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Foreword

Charles Latham

Minister for Agriculture

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Foreword

By SIR CHARLES LATHAM, M.L.C.,
Minister for Agriculture.

I TAKE over my duties as Minister for Agriculture with mixed feelings—a profound sorrow for the passing of an old friend and colleague in my predecessor, the Hon. Garnet Wood, M.L.C., and a deep sense of pride that I should have been chosen to occupy such an important post.

Almost since the beginning of time, agriculture has been the basis of human existence, for the world’s peoples must be fed and clothed from the products of the soil. Without the farmer to provide these vital contributions to the wellbeing of humanity we would have known little or nothing of the arts and sciences or of the comforts and amenities which we now regard as the natural concomitants of civilised existence.

Only a little more than two centuries ago, ours was a thinly-populated planet whose people lived close to the soil which satisfied their meagre needs. With the dawn of the Industrial Revolution—the coming of steam-power and a vast expansion of industry—more and more people left the land for the ever-growing industrial centres.

The urban populations increased tremendously and to feed these millions, vast areas of virgin soil were brought into production throughout the world. Spurred by the ever-increasing demand for more food for the workers and more raw materials for the factories, the new lands were recklessly raped of the fertility, which they had accumulated throughout the centuries.

Today the world is realising that its soil reserves are limited—that the account on the Bank of Fertility is grievously overdrawn in many cases—and that the role of the farmer is all-important.

The old days of wasteful land use are gone forever. The modern farmer must work in close co-operation with the agricultural scientist for, in his constant endeavours to increase production, he must take the fullest advantage of every aid which scientific research can make available.

Farming is the world’s most progressive industry and the Department of Agriculture has a vitally important role to play in our community—it has a splendid record of achievement in the past and its future is filled with brilliant promise.

I am proud to have been given an opportunity to take part in these achievements and hope to be able to further the endeavours of my predecessors. During the years that lie ahead, I pledge myself to do my share to making this Department a vital factor in the progress of Western Australia.
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