

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

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

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

[The President resumed the Chair.]

SWEARING-IN OF MEMBERS.

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

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

BILL—PETROLEUM ACT AMENDMENT.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: In order to assert and maintain the undoubted rights and privileges of this House to initiate legislation, I move, without notice, for leave to introduce a Bill entitled "An Act to amend the Petroleum Act, 1936-1949."

Leave given; Bill introduced and read a first time.

ADMINISTRATOR'S OPENING SPEECH, DISTRIBUTION.

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

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

First Day.

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

That the following Address be presented to His Excellency the Administrator in reply to the Speech he has been pleased to deliver to Parliament:—"May it please Your Excellency: We, the members of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of the State of Western Australia, in Parliament assembled, beg to express our loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign, and to thank Your Excellency for the Speech you have been pleased to deliver to Parliament."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

House adjourned at 4.10 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 2nd August, 1951.

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MEETING OF THE ASSEMBLY.

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

SUMMONS FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR.

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

SWEARING-IN OF MEMBERS.

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

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