

The office of President has been a very pleasant one to me, having had the honour and privilege of presiding over a House notable for the orderly conduct of its business.

In taking an affectionate farewell of honorable members and the officers of the House, I wish them every good wish, and trust that the Council may continue to act in the best interests of the State.

I am,

Yours very faithfully,

JNO. M. DAVIES.

### SPECIAL CONSTABLES.

**The PRESIDENT.**—Mr. Beckett has a question on the notice-paper in which reference is made to "an impertinent interference with the duties and privileges of the Honorable the Chief Secretary." Before calling upon the honorable member to ask the question, I should like him to explain what he means by the word "impertinent."

**The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.**—I think the word explains itself. To my way of thinking, any interference by an individual, or a body of individuals, with the prerogative of a member of Parliament is impertinence.

**The PRESIDENT.**—Under standing order No. 81, I rule that the word "impertinent" is an unbecoming expression, and it will have to be deleted. There are uses of the word "impertinent" which are not offensive, but Mr. Beckett has evidently intended the word to bear the common meaning. I call upon Mr. Beckett now to ask the question standing in his name without using the word "impertinent."

**The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.**—Should I be in order in substituting the words "uncalled for" for the word "impertinent"?

**The PRESIDENT.**—That would be in order.

**The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.**—Then I ask the Solicitor-General—

(a) Did the Government authorize the Lord Mayor of Melbourne to issue a circular to all the mayors in the metropolitan area, or any of them, requesting them to enroll special constables in each centre?

(b) For what purpose has the new force been enrolled?

(c) If no authority was given by the Government for such action, will the Cabinet take such steps as will prevent any repetition of such an uncalled for interference with the duties and privileges of the Honorable the Chief Secretary?

**The Hon. A. ROBINSON (Solicitor-General).**—The answers to the honorable member's questions are as follow:—

(a) No.

(b) For the purposes set out in the Unlawful Assemblies and Processions Act 1915.

(c) Seeing that the Act referred to empowers any magistrate to appoint special constables in certain circumstances without reference to the Honorable the Chief Secretary, there was no interference with the duties and privileges of that Minister.

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

The debate (adjourned from July 29) on Sir Henry Weedon's motion for the adoption of an Address-in-Reply to the Governor's Speech was resumed.

**The Hon. G. L. GOUDIE.**—It seems to be the practice for new members of the House to say a few words during the debate on the motion for the adoption of an Address-in-Reply. I suppose that I am the last, but perhaps not the least, of the newly elected members to speak, and I am very pleased to have the honour of saying a few words to-day. I should, first of all, like to make reference to the repatriation of the boys who have fought for us. There is a great deal of dissatisfaction right throughout the country, more especially in regard to the placing of the returned soldiers on the land. The matter has been in hand for over twelve months, and, so far as I can see, the operations of the Closer Settlement Board have not had the result that they should have had. I am a member of a local Repatriation Committee up in the north-west, and we have been called upon to inspect a large number of properties that have been offered. Applicants for the blocks, of course, have put their applications before the Board. We have been operating for twelve months, and the only result that we can show for our labour is one boy placed on the land.

**The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.**—That is a record.

**The Hon. G. L. GOUDIE.**—I do not know whether it is a record, but if it is, it is anything but a creditable one. It is not the fault of the local Repatriation Committee that that state of affairs exists. I think this matter should be taken up by the Government, who should use every endeavour to speed up the work in

connexion with this branch of repatriation.

The Hon. FRANK CLARKE.—Will the honorable member specify the district more exactly?

The Hon. G. L. GOUDIE.—I refer to the Hopetoun district, and I have had similar reports from several other districts, including the Ouyen district, throughout the North-West Province. I should like the Government to take firm action, and to direct the Closer Settlement Board to speed up the work, so that the returned boys will not be discouraged in their attempt to get on the land. These boys have done magnificent work for us. It is owing to their efforts and sacrifices that we enjoy our liberties, and they should receive justice from us. I notice that it is stated in the Governor's Speech that the Government have taken in hand the question of constructing railway extensions through certain portions of the Mallee district. The idea is to give railway communication to the returned men who have taken up unimproved mallee land. I think it is a good thing that this work has been taken in hand; but whilst feeling that the Government are carrying out their duty, so far as providing railway communication is concerned, I do not think it is a wise policy to put these boys on unimproved mallee land unless the Government are prepared to give them the land for nothing. The boys are entitled to consideration, and surely to goodness each of them has earned at least a square mile of unimproved mallee land. The House should say that if the boys are placed on unimproved mallee land they should get it as a free gift from the State. They have to go through the experience of pioneering, and as one who has put many years in the Mallee, I know what pioneering there means. I can assure honorable members that Mallee settlers are faced with a very difficult problem indeed. The whole question hinges on what they will be able to get in the first year, and the prospects are not too good in that direction. Then, I understand, the soldiers are in the same position as the civilian and the cold-footer. They have to pay for their land, and the only consideration is that they do not pay any rent during the first three years.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU.—They pay ultimately. The interest is only deferred.

The Hon. G. L. GOUDIE.—That is so. I do not think we are doing our duty as the representatives of the country if we allow this state of affairs to go on. As I have said before, our soldiers are entitled to every advantage that we can give them; and surely one little advantage would be to make them a present of the land. I notice in the Speech that provision has been made for extending facilities for irrigation. I recognise this is an important matter, and I congratulate the Government sincerely on the work they are doing in this direction. The locking of the Murray should have been taken in hand a generation ago. We must look to the water which will be obtainable from that stream for the further extension of agricultural settlement in the north and north-west of this State. The areas of vacant land suitable for cultivation in the State are getting very small; and it is only in the direction of irrigation that we can look for further development in primary production. I hope the work will be consummated in the near future. I should like to say a few words with regard to the projected action of the Government in connexion with the destruction of vermin and noxious weeds. Every member of this House is fully seized with the immense amount of damage that rabbits have done to the agricultural interests of this State. We cannot really estimate the amount of damage that has been done. I can give instances where men have put 300 or 400 acres under crop, and have not been able to reap more than 100 acres owing to the destruction by rabbits. When I say that they obtained only three bags to the acre, it is easy to estimate the losses individuals have suffered from the operations of this pest. A sufficient amount of money has not been made available in the past for the destruction of rabbits. We have starved the Department dealing with this matter, and in doing so we have failed to realize the menace that rabbits are to primary production. I should like the Department to be placed on a sounder footing than it has been in the past, and the Government should enter upon some scheme for the eradication of this pest. Members of this House represent provinces in this State where rabbits could be effectively

dealt with if a proper scheme of extermination were adopted. In the past, inspectors have had their hands tied; and just at the critical time when they would be capable of doing splendid work, they have had to knock men off, because the vote had all been expended. I should like a larger amount to be voted for this purpose than has been the case in the past. If honorable members realized the seriousness of the pest, they would be only too willing to see that a larger sum of money was devoted to its eradication. Last year the Government introduced a measure to deal with noxious weeds. The proposals were somewhat crude, and did not meet with the approval of the majority of the municipal councils of this State. The Act should be amended. The only thing that the councils were positive about in regard to that Act was that more inspectors would be appointed, and that they would be called upon to pay at least five times as much as they had been doing in the past for the eradication of thistles and noxious weeds. There was no guarantee, even then, that the scheme would be successful. It is rather a difficult problem to deal with, but the law on this subject requires radical alteration if the eradication of noxious weeds is to be successfully carried out. The procedure which has to be adopted is too cumbersome. By the time an inspector gets in the position of being able to summon a person who has been remiss in his dealings with noxious weeds, they have flowered and cast their seeds. It is too late then to do anything, and another season passes. Any measure, to be successful in this matter, should be in the direction of providing for action by groups of municipalities in which weeds are practically identical. These groups could proclaim certain weeds as noxious, say, in August, and the councils should be compelled to send out notices to every occupier or owner throughout the district, just as they do in regard to the rates, by the 1st September, that certain weeds had been gazetted as noxious, and calling upon the owners to keep the lands free during the ensuing twelve months.

AN HONORABLE MEMBER.—How would you deal with Crown lands?

The Hon. G. L. GOUDIE.—I will refer to Crown lands a little later.

Sir HENRY WEEDON.—You want the municipal councils to do the work of the Government.

The Hon. G. L. GOUDIE.—My opinion is that the councils could call upon the owners and occupiers of land to keep their land free from noxious weeds for the twelve months following the issue of the notice.

The Hon. J. P. JONES.—There are a good many weeds on the roads.

The Hon. G. L. GOUDIE.—The owners of adjacent land would be responsible for half the roads. After these notices had been sent out, the recipients should be given a reasonable time—say twenty-one days—to get to work to destroy the weeds. If at the expiration of that period they had made no reasonable effort, the inspectors appointed by the councils should have power to issue summonses straightway.

The Hon. A. E. CHANDLER.—Without reference to the councils?

The Hon. G. L. GOUDIE.—Why appoint men if we would not give them sufficient power to act in that way? If this scheme were adopted, land-owners would know exactly what was their position; and unless they carried out the directions given in the notice, they would be liable to be fined. The inspectors should have power to enter upon a holding at any time, and issue summonses forthwith. The present procedure makes the Act a farce. If legislation were introduced in the direction I have suggested, it would be effective, and the cost to the country and the councils would be practically no more than it is at present. With regard to Crown land, the Crown has been one of the chief offenders in permitting these pests to spread. It should be equally liable with the private individual. That is to say, the Crown should get its employees to keep the lands under its control free of noxious weeds in the same way that the private individual would have to do. Unless the Crown recognised its liabilities, the Act would be a dead letter. I hope that the legislation which the Government will introduce in regard to this matter will be satisfactory, because unless we take this question in hand, the menace will be much greater than it has been in the past. There are a number of branches of the Department of Agriculture which have been established ever since I was a boy. Possibly those who were grown up at that time were familiar with them; but so far as any practical advantage to the country is concerned they have failed.

The reason is, as I stated earlier, that they have not had sufficient consideration from the Parliament of this country. If a Department is starved, its usefulness is necessarily curtailed. If we recognised this fact, and dealt more liberally with our Department of Agriculture, we should get better service from the officers in the future. I have met many of the officers. Some of them seem sincere and anxious to do the right thing; but when you ask them, for instance, to make an experiment in any particular way, they say there is no money available. We are depending very largely upon primary production in this State, and Parliament should see to it that the Department is supported in every possible way, so that we can secure prosperity for the people of this State. I notice that the Government have decided to encourage co-operative freezing works. I must compliment them on the action they have taken in this direction. Co-operation in this regard has been, to some extent, encouraged in the past, and I hope to see this important work encouraged in the future as liberally as possible. Unless the season changes, we shall be face to face in the near future with a very serious position in the disposal of our surplus stock. We must look, to a great extent, to the Government to see that some outlet is found for the stock that will come to the market. I understand that the cool stores are now practically full. Honorable members can understand that if there is no outlet for the stock prices must fall and the country must suffer very severely. I think the Government should take energetic measures, and try, by every possible means, to see that space is made available for the coming season. I notice, also, that the Government intend to help the Melbourne University to the extent of about £200,000. Whilst I cannot but approve of a proposition of that sort, tending to the better education of the people, still, I think that the far back parts of the State have not received the consideration from our legislators that they should have received. In the Mallee there are many places where people have great difficulty in getting any education for their children. If we have money available, it should be first spent in the direction of giving every child a State education. In country centres there should be the advantage of secondary education. I do not know the require-

ments of the University, but I should like to see children in the country given a better chance of getting a decent education than they have had in the past. I should like, in other words, to see every child given a good education. Our State system is poor. It leaves the child alone when it arrives at an age when it could learn something useful. If such children learnt the rudiments of bookkeeping only, that knowledge would be of some use in after life. Our education system leaves the child just when he is beginning to have the capacity to learn. I feel very strongly that if money is available it should first be spent in giving every child the rudiments of education, and next in the direction of providing secondary schools in country centres. Then if there is any money available it can be spent on the higher class of education. The Melbourne University is a grand institution, but I have not had the privilege of being in it. It is doing good and useful work in the community, but it does not seem to be open to every child. Many parents have not the means to send their children to the University.

The Hon. J. G. AIKMAN.—You seem to have done well without it.

The Hon. G. L. GOUDIE.—I might have done better with it.

The Hon. J. P. JONES.—What would you make the school age?

The Hon. G. L. GOUDIE.—Children who show ordinary ability should have a chance of going to the secondary schools to make their education more complete. I think our State education is not complete, and I know that education is a very important thing to any community. It means more intelligence, more energy, and better opportunities for the people to make good. I think we cannot spend money in a better direction.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—Are you in favour of making it compulsory up to 16?

The Hon. G. L. GOUDIE.—I am, provided the education is of some use. A child at 12 can have learnt all that is to be learned at present. We had a very instructive speech by Mr. Rees at the last sitting in connexion with the importance of handling wheat in bulk. He placed before us a good many forcible arguments antagonistic to the proposal of handling wheat in bulk. I have with me a copy of a paper called *The Farmers' Advocate*—one of the finest journals in the State. I would advise every honorable member

to subscribe to it. This journal puts the opposite view, and in a very clear and convincing manner.

The Hon. W. L. ADAMSON.—What does it say ?

The Hon. G. L. GOUDIE.—I have the whole report here. Mr. Rees stated that the cost of handling wheat in bulk was greater than the cost of handling it in bags. I notice one paragraph in this little journal which states that a trial shipment was sent from New South Wales by the New South Wales Government. There was one portion in bulk and one in bags. The wheat was sold in London, and that in bags brought 3d. a quarter more than that in bulk. On the face of it, a statement like that disparages Mr. Rees's arguments very much indeed.

The Hon. R. B. REES.—It confirms my position.

The Hon. G. L. GOUDIE.—The difference of 3d. a quarter is so small that the cost in each case is practically the same. I should like to hear the matter debated by honorable members who have more inside knowledge than I have. I have been a wheat-grower for a great many years, and I have always thought that the cure for all our evils was the handling of wheat in bulk. However, I give great weight to the arguments adduced by Mr. Rees. I quite agree with him that we should have to use bags on our farms. We take off 200 or 300 bags a day, and we should require some receptacle for the wheat. It would be out of the question to provide box waggons to hold a week's supply of wheat consisting of 200 bags a day, or 1,200 for the week. We should have to have a modified system of handling wheat in bulk. We know exactly the cost of placing our wheat on the market in bags, but we do not know the cost of placing it on the market in bulk. Possibly a large amount of evidence has been taken by Royal Commissions on this subject. As far as I know, we have not had anything authoritative from the Government nor from any Royal Commission with regard to the cost of handling wheat in bulk. We are to be committed to an expenditure of perhaps £2,000,000, and I suppose the wheat producer would have to pay the interest and sinking fund on that expenditure. We should know exactly where we stand before the scheme is launched. I should like to see an estimate prepared from reliable sources show-

ing the cost of a complete scheme of silos and elevators, and the estimated cost of placing the wheat on ships at the seaboard in operating the scheme. We often rush into propositions and regret it afterwards. It is the duty, not only of the Government, but of members of this and of another place, to see that all available information is gathered before we commit ourselves to this proposal. I should like to see a Commission appointed to visit those countries where the handling of wheat in bulk is in vogue. The Commission should be composed of practical men interested in wheat-growing.

The Hon. J. G. AIKMAN.—Mr. Rees has just come back and you do not believe him.

The Hon. G. L. GOUDIE.—Mr. Rees made statements last week that are practically answered in *The Farmers' Advocate*. Any one would be convinced on reading these articles that Mr. Rees is wrong. He also stated that the Commissions that have sat on the question have been tinged to some extent by prejudice, or have been directed to bring in a report in favour of the proposition. If such is the case, the only way to get a fair report is to appoint men interested in the growing of wheat to follow it from the field to the miller, and to give us an unbiased account of the cost of harvesting and placing it in the elevators and on shipboard, and also stating whether our wheat in bulk would receive the same consideration when being sold as wheat in bags would receive. The question of profiteering has been mentioned. One honorable member went so far as to say that the poor farmer, at least, had made a very good nest egg. I do not know whether it was supposed to be made out of profiteering, but it was suggested that it was going to burn with him in another place. If only that was to be used as burning material the poor farmer would escape very lightly. To some extent there may be profiteering going on, but it is a very complex question. We know that a rise in the price of a certain commodity will be reflected in other directions. A rise in wages necessarily increases the cost of production. There are, however, so many things that have to be taken into consideration that I think that the Commission which is to be appointed will have a pretty tough job in arriving at a satisfactory

conclusion. However, if any profiteering has gone on it is not the primary producer who has benefited from it. On the other hand, the primary producer, especially the man who has been growing wheat, has been victimized. If there has been victimization it has been in the case of the man producing wheat. During the past four years the wheat-growers have made a present to the consumers of this country of £1,000,000. There are only a comparatively small number of wheat-growers in the State, so I look upon it as a class tax when we are called upon to contribute to the consumers to that extent. In regard to stock the same thing applies. When we were getting a fair return the price was fixed. As soon as climatic conditions made it imperative for stock-owners to realize on their flocks the fixed price was removed, and nothing was done in the way of insuring the primary producer obtaining a remunerative rate.

The Hon. T. H. PAYNE.—That came under the Commonwealth Parliament.

The Hon. G. L. GOUDIE.—Certainly. As far as the primary producer is concerned he has not been in the profiteering swim. I can assure honorable members that the country has benefited very largely at the expense of the wheat-grower, and also the man who raises stock. At the present time farmers are not receiving a fair return for our labour, and it is on this account that agriculture is declining in Victoria. If we are to continue growing wheat it is absolutely necessary that it should be profitable to the growers. Otherwise we will go out of business altogether. The area devoted to agriculture has decreased by 1,000,000 acres.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—You think, then, that Mr. Hughes should have done better?

The Hon. G. L. GOUDIE.—I certainly think so. It is a question of a man being able to make a livelihood out of his holding. If he cannot do so he must abandon it. That is the way in which wheat-growing has declined in this State. As legislators it is our duty, if possible, to foster these important industries in every direction. One way of doing so is to see that the producer gets a fair return for his produce. I thank honorable members for the way in which they have listened to the few remarks I have made.

The Hon. W. KENDELL.—First of all I should like to congratulate Mr. Goudie, one of our new members, on his speech. He has touched upon a great many questions of vital interest to this country. Coming from the backblocks, he knows pretty well the disabilities under which the people are suffering. Therefore his remarks may carry more weight than those of one who can speak only from hearsay. Before going into the particular question which has induced me to speak to-day, I should like to refer for a moment to the industrial trouble prevailing in Australia. We suffered enough from the war in Europe, but although, happily, the war is now over we are likely to suffer very much more if this industrial turmoil continues. It seems that there is a gospel being preached and promulgated, not only throughout the Commonwealth, but throughout the world, in defiance of law and all social order. In Australia we have 1,700 men belonging to one union holding up a population of 5,500,000 and defying them. Surely we can devise some means whereby we can obviate that for the future.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—What is your remedy?

The Hon. W. KENDELL.—When a body of men claim registration as an industrial union they should have to make with the Government a monetary deposit on which they should receive interest, but which should be available to pay any fines or penalties for any breaches of contract after entering into an agreement under the Arbitration Court. To-day they can break their agreements with impunity. On the other hand, if an employer does so he is haled before the Court and mulcted in a fine. If such amendments were brought about in the law the men would not be so ready to strike. Then again it should be criminal and punishable with fine or imprisonment for any one to incite a body of men working under an arbitration agreement to strike without first taking a secret ballot. In that way you would stop a lot of those fire-eating fellows who incite the men to strike, very often with a view to becoming tin gods themselves. There is not the slightest doubt of that, because such men have usually not very much to lose, in fact they are gaining all the time. In another way a lot of this trouble might be prevented.