

HIS EXCELLENCY'S OPENING SPEECH.

MR. SPEAKER reported that the House had that day attended His Excellency the Governor in the Chamber of the Legislative Council, when His Excellency was pleased to make a Speech to both Houses of Parliament; of which Mr. Speaker said he had, for greater accuracy, obtained a copy, which he read to the House.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY TO THE GOVERNOR'S SPEECH.

MR. WOOD: Mr. Speaker,—It is with much pleasure that I rise to move an Address-in-Reply to the Speech of His Excellency the Governor that has just been read. I esteem the honour, sir, that has been conferred upon me, and upon the district of West Perth, which I represent, in my having been asked to undertake this task. I approach it with a certain amount of diffidence, born of the knowledge of my want of experience in the usages of this Assembly; but I trust that my hon. friends I see around me will bear with me, with a little patience, and be merciful in their criticism. The Speech of His Excellency is, in a great measure, a reflex of that admirable address that was so recently delivered by the Premier to his constituents at Bunbury. It is brimful of confidence in the present prospects of the colony. It alludes in modest terms to the past successful administration, and it boldly and fearlessly anticipates a bright and prosperous future. The policy of the Government, as now disclosed, is only what might be expected from a Government having the interest of the colony at heart, and who are bent upon the development of the resources of the vast territory such as we possess. The policy of the Government may, to some extent, sir, be considered a policy of public works only; but I submit that no other policy, at the present moment, would have been acceptable to this or any other House. The policy of any Ministry wanting the support of the majority of members in this Assembly must of necessity be a progressive policy, as the days for standing still are happily passed away for ever. More especially must the country's movement be a forward one when we take into consideration the splendid addition to our

population that has taken place lately. Nearly 15,000 souls have been added to our population during the last twelve months, and most of these are men who have lived under liberal and free institutions, and under progressive Governments. The country is to be congratulated on the recent discoveries of gold, in almost every part of the colony. Every week seems to eclipse the preceding one in the glowing reports we hear of gold discoveries, and of other indications of mineral wealth. It has been truly said that at the present moment our gold discoveries are a great factor in the colony's prosperity. But, in order to derive the full advantage of these discoveries, and to make them of permanent benefit, the country must carry out its duty to itself, and also its duty to those hardy pioneers who have ventured into the far interior to develop these discoveries; and that duty, sir, is the annihilation of distance, by the construction of railways to connect our goldfields with the centres of population, which the Governor's Speech provides for, so far as Coolgardie and the Murchison districts are concerned. In doing this, sir, the Government is only echoing the beating of the great heart of this country, inasmuch as 95 per cent. of the whole population are desirous that these works should be commenced at once. It is satisfactory to know from His Excellency's Speech that the coal measures in the Collie district give promise of turning out of value to the colony; and I trust that further development of this important discovery will justify the action of the Government in proposing to connect that coalfield with, I suppose, the port of Bunbury, by railway. The need and importance of coal discoveries of commercial value, to my mind, cannot be over-estimated, and I think that a large expenditure of public money would be justifiable in testing the value of these coalfields, and, if the result warranted it, in fully developing them. I can fully support the Ministry in their desire to promote the progress of the colony by the development of its mineral and other resources by the construction of reproductive railways, the extension of telegraph communication and of postal communication, water conservation, and boring. I hope to see a distinct effort made in the direction of artesian boring

this year, both on the goldfields and also in the North-West districts of the colony, in order (in our northern territory) to avert, if possible, the disastrous effects of those dreadful droughts with which it is too often visited. As was expected, sir, provision is made in the Governor's Speech for the raising of a loan of £1,500,000. This is a loan of great magnitude, and no doubt members will consider that it involves a grave responsibility; but my opinion, sir, is that the responsibility commences when we begin to allot or distribute that loan and begin to spend it, and I think it is the duty of this Assembly to closely criticise the various items to be included in the schedule of public works contemplated by the Government. Of these, outside the goldfields lines, there can be but one opinion as regards the extension of the harbour works at Fremantle, and the improvement of our coastal ports by providing extra jetty accommodation, additional lighthouses, and increased shed accommodation. Whilst on this subject, I cannot refrain from saying a word or two with reference to the harbour works now going on at Fremantle, and expressing the great satisfaction we must all feel at the splendid work which is being prosecuted at the mouth of the river—a work which reflects credit upon all concerned, and a work that will be a lasting monument to the skill and ability of those who projected the scheme. The proposed line of railway from Donnybrook towards Bridgetown, and the branch line to the Collie coalfield, are projects which will have to be well considered. I trust that the Government will be able, by statistics and otherwise, to justify their intentions in these directions. The public works undertaken and completed during the past year, and referred to in His Excellency's Speech, show a record of which any Ministry might be proud. That paragraph of the Speech tells a tale of wonderful progress, and shows that every part of our big colony has received due consideration at the hands of the Government. It is particularly cheering to find that measures of domestic legislation will be dealt with during this session, and that, amongst other matters, the Municipal Act will receive attention. I trust that the new Act will contain powers to enable Municipalities to deal

in a more comprehensive manner with matters concerning them than they now possess, and empower them to incur loans for special purposes. I hope also that the rating of town and city properties will be placed on a better basis than it is at present; and, in regard to the city of Perth, I trust that the Bill will include such powers as will enable the municipal authorities to deal with such subjects as deep drainage and the waterworks. The Employers' Liability Bill, which we are promised, should prove a most useful measure, and will no doubt furnish a vast amount of material for discussion. I trust that it will be framed on very strict lines of justice, and be fair to both employer and employé. Whilst dealing with this question of domestic legislation, I trust that the Government will see their way during the session to deal with the Electoral Act, with the better regulation of the liquor traffic, and to introduce some further legislation with regard to Chinese and Asiatics, and also dealing with the closing of shops at certain times and regulating the hours of labour therein. A foremost plank in the policy of any Government in a country like this must almost of necessity be one dealing with the settlement and development of the soil; and I congratulate the Ministry on their intention to introduce further legislation in this direction, by which monetary assistance may be granted to farmers, on certain conditions, in order that the agricultural lands of the colony may be utilised and increased production encouraged. The details of the proposals of the Government in this direction will no doubt be fully given to us when their scheme for the establishment of a Land Bank is brought forward. I trust that the conditions will be such as will commend themselves to the good opinion of this House. The financial condition of the colony, as disclosed in the Governor's Speech, is such that might be envied by any country. It proves able and careful administration on the part of the Treasury, when we find that all the estimates of revenue have been exceeded, while at the same time the items of expenditure have been kept within bounds. If anything were wanted to add to the confidence due to the present Ministry, it is the successful floating of the balance of our

last Loan, proving beyond a doubt the good opinion held by the great financiers of the world as to the stability of our Government and the unbounded resources of our colony. We must one and all deplore the dry season we are now experiencing—I do not know that I should say that *now*, looking at the welcome change that has taken place since this morning—but the dry season we have had up to to-day. More especially has the want of rain been felt on our Eastern goldfields, where, I believe, ample provision has been made by the Government for the storage of storm waters. I join in the hope expressed by His Excellency that we may yet be favoured with a bountiful season. Mr. Speaker, I have now nearly finished. I will merely add that if the past good work done by the Government is an indication of what they will do in the future, we shall be justified in giving them a very full measure of support, at all events as regards their general policy. In minor matters of administration their actions may not always commend themselves to many of us. Even the warmest supporters of the Government may honestly differ from them occasionally; and, so far as I am concerned, I reserve to myself the right of full, but I trust impartial, criticism. I am sure that so long as members confine themselves to these lines the Government will respect their convictions. I trust, sir, that the present Ministry will long continue to hold the confidence of this Assembly, and of the country, because I think that in them we have an Administration whose integrity and good intentions are beyond question. I will now read the Address which I propose to submit for the approval of the House in reply to His Excellency's Speech, and which, I feel certain, will be carried unanimously:—

*" To His Excellency Sir William Cleaver
 " Francis Robinson, Knight Grand
 " Cross of the Most Distinguished
 " Order of St. Michael and St. George,
 " Governor and Commander-in-Chief
 " in and over the Colony of Western
 " Australia and its Dependencies, &c.,
 " &c., &c.*

" We, Her Majesty's loyal and dutiful subjects, the members of the Legislative Assembly of Western Australia,

" in Parliament assembled, beg to assure
 " Your Excellency of our continued
 " loyalty and affection to our Most
 " Gracious Sovereign.

" We thank Your Excellency for the
 " gracious Speech which you have been
 " pleased to address to Parliament.

" Our most careful consideration and
 " attention will be given to the impor-
 " tant matters referred to by Your
 " Excellency, and all other matters that
 " may be brought before us; and it
 " shall be our earnest endeavour to so
 " deal with them that our labours may
 " result in the advancement and welfare
 " of the colony."

MR. KEEP: Mr. Speaker,—In rising to second the Address-in-Reply, I have to acknowledge with thanks the courtesy and the honour extended to myself and also to the constituents which I represent, in being asked to do so. I feel the honour all the more because I am one of the infant members of the House, and the constituency I represent is one of the new-born children of the Constitution Act of last year. I may say that I felt some hesitation in accepting this honour. As I sit here, an independent member on the Opposition side of the House, I had some doubt as to whether I should be able to agree with the policy sketched out in His Excellency's Speech. But, on a perusal of it, I am glad to say that I find nothing, or very little, to which I can take much exception, and I think it will meet with the approval of the majority of the members of this House. As we have heard from His Excellency's Speech, and also from the mover of the Address-in-Reply, the population of the colony has been added to, during the last twelve months, by some 15,000 souls. I think everyone will agree that this influx of population may be attributed to the attractions of our goldfields. It will be necessary, therefore, and wise policy on the part of the Government, to give every facility and encouragement to capitalists and to working miners who come here from the Eastern colonies either to invest their capital or to put in manual work in the development of our goldfields. I think it is the duty of the Government to give these people absolutely every facility that is possible for the successful carrying out of their operations. These facilities have, to a large extent, been provided for, or