

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 21 March, 1950.

Legislative Council: Election of Member—Death of the Hon. J. A. Bodkin, M.L.C.—Glen Innes to Inverell Railway Bill—Church and School Lands (Grace Bros. Pty. Limited) Bill—Special Adjournment—Adjournment (Business of the House—Industrial Arbitration Act).

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT took the Chair at 2.25 p.m.

The opening Prayer was read.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL: ELECTION OF MEMBER.

By direction of the Deputy President the ballot-box was exhibited by the Clerk and then locked.

THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I now declare the ballot open and invite hon. members to come forward and obtain their ballot-papers.

Balloting having proceeded between 2.30 and 4.30 p.m.,

THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I have to announce that the hour for the termination of the taking of the votes at this sitting has arrived, and I direct that the doors be locked. Is there any hon. member present who has not received a ballot-paper and who desires to vote? Will any such hon. member rise in his place in order that his name may be recorded?

No hon. member having risen,

THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT: There being no such hon. member desiring to vote, I direct that the doors be unlocked. All hon. members who had received their ballot-papers before the hour appointed in the writ for the termination of the taking of the votes having completed before that hour the recording of their votes, I declare the ballot closed.

DEATH OF THE HON. J. A. BODKIN, M.L.C.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT announced the decease, since the last sitting of the House, of the Hon. J. A. Bodkin.

The Hon. R. R. DOWNING (Minister of Justice and Vice-President of the Executive Council) [4.40] I move:

That this House desires to express and to place on record its deep sense of the loss sustained to the State and this House in the removal by death of the Hon. Joseph Anthony Bodkin, and that this resolution be communicated to the relatives of the deceased.

It is with extreme regret that I move this motion of condolence to the family of our late member, who for many years was a friend and colleague of mine in the Labour movement. His absence will be regretted by all those who had the pleasure of knowing him. The late Mr. Bodkin was identified with the Labour movement throughout his lifetime. In addition, he had a long family association with the Australian Labour movement during a period when the history of this country was being written. He keenly adhered to the principles of the political party to which he belonged throughout his life, and gave unsparingly of his energy and time. His work was probably better known in the industrial than in the political movement. In the industrial movement he earned a reputation for his honesty, sincerity and integrity, and his activities throughout the years as an industrial organiser made him a well respected member of the trade union movement. Those with whom he came into contact learned to respect his ability and capacity as an advocate on behalf of his members. Those of us who knew him in this Chamber, though only for a comparatively short time, came to realise the excellence of his character. In addition to his activities as a representative of the trade union movement and of the Australian Labour Party, and as a member of this Chamber, he was a member of the City Council, and as an alderman he impressed his colleagues in that

sphere with his ability and knowledge. I am sure that I express the sentiments of all hon. members of this House in conveying to his wife and family our sad regret at his passing; but they will retain the memory of a husband and father who earned in the community a reputation and respect of which any family could be well proud.

The Hon. Sir HENRY MANNING [4.44]: On this sad occasion we meet to express our sympathy with the relatives of a gentleman, the Hon. J. A. Bodkin, who departed this life at a time when he was at the height of his career and popularity. His association with hon. members in this Chamber was short, but in that period most of us who were strangers to him before he came to this House recognised him as a man who was entitled to the full measure of our respect for the many qualities that he exhibited to hon. members. Our sadness, of course, is intensified when we remember that the late hon. gentleman left a wife and large family who must be afflicted with a sorrow greater than any that we, who are not related to him, could conceive. Accordingly it is fitting that we should record the esteem in which we held him, and the debt of gratitude that we owe to the whole of his domestic circle for the exemplary conduct that he displayed during his Parliamentary career.

I recall, with admiration, the degree of restraint that he exhibited on the occasion of his maiden speech, but I can summon up no words that are more expressive of our deep respect for the late hon. member than those that the Minister used in describing his association with the Labour movement. The high office of some members of the Labour movement entitles them to respect in the eyes of all, and the deceased was one of that select band. I think of him not only as one who did a great deal to ameliorate the difficulties of those with whom he was closely associated, but also as one who brought to his negotiations with others a spirit

of trust and friendship which was irresistible. One who can do all that so admirably deserves well not merely of his immediate friends and Labour colleagues, but also of the whole community of New South Wales. I should be happy if I could express in adequate fashion to his sorrowing wife and children our deep sympathy for them, and the undying respect and admiration that we had for the late hon. member.

The Hon. A. W. McNAMARA [4.47]: I desire to associate myself with the Hon. Mr. Downing and the Hon. Sir Henry Manning in speaking to this motion of condolence. For many years the late Mr. Bodkin was an officer of the Australian Workers' Union, and later was an officer of the Water and Sewerage Employees' Association. During the whole of his industrial career he devoted himself unstintingly to improving the working conditions of the labouring classes. He considered that the unskilled labourer ought to be regarded as having intrinsic merit and when, some twenty-six years ago, he became an officer of the Australian Workers' Union he determined to serve them to the utmost extent of his power. When Mr. Bodkin became an officer of the Water and Sewerage Employees' Association he continued his spirited efforts on behalf of those whom many in the community would willingly have disregarded as unworthy of consideration. Consequently, his passing comes, to the army of under-privileged people that he championed, as a great tragedy.

In the early days of the industrial movement the late hon. gentleman's father was the secretary of the Navvies' Union, and he carried on that tradition of service to the unskilled labourer. The vast improvement in working conditions that followed upon his representations are sufficient testimony to his great capacity. The best years of his life were spent in a virile attempt to improve the lot of a class of person that, to-day, commands the respect of all. On behalf of the Australian Workers' Union and my colleagues in this House

I desire to express to his widow and six mourning children our deep sympathy in their sad loss, and our appreciation of the late hon. gentleman's untiring efforts in the service of his fellow men.

The Hon. F. W. SPICER [4.50]: I associate myself with the motion. I knew the late Mr. Bodkin intimately for many years; indeed, I knew also his parents and his grandparents who resided in my home town and all were held in the highest esteem. Both the parents and grandparents of the late Mr. Bodkin lived for the Labour movement and that organisation has lost a worthy son through the passing of our late friend. This House has lost a valuable member and I feel, in common with other hon. members that I have lost a close personal friend. I add my expression of sympathy to the widow and family of the late hon. member.

The Hon. R. E. SAVAGE [4.51]: I support the tributes paid by the Minister in charge of the House and the previous speakers to the late Mr. Bodkin. I was closely associated with him for twenty-five years. At the time of his death Mr. Bodkin had almost reached the age of 50 years and hon. members can appreciate that over a quarter of a century I had ample opportunity to assess the value of his character. It is not generally known that the late Mr. Bodkin began work before he reached the age of 14. Before two years had elapsed he had been elected the representative of about 200 men engaged in a large railway construction job. Some little time afterwards he became an organiser of the Australian Workers' Union.

In 1927 he joined the service of the Public Works Department and when employees of that department were transferred to the Metropolitan Water, Sewerage and Drainage Board, he went with them. In common with many workers in Australia Mr. Bodkin underwent the trials and tribulations of the depression years. He was employed by the Board on the Woronora Dam and it was not

long before his fellow employees recognised his worth and elected him as the local secretary of their union. In 1937 the officers and members of the Water and Sewerage Employees' Association showed their appreciation of his qualities and appointed him organiser in the head office, which position he held to the time of his death. Hon. members are aware that four years ago he was elected to this Chamber. He was also successful in being elected both as a member of the City Council and of the Sydney County Council.

The greatest tribute that can be paid to the late hon. member and to his good wife is that they brought six Australian daughters into the world and instilled into them the love of God and of their country. I join with hon. members in conveying sympathy to Mrs. Bodkin and her family.

The Hon. J. M. CONCANNON [4.54]: I support the motion with feelings of deep regret and profound loss at the passing of a colleague and friend in the person of the late Mr. Bodkin. He was unassuming, charitable, tolerant and understanding of human nature. I had the unique opportunity for many years, in my capacity as secretary of the Salaried Division of the Water and Sewerage Employees' Association, of coming into close personal contact with the late hon. member. With the Hon. Mr. Savage I appreciated the value of his work for those whom he represented. He was sympathetic, diligent and painstaking in his efforts on their behalf.

His death is another example of the toll which time after time the public life of this State exacts from those who serve their country. Unfortunately, we have no system of superannuation in this House which, if it existed, would be very valuable to the widow and family of our late colleague. His loss is a distinct one to Australia, to the State, and to the Labour movement. The name of Bodkin is inseparably associated with the history of the political and industrial wings of the Labour movement of this State, and the loss of Joe Bodkin will be very

hard to make good. In conclusion, I use the language of his Church—*Requiescat in Pace*—may his soul rest in peace.

The Hon. E. C. O'DEA [4.47]: I join in this motion of sympathy to the widow and family of the deceased member who was my colleague not only in this House, but also in the City Council, where he was elected for the ward that I represented. I have known the family of Bodkin for many years and looking back one could find, even before my time, that they had a wonderful record of service to the State. On his mother's side, his grandmother used to attend to the sick in her district, even though they were many miles out of town. If she were called upon to travel any distance and to act as midwife in an urgent case, her daughter, the late Mr. Bodkin's mother, went with her. When Mr. Bodkin's mother came to Sydney she set about organising and improving the lot of what were then known as the "White-collar Workers"—an effort towards which every member in this House was most sympathetically inclined. She was a voluntary organiser and played an important part in improving the conditions generally of female employees in industry. Her husband, the late hon. member's father, was one who helped to form the Navvies' Union. The first meeting in this connection was called on the Blue Mountains near where the bridge known as the old Zig Zag was built, and at the time one of the worst snow-storms in the history of the district was raging. Mr. Bodkin became the second secretary of that union, succeeding the late Mr. Daniel O'Sullivan. Every member of this House knows of the late hon. member's efforts for the workers of our State, who play such a prominent part in maintaining our roads in a trafficable state—

The Hon. P. M. McGIRR: And the railways.

The Hon. E. C. O'DEA: And the railways, as the hon. member has stated. The late hon. member himself, as a young married man, was hit by the depression and was compelled to break up his family. With daughters scattered here and there, he humped his swag through the country districts of the State. The family was eventually reunited and ultimately Joe Bodkin became a paid official of the Water and Sewerage Employees' Association, to which he gave much of his time. Through his efforts during the construction of the graving dock and other war-time projects industrial stoppages were very minor and he frequently negotiated a settlement of disputes to the full satisfaction of both parties. His work was accorded due recognition and he was elected to the executive of a political party that plays an important part in the affairs of this State. Later he was elected to this House and to the City Council, and became the employees' representative on the Sydney County Council Electricity Undertaking. Joe Bodkin worked always in the interests of his fellow-men and of his country. His family was a happy and devoted one with a great love of their country. This House and the community are the poorer for the passing of a man of the calibre of the late Hon. Joseph Anthony Bodkin.

Hon. members and officers of the House standing in their places,

Motion agreed to.

GLEN INNES TO INVERELL RAILWAY BILL.

Bill read a third time and returned to the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

CHURCH AND SCHOOL LANDS (GRACE BROS. PTY. LIMITED) BILL.

Bill received from the Legislative Assembly and read a first time.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT.

Motion (by the Hon. R. R. Downing) agreed to:

That this House, at its rising to-day, do adjourn until Wednesday next at 10.55 a.m. sharp.

ADJOURNMENT.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE: INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION ACT.

The Hon. R. R. DOWNING (Minister of Justice and Vice-President of the Executive Council) [5.8]: I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

At the conclusion of the ballot at 1 p.m. to-morrow, it is proposed to ask you, Mr. Deputy President, to leave the Chair until 4.30 p.m. when the House will be asked to proceed with the second reading debate on the bill that was read a first time to-day. It is not expected that the Transport and Highways Bill, of which contingent notice of motion has been given, will be received from the Legislative Assembly to-morrow and the debate on that measure will not begin before next Thursday.

The Hon. A. W. McNAMARA [5.9]: I should like to ask the Minister whether it is the intention of the Government to amend the Industrial Arbitration Act to provide recourse to arbitration for rural employees. Under section 131 of that Act organisations of members employed in rural industries are prevented from obtaining an award unless they can dispose of the abracadabra inserted in the enactment by the Government of which the Hon. Sir Henry Manning was a member. My organisation has a large number of employees engaged in rural pursuits and because of the determination of a Federal authority that awards made pursuant to Industrial Peace Regulations under the National Security Act have expired under the Transition of Powers Act, those employees are thrown back to the suffrage of the State court. I should like the Minister to say

whether it is the intention of the Government in the near future to introduce legislation designed to provide an opportunity, without the tags provided in section 131 of the Industrial Arbitration Act, for the court to regulate the conditions, employment and rates of wages of employees in rural industries. Wool is selling at 128½ pence per lb. Wheat on an equalisation basis is at 16s. 8d. a bushel, and on the free market is bringing £1 or more, but employees in these industries are still deprived of the right to approach the Arbitration Court for a determination of the proper value of their labour in those industries. If the Minister is not able to say when the bill will be introduced, will he seek to impress upon the Government the need for an immediate amendment of our industrial legislation, so that the drift of rural workers to the metropolitan area might be checked to some extent.

The Hon. T. P. GLEESON [5.11]: The hon. member does not fully understand the position. It is true that the legislation to which he referred is not now applicable, but the shortage of labour has resulted in some adjustment of wages in those industries.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! The hon. member is not entitled to debate a matter referred to by another hon. member on the motion for the adjournment.

The Hon. R. R. DOWNING (Minister of Justice and Vice-President of the Executive Council) [5.12], in reply: The matter mentioned by the Hon. Mr. McNamara has had the attention of my colleague the Minister for Labour and Industry, but I will convey to the Minister the observations that have just been made and endeavour to ascertain whether it will be possible for the Government to comply with the hon. member's request.

Motion agreed to.

House adjourned at 5.12 p.m. until 10.55 a.m., Wednesday, 22nd March.