

WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES.

THIRD SESSION OF THE SEVENTEENTH PARLIAMENT:

The Parliament was prorogued to the 31st July, 1941, on which day it met for the despatch of business.

Parliament was opened by His Excellency the Lieut.-Governor.

In pursuance of resolutions passed on the 12th December, 1941, Parliament reassembled for further business on the 9th April, 1942.

Legislative Council.

Thursday, 31st July, 1941.

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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. L. L. Lenke) read the proclamation of His Excellency the Lieut.-Governor summoning the third session of the Seventeenth Parliament.

LIEUT.-GOVERNOR'S OPENING SPEECH.

His Excellency the Lieut.-Governor entered the Council Chamber at 3.2 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—

The third session of the Seventeenth Parliament of Western Australia has been summoned for the transaction of important public business.

It is with regret that I record the passing of Mr. G. J. Lambert, member of the Legislative Assembly for the Yilgarn-Coolgardie district, who gave so many years of his life in the public service of this State.

Australia's War Effort.

The war situation continues to cause the gravest concern, and although the heroic deeds of the Australian forces, in company with those of other parts of the Empire and of our Allies, have evoked universal admiration, we find ourselves still facing the greatest crisis in our history.

The bravery of our men in the Army, Navy, and Air Force fills us all with a sense of profound gratitude. It was with great pride that we learned a few days ago of the well deserved award of a Victoria Cross to Acting Wing Commander H. I. Edwards, D.F.C., of Mosman Park.

Our joy in the accomplishments of the sons of this State is tempered with the deepest sorrow for all those who have lost loved ones in this fight for freedom, and I should like to join with Ministers in expressing to them our sincere sympathy and the hope that they may find comfort and pride in the memory of supreme sacrifice.

Despite many reverses and great sacrifices the people of Great Britain continue to display unparalleled fortitude and indomitable resolution. Inspired by their example Australia is constantly increasing its contribution to the tremendous effort necessary for the victory of freedom over oppression.

Consistent with their high reputation for practical patriotism, the people of Western Australia have responded magnificently to the demand for men for the fighting

forces, and for money with which to feed, clothe, equip and pay them. The tributes paid to the high place this State occupies, in proportion to population and resources, in enlistments and financial contributions, will stimulate its people to still greater endeavour.

The pledge given by Ministers on the outbreak of war to assist the Commonwealth Government to the fullest possible extent has been honoured in every way. Constant and close co-operation is the keynote of this State's relations to the war effort.

Civil Defence.

The Civil Defence Council, appointed under the powers conferred by the Civil Defence Act, passed last session, is steadily evolving measures for the protection of the civil population, and public and private property. The organisation is progressing smoothly and effectively, and is achieving good results.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly—

Finance.

The financial operations of the State for the last budgetary period resulted in a surplus of £11,111. This is in conformity with the undertaking given by Ministers that the Government would, as a first step, endeavour to preserve the financial stability essential for the conduct of the war. The policy of economy which made this result possible will not be relaxed, and preference will be given to expenditure on war purposes. An amount of £36,128 was spent last year from the vote provided for unforeseen expenditure to meet war precautions measures.

Mr. President and Honourable Members of the Legislative Council—

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly—

Munitions and War Supplies.

With pleasure I record substantial expansion in the production of munitions and war supplies.

The Railway Department has been successful in its tendering for defence work, aggregating many thousands of pounds, and overtime and extra shifts are being worked to aid the national effort to build war machines and equipment on an unprecedented scale. A modern tool room for the manufacture of necessary tools and

equipment is being erected in the metropolitan area, and by arrangement with the Commonwealth Government accommodation at the Midland Junction Workshops has been substantially increased. Portion of this extension is set aside as an annexe for the manufacture of munitions, and includes locally manufactured machines for the turning of shells. Machining of the rough steel forgings for the first order will commence shortly. During the recent visit to this State of the Director-General of Munitions approval was given to double the original capacity for shell making.

Following persistent representations by the State Government the Commonwealth Government decided to establish a small arms ammunition factory on an appropriate site at a cost of £250,000.

Work carried out by the State Implementation Works for defence and for the Navy and Munitions Departments includes the degaussing of ships against magnetic mines, fitting and repairs to paravanes and gear used in minesweeping, repairs and alterations to the naval pilot fleet, including gun-mounting, and depth charge gear, manufacture of deck panels and platforms for military bridges, hydraulic shell-handling presses, machines for the manufacture of explosives and Hepburn lathe parts. To enable these works to assist more efficiently in the munitions effort, work is proceeding in the equipment of the moulding shop with modern plant, and consideration is being given to the better equipment of other sections.

Comprehensive evidence was presented to a Committee established by the Commonwealth Government to inquire into the productive possibilities of the State in relation to war work, and important results have already been achieved. The greatest credit is due to the men who are giving so freely of their knowledge, time and skill to ensure that everything will be done to support the fighting services with the best that can be supplied. A large quantity of war materials is being manufactured by private factories and workshops. Every effort is being made to participate to a much greater extent in such production, both in Government and private workshops. At the same time every care is being exercised to ensure that the industries which are extended and established are capable of adaption to peacetime requirements.

Secondary Industries.

Post war reconstruction will involve the placing of many men in industry, and by careful preparation and foresight it is hoped to pave the way for this transfer. In the meantime no opportunity is being lost to develop and expand the normal secondary industries of the State. A number of new ventures give every promise of success, and others are in course of exhaustive examination. Machines previously imported are now being manufactured successfully within the State, including electric motors, special purpose lathes, tool holders, rockdrill parts, conveyors, water meters, and concrete mixers. These are equal in quality to the imported articles and not higher in price.

A number of new factories operating in the production of food and clothing have been established during the year, one of the clothing factories having been established at Bunbury. Much attention has been given to the development of the fishing industry. Two new fish canning factories have commenced operations, one at Geraldton and the other in Perth. The Commonwealth Government has agreed to provide a fisheries research vessel to operate in Western Australian waters. The vessel will be constructed in this State and local hardwoods will be used. A factory is being established to produce linseed oil and linseed meal from locally grown linseed. An area of 2,000 acres has been planted this season in the Avon Valley district and it is believed a major industry will be built up.

The producer gas industry has continued to make progress. There are now over 3,000 plants in operation on motor vehicles in this State, which is more than the total for all the other States put together. Production of charcoal has been developed and until the recent drastic rationing of petrol supplies sufficient charcoal was available to meet the demand. The Forestry Department is now extending its production of charcoal and approximately 180 men are employed directly by the Government in this work, in addition to numbers of men employed by private firms.

Extensive investigations and tests have been carried out regarding the possible production of potash and alumina from alunite deposits at Lake Champion. There is every reason to believe that potash can now be

commercially produced in a quantity sufficient to supply the whole of Australia's requirements for many years. Close attention is being given to the possibility of producing sulphur requirements from local deposits of pyrites. Sulphur to the value of £300,000 is imported into this State every year. Attention has also been given to the possibility of local phosphate rock deposits being made available to meet the phosphate requirements of the State.

Agriculture.

Seasonal conditions throughout the agricultural and pastoral areas during the past year were generally unfavourable, owing to acute drought conditions. Fortunately this year the State has entered into a more generous season and climatically, both agriculturally and pastorally, the prospects are better than they have been for some years.

Western Australia is dependent upon external markets, and its rural existence and general economic welfare depend upon large scale participation in international trade for most of its primary products.

Circumstances which are entirely war-caused are seriously affecting and in some instances threatening some primary industries, and in comparison with other States, the war affects Western Australia most seriously.

The Shipping Position.

The most serious problem confronting the British Empire in the war is the shipping position. To win the Battle of the Atlantic, the Battle of the Mediterranean, the Battle of Britain—the British Government must conserve shipping.

The disposition of shipping must, therefore, be made in accordance with the best interests of the war effort and in this connection the food requirements of Britain take precedence over all other considerations.

In the first year of war, Western Australia had a fair share of the bulk contracts made with Great Britain which, from Australia, reached a total figure exceeding one hundred million pounds. Contracts with Great Britain for foodstuffs greatly affect Western Australia and as the shipping position has further deteriorated so have the difficulties increased.

An increase in allocation of shipping cannot be expected and that allotted for this year must increase internal problems consequent upon the accumulation of what normally would be export commodities.

Alternative markets are difficult. A review has been made of all available cold storage facilities, and in several cases accommodation has been increased.

Primary Industries.

The main objective within Australia as affecting this State is to endeavour to secure as much stability for primary industries as the circumstances will permit. While the Government has acted in close co-operation with the Commonwealth, there are some decisions of the controlling Boards which adversely affect this State's rural industries.

Such industries as export lamb, pork products, the poultry industry, apples and pears, and the dairying industry have, with others, many additional problems of production, storage, and export, consequent upon war circumstances.

Australian requirements of tobacco approximate 28,500,000 lbs. per annum, and the production is only 5,500,000 lbs. The area planted in Western Australia last year was 1,365 acres, the resultant crop being in excess of 900,000 lbs. Western Australian leaf is of the highest quality, and it was confidently anticipated that the industry would expand to the State's benefit and at the same time assist in meeting Australia's normal needs. The imposition of the quota system has prejudicially affected the production and manufacture of tobacco products in this State. It is hoped that the present system of quota which is being applied will be altered to more equitably conserve the best interests of the industry in this State.

Wheat, Wool and Flax.

Western Australia's wheat yield during last year was 21,600,000 bushels compared with 40,860,000 bushels for 1939-40. The Wheat Stabilisation Scheme instituted and authorised by the Commonwealth Government refers particularly to a guaranteed price and control of wheat production. This has necessitated the registration of all wheat-growers and the regulation of areas on which wheat is to be sown for grain.

During the 1940-41 season, 22,359 bales of wool were appraised, the average price

per pound of greasy wool in this State being 11.95 pence. Wool producers are relieved of anxiety regarding the disposal of their product while the war lasts, wool being the only primary product in respect of which a contract has been made for the disposal of the total surplus for the term of the war, whether that surplus is shipped or not.

A new rural industry which the war has brought to this State is the growing of flax in commercial quantities. During 1939-40 an area of 1,000 acres was planted and even under unfavourable conditions payable crops were obtained. This year 7,000 acres have been planted in three districts, and two further flax mills will be erected. The yield is expected to be approximately 10,000 tons of straw.

Every effort is being made to ensure for the producers of this State the maximum share of the trade available for the large quantities of exportable commodities which will continue to be produced in excess of local needs.

Mining.

The value of the production of the gold mining industry was approximately £12,000,000, an all time record for annual production and value in the State, over 15,000 men being employed. Every encouragement has been given to assist and expand the development of this industry in view of its importance to the war effort and its effect on the economic life of the State.

The gold mining industry has been affected by a shortage of trained labour, and difficulty in obtaining plant. The importance of maintaining production at the highest possible level is fully recognised, and every effort is being made to improve the position, particularly by the transfer of prospectors and other workers to skilled and remunerative employment in the mines. Attention is being given to the development of deposits of copper, bauxite, iron and other minerals valuable to the war effort. Active operations are being undertaken in the northern part of the State in an endeavour to locate oil, five separate parties being employed in these operations.

Timber.

Timber production has continued steady during the last twelve months at about ten per cent. below the normal pre-war figure. The industry is dependent to a considerable

extent on interstate and overseas orders, and thus upon shipping facilities, but the local market has remained fairly constant. Western Australia is able to make further substantial contributions to any shortages in the Eastern States caused by the reduction of imports and the necessity for conserving foreign exchange.

Employment.

Unemployment has been very substantially reduced. The number of men dependent upon the Government for casual work is now approximately 4,000 less than at the outbreak of war. This has enabled the liberal conditions for casual workers employed by the Government to be maintained in spite of the drastic reduction of loan money caused by the demands on the loan market for war purposes. During the year special attention has been given to developing the State Labour Bureau in both men's and women's sections with gratifying results, also the Youth Employment section of the Bureau.

Railways and Tramways.

Railway revenue has been adversely affected by interruption of the normal movement of the State's primary products owing to dearth of shipping under wartime conditions. However, restrictions on the use of liquid fuel have resulted in increased coaching earnings. Endeavours to obtain extra trolley bus units for the Tramway Department have been unsuccessful. Additional road motor vehicles are in use and further units are on order.

Public Works and Water Supplies.

The Public Works and Water Supply Departments have engaged in a year of widespread activity. Provision of extra reservoir accommodation has been made at Cunderdin and Kellerberrin.

The Canning-Mundaring Reservoir link main between Belmont and Greenmount has been completed, enabling an additional 2,000,000 gallons of water daily to be made available to the Goldfields.

The Samson's Brook Reservoir to serve the Waroona district has been completed with a capacity of eighteen hundred million gallons, thus augmenting the storage of five hundred million gallons in the original reservoir on Drakes Brook.

Another reservoir known as the Stirling, is in course of construction on the Harvey

River, about 12 miles east of Harvey town-site. The capacity of this reservoir will be twelve thousand million gallons. This reservoir will enable an area of 36,000 acres to be brought within the benefits of irrigation, and will bring the total area of land to be served by irrigation from Waroona to Dardanup to 72,000 acres.

Construction is in hand of a slipway at Arthur's Head for vessels up to 2,000 tons dead weight.

Several major buildings were completed during the year, including the Perth Technical College. Good progress was made on the new Perth Hospital, and it is expected to be available for full use next year. A new Government Chemical Laboratory at Perth, and a Technical High School at Fremantle are in course of construction.

War conditions have seriously affected the development of the road systems, both in extent and direction. Bitumen is scarce and the position regarding future supplies is obscure.

Sewerage extensions have been carried out in the outer suburban areas. The completion of the Canning Dam has enabled the Department to meet all water supply requirements, and has obviated the necessity for any further water restrictions.

North-West.

War conditions have retarded the operations of the State Shipping Service, and costs have been greatly increased because of big rises in charges for fuel, wages and stores and the heavy burden of war risk insurance.

A very serious reduction has occurred in the number of head of cattle available for treatment at the Wyndham Meatworks, due largely to the very bad season, and also to the diversion of large numbers of cattle to Darwin. Market conditions are not nearly so satisfactory as they were in 1940. Due to war conditions canning is being undertaken and the Wyndham Meatworks may be expected to participate in this scheme next season.

Trading Concerns.

Activities at the State Brickworks were slack during the first six months of the year, but since January both kilns have been operating at full capacity.

The State Saw Mills had a satisfactory trading year. Helpful orders were received for munitions and other military works in South Australia and Western Australia.

Native Affairs.

The position in connection with natives is satisfactory. The Carrolup Settlement in the Katanning district has been re-established and now comprises 109 children and 80 adult natives. Every endeavour is being made to make it self-supporting in food.

Technical Education.

The Government considers that in view of the scientific background of all industry, both primary and secondary, more liberal provision must be made for technical education.

A knowledge of the scientific fundamentals of primary industries must add to the efficiency of those industries, while the basis of efficiency in secondary industry is technical preparation.

The war has amply demonstrated the urgent need for technical education. The placing of youth in industry will be an important function of the State in the post war period when diversified industries are established.

The Government policy to extend secondary industry will therefore be supported by an extension of technical training facilities throughout the State.

In recent years extended facilities have been provided in metropolitan centres and technical classes have been established at four country centres, viz., Bunbury, Collie, Narrogin, and Geraldton. A Junior Technical High School will shortly be erected in Fremantle.

Consideration is being given to extensions to other country centres where practicable, and for technical correspondence courses to reach isolated youth in country districts.

Legislation.

A number of Bills have been prepared for your consideration. Amongst these are measures dealing with companies, traffic, profiteering prevention, rents, public trustee, franchise for the forces, industrial and rural matters.

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

His Excellency then withdrew from the Chamber.

BILL—WEIGHTS AND MEASURES ACT AMENDMENT.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [3.38]: 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 Sections 28 and 46 of the Weights and Measures Act, 1915."

Leave given; Bill introduced and read a first time.

LIEUT.-GOVERNOR'S SPEECH, DISTRIBUTION.

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

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

First Day.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [3.42]: I move—

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

Before proceeding to deal with the Speech, I may comment on the fact that the rush of questions that has occurred to-day is a happy augury for the coming session, indicating that members intend to be inquisitive. It is to be hoped that they will show themselves inquisitive; and I wish them to be inquisitive not only as to State affairs, but also as to affairs throughout the Common-