

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 29 MAY 1918

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

WEDNESDAY, 29 MAY, 1918.

PRESENTATION OF SPEAKER.

The SPEAKER (Hon. W. McCormack, Cairns) took the chair at 10 o'clock and said: I shall now proceed to Government House, there to present myself to His Excellency the Governor for His Majesty's Royal approbation.

The SPEAKER then left the Chamber.

On the House resuming at two minutes to 12 o'clock.

The SPEAKER said: I have to report that I have this day been to Government House, where I presented myself to the Governor for His Majesty's Royal approbation as the member chosen by the Assembly for the high and honourable office of Speaker, and that His Excellency was pleased to make the following reply:—

“ Mr. SPEAKER,—

“ I approve, on behalf of the King, of the choice which the Assembly has made in your person.”

After which, in the name and on behalf of the Legislative Assembly, I laid claim to

Hon. W. McCormack.]

all the undoubted rights and privileges of the House, and prayed that the most favourable construction might at all times be put upon their proceedings; to which His Excellency replied—

“Mr. SPEAKER,—

“I recognise and confirm, on behalf of the King, the lawful rights and privileges claimed by the members of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland in as full and ample a manner as they have been heretofore granted or allowed by His Majesty.”

GOVERNOR'S OPENING SPEECH.

A message having been received that the Governor requested the attendance of Mr. Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly in the Council Chamber,

The SPEAKER and hon. members proceeded thither accordingly, and having heard the Opening Speech read, returned to their own Chamber, when the SPEAKER announced that he would resume the chair at half-past 3 o'clock.

The House having resumed at the appointed hour,

COMMISSION TO ADMINISTER OATH.

The SPEAKER said: I have to inform the House that His Excellency the Governor has been pleased to issue a Commission under the Great Seal of the State empowering me to administer the oath or affirmation of allegiance to such members as may hereafter present themselves to be sworn, which I now direct the Clerk to read to the House.

The CLERK read the Commission accordingly.

MEMBERS SWORN.

MR. J. C. PETERSON AND MR. W. J. WELLINGTON.

Mr. J. C. PETERSON and Mr. W. J. WELLINGTON, having taken the oath and subscribed the roll, took their seats as members for the electoral districts of Normanby and Charters Towers respectively.

ELECTIONS TRIBUNAL.

JUDGE FOR 1918.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a letter from the Chief Justice, intimating that His Honour Mr. Justice Chubb would be the judge to preside at the sitting of the Elections Tribunal for the year 1918.

DESTRUCTION OF BALLOT-PAPERS.

The SPEAKER announced that he had received a letter from the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, stating that, pursuant to an order made by the House on 28th November, 1917, he caused all ballot-papers in his possession, the period for the safe custody of which had expired, to be destroyed. The ballot-papers were burnt in furnaces in the presence of the Clerk Assistant and himself, and before they left the ground they were satisfied that the destruction was complete.

[*Hon. W. McCormack.*]

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of the following from the Auditor-General:—

Auditor-General's report upon the balance-sheet of the Queensland National Bank, Limited, for the half-year ended 31st December, 1917.

Ordered to be printed.

PANEL OF TEMPORARY CHAIRMEN.

The SPEAKER: Pursuant to the requirements of Standing Order No. 11, I hereby nominate the following members to form the panel of Temporary Chairmen during the present session:—

Thomas Foley, member for the electoral district of Mundingburra; Thomas Robert Roberts, member for the electoral district of East Toowoomba; William Forgan Smith, member for the electoral district of Mackay; Harry Frederick Walker, member for the electoral district of Coorooka; George Pollock, member for the electoral district of Gregory.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT.

The PREMIER (Hon. T. J. Ryan, *Barcoo*): I beg to announce that on the twenty-sixth day of April, 1918, William Neal Gillies was appointed a member of the Executive Council of Queensland. On the thirtieth day of April the Hon. Thomas Joseph Ryan resigned his position as Vice-President of the Executive Council, and the Hon. John McEwan Hunter resigned his position as Secretary for Public Lands, and the Hon. John Harry Coyne resigned his position as Secretary for Railways. On the same day the Hon. John McEwan Hunter was appointed Vice-President of the Executive Council, the Hon. John Arthur Fiholly was appointed Secretary for Railways, and the Hon. John Harry Coyne was appointed Secretary for Public Lands. I beg to lay on the table “Government Gazettes” dealing with the above.

LEADERSHIP OF OPPOSITION.

Mr. MACARTNEY (*Toowong*): I desire to inform the House that I have been re-elected to the position of leader of the Opposition.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: I desire to offer my congratulations to the hon. member for the high honour that has been conferred upon him by the members of his party. The position of leader of the Opposition is a very responsible one. It entails very onerous duties and is a very great tax on the time of any hon. member who achieves it. Indeed, I think it takes nearly all his time—I speak feelingly, having occupied the position of leader of the Opposition for a considerable time myself. I hope that our relations during the time the hon. member occupies the position will be pleasant, and that we will endeavour to conduct the business of the House harmoniously. I hope that the hon. member's health will enable him to stand the strain—because it is a strain—and, in point of time, I trust that his term will be a long one.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear! and laughter.

PAPERS.

The following papers, laid on the table, were ordered to be printed:—

Amendment of clause 18 of schedule to the Industrial Arbitration Act of 1916.

Despatches from the Secretary of State for the Colonies, conveying His Majesty's assent to certain Acts passed during the session of 1917.

Award under the Industrial Arbitration Act of 1916 relating to surveyors' labourers and cooks employed by the departments of the Treasury, Public Lands, and Railways.

Award under the Industrial Arbitration Act of 1916 relating to certain employees of the Commissioner for Railways engaged in railway refreshment-rooms.

Rules of the Supreme Court as of Wednesday, the fifth day of December, 1917, being Law Calendar for the year 1918.

Order in Council under the Fish Supply Act of 1916.

Regulations under the Income Tax Acts, 1902-1915.

The following papers were laid on the table:—

Statements of certain insurance companies under the Life Assurance Companies Act of 1901.

THE OPENING SPEECH.

The SPEAKER: I have to report that the House this day attended His Excellency the Governor in the Council [4.30 p.m.] Chamber, where his Excellency delivered an Opening Speech to both Houses, of which, for greater accuracy, I have obtained a copy. I am not going to read the Speech over again to hon. members, as they have already heard it read. Is it the pleasure of the House to take it as read?

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

ADDRESS IN REPLY.

Mr. JAMES (*Logan*), who was received with Government cheers, said: Mr. Speaker,—I rise to move that the following Address be presented to His Excellency the Governor, in reply to the Speech of His Excellency on the opening of this the first session of the twenty-first Parliament of Queensland:—

“MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

“We, His Majesty's loyal and dutiful subjects, the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland, in Parliament assembled, desire to assure Your Excellency of our continued loyalty and affection towards the Throne and Person of Our Most Gracious Sovereign, and to tender our thanks to Your Excellency for the Speech with which you have been pleased to open the present session.

“The various measures to which Your Excellency has referred, and all other matters that may be brought before us, will receive our most careful consideration, and it shall be our earnest endeavour so to deal with them that our labours may tend to the advancement and prosperity of the State.”

The recent elections placed the Government

in an excellent position to carry that out. We all notice the lack of attendance on the Opposition benches, but I do not think that that is due to any concerted action beforehand but rather to the fact that the people of Queensland have appreciated the fact that the Queensland Government, during the last three years, have placed a sound and progressive policy before them. (Hear, hear!) Therefore, some of the gentlemen who represented electorates in Queensland during the last three years have not now the opportunity to sit on the Opposition benches. (Hear, hear!)

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: It will be a good thing for the country.

Mr. JAMES: Undoubtedly. I do not think that the people did an unwise thing, but that they knew exactly what they were doing when they give that decision on 16th March last. (Hear, hear!) We must remember that this Government, during the last three years, have had a very difficult task to carry out—that is, to start a new programme of government in war time. We notice that for many years Queensland has gone on in an “how-d'ye-do” sort of fashion, and has been in a state of comparative stagnation. But in 1915 the people of Queensland came to the conclusion that a change was necessary, and therefore—and in spite of the war—the Labour Government was called upon to embark upon a progressive policy to replace that policy of stagnation to which the country had been subjected for half a century.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. JAMES: One of the great difficulties in respect of such a situation was that of finance. Hon. members will notice that in the Governor's Speech it is proposed to make an interim statement in regard to the finances. That is stated to presage a deficit on this occasion, as on the last. That deficit is to be expected. We find that there is a deficit in every State of the Commonwealth. It is a common condition of war time, but I must say that it is wholly due to the action of the Legislative Council, which is the shadow of the Opposition which we have here, that we have a deficit in Queensland today, for the simple reason that the finance Bills which were introduced by this Government in order to liquidate that deficit were turned down.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. FRY: Which Bills?

Mr. JAMES: The Bills which were interfered with by the Legislative Council comprised one which proposed to tax persons with incomes of over £60 per week. (Hear, hear!) We find that people who would be so taxed would have to pay about £5 17s. 6d. per week out of it, and would only have something over £50 per week with which to pay their butchers' bills—with which to get meat from the State butchers' shops. (Government laughter and hear, hears!). This Government, in spite of the difficult times under which we are passing, embarked on a policy of national development. We find they have attacked the bad system of the past right in the centre. One of the weaknesses of modern society at present is in distribution. It is with the matter of distribution that this Government have grappled in some measure. We find that they are trying to the best of their ability—and I think very

Mr. James.]

successfully—to bring the producers and the consumers nearer together, so that there may not be so much waste in the distribution between those two; so that a fisherman, for instance, may be able to get a better price for his product, and the consumer in the city better able to buy fish, which is rather an unusual proceeding on the part of a great portion of our suburban population to-day. (Hear, hear!) During the election campaign certain fishermen remarked to me that they had recently sent several 40-lb. cases of mullet up to Brisbane, but, instead of getting a cheque, they received a bill of costs. We find that this is a very frequent occurrence. That is simply an instance of the old system. The practice was for the local retailers of fish in Brisbane to decide among themselves what the price of fish should be, buy up all they wanted at that price, and allow the rest to be thrown into the sea or allowed to go to waste. The new fish markets, I understand, handled 160 tons of fish in the first fortnight of their existence, which shows that they have the confidence of the fishermen. (Hear, hear!) They have been paying 5s. 6d. per case for mullet.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: The fishermen turned down your man.

Mr. JAMES: They elected me.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear! and laughter.

Mr. JAMES: At present the fish markets are paying 5s. 6d. per case for mullet in the glut season, and there is every possibility of them going up to 12s. 6d. for a 40-lb. case, whereas previously, allowing for waste, the average price obtained all the year was 2s. 6d. for a 40-lb. case. The increased price all goes to the fishermen, but in the past they paid expenses out of the smaller price received. The consumer in Brisbane is to-day buying fish at 4d. per lb. in the State fish markets.

Mr. PETRIE: That is only for mullet. (Government laughter.)

Mr. PETERSON: It includes flathead. (Laughter.)

Mr. BEBBINGTON: I think you must have a lot for sale over there. (Renewed laughter.)

Mr. JAMES: The disabilities which are obviated by establishing State control and distribution of fish are also found in the distribution of fruit. In fruitgrowing districts any amount of fruit is grown which is unsaleable in the season, because there is not proper distribution, but we have now provided for a State canning factory, where fruit will be dealt with in the same way as fish. None will be thrown away or let go to waste. When this system is properly developed the whole of the fruit supply of Queensland will be so handled that the fruitgrower, as in the case of the fisherman, instead of wondering whether they are to get a market for their fruit, will find they have a ready market, and will know the price they will receive.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. JAMES: That is one of the reasons why in some of our fruit districts in the Logan the Labour party got an overwhelming majority.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: Were there no other reasons?

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: You be careful. You are skating on thin ice.

The SPEAKER: Order! Order!

[Mr. James.

Mr. JAMES: To complete this system of distribution of primary products, we have also the State markets. I have information from the manager of the State markets that good business is being done there; and, from my knowledge of the farming interests in my electorate, I have found there was great need of something in that direction, because, owing to the difficulty in handling fruit and other products in Brisbane, fruitgrowers and other producers in the farming districts have been in the habit of sending their material right away to other States and organising the business themselves. Under that system a fruitgrower would naturally watch the paper, and find out what price was being paid in Sydney. If he saw a high price ruling he would send his fruit there, but by the time that the fruit reached Sydney all the other fruitgrowers would be doing the same thing, and there would be a glut, so that a loss would probably be incurred, while there would very likely be a high price ruling in Melbourne. It is, therefore, a very good thing for the State to undertake a system of organising interstate distribution, and, instead of allowing the fruitgrower to be subject to capricious markets, as he has been, to undertake the work of distribution—to establish branches in the different States, so as to handle fruit and other produce to the best advantage, and save the primary producer from loss through waste.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. JAMES: These, very briefly, are some of the means which are being adopted by the present Government to overcome the difficulty with regard to the middleman, in order that the primary producer may get a better price for his products, and the consumer in the cities may get cheaper food. That benefits all the people who are worth benefiting, all those who give an honest return for what they get: and it proves conclusively that the interests of the farmer and working man in the city are not opposed, but are identical with each other.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. JAMES: There is one objection which has been raised in the past to State enterprise. We have heard a great deal about "the Government stroke," about Government departments being used as hospitals for "political dead-beats." There may be remnants of the system in the departments, although it is not in the administration—but we must remember that if there is any of this system still remaining it is a legacy from the past. (Hear, hear!) Who were the past? The past Governments were the gentlemen sitting opposite, the people who have been misleading and misguiding the destinies of Queensland for the last half a century.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. JAMES: It was they who established that system. They were not trying to run the Government departments seriously, but simply used them as benevolent [4 p.m.] asylums for those who helped to get them into Parliament. The Labour party, however, recognises the inevitable extension of such State functions, and it is their policy to do away with this system of favouritism. (Opposition dissent.) It is the aim of the present Government to run all the State industries, and all the State departments, on a commercial basis. (Hear, hear!) If that has not been done

in the past, it is not the fault of this Government, but it is the fault of the Governments and the parties who established that system. So it is for those who established that system to remember this before any criticism is made.

You will notice in the Governor's Speech that it is proposed to introduce a State Enterprises Bill. I understand that the object of that Bill is to place the State industries and State departments as far as possible under non-political control, that is, in so far as it is necessary, to place them upon a proper commercial basis. But it will not mean that they are going to be put in the same position as the Railway Department is at present under an autocratic Commissioner who can do as he likes, irrespective of what the Government of the country wills, and against the Government policy.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. W. H. BARNES: He is to be a squeezable fellow.

MR. PETERSON: No. He is—

MR. JAMES: It is obvious from the few remarks I have already made that, in spite of the war difficulties, this Government is making a sincere and courageous attempt to get over some of the difficulties under which the country has been labouring. I may say now that it is all the more necessary to do that because it is war time, because in war time any people who do anything worth while are feeling the pinch. Therefore, in spite of any criticisms made in regard to industrial enterprises, I say that these things should be carried out in war time. This is a time when we have an opportunity of developing our industries such as we never had before.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JAMES: We have now got an opportunity to rectify the retrograde movement in the boot industry caused by the old Tory Administration. Under the Tory Administration there has been a decrease in the number of employees. We know that there are less employees in the boot industry in the State to-day than in 1908. We do not find private enterprise trying to rectify that state of affairs. (Hear, hear!) Therefore it is necessary that this Government should do all it possibly can to take advantage of war interference in commerce to develop our local industries.

This Government has also adopted a humanitarian policy which is to benefit those who are unable to benefit themselves. All are aware that the Home Secretary's Department has organised a system of baby clinics for protecting the life of the young—protecting for Australia the beginnings of the greater population of the future. (Hear, hear!) We find also that during the last three years this Government increased the amount paid to natural mothers for looking after their own children. Previously under the old Liberal party, the foster mother received more than the natural mother for the care of children. The Liberal party made no pretence towards humanitarian legislation and always took advantage of the natural mother who desired to look after her own children and paid her less than they paid the foster mother.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Shame! Shame!

MR. JAMES: That is an illustration of the difference in the outlook of the two parties. One is a humanitarian party and the other is not a humanitarian party. That is the best way to put it.

MR. BEBBINGTON: The orphans were the first you reduced last year.

MR. JAMES: There is no need for me to include in my summary of the legislation of the Government any lengthy reference to the benefits received by those suffering from miners' phthisis and their dependents, or to the benefits received under the Workers' Compensation Act. (Hear, hear!) They show that we have a definite humanitarian policy. (Hear, hear!)

I notice in the Governor's Speech a reference to a proposed Supreme Court Act Amendment Bill. I hope, from a humanitarian standpoint, that this measure will provide for the retirement of Supreme Court judges at least at the age of 65 years.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JAMES: We find that some of our judges have made—looking at it from a layman's point of view—some ridiculous judgments. In the Legislative Council case—the case of Taylor versus the Attorney-General—their decision was reversed by the High Court and also by the Privy Council. The ages of our present Supreme Court judges are of interest. Mr. Justice Chubb is 73 years of age, Mr. Justice Cooper 72, Mr. Justice Real 71, and the two babies are Mr. Justice Shand, 60 years, and Mr. Justice Lukin, 50 years. Mr. Justice Chubb started on his judicial duties twenty-nine years ago. Mr. Justice Cooper started on his thirty-three years ago, while Mr. Justice Real started twenty-eight years ago. And we find in some of their judgments to-day the ideas that were in existence thirty years ago—they attempt to incorporate these in what should be up-to-date modern judgments.

MR. STOPFORD: They practise a go-slow policy, too.

MR. JAMES: Therefore I think that it will be a good thing if this Supreme Court Act Amendment Bill provides for the retirement of the Supreme Court judges at a reasonable age, when their mental faculties begin to suffer the deterioration which might lead to injustice in some respects. One of our first objects should be to get a judiciary as efficient as possible, and therefore we should provide for the appointment of younger men to those positions in order to attain to an absolute standard of justice at all times.

MR. VOWLES: You want them "temperamentally fitted"?

MR. JAMES: Not only is it the duty of the Government to attend to the development of the national industries and provide for the proper distribution of primary products and to do all that they can in a humanitarian way, but we find that it has fallen upon the present Government lately to protect this State against Federal encroachments. This is not a party matter; it is one which hon. gentlemen opposite will agree should be supported by all Queensland. The price of butter in Queensland should not be fixed at a net rate of 10s. per cwt. less than Victoria and New South Wales.

MR. CARTER: Thirteen shillings.

Mr. James.]

Mr. JAMES: I said "net." The Queensland price for butter is 149s. 4d. per cwt., but 3s. is allowed on that price for sale in Victoria, which makes it 152s. 4d. In Victoria the price of butter has been fixed at 162s. per cwt. On the supposition or excuse that there is a surplus of butter in Queensland, the Victorian and New South Wales merchants are allowed an increased price. I find from investigation that it costs 1s. 7d. per cwt. to send this butter to Victoria, whereas the net difference is nearly 10s. per cwt. That is giving the benefit to middlemen, and this State is being victimised for the benefit of the speculators in Melbourne and Sydney. All parties in this Parliament should unite to protect the State against Federal encroachments of that sort. It is necessary for all concerned in the butter industry to see that there should be no great margin in the price between the Southern States and Queensland.

The Commonwealth Government has also refused to allow this Government to handle Queensland's rare metals. Queensland produces the greatest quantity of molybdenite and wolfram in Australia, yet the Federal Government gave the monopoly to Dalgety and Co. to control the export of those metals. The price of molybdenite in England is £225 per ton, and Dalgety and Co. have profited by as much as £75 per ton. They get a fixed price for the metal in England, yet the working miners in Queensland had to take whatever the company pleased to give them.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Shame! Shame!

Mr. JAMES: This Government approached the Federal Government for the right to act as agents for the handling of our rare metals, but they were turned down. Yet we now find that the Federal Government have appointed the Thermo Ore Reduction Company of North Queensland to be the agents for the handling of those metals in Queensland.

Mr. KIRWAN: How many shares has Mr. Hughes got in that company?

Mr. JAMES: The Federal Government would not allow the State Government to act as agents in that matter at all. I consider that the Queensland Government should have a greater share in the handling of our local products and in fixing the prices of those products. (Hear, hear!) We know that it is not altogether a State matter, since the Imperial Government and the Commonwealth Government between them have control of freightage and the market facilities in London, but there should be some arrangement entered into between the Commonwealth Government and this Government to provide for the better protection of our State interests in that regard.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. JAMES: During the election, apart from the domestic matters engaging the attention of electors, the question of patriotism entered very largely into the discussions which took place. I often wondered where true patriotism was to be found. I wondered if it was to be found in the Liberal party, which wears a national cloak in order to get the votes of a certain section of the people by pretending that it was a truly national party. I do not know exactly how many names the party sitting opposite has had in the last few years. (Hear, hear! and

[Mr. James.

laughter.) We know that any individual who is always changing his name is likely to be regarded with suspicion.

The HOME SECRETARY: They are found more in St. Helena than elsewhere. (Hear, hear!)

Mr. CORSER: That is where your policy was framed.

Mr. JAMES: We found when the war broke out, and the people were overcome by patriotic emotions, that the party opposite immediately changed their name to the "National" party, in order to try and catch votes by working on that patriotic sentiment. They failed to dupe the electors outside; but, at the same time, they adopted that patriotic cloak in order to catch those votes. But when the Queensland Government adopts some measure or takes some course in order to pursue the things for which Australia is fighting to-day they get very little sympathy from the so-called "National" party at all.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. JAMES: We find when the Premier of Queensland allows his name to be used in connection with the raising of 1,000 volunteers, and he speaks from the Post Office steps in aid of that proposition, that there is considerable criticism from persons who are actively associated with the National party.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. MACARTNEY: You never got one recruit. (Opposition interruption.)

The SPEAKER: Order! Order! I suggest that hon. members allow the hon. member to make his speech without interruption.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. JAMES: I enjoy these interjections, Mr. Speaker, because it shows that hon. members opposite are very interested in what I am saying, and that it touches them very closely. (Hear, hear!) I don't know how it is that the Federal authorities are so lax in taking precautions against persons who prejudice recruiting for political purposes. I think that there is room for strong action in that respect, and I am astounded that the military authorities have taken no course at all in order to protect the recruiting movement in Australia from attacks which are the outcome of a party spleen and spite.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. JAMES: I think that is all that we can put it down to. (Hear, hear!) I do not make that charge against members of Parliament particularly. We find that the raw feelings which a party represents are to be found more clearly defined in the followers than in the leaders; but they are true, on the whole, of all persons so engaged. It is remarkable that, although the party which calls itself "National" went out to catch votes under a patriotic cloak, they stooped to apparently the most unpatriotic means in order to get those votes. (Hear, hear!) When the people of the Logan were pleased to elect me as their representative, we found that certain organs of the Press in Queensland which did not support the Labour party were very quick in ascribing my election to what they called "the German vote." During my tour of that electorate I found no Germans at all; I found a lot of good Australians.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. JAMES: I don't think that because a person's forefathers happened to come from a place called Germany, which is at present at war with England, they are to be regarded as Germans.

Mr. KIRWAN: What about the late Queen Victoria and King Edward?

Mr. JAMES: In actual practice the National party recognised that fact, because I found a gentleman of the name of Heinrich August Karl Klüber organising in the Logan electorate in opposition to me.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear! and laughter.

Mr. JAMES: I naturally came to the conclusion that that gentleman was paid and sent out on that mission by the National party on behalf of my opponents.

Mr. POLLOCK: To get the German vote.

Mr. JAMES: No. Not to get the German vote, but to get the Australian vote which they themselves declare is German. The reason, I will submit, that that section voted for the Labour party, was not because they were Germans, but because the Federal Government failed to recognise them as good Australians and took their vote away from them.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. JAMES: I will ask you, Mr. Speaker, is there any section of the community which, if victimised in that way, would not retaliate? They did retaliate, and I admire them for it; and I say again that I don't know of any section in Australia who are more patriotic than they are, because right through that district I found that they were truly patriotic and they resented the imputation of disloyalty. If the Federal Government had suspicions as to the loyalty of certain people in Australia, why did they not wait until they could "sheet home" a charge of disloyalty by the proper methods, instead of including the whole of a certain section of the people of Queensland in a general condemnation? If Australia is to become a great nation—as I hope and think it will—it is necessary to bind into one nation the whole of the people who are at present in Australia, and not split them into a lot of fighting sections the same as the so-called "National" party have been doing. (Hear, hear!) We have many nationalities in Australia. You might go to some countries and find that the people of that country for centuries back were of the one race, but in Australia we have people from all over the world. We have invited them here; we have asked them to come here and almost paid them to come to develop Australia; and now, when all these sections are united into one Australian nation, we find a so-called "National" Government turning round and declaring that one part of the Australian people are not worthy of citizenship. That is why they voted for the Labour party this time—because the Labour party does not believe in splitting up Australia into a lot of different sections in that fashion, but believes in welding the whole of these peoples into one Australian nation.

Mr. STZER: Like a May Day meeting.

Mr. JAMES: I hold that the return of my friend, Mr. Butler, for the Lockyer is due wholly to the resentment of the electors of that district at the tactics which were employed there—unpatriotic tactics. We find that the so-called National candidate for the

Lockyer issued a manifesto, in which he blamed Andrew Fisher, late Prime Minister of Australia, for declaring that he would devote the last man and the last shilling to winning the war. The people of that electorate, being patriotic Australian citizens, resented such tactics, and therefore we find that in portions of the electorate—where the residents could not be accused of having any German blood in them—Mr. Butler got overwhelming support. They resented the unpatriotic action of a party that called themselves "National" in order to catch votes. Mr. Butler will, no doubt, deal with this at greater length. (Laughter.) I am just mentioning it by the way, because, while I am defending the rights of Australian citizens, it is just as well to show up the tactics to which this so-called "National" party are willing to descend. We need to remember these things; and before that party can rightly call itself a National party it will have to recognise the right of every Australian citizen to full citizen's rights, cut out their party strife and bitterness, and, if they want to win the war—as they say they do—to enter loyally into a compact with all other parties towards that end. Australia entered into this war almost unanimously. At the beginning of the war, had a plebiscite been taken of the people, probably 90 per cent. would have been in favour of pursuing it. Since Australia is in it now, Australia shall remain in it.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. JAMES: The efforts to get volunteers and to pursue the war on the basis of the voluntary system which has been laid down by the people of Australia should not be interfered with by the tactics which the Opposition has shown a tendency to pursue. I think that the Labour party can be called the "National" party in future if deeds and facts, rather than names, are to be considered.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: Truly National.

Mr. JAMES: This is the truly "National party," because the Government—(hear, hear!)—as I have shown—and the party for whom the Government acts, are doing their best to develop the industries of Australia, and to take advantage of war conditions in order to do that. They are trying to build Australia into a fine nation, and it is only by those methods that we will really come out into that future nationhood to which, I think, all Australia should aspire.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. BRENNAN (who was received with Government "Hear, hears") said: I rise to second the Address in Reply so ably proposed by the hon. member for the Logan. Before proceeding to formally second that vote, I have to tender to you, Sir, my congratulations on your attainment of so high a position as Speaker of the Assembly. I think that young members coming into the Chamber are looked upon as subjects worthy of ridicule, and those young members have to look to the Speaker for guidance; and the Speaker has to encourage those young members in intelligent debate. This morning, in answer to a message, we were called to the Upper House. We attended there, where I heard a Speech delivered by His Excellency the Governor. That Speech in itself was very high in quality, and spoke volumes for the able advisers of His Excellency in educating and pointing out to him the necessities for the democratic portion of Queensland as

Mr. Brennan.]

represented in this present Parliament. I think that the advisers of His Excellency have shown the way to true democracy and the principles required for that democratic spirit in the future. Before seconding the motion, I would like to add something to what the hon. member for the Logan has already said. I notice in the Governor's Speech, regarding returned soldiers, the following statement:—

"To the problem of making adequate provision for the soldiers who return to Queensland, my advisers are giving the very closest attention, and they have already made satisfactory arrangements for a considerable number of them. The work of settling on suitable Crown land such of them as have a turn for agriculture or its allied industries is proceeding satisfactorily."

When we come to consider that when this war is over there will be something like 8,000,000 people thrown out of employment—that is to say, the soldiers in the British dominions actually engaged in the war, and the women and girls who are engaged in munition works—we then start to appreciate the nature of the duty of the Government to provide employment for those people. We know very well that when the war is over there will be a surfeit of unemployment in Australasia. At present we have it in Sydney and Melbourne, and it is sure to come, to a great extent, in Queensland. I think the Speech of His Excellency the Governor this morning points the way to a solution. If the Opposition will assist the Government, and also persuade their friends on the other side of the door to assist us in enabling a proper procedure to be adopted, and proper work to be done, so that the soldiers, on their return, will be able to go into employment which will be satisfactory for them and their dependents, they will be conferring a benefit on the people of Queensland. I was much interested to hear our worthy Premier at Toowoomba. He said there that, as far as the Queensland Government was concerned, its ambition was to develop the mineral resources of Queensland. Now, we all know very well that Queensland, in mineral resources, is the richest State in Australia. The Premier said that it was the duty of the Government to develop those mineral resources of Queensland. He pointed out that with the increase in the accumulated debts—Federal and State—taxation alone would not possibly do more than pay interest without touching redemption. He pointed out that it was necessary for Governments to take control of all products and minerals, and work them to the best advantage, the profit to be derived from such enterprises to be applied to the redemption of the liability of the various States and the Commonwealth. I think that when the Premier said that he hit the keynote of the situation, as it appears to be the only solution of Australia having a chance of emerging from, and relieving itself of, the enormous liability which is going to be placed on the shoulders of the Australian people in the future. I think that we have in the present Parliament the ablest statesmen we have ever had in the history of Queensland.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. BRENNAN: I say that their action last session, in endeavouring to introduce the Iron and Steel Works Bill, shows that they were out to do the best they could for Queensland; but, sorry to relate, and sorry

[Mr. Brennan.

I am to see it on record, the Opposition fought that measure, which at the present time might have been an accomplished fact. I trust when that Bill is introduced on this occasion the Opposition will vote for it to a man, and also influence their friends across the door to do likewise. I say further that the Government, in tackling the arsenic question, has done a great good for the farmers and settlers in Queensland. I think the arsenic question is one which required tackling immediately, and if the results of the trial in the mine are successful it will be a boon not only to farmers but to the pastoralists. The pastoralists, however, must be impressed with the necessity of carrying out their obligations under their leases. They have to get rid of the prickly-pear. They [4.30 p.m.] cannot take the leases, feed the grass off them, allow the pear to take charge, and then throw them back to the Crown, as they have done in years gone by. I say that this question is one of the most material at the present time. Prickly-pear not only is throttling the grazing industry, but also is threatening the whole of the pastoral industry, and if it is not grappled with Queensland is going to be in a very shocking state. I do not think the destruction of the pear is the only solution of the problem. Possibly, with the Labour party's ambition for scientific research we may be able to introduce to Queensland able chemists who will provide other means of dealing with prickly-pear and of making spirit from what at present is a troublesome vegetable.

I notice a Bill is to be introduced to deal with dairy produce. When we speak of dairy produce, we have to consider the farmer. We know very well that in the past the farmer has always been told that the only friend he had was the person who would not put a tax on him. "We won't put a tax on you; you stick to us, and vote for us, and we will not put a tax on you"—that has been the cry of the Opposition for the last fifty years, but the farmer is starting to realise that direct taxation may be a blessing—(Opposition laughter)—because once a measure is passed for direct taxation he can calculate what it is going to be six months ahead, but he does not know what the middleman is going to do or what he is going to make out of him in indirect taxation. For instance, in 1911 the farmer was getting about 9½d. for his cream, and butter was selling at 2s. 5d. or something near that price. Hon. members will remember at the same time something like half a million cases of butter were being cornered in Sydney.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Did you say 9½d. for cream?

Mr. BRENNAN: Something like that, as you know.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: That is a very good price.

Mr. BRENNAN: Now it is 1s. 3½d., and butter is selling at 1s. 7d. or 1s. 8d. per lb. The farmer is in a better position to-day than ever before in the history of Queensland. And he has become educated as to who are his best friends. It is essential that the farmer must be educated. When he puts his crop in he must know what he is going to get for it. He must not be left to the mercy of the middlemen who are unscrupulous and want to corner the markets.

I admit that a man acting as agent is not so bad, but the man who has capital and can hang on to the farmers' produce until the price comes round to suit himself, may corner the markets.

Now I intend to come to the question of the early conference of wheatgrowers. I think that when it is called it will prove to be like the conference of sugar-growers. It will give the utmost satisfaction to the farmers on the Downs. I am sure the hon. member for Drayton will support us in this matter and other matters dealing with the farmers, because there is no doubt they are all in their interests. I think it will be found that the wheatgrowers will attend that conference and that in three years' time, like the cane farmers in the North, they will be well satisfied with what has been done for them.

The question of the Royal Commission upon the feasibility of establishing the iron and steel industry in Queensland deals with a proposal that is going to prove a great benefit to the State. I hope that the Iron and Steel Works Bill will become an accomplished fact in the very near future, as when the industry is established we shall be able to extend our railways in the North and also in the farming and other rural districts, at a minimum cost.

The next matter to receive my attention is the Health Act Amendment Bill. I say that the Federal Government has been criminal in its negligence in not attending to the health of the people of Australia. The Ryan Government, during last session, introduced and passed a Health Act in which were inserted certain clauses dealing with venereal diseases. That Act is the only piece of legislation in Australia which makes it compulsory to notify such diseases. We read the other day a most glaring and deplorable statement as to the condition of some of our unfortunate Australian soldiers. Australia's average is second on the list of venereal disease at present in the hospitals at home, and when the war is over we are going to have those unfortunate lads returning here and elsewhere without any Government control. At the present time the city of Brisbane is reeking with venereal disease. Queensland—the whole of Australia, you might say—is reeking with it, and any gentleman who refuses or declines to assist in attending to the health of the community of Australia in this matter ought to be hanged to the nearest post. We are laying ourselves out to bring in humanitarian measures, and yet, on the other hand, some public men are looking on at the spread of this awful disease without taking any steps to prevent such spreading. I hope the Government, during the present session, will see that the administration of the Act to which I have referred is put into force with the greatest violence it is possible to use, because it is the only means of combating the evil in Queensland.

I do not intend to go any further into the Speech at the present time. I have very much pleasure in seconding the adoption of the Address in Reply.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. MACARTNEY: I beg to move the adjournment of the debate.

Question put and passed.

The resumption of the debate was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

The House adjourned at twenty-three minutes to 5 o'clock p.m.