 men working in the industry. However, we find that in 1956, only 5,628 men were employed in the industry. I venture to say that there would be no more than 3,500 men—if there are that number—working on the mines along the Golden Mile.

I am assuming that the figures which I have just quoted represent the number of the men employed on the mines associated with the Chamber of Mines and situated on the Golden Mile. It is a fact, however, that the number of men working on minerals other than gold in this State is approximately 920. The wealth obtained this year

from minerals other than gold has amounted to over £4,000,000, which is a very tidy sum; and I think it points towards a very prosperous year in this field.

This afternoon, I make a plea to the State Government to give support to any movement that will help the goldmining industry and I also want to bring to the notice of members some of the mines that have gone out of production, and some mines away from the Golden Mile which more or less are keeping the men employed in those districts. They have values which though not as good as those on the Golden Mile are still keeping the outback going. Some of the mines which went out of existence in late years include the Porphyry mine. It went out through low values. Many years ago, the Sand Queen mine in Comet Vale was also closed; and it was known to people some years ago, when the boom was on, that water was the main cause of that closure, and the mine could be unwatered only at terrific cost. The Lancefield mine at Laverton was closed recently, as was the Big Bell at Cue, another good producer. That went out of existence, and the plant, machinery and buildings have been sold.

When one looks back on the activities that took place a year or so ago, it is rather saddening to think that such a mine, producing so great a tonnage, employing approximately 450 men, and keeping a township of up to 2,000 people should be closed. It was well set up and it was a well laid out mine as far as machinery and plant were concerned. This mine has gone and the town has become a ghost town. When the mine was producing it was a great asset to the State and to the Commonwealth. What do we find now? When the mine was closed, overnight the people had to go to fresh fields or pastures. That is not the only mine that has been closed. It has been happening through the years in the North-Eastern Goldfields and the Murchison.

I do not profess to know much about the Wiluna mine, which was not embraced by my constituency until after it closed down. I believe that the Wiluna mine was a great producer in its time; and it supported, together with the pastoralists, a town with a population of 7,000 people. If we were to go to Wiluna today we would not find many people there. There might be a few hundred, but that would be all. Another mine which closed down some years ago, and which gained much prominence recently was the Great Fingal, a few miles outside of Cue.

For the benefit of members who do not know, I might state that the Big Bell was only 18 miles from Cue. The Great Fingal mine is close to the township. During its lifetime I understand it produced from 1,000,000 tons of ore a total of over 1,000,000 oz. of gold, and that is some quantity. At present, the Government has diamond-drilled one hole on this mine and it has

gone to a depth of 4,000 ft. There are reasonably good values. It costs a lot of money to put down a drill and the Government now intends to drill a second hole to link up with the first one to see if the values continue. If they do, I have no doubt that the Great Fingal, which has been known through the length and breadth of the State, will come into production again—perhaps as one of our best producers. I sincerely hope it will.

I wish to refer to another mine—the Emu at Agnew, about 70 miles north of Leonora. I understand the Government will also diamond-drill in this mine. It will drill with a view to ascertaining the values there and finding out whether it can get the mine into production again. So we see that the State Government is doing a fair bit towards getting the gold-mining industry on the footing it was on some years ago. It was thought that, after the last war, the mines which were closed—and I have touched on only a few—would be reopened. I regret to say that instead of those mines being reopened, more have been closed down. It is a very sad state of affairs for this to happen to mines which are on the margin.

This afternoon I have not much time, for various reasons, to go into this side of the matter as deeply as I would like. It would really take some hours. But before I resume my seat I want to refer to two or three mines which are maintaining the outback in the Murchison and Mt. Margaret goldfields. One of these mines is the Timoni, some 70 miles out of Menzies. It has pretty fair values and keeps employed 76 men. It is a decided acquisition to the township of Menzies.

Another mine I have in mind which is doing a good job is the Sons of Gwalia. It does not turn out very high-grade ore, but it turns over a phenomenal tonnage each month. Only recently from 12,000 tons of ore it turned out 2,505 oz. of gold. This mine has also been assisted by the State Government to the extent of £250,000, because it was thought there were values there, and if it could be kept going and the developmental work could be carried on, the mine would continue to produce for many years. I have great faith in this mine and I think it will be a good producer. The Government will do some lateral diamond-drilling in this mine shortly. I noticed recently they got higher values than they had previously for some years.

Another mine which I must touch on is Hill 50 at Mt. Magnet, which is a prosperous little town. This is one of the richest mines outside the Golden Mile, and from 9,000 tons they received 6,500 oz. of gold. There is no doubt that if one or two mines like Hill 50 could be found, the gold-mining industry in this State would prosper.

I sincerely hope that the State Government and those closely associated with mining will make representations again to

the Federal Government to see whether it is possible to give a bounty, subsidy or bonus to the mines which are classed as low marginal mines, and thereby give the people in the outback a feeling of some security. Many of those people are not very happy at the present time on account of the mines closing down. If it were possible to have an increase in the price of gold or to give a subsidy, that would have a great effect on the people in those districts. With those few words I conclude my remarks, and shall wait until the Supply Bill comes up to continue on this subject.

HON. F. R. H. LAVERY (West): I formally second the motion.

On motion by Hon. Sir Charles Latham, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West): In view of the late hour, I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 4 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 4th July, 1957.

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