

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 18 September 1985

THE SPEAKER (Mr Harman) took the Chair at 2.15 p.m., and read prayers.

TRANSPORT: BUSES

High Wycombe-Midland: Petition

MR GORDON HILL (Helena) [2.17 p.m.]: I have a petition which bears 244 signatures and which is framed in the following terms—

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled:

We the undersigned citizens of Western Australia request that the Government take action to ensure that the Metropolitan Transport Trust introduce a bus service between High Wycombe/Maida Vale and the Midland sub-regional centre.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that you will give this matter your earnest consideration and your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

I have certified that the petition conforms to the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly.

The **SPEAKER**: I direct that the petition be brought to the Table of the House.

(See petition No. 5)

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

On motion by Mr Crane, leave of absence for eight weeks was granted to Mr Williams (Clontarf) on the ground of urgent public business.

BILLS (5): INTRODUCTION AND FIRST READING

1. Local Government Amendment Bill (No. 2).
Bill introduced, on motion by Mr Carr (Minister for Local Government), and read a first time.
2. Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre Amendment Bill.
3. Medical Amendment Bill.
Bills introduced, on motions by Mr Hodge (Minister for Health), and read a first time.
4. Financial Administration and Audit Bill.

5. Acts Amendment (Financial Administration and Audit) Bill.

Bills introduced, on motion by Mr Brian Burke (Treasurer), and read a first time.

COMMERCIAL TENANCY (RETAIL SHOPS) AGREEMENTS AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2)

Second Reading

MR BRYCE (Ascot—Minister for Small Business) [2.26 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

This Bill seeks to make a number of amendments to the Commercial Tenancy (Retail Shops) Agreements Act which came into effect on 1 September 1985.

When the Act was first introduced, I indicated to the House that the Government recognised the complexity of the matters being addressed in the legislation and that the Government would be prepared to move quickly to introduce amendments where necessary. These amendments are being introduced to overcome certain concerns which have become apparent in relation to the legislation since its passage some months ago.

Mr Court: You should have been concerned in the first place.

Mr BRYCE: I am waiting to hear the member for Nedlands actually say that he supports the legislation.

Mr Court: You didn't support any of our amendments and now you have to come back into this place with this legislation.

Mr BRYCE: The pea-brain sitting opposite who was never able and never will be able to operate in this environment—

Mr Blaikie. It is called: "a soft-shoe shuffle".

Mr BRYCE: It is called political flexibility. It is a state of mind and a process which is almost totally unknown to members opposite. I suggest they accept that a new age has dawned and things will be done a little differently from the way that members opposite did them, and the way that the nineteenth century British grandfathers of members opposite did them.

It is the Government's desire to ensure certainty in relation to the operation of the legislation and to ensure that tenants of retail shops obtain the benefits flowing from the legislation—which members opposite would never agree to do.

Concern has been expressed, particularly by legal commentators on the legislation, that the definition of "Lease" extends to those persons occupying under short-term licences the common areas of a retail shopping centre, and action has been taken which has resulted in charity groups and commercial promotional activities being excluded from some of these areas.

As well, retail shops in some shopping centres have been told—I might add quite mischievously that a little bit of encouragement from the member for Nedlands—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Nedlands will have his opportunity later on.

Mr Laurance: Very shabby indeed.

Mr BRYCE: It was not shabby. The draftsmen did a superb job because they were dealing with a complex subject and some small-minded members opposite thought they would hop into the middle of the application process of this Bill and have a little fun. I invite certain of those identifiable members opposite to continue down that path and if they do I will personally visit every major shopping centre in the State and explain to the people in those centres exactly how provocative and uncooperative the Liberal Party has been with respect to resolving and addressing these issues.

Several members interjected.

Mr BRYCE: I hope I turn out to be something less of a disaster than the part-time member for Gascoyne who has opened himself a little shop in a shopping centre and seems to spend more time in the shop rather than in his bailiwick up in Gascoyne.

Mr Laurance: If you intend to accuse my wife—

Mr BRYCE: I did not refer to the member's wife. I was referring to the time the member for Gascoyne spends at his store.

Mr Laurance: Your wife earns from funds from the Government. My wife has never done that and never will. She works hard.

Mr BRYCE: I was not talking about the member for Gascoyne's wife; I was talking about his interests. I will now continue. Retail shops in some centres have been told that spillage of their premises into the common area is no longer permitted. This has been generated by fears that the effect of such occupation and licence amounts to a lease giving a right to an option for five years' ten-

ancy. This was never intended by the legislation, and the Government's advice was that the legislation did not apply to charity groups in any event. However, to avoid any uncertainty as to the application of the legislation, the Bill seeks to amend the definition of "lease" to remove this perceived difficulty and the problem flowing from it.

If the member for Gascoyne is really worried about it I would suggest that he desist from giving such assistance because he does not spend much time up in his bailiwick.

Mr Laurance: I live in my bailiwick but my wife has some interests. Does the Deputy Premier's wife have interests?

Mr BRYCE: The member for Gascoyne would love to know. I suggest that if he or his colleagues were ever to have the gumption to support the disclosure Bill for members of Parliament they might find out.

Finally, the Bill provides a device which is intended to prevent the avoidance of the legislation by the interposing of a head lease to a related person or corporation. The concept of the related person or corporation is broadly defined. In these cases the head lease is deemed to be modified to the extent necessary to provide for an option of a five-year term.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! I think we should concentrate on the Bill.

Mr BRYCE: I will happily ignore the interjections, which I suspect are mischievous in the extreme.

The Government, however, recognises that there may be bona fide commercial reasons for related persons or corporations to enter into head leases for reasons not connected with the intended avoidance of the legislation. The Bill provides a mechanism to avoid the modification of the head lease by a determination of this issue by the commercial registrar of the tribunal. As well, issues as to the extent of the modification of the head lease can be resolved by the commercial registrar in the same manner as other matters arising in relation to a retail shop lease. It is anticipated that such amendments will deter persons from entering into contrived agreements to avoid the application of the legislation.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Court.

CONTRACEPTIVES AMENDMENT BILL*Third Reading*

Bill read a third time, on motion by Mr Hodge (Minister for Health), and transmitted to the Council.

**MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT
(FINANCIAL INTERESTS) BILL (No. 2)***Second Reading*

Debate resumed from 29 August.

MR HASSELL (Cottesloe—Leader of the Opposition) [2.41 p.m.]: I thank the Government for calling on this Bill at this time in the recognition that some Ministers and some Opposition members are away; in one case an Opposition member is away for medical reasons.

The Bill before the House is identical in arrangement and content to the Members of Parliament (Financial Interests) Bill 1985 which was defeated subsequent to its introduction in the Legislative Council in February of this year. That Bill was debated at some length and in some detail so I do not think it would serve any great purpose to re-run that debate. The same arguments apply in relation to this Bill; the same deficiencies apply in relation to this Bill. The Bill itself is equally opposed on this occasion by the Opposition as the previous Bill was opposed.

Not only is this Bill identical in arrangement to the previous Bill we debated earlier this year, but it is also only slightly different from the Bill introduced into the Legislative Assembly in November 1983. A number of differences have been identified between those two Bills and I do not think it will serve much purpose for me to outline those differences now.

Suffice it to say that the Bill before the House has been previously debated on a couple of occasions. The substance of the issue is the same and the positions of the Government and the Opposition are the same.

What those Bills sought to do and what this Bill seeks to do was and is to require in a very restricted and narrow way the disclosure of financial interests of members of Parliament. Those Bills sought and this Bill seeks to have that disclosure supposedly in support of the protection of the public interest.

It is our belief that the Bill is questionable in principal and deficient in its provisions, and I will deal with the deficiencies in its provisions first. The provisions in the Bill are themselves inadequate to meet the Government's stated objective that members of Parliament should discharge, and I quote—

... their public duties without bias and free of the influence of private interest or personal advantage.

They were the Premier's words in the second reading speech.

However, the most fundamental and obvious deficiency of the legislation is that it applies only to members of Parliament and not to any of their relations, whether spouse or other. So the very starting point of the legislation is a deficiency in its capacity to achieve the stated objective, even if one were to agree wholeheartedly with the objective and with this kind of approach to achieving it.

It is simply ludicrous to imagine that the Government will achieve anything by making members of Parliament disclose their financial interests and only some of their financial dealings when, at the same time, it is prepared to allow their spouses and their children or others related to them to carry out any of the selfsame dealings without any disclosure.

It is of course common and expected that many people have financial arrangements between husband and wife which involve a separation of assets for taxation and other reasons, all of them legitimate; but were any of those arrangements to be made simply as a means by which to avoid disclosure in these sorts of circumstances, then they could easily be made. Furthermore, if a member of Parliament did not wish to disclose that he was the owner of land or that he was dealing in land or that he was the beneficiary of a trust or that he held some shares in a company, that member would be able to carry out those transactions in the name of his or her spouse without the slightest difficulty and without any disclosure.

The benefits that might be given in the form of gifts can in effect be laundered by being passed through members of the family. For example, on occasions in the past where large companies have sought to benefit a member of Parliament by making a substantial gift to that member, sometimes with complete goodwill and without any attempt to bribe or to exercise undue influence, it has come to be recognised that those things should be subject to self-discipline.

Yet here we have legislation which would allow, for example, if it were to occur, a Japanese trading house to make a very substantial gift of a diamond or some other benefit to the spouse of a member of Parliament, and the legislation would not catch it at all.

Absolutely nothing in the legislation prevents benefits being given to the campaign or the re-election accounts of members of Parliament without being disclosed. Those accounts can be as important for a member in terms of the exercise of influence as any other payment or benefit. Yet the Government comes along and says it does not want to concern itself with any of those things and that all it wants to do is to home in on members of Parliament themselves. The whole Bill rings hollow when one looks at how inadequate it would be to achieve the Government's own objectives.

The annual reporting provisions in the Bill enable interests held by a member to be traded between annual reports, so that a real benefit could be obtained and disposed of prior to the point of being required to be recorded or reported. Some of these difficulties might be seen to be not only deficiencies in the legislation itself, but also difficulties inherent in the very idea of trying to make members of Parliament accountable for all their private property and private dealings. Of course it would be quite reasonable for the Government, when considering this Bill, to have been confronted in Caucus by cries of "No, no" had it included provisions seeking to impose an obligation on the spouse of a member to disclose his or her financial interests and dealings. While the desire of the Government to have these financial interests and dealings brought out into the public arena might be a worthy desire in a sense, it runs up against another principle when it gets to the stage of seeking to be effective. It runs up against the principle of privacy not only in respect of the member, but also in respect of the dealings of someone who is close to the member, and someone who could carry out all sorts of transactions on behalf of the member without any of those disclosures being made.

There is no perfect world, and the reality is that the size and the breadth of Parliament provides the protection against the kind of corruption that this Bill seeks to avoid, corruption which, to the best of my knowledge, has never been detected among members of this Parliament in its entire history.

This is a feeble attempt to introduce legislation which will not succeed in its stated objective and which cannot succeed in its stated objective because it could never be sufficiently broad and embracing to really cover the whole ground. The protection of Parliament from this kind of influence is the very

public nature of Parliament; it is the very issue of the fact that Parliament is an open place in which members can state their positions.

I refer to a couple of practical examples which occurred only a few months ago. A situation arose which greatly annoyed the member for Kimberley because questions were asked in this House about whether the member for Kimberley was contemplating selling some of his properties in the Kimberley to the Government. He was most unhappy, and understandably so, in a personal sense, that those sorts of questions were directed to what he regarded as his private affairs.

Mr Bridge: I will always remain angry about that sort of intrusion into my business.

Mr HASSELL: Exactly, and I understand the member for Kimberley's anger. I also understand the legitimacy of such a question being raised if there were a genuine belief, anywhere in the House, that that sort of transaction might take place in regard to a member of the governing party; yet the member for Kimberley, who has just acknowledged his feelings about the matter, will undoubtedly vote for the Bill—because he is bound by his Caucus to do so—which would require me to disclose my transactions about my limited assets.

What is the difference? I would have to disclose my assets simply because I happen to have a few assets, and not because I propose to deal with the Government or for any other reason, and in regard to those sorts of issues protection exists already in the openness of Parliament, in the public records that are available, in the capacity of people to search those public records, and in the capacity of the media to disclose them.

The Premier, in one of his public statements about this sort of legislation, tried to link the need for this legislation with what he regarded as allegations uncomfortable to him about the involvement of Ministers or members of the Labor Party in the share dealings of DTX Australia Ltd. The Premier went on record as saying something to the effect that—I am not quoting his words—if we had this pecuniary interests or financial interests legislation, all of these details would be disclosed.

Now of course they would not be disclosed, and that is the very point, because any Government member or Minister who was involved in share dealings with DTX would not have done so in his own name, nor would he have involved himself in those share dealings in the names of any companies with which he was

listed as a director or a shareholder. Such a person could simply have made the deals through some other channel without ever being caught by the provisions of this Bill. Not only that, but those dealings could have been completed between the requirements for annual returns or annual reports, and they would not have been disclosed or needed to be disclosed in those reports.

So the real protection in our system of Government from the exercise of undue influence, bribery, or corruption, is to be found not only in the size of Parliament—it is pretty hard to corrupt an entire Parliament of 57 people, for instance, people who sit in this House and there would always be a few remaining members who would be prepared to speak out if the situation is of such a serious nature—but also it exists because of the public nature of our system of democracy, the public capacity of a free media to investigate and to disclose. Of course, there have been some real examples recently of the media making investigations and disclosures.

For instance, the whole front page of last Saturday's *The Western Mail* is filled with disclosures about the DTX company and its former managing director who has now resigned because it was discovered that he had some kind of record in South Africa which precluded him from holding the position he held with that company. Of course, the second item was the story about Mr Brush, the Premier's former adviser and confidant, and Mr Brush's wife, the Premier's present staff member, who are under some kind of investigation. That had nothing to do with disclosure of pecuniary interests in Parliament.

What is interesting, of course, is that had this legislation been in place, Mr Brush would not have been affected by it so he would have made no disclosure. None of the Government's party political advisers would have been required to make any disclosure even though they are employed on a personal contractual basis by Ministers and members of the Government. Those employees are not subject to the constraints of the Public Service in the normal way.

This is simply a Bill which bears the same hallmarks of incapacity and deficiencies as did the similar legislation twice introduced by this Government.

The Premier claimed as justification for this Bill that the Bill "forms an important part of the Government's programme for parliamen-

tary and electoral reform". That quotation is in the second reading speech relating to this Bill. I ask members to note that this Bill was deemed by the Premier to be an important part of the Government's programme, but it did not even warrant a mention in Labor's policy document on parliamentary and electoral reform of January 1983. The policy document issued one month before the Government was elected contains no mention of this Bill which for the convenience of the Premier's argument is now deemed to be such an important piece of legislation.

Mr Mensaros: It does not seem to be in the Governor's Speech.

Mr HASSELL: I do not remember its being there, but it may have been.

The policy platform of the State ALP does include this matter, but Mr Berinson has stated that "the party platform stands there as a guideline . . . it may not be implemented at all at the discretion of the Government". That quotation appears in *Hansard* of 28 March 1985 on page 1527.

We have legislation before us which is deficient and which was not in the policy of the Labor Party issued prior to the last election. It is in the party platform, but a senior Minister (Hon. J. M. Berinson) has said it does not bind the party and it is there to be taken if the party wants it.

So what is the status of this legislation? Let us get to the real nub of the matter. It is very simple; this legislation is but a stunt. It has been brought here to create a conflict with the Legislative Council. That is the purpose of the Bill, and always has been its purpose; it is particularly its purpose on this occasion.

Mr Carr: Are you going to predict an early election on the basis of that strategy you have just worked out?

Mr HASSELL: I am not going to predict anything.

Would not one have thought that if the Government were dinkum about this legislation it would have taken heed of the deficiencies previously identified in debates and done something about them? The chief deficiency is that the Bill does not apply to any members of families of members of Parliament. That is the practical deficiency. The Government did not do anything about those deficiencies because it could not. That is the inherent difficulty of this kind of legislation. It is not only unfair to a member of Parliament to seek to impose on him or her an obligation to

disclose his or her private affairs, it is also unacceptable to the Government itself and to the community at large to seek to impose on a member's relations an obligation to make that disclosure. This Government would not be prepared to do it. For a start, it would run into the greatest difficulty with the Women's Advisory Council and the feminists because they would have reacted very strongly to proposals that they, representing female spouses, might be required to make disclosure of their interests.

We see in this legislation simply an attempt to create a conflict with the Legislative Council. I do not think there will be much conflict; the legislation is likely to suffer the same fate as its predecessors. I do not know whether a formal decision to that effect has been made in the Legislative Council at this stage, but I predict that it seems likely that that will be the fate of the legislation. It will founder for the same reasons as the previous legislation. It is not justified; it would not be effective; it is incapable of being made effective; and, it is defective in its fundamental assumptions.

It is interesting to note that the Premier stated that the disclosure of interests by members of Parliament was a desirable and necessary step to maintain public confidence. He also referred to the presence of such legislation in other States. Interestingly the disclosure of financial interests in New South Wales has not led to any satisfactory resolution of the continuing suspicion of corruption in that State. We see the old argument of "us too"; the argument put by the Premier is that because Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia, and the Northern Territory have this sort of legislation we should have it, too. I do not think that is much of a justification. I remind the House that the Premier used that same justification for introducing the financial institutions duty; that is, we should have such a duty here because it exists in other States. Queensland does not have such a duty and we will not have it either when we get back to office.

This legislation is not really to be treated as seriously as that because it is a pointless proposition. Even if it were put into effect it would not work. If one looks at some of the provisions of the Bill relating to the right of members to use it or the restrictions on people's rights to speak about what is in the returns one sees what kinds of arguments the Parliament would get into over enforcement of the legislation.

When one looks at clause 19 one sees a very peculiar provision indeed. It states—

Notwithstanding any other law, a Member shall not publish in the course of the proceedings of Parliament—

(a) any information derived from a register unless that information—

(i) constitutes a fair and accurate report or summary of such information as contained in the register; and

(ii) is published, in good faith;

I ask members to consider this situation: Suppose a member of Parliament does not look at the register but goes away to a company such as DTX and discovers from examining its share register and searching through the shareholders disclosed in the register, and then going to the companies office and searching the files relating to the corporate shareholders of DTX, that certain transactions have taken place in relation to the company's shareholdings. Suppose he discovers that a member, perhaps even a Minister, was involved through a nominee company in the purchase of shares in the float of DTX and later on was involved in the sale of those shares when the price had been pushed up to \$12 or \$14, or whatever.

Suppose the member discloses that information in the House and somebody says, "That information is in the register, so it should not have been disclosed." The member would then say, "I was not using the register but other information I got outside about this company". I use DTX and the members who may have had dealings as an example of course, but it is a good example because the Premier used it in seeking to justify this Bill. He was very concerned about the allegations made about the possibility of one or more Ministers or members having been involved in such dealings.

Where would Parliament be if it tried to enforce and to deal with clause 19 of this Bill? Members should look at the clause. They do not have to be lawyers to understand clause 19. It seeks to restrict the right of a member of Parliament to say what he likes in this House. Then, of course, it imposes on the Parliament an obligation to enforce that provision through treating people in accordance with contempt. What a very dangerous proposition that is. Has anyone ever seen members of this Government enforce a contempt against one of their own number? Would they ever see it happen or would they expect to see it happen? What they

would see would be that this rule would be enforced effectively against Opposition members because they are in the minority. It would not be enforced against Government members because they are in the majority. It would be the same situation as the likelihood of a Government member being suspended from the House. That is always a very difficult and awkward proposition under our system because, of course, the Speaker's authority rests with the majority and that majority includes members of the Government.

When one looks at the practicalities of this legislation from beginning to end, and when one looks at the deficiencies and the way it is drafted, one sees it is simply a nonsense Bill. It is a stunt, as I said. There is no other interpretation for it. It has been put together and cooked up to bring about a conflict between the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council. I do not know the reasons for that. Maybe the Premier decided that he would use it for some purpose. Maybe he has changed his mind. Maybe, on the other hand, the Premier or, more likely, the Minister for Parliamentary and Electoral Reform as he calls himself, discovered that the list of pieces of legislation rejected by the Legislative Council in the life of the whole of this Government was so short that he needed to add a couple to it to make it look respectable to float the silly arguments that he floats about the Legislative Council flaunting the Government. The number of Bills rejected by the Council in the life of this Government can be counted on the fingers of one hand. One would not need many more fingers to include those Bills that have been shunted off to committees.

Is it not amazing that the Government complains about Bills being shunted off to committees? Government members should have a look at the parliamentary and electoral reform policies of their party which were issued prior to the last election. Those policies contemplated a substantial increase in the use of parliamentary committees for the examination of legislation. However, the Government has ignored those policies utterly since it came to office. Government members used to talk about it constantly while in Opposition. They said that they wanted to see policies that made Parliament work and that they wanted to have lots of committees in the Parliament to examine legislation. We have sent a couple of Bills to committees. How many Bills have been sent to committees?

Mr Tonkin: Quite a lot have been sent to loaded committees from a loaded unrepresentative chamber.

Mr HASSELL: That is hypocrisy. Is it not ironical that the Labor Party which said it would like to have lots of parliamentary committees to examine legislation is now complaining about that fact?

Mr Hodge: It was after the reform of the other House.

Mr HASSELL: I do not recall that qualification being included in the policy and I have read the policy very carefully.

It is ironical that a whole section of the policy of the Labor Party has been forgotten by the Government and we now have foisted upon us a Bill about something that is not mentioned in that policy and which demonstrates the hypocrisy of the Government. I do not think anybody could be serious about this Bill. The member for Kimberley, who is a fair-minded person, would know that this Bill is a charter for people to do the sorts of things that he would object to being done, in a legitimate way. It is a charter for trouble and will raise all sorts of questions about the freedom of the Press. What would happen if it were not a member who found out information independently of the register and published it in here but if it were a member of the Press who found out that information and published it outside?

The member would rise in his place and say that that was a breach of privilege of the House because the information published was included in his register of financial interests.

It is entirely possible for this Bill to be used as an instrument of oppression and an instrument to silence the media and to stop it from making investigations and disclosures. I do not suppose there is anybody in this House who has not, at some time or another, been less than happy with what has been published in the media about them or who has not felt the prick of the barb, or that the activities of the media are unfair. Everybody feels that way, when they are up front and in the firing line and when some of the things that are said, although true, the member would rather not have been said. At the same time, I do not think any member of this House would not be concerned to see that the democratic system as we know it was not preserved.

This legislation is capable of putting fetters on the right of the media to publish certain matters about members. Those fetters should

not be imposed. The possibility of their being imposed should not be included in the Bill. There are all sorts of possibilities that these matters will become subjects for contention and concern. That risk should not be taken. I suggest to Government backbench members who, perhaps, have not read the Bill, that they ought to think about it. It is my understanding that a number of Government members would be extremely concerned if they believed the Bill was likely to be passed. I think they should have the courage on this occasion in relation to such a significant piece of legislation to vote against the Bill.

I oppose the Bill.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Tonkin (Minister for Parliamentary and Electoral Reform).

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AMENDMENT BILL

Third Reading

MR DAVIES (Victoria Park—Minister for Conservation and Land Management) [3.20 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

Yesterday the member for Katanning-Roe asked me several questions, not all directly relating to this Bill, and I told him I would find the answers to those questions.

The first question related to the picking of *Darwinia*. There will be no difficulty with that, and unless the species is likely to disappear by next spring, the people will have the samples they have been accustomed to having and, to use the words of the member for Katanning-Roe, we will get rid of the red tape and bureaucratic procedures which seem to be hampering people to no good effect. In every year in which I have been associated with the display, they have had their samples. I can assure the member the samples will be supplied, and I will be able to let the member know before the House rises today whether rangers will pick and deliver them, or whether the rangers will accompany someone to collect the specimens.

The second matter related to parrots, which is a rather wider issue, and I am unable to give the member an answer on this occasion. However, I have asked that the member's speech be considered and that I be given a comment on it, and I will let the member have a written reply on the matter of parrots and the devastation they are causing in the orchards in farming areas.

Thirdly, the member for Katanning-Roe was concerned—as I am concerned—about the two-year period which relates to prosecution. I asked whether any prosecutions had been stopped because of the six months' limitation, and I was advised that none had been stopped. However, there were some prosecutions between the six month and the two-year periods, and one of them in particular—which I think is still proceeding—relates to the taking of crocodiles in the north. This places the matter in the same line as the fishery matters with which the member for Katanning-Roe was associated. The fisheries inspectors have two years, and the fauna inspectors six months in which to effect prosecutions. I have accepted that they should have the same time, and have also taken on board and conveyed to the department the member's concern—and mine—that this should become a precedent for other Acts; that after two years people can find that they have been prosecuted because of delays in getting the evidence together.

Finally, I give the member that assurance on both matters, and will let him have a written reply in regard to the parrots in due course. I share the member's concern regarding the two-year period for prosecution, and it is up to every member of this House to check whether any legislation in the future actually warrants any amendment of that kind if an amendment is ever brought in. I hope the member will accept those explanations.

MR OLD (Katanning-Roe) [3.24 p.m.]: I acknowledge the Minister's comments and thank him very much for his prompt attention to the matters I raised last night.

I am delighted that the Minister has given some instructions down the line with regard to the picking of *Darwinia*. Like the Minister, I am very conscious of the need to preserve rare and endangered flora, and at times have had to go to the battlements to preserve it. However, I did feel that this case was bringing the bureaucracy into disrepute, and that it was actually bureaucratic nonsense. I am delighted that the Minister has taken steps, and I look forward to being told by him that the matter has been resolved.

I do feel the damage the birds are doing in some wheatbelt areas needs to be considered. Those areas defined as normal fruit-growing areas should not be the only areas that have access to control. I realise the importance to the agricultural industry of the fruit-growing areas—please do not misread my thinking—but fruit-growing is also important to

individuals in farming areas. To put the Minister's mind at rest, I know he had my apricot tree in mind and was very perturbed that we did not get our jam this year, but I have no intention of taking action against the Government at this stage.

I am still uneasy about the two-year prosecution period. I take the blame, being the person who first introduced the two-year term. It is not coincidental that during the period when fisheries and wildlife were very closely administered, fisheries inspectors and wildlife inspectors did dual work. Wildlife inspectors probably became quite used to a two-year period during the time that legislation was in force. It may well be that they thought if it was good enough then, it would give them a little more breathing space. However, I accept the Minister's explanation and I thank him for investigating the matter.

MR HASSELL (Cottesloe—Leader of the Opposition) [3.27 p.m.]: With your indulgence, Mr Speaker, I would like to seize the opportunity presented by this Bill to tell the Minister handling the Bill that he gave great happiness to my mother the other day.

The simple story is that the Minister and I were recently together at Ravensthorpe, where he was officiating at the opening of the Ravensthorpe wildflower exhibition. One of the prize exhibits there was a specimen of the Qualup bell, a most beautiful native plant. In the course of cordial discussions with the Minister, I mentioned to him that my mother was intensely interested in gardening and wildflowers, and always had been, and had often talked about the Qualup bell since I was a child. However, to the best of my knowledge she had never seen one, except in pictures.

Last weekend, when I heard from my mother—and that does not occur as regularly as I would like—she advised that someone had arrived at the front door on behalf of the Minister with a sprig of these beautiful flowers. She was absolutely delighted.

Mr Barnett: Is that another vote for us?

Mr HASSELL: My mother said she had written to the Minister to thank him, and I would also like to thank him. It was a very kind act, and one much appreciated by my mother.

Mr Davies: Thank you. It was a great pleasure.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

ACTS AMENDMENT (SEXUAL ASSAULTS) BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 3 September.

MR MENSAROS (Floreat) [3.28 p.m.]: I am very sorry to say that I am most unhappy that the Government has raised this matter. I do not think anyone in his right mind would say that I should expect Order No. 13 on the Notice Paper to be brought up, on private members' day, when the Government, in a practical sense and after the formalities, has two hours of business.

This is a very serious Bill and deserves better treatment than to be rushed about without my prior knowledge or any warning. I had no knowledge that it would come up until a minute ago, and if it were dealt with now it would not be dealt with properly. Because of this, I seek leave of the House to continue my remarks at a later sitting.

Leave denied.

Mr MENSAROS: The Government's attitude signifies what I have just said. The first significant matter was that the Premier himself was not present to introduce his Bill. He gave it to one of the lady members. That was the first indication of how the Government will deal with the situation.

Mr Tonkin: This is a very important piece of legislation. We want it to pass through this House to protect the women of this State.

Mr MENSAROS: The Government brings up Order No. 13 on a day when it has two hours of business! How can I expect it?

Mr Tonkin: It was done to accommodate you people.

Mr MENSAROS: The Leader of the House is insincere and he does not take this issue seriously. It is a stunt.

Mr Tonkin: We take it seriously and you should be prepared to go on with anything that is on the Notice Paper. I have given an undertaking to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to give everyone a week to consider a Bill. On this occasion it is more than a week.

Mr MENSAROS: I will deal with the Bill as best I can, but to the detriment of the House I will not be able to deal with it in the manner in which I intended and the way in which the subject deserves. This stunt by the Government shows that it has not given the subject serious consideration. It brings up a red herring—it is a stunt.

I ask the Leader of the House whether he has read the Bill. Of course he has not read it. Has the Deputy Premier read it?

Mr Bryce: Of course he has.

Mr MENSAROS: He has not read the Bill. Has the Minister for Police and Emergency Services read the Bill? He has not read the Bill. Nobody has read the Bill and nobody knows what we are talking about, yet the Deputy Premier claims that he is taking the subject seriously. The whole thing is a stunt and is not taken seriously at all.

The Government said it wanted to pursue its policies. What policies—the legal policies, or the so-called women's equality policy? The Bill is before the House because a few frustrated women have decided that they want to achieve something which has nothing to do with the law as amended in this Bill.

One should give consideration to this legislation and take note of the public outcry associated with the proliferation of crime. The outcry indicated that the Parliament should legislate in regard to more serious offences and that it should legislate in a different way in cases of sexual assault. This has not happened because if one were to read the Bill one would find that the penalties are not at all as harsh as the previous penalties. The Bill is just a regrouping of offences that appear in the Criminal Code. The Government has given no consideration to the feelings of the public.

At the same time the Bill is taking away the traditional right under the century-old British jurisdiction. Apart from the few jokes made in the Bill about the equalisation of genders, it does nothing. The Government thinks that it is mightier than God and it wants to show that men and women are not different—that they are one and the same creature. That is what is implied by this Bill. It shows the mentality of the frustrated women who are working for so-called equality. However, worse than this is the fact that the Bill gives plenty of opportunity for the use of blackmail in the future and this is based on the legal framework as it is provided in the Bill.

The Government is trying to implement some sort of women's policy and this is referred to sentimentally in the three pages of the second reading speech notes. However, the Bill has nothing much to do with legal policies.

If the Government were to take this legislation seriously, it would have allowed sufficient time for the Opposition to prepare its case. Why cannot the Government follow the

practice that is adopted in the UK Parliament when serious matters are before it and publish a white paper? Why cannot the Opposition be given sufficient time to discuss the issue with members of the community, the professions involved, and the judges, in order to ascertain their opinion on this important subject? Why has the matter been brought before the Parliament for discussion when it was No. 13 on the Notice Paper and it became the third or fourth item to be discussed? Is that the way in which the Government wishes to deal with important subjects? When I said that the legislation deserved serious consideration and when I asked for leave to defer debate on the Bill until I had received advice from those people whom I had contacted, the Deputy Premier said, "No". Did the Opposition, when in Government, ever say "No" when it was asked for leave to defer a particular item?

Mr Bryce: No! Never! Don't paint yourself lilywhite!

Mr MENSAROS: We never said, "No" to that request when it concerned a serious matter, but the Deputy Premier, on behalf of the Government, said, "No" on this occasion. That is how seriously he takes this subject.

Where are the opinions asked for by the Government in regard to this legislation? My understanding is that it asked for an opinion from the Law Society, and that the Law Society came up with a confidential committee report and hence I cannot use that opinion. Why ask for an opinion if it is so confidential that it cannot be used? Where is the opinion? Has the Government tabled it and asked that it be incorporated in *Hansard*? No, it has not. My assumption is that because the report is critical of the Government's action and that it points out that legally this legislation is a lot of nonsense, the Government thinks that it can thrive on public opinion because it has to "protect women". The legislation has nothing to do with protecting women. As I will try to point out it has more to do with giving some women the right to use the legislation as a form of blackmail. No matter how much justice there is in public opinion in regard to women; no matter how much justice there is in harsher punishment; and no matter how much the public asks for protection of victims, the Government does not care about victims. Recently the Attorney General was asked for a transcript of the court proceedings concerning a rape case and he said that it cost too much—which is ridiculous—and that he would not make it available. The Government does not want to protect the vic-

tims of sexual assault. The Government is not prepared to do anything in cases of such importance.

Does the Government consider that its departments are political? For example, is the Police Department political? Has it suddenly changed its view because the Labor Party is in Government? Do Government members know that their colleague, the Minister for Education, when in Opposition, introduced three Bills similar to this and do they know what the view of the Police Force was on that occasion?

Mr Carr: What are you saying about the police being political?

Mr MENSAROS: Does the Minister for Police and Emergency Services think that they are political?

Mr Carr: No, I do not.

Mr MENSAROS: Neither do I. That is my argument. Has the Minister for Police and Emergency Services asked the opinion of the Police Force in regard to a Bill introduced by the Minister for Education three years ago? Is the member in charge of this Bill aware of the views of the Police Force at that time, and is her adviser aware of them? We have never seen as many advisers in this House as we have during this Government's term in office. When I was in Government it never occurred to me to have an adviser to assist me in the House. If anything, it shows how much importance the member in charge of this Bill places on it.

Points of Order

Mrs BEGGS: On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr Taylor), I take objection to the fact that the member for Floreat is indicating that a member of this Parliament cannot handle a Bill of this nature.

Mr HASSELL: I know of no Standing Order under which such a point of order can be upheld.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Taylor): There is no point of order. The member for Floreat.

Debate Resumed

Mr MENSAROS: The Government does not know, the member who is handling the Bill does not know, and her adviser who sits in this Chamber does not know what view the Police Department had of the Bill which the Minister for Education, when in Opposition, tried to introduce three years ago. The police were not happy with that legislation. I wonder why we cannot wait for opinions from practising lawyers who would look a little further than the propaganda aims of this legislation. I wonder

whether the propaganda is worth a State of the Commonwealth of Australia giving up all the proper rights of defendants, rights of which any English speaking country is proud because it has more rights than exist in most other countries. Is it worth giving up this principle altogether for the sake of propaganda?

Let us now consider what this legislation is really trying to do. It seeks to change the law in a material and procedural way with respect to some, not all, sexual offences. Despite the fact that it equalises the genders, so to speak, it ignores the fact that God created men and women. I do not know whether we are to be allowed to use the expression that God created men and women. We are probably expected to say that God create persons. The Government probably intends to rewrite the *Bible*.

By equalising the genders the Government seeks to make it legally possible for a woman to rape a man, a woman to rape another woman, or a man to rape a man. That fact was not picked up by the media. It was a public relations exercise for the media.

Apart from attempting to equalise the genders, the Bill concerns itself with procedural matters as well. I mentioned that not all sexual offences are dealt with in the legislation. The Criminal Code has been called old. Mankind is also old. Human characteristics and virtues likewise are old, as are human vices. They were not invented with the new technology. The human character has been the same since it was first documented. We can look back to the Statutes of Hammurabi in the Middle East, long before Christ was born, to see the provisions that were then made. Those provisions mirror the characteristics of mankind individually and as a community. They were not at all different from what they are today. Although the Criminal Code is old it deals with people whose characteristics remain fairly much the same. The proposed legislation will not affect certain sexual offences. For example, it will not affect the offence of sodomy. Today we call sodomy homosexuality; the Criminal Code called it sodomy. There has been no attempt in the great modernisation to take out the punishment of whipping. Again, the Deputy Premier does not know that that punishment is still in the Statute.

Mr Bryce: I am prepared to regard you as a luminary and to sit here and listen.

Mr MENSAROS: The Deputy Premier can regard me as whatever he likes, but he will not be regarded seriously. Thus some sexual of-

fences are only partially affected by the legislation for no better reason than that such action may be of some advantage to the women's liberation movement.

Mrs Buchanan: What nonsense! I would like you to tell that to the women of Geraldton.

Mr MENSAROS: The member can speak to the Bill later after she has studied it. I would be happy if she studied it, because if she does she will be the only member on the Government's side to have done so.

Clause 4 of the Bill amends section 29 of the Criminal Code by deleting the following—

A male person under the age of fourteen years is presumed to be incapable of having carnal knowledge.

I have no objection to that clause. The words "carnal knowledge" were defined in the Criminal Code as sexual penetration. Clause 4 attempts to delete the existing provision which presumes that boys under 14 years of age cannot commit that offence. I have no quarrel with that provision.

The legislation also repeals section 314 of the code which deals with the offence of assault with attempt to commit sodomy. As I said before, that is the homosexual act. That deleted offence carried a maximum penalty of 14 years gaol. Clause 7 of the Bill also repeals section 315 of the code which deals with the offence described as indecent assault of males. That carried a maximum penalty of three years gaol.

The legislation then seeks to delete all sections of the code which deal with rape and the attempt of rape. I refer to sections 325, 326, and 327 of the code. Offences under those sections carried punishment of life imprisonment without whipping, and 14 years' gaol respectively.

The Bill seeks also to delete section 328 of the code which deals with indecent assault on females and bears a maximum penalty of four years' imprisonment. Also included in the deletions is the provision that rape or, as it is now called in the Bill, sexual assault, cannot be committed between husband and wife. It is remarkable that the Government has zealously made provision for *de facto* situations in all sorts of legislation. It did so in the Criminal Injuries Compensation Bill with which we dealt yesterday. However, it does not include *de facto* relationships in this legislation. I suppose that it does need to because if a husband can commit the offence, a *de facto* can commit it

also. I will return to this theme because the provision can lead to a most bizarre situation and perhaps be the subject for blackmail.

Let us now consider the substitutions outlined in the Bill for the deletions of the offences under the code. I consider first the proposed sections 324B, 324C, 324D, and 324E. These deal with minor and major offences. Proposed section 324B deals with indecent assault and proposed section 324C deals with aggravated indecent assault. The aggravation is defined in the proposed legislation and appears to be adequately defined. There is not much to quarrel with in it. However, if we compare the penalties we can see that they are the mirrored counterpart to that which has been deleted. That which has been deleted is the provision for assault on males and females.

The respective penalties are three and four years. The present maximum penalty for this offence is four years and I ask how the new provision can be described as a harsher and stiffer penalty which has been introduced as a result of public outcry. The Bill does not state what is the minimum penalty and it is not stated in the Act's amendment that we shall amend the Offenders Probation and Parole Act so that parole cannot be granted earlier than a certain time. It leaves everything as it is at present. In the second reading speech the member for Whitford complained about the penalties being handed down by the courts and said they were not sufficient compared with the maximum penalty. However, the Government has achieved nothing and taken no step towards imposing harsher penalties because the maximum penalties set out in the Bill is four years, compared with the present three years and four years.

I suppose the provisions in the Criminal Code have better expressed today's feelings—with which I, as a conservative, agree about men and women because it set out a penalty for indecent assault against men as one year less than the penalty for indecent assault against women. What could express the present day sentiments better than that? The ancient Criminal Code expressed it better. It allowed for maximum penalties of four years and three years as against the proposed penalty of four years.

Referring to proposed section 324C relating to aggravated indecent assault, the maximum penalty is six years. What can that be compared with? It can only be compared with either attempted rape, rape, or assault with intent to

commit sodomy or something like it; no other comparison can be made. Under the Criminal Code that offence carried a maximum penalty of 14 years. How can it be said that the penalty proposed is harsher? It is less than half of what it was previously.

Proposed section 324D referring to sexual assault, provides for a maximum penalty of 14 years but the penalty for the equivalent offence under the provisions of the Criminal Code, which has been deleted, is life imprisonment. There has been a huge outcry that in all pragmatic senses such a sentence may mean only seven years' imprisonment or thereabouts but it cannot be claimed that the 14-year maximum penalty under the Bill will necessarily mean a harsher penalty. In fact, it can easily become a lesser period because the Bill contains no other provision setting out the minimum term. There is no provision which says that parole cannot be given; it is left to the discretion of the judge just as it was under the provisions of the Criminal Code. I digress to say that this legislation has failed and anyone who compared the concern and knowledge of any judge in Western Australia with that of members of the Government would be appalled. Where are the harsher penalties or the Government's so-called consultation?

If we consider the gravest offence of aggravated sexual assault dealt with by proposed section 324E, the maximum penalty is 20 years as opposed to a maximum penalty of life imprisonment under the provision of the Criminal Code. There is absolutely no guarantee that the discretion of the judges will result in harsher penalties being applied.

I am not at present advocating any type of penalty; I am pointing out that the claim made by the Government, which has been good propaganda, that following public opinion and the proliferation of crime it intends to introduce harsher penalties, is simply not true. I cite the examples previously mentioned: Four years as opposed to three years or four years; six years against 14 years, which is much lighter; 14 years against life; and 20 years against life. That is the situation regarding the harshness of the penalties.

If we consider the further provisions of the Bill it can be seen that sexual penetration is defined, and one could argue about this definition. Of course, the present Criminal Code refers to carnal knowledge and refers simply to penetration; it assumes that the penetration will be a natural sexual act because unnatural sexual acts, such as sodomy or bestiality which

are quite different, are dealt with separately. According to the definition in the Bill anything can be regarded as penetration and I would not like to be in the position of a judge who has to define it. The Bill does not refer to men or women but refers to persons. It states that if one persons puts any part of its—I use the word “it” because we do not appear to refer to men and women in the Bill—body into any part of another person's body, that is regarded as penetration. One could be stupid in the extreme and point out that it could very easily be interpreted under this provision that if someone puts its arm under someone else's armpit, which is part of the body, that is penetration.

Mr Barnett: Or if they pick your nose.

Mr MENSAROS: I agree with the member for Rockingham, that is about what the definition means.

Mrs Beggs interjected.

Mr MENSAROS: If the member for Whitford wants the legislation to be taken seriously, it should be properly defined.

Mrs Beggs: It is clearly defined as penetration of the vagina or the anus of any person.

Mr MENSAROS: The member should read the definition. The proposed section continues to state that it is not necessary to use only parts of the body; a person can use an object for manipulation.

A further point which I think is an error and could lead to all sort of abuse is the definition of consent. Of course, this definition includes consent obtained by force, threat, or intimidation and I have no argument with it to that point. However it also includes deception or fraudulent means. What do these terms mean? I will go a step ahead to explain my point because this part should be combined with other provisions of the Bill which state that it is not necessary for the victim to report criminal incidents such as this on the basis that he, she or it might have grievous reasons for not doing so. It is not necessary to report the incident immediately; it can be done a month or so later. It is not very difficult to envisage a situation where a person has given consent on the understanding that the partner, who is later accused of the offence of criminal assault, has promised to give that person something—perhaps jewellery, payment, or some other compensation in kind, which did not finally eventuate. That is deceit because the consent was given on the basis of one person's promises. Consent was given only because the

partner promised that person something. If the partner does not come good with the promise deception has been involved in the consent. The incident does not have to be reported and, in fact, as we shall see later the judge is required to tell the jury that the fact that the victim did not report the incident should not concern them and that they can still convict the offender. It can be said that the person was embarrassed and he, she, or it might have had good reasons for not reporting the incident. It can be reported four months later when the partner, who has become the accused, has not made good his other promise because at that stage it can be claimed that the consent was obtained by deception.

This can happen. This is how seriously this legislation has been considered. One needs only to read it. It is our job as members of Parliament and as legislators to point out these erroneous statements.

These provisions should not be included. They should be considered by experienced lawyers and inquiries should be made from the judiciary, from the Law Society, from the Bar Association and other such bodies. The matter should be discussed publicly and a white paper produced so that all these things can be pointed out. With due respect to the media, they could have made a good story about it, but it was taken at face value.

As far as women's rights are concerned, they will not last long. They might last a little while, but then things will return to normal. The women will go back to the home, they will be happy like my parents and grandparents were. We are unfortunately in an age where this sort of thing happens. Things will return to normal because nature will take its course. Unfortunately I will not be here but our children will have it happier than we did. All these things will go away because they are artificial and against human nature.

Mr Tonkin: You old fuddy-duddy!

Mr MENSAROS: The Leader of the House might call it funny—

Mr Tonkin: Fuddy-duddy.

Mr MENSAROS: That is all right.

My example is abrogated because one must bear in mind that the offence can be committed between husband and wife. He can claim she gave consent, according to the normal customs and laws with which I was brought up. Most of us accepted it was natural to have sexual relations and intercourse between husband and

wife. A wife can claim much later, when they have fallen out about something, that she did not give consent because there was a deceit. The husband was fraudulent when he said, say, that they were to move into a better house.

This can be construed as a sexual assault because the wife did not consent. She may report the matter six months or a year later. That is provided for in the legislation, as indicated in the second reading speech.

There is a legal provision in the Bill which, if one were to accept the rest of it, would not be objectionable, and that is simply the provision for alternative convictions, depending on the evidence. Evidence can be given on different charges, and there is provision for conviction on a lesser offence rather than on the original charge. This is an accepted provision in the criminal law.

Of the four main offences which I have described, the two more serious ones will come before the Supreme Court and the two lesser ones can be dealt with by the District Court. If that provision is used it will be the Supreme Court which brings down the verdict for the lesser offence in place of the original charge.

Again I emphasise only a maximum penalty is provided. There is no attempt to provide a minimum penalty, therefore the claim of harshness has no justification whatever.

One would have to go to the Evidence Act, which is the formal part of the criminal proceedings which are being amended. This is where I have strongly criticised the fact that the Government is willing to give up the centuries-old right of the defendant to defend himself in a fair trial. I suppose the Government has done this on the advice of those concerned with women's affairs.

I am convinced that anyone who objectively reads the provisions of the Bill will ascertain as I have that the Bill goes far overboard, despite the statement—or perhaps because of it—by the Government in the second reading speech, which says that the position of the defendant is safeguarded.

The position of the defendant is absolutely hopeless. I do not know whether the Government made the statement in the second reading speech out of ignorance or to divert attention from the fact that the opposite is the case. I ask the Government, and particularly the member for Whitford, how is the position of the defendant safeguarded?

If the member cares to answer the debate I would like to know how it is any better than it was before. If the Evidence Act is being amended and whether the Criminal Code is or is not being amended, how is it that the defendant is in any better position, or even how has the proper position been safeguarded?

The Evidence Act is amended in connection with the new sexual assault offences. It provides which evidence cannot be used. One must keep in mind that in the existing Criminal Code and according to the existing rules of evidence, certain evidence could be used only with the leave of the court. That is now being changed and there is only one type of evidence which can be used with the leave of the court. Certain other evidence cannot be used at all. The court cannot give leave to use it.

This is expressed in proposed sections 36B and 36BA of the Evidence Act. Section 36B says that the sexual reputation of the complainant cannot be brought in as evidence. If the offence is committed with a whore, that fact cannot be introduced as evidence. The court cannot give any leave for it to be brought in. Sexual assault can be committed with a common prostitute. What her reputation, trade or profession is will not come into the situation at all. If a jury member has knowledge of it he might well be disqualified.

New section 36BA talks about the sexual disposition of the complainant.

As with those explanations given earlier, there is no explanation as to what they mean exactly. It presumably deals not with heterosexuality and heterosexual behaviour but rather it has a disposition towards homosexuality or towards lesbianism. According to the definition in the provision, it seems that although the defendant may like to bring up the sexual behaviour of the alleged victim as evidence that the alleged offence could not be taken seriously, it will be banned altogether. If one takes the Government's statement in its proper perspective, one sees that the rights of the defendant are not being safeguarded. Two of the evidences are crossed out altogether and cannot be brought in at all, not even by leave of the courts; the third evidence is one for which the courts can give leave. However, generally it is the sexual experience of the complainant which is excluded from the evidence. Although I had little time left over from dealing with other legislation, my research into this legislation did not give me an answer as to where this provision appears in the Bill. Perhaps the member for

Whitford or her adviser knows where it is to be found, but we will see when the reply to the debate is given.

In addition, evidence which deals with the past sexual experience of the complainant can be produced only by leave of the court, if the court considers that the evidence is of substance to the facts and outweighs the distress, humiliation and embarrassment of the victim. Thus the court must necessarily examine the defendant's other evidence. The court has to give leave that such evidence be admitted should it have substantial relevance to the facts and outweigh the effect it will have on the victim of the alleged crime. There needs to be some tangible guideline for the courts to follow, but I do not really know what this is as the Bill's provisions stand.

Next we must consider the manner in which the judge addresses the jury, and what he says to the jury. In proposed section 36BD(a) it stipulates that the judge shall—

(a) give a warning to the jury to the effect that absence of complaint or delay in complaining does not necessarily indicate that the allegation that the offence was committed is false;

In other words, as I emphasised before, the complaint may be laid a year or more after the alleged offence occurred and the judge has only to say to the jury, "Don't bother about that. It does not matter that it has taken a year before the complaint was laid because there might be good reason for not making the complaint sooner." In fact, there may have been no complaint from the alleged victim; rather, somebody else might have gotten into the act, jumping onto the bandwagon of revenge and making a report to the police for reasons best known to themselves. The judge, as I have said, can virtually say to the jury, "Don't bother with that, although there was no complaint by the victim, you may as well convict the alleged offender." How does this safeguard the rights of the offender?

Conversely, proposed Section 36BE(a) provides to the effect that it is fairly unsafe to—

convict the person on the uncorroborated evidence of the person upon whom the offence is alleged to have been committed;

Normally, of course, a judge would sound this warning to the jury, not only in sexual assault cases but in other cases as well. It is unwise to accept the word of one person against the word of another regardless of

whether it concerns one offence or another. Thus this provision 36BE does not safeguard the rights of the offender. The rights of the defendant can be safeguarded against unwarranted accusations if there is no corroboration by others of the alleged offence. In sounding that warning the judge is giving the jury leave to accept that one uncorroborated witness is just as good as evidence which is underpinned by various other statements or facts. It means in effect that the alleged offender can be convicted on the testimony of one witness only.

I will give a hypothetical example of a situation which could occur if this legislation is passed. It will highlight in a more practical way what the legislation really means and what I have tried to explain so far; that is, that the age-old and respected criminal law system which gave the right of fair trial to all defendants is now being done away with. I will refer briefly to an example of a husband and wife. They have normal sexual relations—I would ask members not to confuse this case with the recent Victorian case in which the alleged offender committed sodomy on his wife. The case I refer to concerned an accusation of rape in the heterosexual sense. That is quite a different matter from the Victorian case. The Victorian Parliament, having changed the provision of the original offence of sodomy, thus excluded the possibility for conviction of that offence in the context of marital rape.

This legislation takes away the provision that sexual assault, as it is called now, cannot be committed by a husband against his wife and it does not compare with the Victorian case because this Bill brings into the sexual assault legislation a provision which still separates the offence which occurred in Victoria and natural sex. This is according to criminal law in this State. Let me return to my example. A husband and wife may have normal sexual relations but a few months later the wife complains for reasons best known to herself. She can threaten her husband and say, "I gave my consent to this normal sexual relationship only because I was under the impression that you promised me something and you didn't do it." The husband may say, "What sort of nonsense is this? I never promised you anything and never did anything." Thus we have a complaint for an offence which according to the provisions of this Bill could be committed by a husband against his wife. It does not matter that she reported the offence months later; it is a matter of indifference to the jury. I must emphasise again that under this provision an

uncorroborated testimony from one witness is just as good as evidence from others. That is where we stand. It is an entire opening-up of the situation called blackmail—the wife, probably advised by whatever women's department exists at the time, will be able to use this provision of the Bill for continuous blackmail if she wants to.

Also, talking about normal relationships between girlfriends and boyfriends, a blackmail situation could occur. A delayed complaint does not matter because the victim could have good reason for that delay. The uncorroborated evidence is enough to prove that consent was given on deceit. The defence that the girl was a loose woman or a tart would not be admitted anyhow. There is a constant situation for blackmail with respect to alleged offenders.

Quite apart from the fact that I would have liked to be better prepared it is not the duty of the Opposition to deal with this matter in the normal way and seek to amend the Bill; neither would the opportunity arise, because the Government is hellbent on passing this Bill. It wants to steamroll the legislation. The Opposition has not had the opportunity of obtaining proper legal advice from experts and has not had enough time to get that advice. Added to this, in the absence of the very decent, nice young fellow who was the private members' draftsman, we have now been assigned an equally nice young lady who, however, has had no drafting experience whatsoever. This is what we are getting. In these circumstances, how can anyone expect that the Opposition can deal with this matter seriously?

I do not care about what happens to this legislation. It is bad for the reasons I have given. It does not provide harsh penalties in line with what the public wants and the proliferation of sexual crimes demands. It is taking away the traditional right of the defendant to have a fair trial and defend himself properly. The Opposition's attitude is that we do not care about this legislation as it is so bad; however, we will not overlook it, and as soon as we become the Government again, we will address ourselves on the subject in a much more serious way than this Government has treated this matter; namely, with absolute contempt, which has resulted in this legislation which is a stunt and which should be judged as such.

MR CRANE (Moore) [4.24 p.m.]: It was not my intention to speak on this Bill, but I am extremely concerned about some of the events of today and the lack of concern about the severity and importance of this Bill.

This Bill would be one of the most important to come before this Parliament, and the most involved in many ways. For that reason I do not believe we were unreasonable in asking for more time to consider it. This is a subject which has been before the public for many years now, and the public have been screaming out at the top of their lungs for action to be taken. The vast majority of people are concerned, not so much about changing the laws and their intention, and the ways in which rapists can be convicted, but that when rapists are caught and convicted they are let off with such a light penalty; the penalties do not fit the crime. I believe this is where the Government is going wrong in this legislation.

There is a very strong case for the penalties for people convicted of rape to be much more severe. Certainly, there may be some technicalities whereby we can make it easier for the victim during a court hearing; God knows, we must all feel compassion for a person who has suffered the indignity of rape. There is no dispute about that, and any sane-minded Christian person must feel absolute disgust at many of the things which have happened in this regard.

I suppose many of us, as members of Parliament, have had constituents who have suffered either the indignity of rape or been accused of committing it. It is a most involved crime and a very serious one. I do not feel, with the little time I have available to me—and it is all very well to say this Bill was introduced in early September, but we have many other responsibilities and other Bills to investigate—that this matter can be dealt with fully in the time available. As the member for Floreat said, how many people on the Government side, including the Deputy Premier, have read the Bill or tried to study it? I tried to do that, but I must confess that I have not gone right through it. It is of concern to me that a matter of such magnitude and importance to women should be treated in such a manner in this place. We should be given, in this particular instance, much more time to study the Bill's implications.

I said earlier the public outcry or concern is that the rapist appears to be getting away with a little tap on the back of his knuckles in some instances, and the victim must go on and face

society and carry, for the rest of her life in many instances, the trauma of the experience she has suffered. Rape is a most hideous crime. I do not think there is any crime worse than rape. It would have to be one of the number one crimes facing society, yet here we are in this place being asked to pass judgment on a Bill, or agree to a Bill, whereby with a lot more concern and certainly more time, we may be able to introduce some amendments so that we would end up with legislation in the State of Western Australia which would assist the victim and reduce the trauma she must go through with the courts.

It is often said that many victims do not report a rape because of the embarrassing situation and the "third degree" to which they might be subjected to in court. I think this is a fair enough comment because, firstly, the victim has suffered one of the most hideous, traumatic experiences of her life. I am talking about rape. I am not talking about someone who feels disappointed that a little lark in the park went wrong, and afterwards has had second thoughts about it. I am talking about a victim who has been raped. I feel very strongly about this.

If someone raped a member of my family, my wife or daughter, or anyone close to me, I have no hesitation in saying that that person would never rape again. I promise that. It is a very strong thing for me to say, but how many other people have said, "If anybody violated a member of my family he would never get away with it"?

Mrs Beggs: Or yourself?

Mr CRANE: Yes, or myself, but I am talking at the moment about females because there is a difference in gender.

Mrs Beggs: There is no difference in sexual assault.

Mr CRANE: I must beg to differ with the member for Whitford. God made men and women different, and thank God he did!

Until I was so rudely interrupted I was saying that we must show compassion and consideration for the victim who has been raped. Speaking about rape, I have actually witnessed a rape. That would surprise members. It was while I was in a naval hospital and I was too sick to do anything about it. A young sailor in a bed three or four beds down from me in the ward was raped by another sailor.

I am sorry to have to say that, but it illustrates that I do know the indignities of rape, so do not, please, try to say I do not know what I

am talking about. Had I been in a position to be able to do something about it, I can assure members I would have, but when one is very sick in a hospital bed, what in hell can one do? I do speak with experience in this matter. That incident concerned a male and that point has probably surprised many members.

Mr Old: It wouldn't surprise us about the Navy.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr CRANE: Do not worry about the Navy. Sailors are no different from any others really, I suppose. I could have told members some very good stories last night when we were dealing with another Bill, but I elected not to do so.

Leave granted to continue speech at a later stage of the sitting.

Debate thus adjourned.

COMMERCIAL TENANCY (RETAIL SHOPS) AGREEMENTS AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

MR COURT (Nedlands) [4.32 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time. This Bill seeks to amend the Commercial Tenancy (Retail Shops) Agreements Act which came into force on 1 September this year. Today the Deputy Premier introduced another Bill to amend this legislation, and he has tried to give the mischievous impression that the Opposition is stirring up trouble in relation to this legislation which we are seeking to amend with this Bill.

I want to make it clear that nothing could be further from the truth. We made it plain publicly during the debate on the parent legislation that we would seek to outline its pitfalls and the problems which we knew would arise. We were ignored by the Government during that debate. In fact, the debate was stopped before we had a chance to debate it in full. During the intervening time between the Bill leaving Parliament and coming into effect on 1 September, many lawyers have telephoned me for advice on behalf of tenants and landlords in regard to this legislation.

The legislation originated with good aims, aims which the Opposition supported; but the way the Government presented the legislation, and its refusal during the debate to accept our amendments or any of our advice has really turned this legislation into a general dogsbody.

It is hoped that the responsible Minister in another place (Hon. Peter Dowding), as a lawyer, and some of his officers in the Department of Consumer Affairs who are also lawyers, can knock this legislation into shape before more chaos is created.

In the last two weeks my office has been inundated with telephone calls from tenants seeking advice on how to handle this legislation. This occurred because lawyers gave landlords the advice that the shopkeepers must remove their goods from outside their shops, so clothing, goods, Lotto tables, or whatever had to be removed. The shopping centre managers walked around many centres and forced people to remove all their trading stock and equipment from the common areas in the shopping centre. These people rang up for advice and I explained to those people that the Opposition had prepared an amendment to the Act to help solve this problem and that we hoped the Government would also try to address the problem in its announced amending Bill.

I ask the Government why it did not, as promised to the industry, amend its legislation before 1 September when it came into effect so that these problems would not have arisen. The Minister has been quite backward in not having removed this quite small anomaly from the legislation prior to 1 September.

The State Government and the Deputy Premier in particular has a lot of explaining to do over its bungling of the introduction of the legislation which this Bill seeks to amend.

During the initial debate on the commercial tenancies' legislation earlier this year, the Opposition made it clear that it supported many of the aims and requirements of the legislation. On the other hand, the Opposition was very critical of the way in which the legislation was presented and highlighted many of the anomalies which would arise to the detriment of all parties concerned; that is, to the tenants and the landlords. The stubbornness and the sheer stupidity of the Government in not heeding our warnings have created the necessity for this amendment and the many others which the Government has introduced, and no doubt will introduce in the future.

We went through a similar debacle with the financial institutions duty legislation. The Premier refused to listen to any of our reasoning and later he had to eat humble pie and introduce some of the amendments himself.

The Government's commercial tenancy legislation has severely disadvantaged charity groups using shopping centres for fundraising activities, and tenants who have previously displayed and sold goods outside their shops.

The Government has tried to cover up the fact that it has messed up this part of the legislation and that it has created considerable confusion for tenants, landlords, and charity groups.

Many small shopkeepers have been told by their landlords to stop displaying and selling goods outside their shops, and many years of goodwill and harmony which have been established with this practice have been destroyed.

We now see situations where previously good relationships in shopping centres have become open warfare. If one were to go to any shopping centre today, one would see that landlords have insisted that shopping centre managers have all goods removed from common areas. Shops which previously used to display clothing in the common area now have it all crammed inside the shop, and that is detrimental to the shop's trading activities.

The owners of lottery kiosks have had their Lotto tables confiscated because they were positioned in common areas for the sale of Lotto tickets and the like.

This is a ridiculous situation and I am sure that many members on both sides of the House have received telephone calls from shopkeepers who are very concerned about the activities which have taken place in the past two weeks.

I have explained the situation to some of the people who have contacted me and I have pointed out what the Opposition will do in order to help resolve this problem. I have also suggested that they talk to their local members of Parliament, of either party, and to explain their problems to them.

Mr Davies: Do you think BOMA is being a bit bloody minded about it?

Mr COURT: The member for Victoria Park has probably received phone calls in this regard. I have suggested to some of the people who have telephoned me and who operate shops in the East Victoria Park area that they should telephone him to tell him of their problems. I am afraid the landlords have not had a choice under this legislation. The advice that they have been given by their solicitors is to take the course that they have taken. The Government has also introduced legislation to correct the situation.

Mr Davies: They received an assurance though that it was not meant to be interpreted that way. They could have played the game if they wanted to, but they don't like the result at all.

Mr COURT: If I could just explain to the Minister, an assurance does not help in certain cases. Let us use the example of a company which demonstrates solar hot water systems. Assume the company has a licence or a contract to go into a major shopping centre for a six-week period and display the solar hot water system.

At the end of the six weeks the existing legislation has been interpreted by solicitors to mean that they have a right to insist that the landlord allow them to stay for five years. The reason that the landlords accepted the legal advice in this case was that they did not want cases to arise in between the time the legislation came into force on 1 September and the date it would be amended. That period could have been three weeks, four weeks, or a few months. As with the solar hot water company, it could have involved only a few weeks but it could also mean that the tenant could have the right to stay for five years. I think the House would agree that when that sort of period is at stake, one cannot accept the word of the Minister for Small Business that everything will be okay. It is the law and it will be determined by the courts and not by the Minister for Small Business.

The Opposition made it clear during the parliamentary debate that these problems would arise with the legislation. However, the Government saw fit to ignore those warnings and eventually the debate was gagged before the new law could be sensibly and properly discussed. On March 12, on page 784 of *Hansard*, the Minister said—

... there should be no mistake in anyone's mind that there has been slovenliness or carelessness in the drafting of this Bill, because the Bill has been under serious consideration by representatives of the agencies for whom I am responsible and industry groups which have a vested interest in this matter for more than a year.

If some members in this Chamber detect that in comparative terms there are some relatively open statements, I say those statements are included quite deliberately. During the course of their remarks, some members have suggested that this fact constitutes loose drafting. I want to make it

perfectly clear that there is no loose drafting in the sense of any carelessness, but that this piece of legislation comes to grips with a particularly complicated issue...

The Minister repeated that statement again today in his second reading speech on another Bill to also amend this legislation. The Minister says that the Government has purposely applied a broad-brush approach on this issue. The broad definitions used in this Bill were going to create problems right from the word "Go", particularly for the tenants. Those problems will negate the very real and necessary changes required to improve shop lease practices. An example of that occurred during the debate. The Opposition specifically asked whether a charitable group—the member for Mt Lawley who asked the question gave an example of a P & C group—would require exemption from the legislation if it wanted to run a raffle in a shopping centre and to sell tickets in that centre. Under this legislation, a licence is a lease. He said that, according to the Minister's explanation, the P & C would have to approach the registrar to seek an exemption from the Act. That would mean the P & C would come under the jurisdiction of the legislation. It could go into the shopping centre, sell its tickets, and later say to the landlord that it wanted to stay in that centre for five years. The Minister replied, "That is the way it will operate."

The registrar says differently. He says that, contrary to the Minister's assurances given during the second reading debate, the registrar is not in a position to issue an exemption certificate under the Act. Therefore the Minister has misled the House and is desperately now trying to excuse his incompetence by attacking the Opposition. I am afraid that he will not get away with it. He has either misled the House or, during the debate, had no idea about how the legislation would work. Judging from the calls from the legal fraternity which has the job of trying to interpret the legislation, many other problems will arise with this legislation.

We now have the situation where the Government, only two weeks after the Act has come into effect, is introducing major amendments to the legislation. One of the major amendments is of a retrospective nature to make certain that people come under the legislation. He is also trying to outlaw ways of avoiding this legislation, a problem which we very clearly foreshadowed during the debate. We were ignored. The legislation also tries, in a

different way, to solve the problem that we are attempting to solve with this amending legislation.

The legislation is becoming messy. From what we have heard from all sources—tenants, landlords, and the legal fraternity—there will be many problems in trying to work under the legislation in the future. It is no wonder that the Government is transferring the administration of the legislation from the Minister for Small Business to the Minister for Consumer Affairs. As I said previously, the legislation will require much more legal work done on it to get into some workable form.

I urge the House to support the common-sense manner in which the Opposition proposes to amend the legislation. We want to solve the problems which unfortunately have arisen because of the Government's stupidity and stubbornness in not accepting our previous advice. The sad part about the legislation is that much unnecessary disharmony has arisen between tenants and landlords, and that must be stopped immediately.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Gordon Hill.

AGRICULTURE: RURAL SECTOR

Government Inaction: Motion

MR OLD (Katanning-Roe) [4.49 p.m.]: I move—

That this Parliament expresses concern at the lack of action by the State Government in easing the serious financial plight of farmers and businessmen in rural areas and calls on the Premier to—

- (1) Provide immediate relief by abolishing the State fuel franchise levy.
- (2) Make immediate representation to the Commonwealth Government to—
 - (a) substantially reduce the excise duty on all fuel;
 - (b) take appropriate measures to influence a drop in interest on bank loans;
 - (c) reject the I.A.C. recommendation to apply an anti dumping duty of \$80 per tonne on D.A.P. (Di Ammonium Phosphate);
 - (d) make a meaningful allocation of funds to the Rural Adjustment and Finance Corporation.

I am sure the majority of members in this House are well aware of the financial plight of people in rural areas today. It is not very long since a Select Committee was investigating the situation regarding farmers and it brought forward a comprehensive report. It is not an easy problem to solve. In fact, it is one which has been the subject of many suggestions and there has been some relief of a minor nature provided by Governments, both State and Federal.

Not only the farmers, but also the businessmen are experiencing grave financial troubles in rural areas. The businessmen are a direct reflection of the agricultural economy, and this has always been the case. I do not believe that Western Australia, particularly, and Australia, in general, have been through such a bad time in the rural areas since the Depression. It may well be that this is a short-lived aberration, but I do not believe it is only because of the level of the debt structure which has been assessed, and which currently faces the farming community; it is also because of the debt level of the rural business community which has not been assessed.

I am aware that an unofficial and sketchy survey was recently carried out in a small south-eastern farming town and it concluded that the debt level of the business people in that town was something in the order of \$50 000. One must take into account that the businessmen involved in machinery would be carrying a debt level of \$100 000 and some of the smaller businessmen would not be carrying any debt load. It can be seen that this applies equally to country businesses and the farming industry.

The average farm debt in the wheat growing areas of Western Australia is \$177 000 and that is higher than in any other State in Australia. In fact, it has been calculated that the average indebtedness of Eastern States wheat growing farmers is in the order of \$91 000. There is a tremendous difference in the debt load carried by Western Australian farmers compared with their counterparts in the Eastern States. For that reason there has not been a great deal of concern shown to Western Australian farmers by the majority of Federal members because most of them represent areas in the Eastern States. While there have been demonstrations in the Eastern States and the farmers have told both the Federal and State Parliaments of their serious financial plights the Governments

concerned have gone nowhere near considering the serious position being experienced in this State.

One of the highest cost inputs on a farm is fertiliser and, of course, another is interest rates. A person who has just left rural finance and who was good enough to talk to a group of people recently about some of the problems in the industry said he was of the firm opinion that interest rates are not the biggest factor. That can be proved when one takes some notice of the analyses of the problems being experienced in the farming areas.

Today the inputs into farming in Western Australia certainly outweigh the returns from farming. To support that comment, I will refer to some statistics which have been given to me. Of interest is the fact that the rural areas, the farming industry in particular, contribute greatly to the economy of this State. The gross value of rural production in Western Australia for 1984-85 has been estimated at \$2 719 million, which in real terms is about \$1 942 million. The forecast for 1985-86 is \$2 450 million which, in real terms, brings it back to \$1 591 million. To a great degree these figures are a reflection on the seasonal conditions. Also included in those figures is the fact that some farmers have been unable to carry on their normal farming activities because of the lack of finance. Certainly, while those who have not been able to carry on any activities would be in the minority, it has been quite normal for many farmers to restrict their activities because they have not been able, through lack of finance, to put in the crop they wanted to or to carry the number of sheep they would normally carry and thus the gross value of the rural industry is declining.

The decline in the gross value of the rural areas reflects not only on rural business. If the gross value of the primary industry declines to any extent the cold winds will blow down St. George's Terrace before long and I can assure members that a great deal of interest will then be taken about the plight of the people in the rural areas.

I mentioned that the rural input costs were rising more than the output prices. The current situation is the worst that has been experienced for 35 years. Hopefully we can do something to correct the situation. I am hoping that the Government will take note of the figures that I will produce and will bring some pressure to bear on the Commonwealth Government to take remedial steps. I am also hopeful that the Western Australian Government will under-

take certain remedial steps for which it has the power. I will refer to that matter later because many steps can be taken to give immediate relief to help those people who are experiencing tough times.

The Western Australian farmers' unit output prices in the past five years compared with 1980-81 are as follows—

Wheat up 11 per cent
Wool up 26 per cent
Cattle up 40 per cent
Sheep down 12 per cent

The total outputs combined give an average upward thrust of 16 per cent, which sounds rosy until one looks at the inputs which are as follows—

Fertilisers up 28 per cent
Chemicals up 22 per cent
Fuel up 57 per cent
Machinery up 61 per cent
Wages up 49 per cent
Rates & taxes up 60 per cent
Marketing charges up 47 per cent

The average total inputs combined have increased by 50 per cent. Therefore, there has been a 50 per cent rise in inputs and a 16 per cent rise in outputs. I am sure that I do not have to remind members that no business can continue to make such a loss for too long.

The State Government could take some steps which would offer immediate relief to the rural industry. I am sure that by taking some remedial action the State Government will encourage the Commonwealth Government to follow suit.

The State Government should grab the bull by the horns and make an immediate commitment to abolish the State fuel franchise levy. I know the Government has dragged all sorts of red herrings across the trail of abolishing that levy, but I can assure it that it is possible. I can also assure the Government that it is more than possible for the present Government because it has reaped such a bonanza from the increase in cigarette tax and the introduction of the FID. That would more than recoup the loss of the fuel franchise levy on the farming community.

That in itself will not solve the problems of the rural community faced by farmers, businesses and workers, all of whom have similar problems. However, at least the example should encourage the Commonwealth to come to the party to some extent and give away some of the money it is taking from the price of a litre of fuel.

There is no doubt that the Premier's announcement of a balanced Budget or a small surplus was a ploy. There is no doubt that there was a fairly large surplus in the Budget, much of which was pushed under the fence to provide a nice fund to start off next year. This has enabled the Premier to introduce a few election sweeteners. This has been seen in the Swan Valley, Bunbury and, again yesterday, in Mandurah. That is fair enough, it is electioneering. However, if in fact the Budget reveals—and we are able to ferret out—that a large sum of money has been pushed under the fence, that would be an indictment on the Government, because if there is such a surplus, as I am convinced there is, that money should be used to alleviate some of the financial problems of people in the rural areas. The Commonwealth Government takes something like 66 per cent of the retail price of a litre of petrol and it is about time that it made some meaningful effort to reduce its spending and pass some of that money to the people who are producing the wealth in this country. It would be an act of good faith on the part of the Prime Minister if he made a substantial concession to the people of Australia and dropped the price of fuel.

The Prime Minister addressed the farmers who demonstrated in a very orderly way at Canberra and in his own words said, "My friends." That was greeted with loud derision. He told the farmers that he could see they had a good point and that the Government would certainly consider reducing the price of fuel to primary producers. What did he ultimately do? Nothing. He said that as the tax summit had not agreed to option C of the white paper, that now abrogated any commitment he had made to give a concession on the price of fuel. That is absolute rubbish. It had nothing to do with the matter. The fact that the farmers happened to hold their rally during the time of the tax summit somehow gave it some mystique, according to the Prime Minister, who tied their request to what was going on inside the castle. The only reason that the farmers met at Canberra at that time was that they knew they had a good chance of getting lots of people to take note of the fact that they were disturbed, that things were not good, and that they need immediate assistance. What did they get? A very minor concession on distillate, of 2.4c a litre, which does not mean a thing. It was part of the excise on distillate. The excise on distillate had always been rebated to primary producers but in its wisdom the Federal Government decided that

the cockies were getting far too rich, and that it would freeze the excise rebate, and that from that point on the excise would be paid by all users. It decided that there would be no automatic refund of the rebate up to the date at which it froze the scheme and if farmers did not apply for the rebate, as they had in the early days of excise, they would not receive it. Many farmers did not receive the rebate; probably because some amounts were small or they forgot to apply. That is exactly what the Government was relying on. The Government came to the party with the residual amount of the excise duty which should never have been charged to the farmers in the first place. As one of my colleagues said, it was an insult.

At the moment servicing debts is an almost impossible task, especially in the upper range. Let us consider the average debt level mentioned previously of \$171 000—and the Minister for Agriculture who would certainly have more up-to-date figures quoted \$177 000—for the wheat farmers of this State. I assume that we are referring to wheat farmers which covers almost the whole of Western Australia except the south-west, which has horticultural and dairy farmers. I am assured by the bank officers in those areas that many of those farmers carry no debt loan at all. That does not mean that they have a nil balance at all times; it means that some of them borrow seasonally. For example, they borrow enough money after seeding or around seeding time to put in their crops and that loan is then cleared at harvest time. They have a come-and-go arrangement with the bank. A fairly large percentage of these people are still farming in Western Australia and therefore one can imagine the size of debt which other farmers must be carrying. I know of some with debts of \$500 000 and others with debts of \$300 000. It does not sound much if one says it quickly and probably it did not mean much before land prices started to slide. It is just one of the problems with which the farming community is faced.

The Commonwealth Government has done nothing to try to contain interest rates. In fact, it has encouraged high interest rates. I say that advisedly because in an endeavour to prop up an ailing dollar—it is certainly ailing—the Commonwealth has encouraged capital inflow. That is a fairly normal operation if a Government wants to prop up its currency. However, to encourage the capital inflow attractive interest rates must be offered to overseas lenders. The money is coming into the country

and one can bet one's bottom dollar that the Commonwealth and the Treasurer have no intention of dropping those interest rates because if they did so it would result in an immediate outflow of overseas money and further depreciation of the Australian dollar. The current quote for the Australian dollar against the American dollar is about 67c and that is a slight improvement on the previous day. However, the general trend has been downwards and I have heard some fairly grim forecasts of the level to which the dollar will descend. I shall not make a prophecy now but it worried me when I heard it.

The Treasurer was interviewed and a report of the interview appeared in *The Australian Financial Review* on 26 August 1985. He was being asked about the attitude of the Treasury. The article reports the Treasurer as making the following statement—

The additional thing I require of the BAE is this constant briefing on macroeconomic data to provide counter advice to Treasury and Finance.

Heed that! The Treasurer requires counter advice from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics from that given by the Department of the Treasury and Finance. The Treasurer was then asked—

You want to have some countervailing force?

To which he replied—

Yes. I want to get some handle on it. I think they come up with quite staggering things at times. They fought so hard against the floating of the dollar, now they use that as a proxy for not taking action in so many areas that I get a bit alarmed.

I wonder who is the Treasurer? Is it the Department of Treasury and Finance or is it Mr Keating? I wonder what control Mr Keating has on the Treasury and what influence he has. Is he doing the bidding of the Departments of Treasury and Finance, or is he in fact trying to remedy some of the problems that are being experienced in Australia at present? I do not think he is.

I recall that some three or four years ago commercial bills from the banking system were costing up to 22 per cent. People threw up their hands in horror because it was clear that such levels of interest rates could not be serviced, and I do not believe that they can. However, when we look at the normal interest rates today we must not overlook the fact that when the

Commonwealth decided to deregulate banking, it saw this as the great answer to all the economic problems that beset this country. We would get these overseas banks to operate in Australia and they would be very competitive and interest rates would come down. There has been some activity but the major banking groups have not yet arrived. As one gentleman said to me recently, "What difference is it going to make? Can you imagine the Bank of Japan hanging out its shingle at Mukinbudin or Katanning?" to which I replied, "No." These overseas banking corporations will not be interested in rural finance, any more than they are interested in it now.

I referred to the fact that an interest rate of 22 per cent was being charged on commercial bills from the banking system. The prime rate on overdrafts over \$100 000 is quoted in *The Australian Financial Review* of 26 August 1985 as being 18.25 per cent. The ANZ Bank recently topped 18.5 per cent, and when we take into account the other charges being charged by the bank and the keeping charges, we are almost up to the rate of 20 per cent-plus for commercial bills that existed in the bad old days. Until there is some relief, these interest rates will continue to grow and we will not be able to solve the problem. The article in *The Australian Financial Review*—for which Mr Keating was interviewed—continues as follows—

The prime rate for overdrafts over \$100 000 reached a record level in June this year when the National Australia Bank put its benchmark up to 18.25 per cent.

Since then the prime rate has risen to its maximum level and no-one seems to be sure where it is going to stop. If one puts a cap on interest rates, there will be charges, as has happened in the housing industry, and there is always a way around it. I believe that "interest" is only one name to describe how to service money. It seems to me that when people are induced to borrow commercial bills—provided that they can buy them, as they will be able to shortly—they may find themselves on a treadmill. This is what happened some three or four years ago when they were hit that 22 per cent prime rate. In such a situation it becomes very difficult to service debts.

[Questions taken.]

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.15 p.m.

Mr OLD: During question time the Premier was asked a question about country charges, and he was very keen to talk about SEC costs being subsidised in country areas. I have to agree in part with the Premier, in that there is a need for a subsidy. When farmers say they do not want subsidies it means that they do not want handouts. They do not want to be in a position where they have something given to them one day which is chopped off the next day. If we are going to assist rural people, we must assist them in a material way.

I recall that when the 1971 election was being contested, one of the planks in the Labor Party's platform was that it would equalise the SEC charges between the city and the country.

Mr Jamieson: When was that?

Mr OLD: In 1971.

Mr Jamieson: We did that. I was the Minister.

Mr OLD: Yes it was done. It was a very attractive thing. The Labor Government did equalise charges—it pushed the city charges up to match those of the country! What happened then was the same sort of thing that is going on now. The charges were equalised all right—the country got nothing and the city got sluggish. So it was more dough in the coffers. I congratulate the ex-Minister for his very nimble footwork; it was great. But that is the sort of thing we do not want right now.

There is no doubt that there is a great necessity for assistance for country people, and tonight the Minister for Agriculture, during question time, was talking about another survey. I do not for one moment criticise the need for another survey. I agree with what the Minister said and I agree with what the President of the Primary Industry Association said—these things must be ongoing. The more surveys that can be taken, the better, provided we take note of the recommendations and provided those recommendations are realistic. In a department as big as the Department of Agriculture, the Building Management Authority or the Water Authority of Western Australia there is a great mix of people and there will be a diversity of opinions from them. It is up to the upper echelons of these departments to make recommendations to the Minister which will have some effect. The Minister cannot sit down as the Minister and decide on the best way to solve the problems of rural industry. I am the first to recognise that fact. It is no good my standing here and calling the wrath of the Lord down upon the Minister for Agriculture, be-

cause he is taking advice from his department and he is as conscious of the problem as I am—and probably more conscious because he has access to more comprehensive data.

I believe the bulk of the problem lies in the Federal sphere. It is always very nice for States to knock Commonwealth Governments. It has been done from time immemorial and it is probably a good way to slip away from something. However, we must adopt some positive approaches to measures that should be taken by the Commonwealth. It has been acknowledged by economists throughout Australia, and by people of commonsense who are not economists, that Australia is living beyond its means. There is no doubt whatsoever we are living beyond our means.

I go back to that financial review report of the Minister for Primary Industry. He was talking about farmers' problems. The difference between their costs and what they are paid for their produce has been declining at a particularly rapid rate in the past few years. Farmers are seriously in debt with higher interest rates. Most are tightly bound to world commodity markets over which they have no control.

That is quite correct, and the Minister for Primary Industry is well-qualified to comment. He is also looking at the debt structure of the Australian farmer as the Australian average. I am saying tonight that we should be looking at the debt structure of the average wheatbelt farmer in Western Australia and divorce that from the Australian average. The Australian average is so far below our average debt structure that it is unrealistic to compare the two. We must do what we can to assist these people.

We are spending far too much of the national budget on welfare. I know that this will draw a few crabs, because there is no doubt that we live in a period when welfare is essential. But there is no doubt either—and I say this quite openly—that welfare payments are being exploited, both on a State and on a national basis. I am quite sure that the Minister, if he were taking any note, would agree.

Mr Davies: That is often claimed. When people come to me and complain, I say, "Give me their names and I will report it."

Mr OLD: I get this too. I have also had names and I have not reported them. I am probably as guilty as anybody else. There was a case reported in the paper in the last 24 hours where a family took \$300 000 in four years. That is about \$78 000 a year each for a family

of four. One can live in reasonable circumstances on that sort of income, with no tax, but with fringe benefits, and the like.

Mr Davies: No perks.

Mr OLD: No, admittedly there would be no perks.

The breakdown of the recent Budget shows 27.6 per cent has gone to social security. That is the biggest item of expenditure in the Federal Budget. We have 26.3 per cent going to other items. That is every other thing if one lumps the whole lot together.

Payments to State Governments and local authorities amount to 19.6 per cent. We rate number three. When all is said and done, the States are the earners of the money. Western Australia earns a very commendable percentage of Australia's export earnings, yet here we are with 19.6 per cent to divide up between the States and local government.

Health receives 9.1 per cent. That is rising. Defence receives 9.5 per cent—a pittance. Education is 7.2 per cent. We have our values all wrong.

We have to look after people who cannot look after themselves; there is no doubt about that. But we have also to ensure that there is no exploitation of the system.

I have no doubt whatsoever that there is exploitation of the system. One reads in the paper about people taking the Government for \$300 000. That is an indication of how easy it is. Now we are to have identity cards to stop that sort of thing going on. That is so much balderdash.

We have a situation where some people appear on the electoral roll three or four times. They are registered for unemployment benefits in three or four different areas and they can have three or four different identity cards. I understand the Federal Government is now proposing a watered-down version of its original proposal, omitting the photograph. As far as I am concerned, the carrying around of an identity card in any form is completely abhorrent. We have enough cards now with American Express, Bankcard, and all the rest. To carry something like a passport in one's own country is abhorrent.

It was obviously abhorrent to the Caucus because it wiped the photograph out. The identity card system has been made totally ineffective because there is nothing to stop people from registering and enrolling in various areas. It is done now.

We must press the Commonwealth Government to start taking a realistic attitude to the Budget. I am being critical, not only of the present Government, but also of the previous Government, which was just as bad. I have often made the point that the only people in Australia who generate any income from Australia are the States. The Commonwealth Government resides in Canberra, and Canberra produces nothing except subsidised rentals. I do not know whether they will become part of the perks deal.

I applaud the recent move by the Commonwealth Government to abolish tariffs on harvesting machinery and replace them with a bounty. This is a positive move towards assisting the rural industry.

Unfortunately it has not gone far enough. I suppose it is easy for me to say that, but I believe that all tariffs should be abolished, especially on articles which are being utilised and which are special to the rural industries.

I speak now of such things as chemicals. I spoke earlier about cost inputs into agriculture, and chemicals are one of the major inputs. I do not know how high the tariff is on chemicals although I am given to understand it is not terribly high, but the fact is that it is another impost on an industry which is battling today.

Last week I attended the Newdegate field day and looked at the big four-wheel drive tractors. Very few of them will be sold. What I noticed and what interested me greatly was the fact that we had there certainly one Western Australian tractor, some Australian-made under licence tractors, and a Russian tractor, the Bolaris, which sold for about a half or one-third of the price of our own Australian tractors and the imported tractors.

Mr Davies: Was it of about the same horsepower?

Mr OLD: Yes. I have talked with fellows who have bought these Russian tractors. We have all heard about how they work for 20 hours and then break down. Well, some of these fellows have had them for a couple of years and they say that if their tractors break down they will go out and buy another one. Admittedly they do not have all the frills.

But how can those tractors be brought into Australia to compete with locally-made tractors which attract the bounties to make them competitive, when the Industries Assistance Commission can turn around and recommend a dumping duty on DAP fertiliser? If the IAC is

to talk about a dumping duty, it had better take a look at the tractor industry as well as the fertiliser industry. We would be better off to forget about dumping duties, especially on this DAP fertiliser, and get away from that threat hanging over the industry of an extra \$80 a tonne.

The Minister made a statement tonight on this issue and I am happy that he has taken up the matter with the Commonwealth Government. However, the removal of tariffs on headers is too little too late, because that will not help the industry at all. Very few farmers will be buying new headers this year because of their colossal cost; they will not be able to afford them.

Fertilisers represent 20 per cent of a farmer's cash input, so if the cost of DAP fertiliser goes up, up goes that major component. I ask the Minister to continue his presentation to the Commonwealth Government for it not to go ahead with that stupid recommendation from the IAC.

A very urgent need exists for immediate planning. The world wheat market is quite suspect at present, and I know that one of the Opposition's speakers to follow will talk about that market. I was talking to a farmer recently after he had just returned from Europe. In case members think he is a wealthy farmer I point out that he went over there as an industry representative.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Burkett): Order! That is not called for.

Mr OLD: We are very protective.

He went over on a subsidised industry job. He told me that while he was there it was apparent that the northern hemisphere harvest was just getting into full swing and that it appeared there would be a bountiful harvest, which is bad news for Australia. I suppose the good news is that the EEC is probably slowly waking up to the fact that its subsidies going to the agricultural market, and the Euro dollar, are costing it so much money that it is likely to go broke. That may not be far away and it is already reflected in the increase in prices for sugar which, although not large in cents per pound, is about double what it was three or four weeks ago. So the EEC is suddenly waking up to the fact that subsidising these products is probably a very uneconomical way of keeping people in business.

Fortunately, Australia has a guaranteed minimum price plan for wheat, a plan which has been in operation for some years now.

Whatever happens to the world market, even should there be an absolute slump, the problem will be ironed out to a degree on the basis that the guaranteed minimum price is calculated on the worst of the last two out of three years and the forecast return for the following year. That provides a breathing space for the Australian agricultural industry.

The United States of America is not in any way assisting Australia at this stage in respect of the sale of wheat, because it has entered into what is probably a necessary programme of combating the EEC's price cutting. I hope that now the EEC appears to be accepting the need to take a more rational attitude, America will soon follow suit. Unfortunately, the EEC subsidies, which are in the order of \$2 billion over the next three years, to help their wheat programme, is still a very serious threat to Australia. Until we can get this sort of thing ironed out, we are in big trouble.

Not only have we got the subsidies of the EEC and America to contend with, but we also have the situation where the western countries—and WA has played a very big part in this—have been working assiduously to endeavour to assist third world countries—some of them very oil rich—to increase their productivity. Right now it is starting to pay off and we have the situation where China is growing a lot more wheat which is helping it towards self-sufficiency. India also is heading towards self-sufficiency. So, through our benign attitude—and long may it last—our Australian wheat industry is being disadvantaged. If we can get the EEC and America sorted out we will probably have some hope for the future.

Just in passing I will mention the policies of the Foreign Investment Review Board. This is always a very saucy topic to bring up because whatever attitude one takes one is always 50 per cent wrong. The FIRB has outlived its usefulness. It was created in an endeavour to control the inflow of foreign investment in farms, businesses and real estate. It has achieved its objective to the extent that foreign investment perhaps needs a little pep-up. Of course, whatever I say will mean that I am 50 per cent right and 50 per cent wrong.

The upper limit on the policy to buy something—certainly rural properties—without the consent of the FIRB or where it can be considered to be automatic, is \$300 000. With the situation we have today and with the problem that land values have fallen to such an extent that the borrowings against the land today

would be battling in some instances to cover the debt accrued, we should be looking at increasing that exemption level to \$1 million.

Before people throw up their hands in horror, I point out that one fact is indisputable: If a person buys some land he cannot take it away. It remains in Australia and it belongs here.

Mr Davies: They are not making any more either.

Mr OLD: No. It is a slow process. There is some land being formed in the deltas of rivers but it takes a long time.

In selling that land to foreign investors we could impose some conditions which would ensure that the land was always there to be farmed and developed by Australians. Many people are financially embarrassed today, but if they could get some ready cash for their farms they could probably carry on. I put a proposition to the Foreign Investment Review Board through one of the departmental officers not long before the change of Government that perhaps we could look at a situation where the FIRB could approve the sale of a property to a foreign investor with the proviso that it be leased back to the vendor for a period of, say, 10 years, with two five-year options of renewal, making 20 years in all. I had talked with a representative of a superannuation fund in the UK who evinced very great interest in such an investment.

In other words, investors were not looking for a quick return but for capital appreciation. If the rental to the lessee was worked out on the basis of six per cent or seven per cent, it would be a very modest return on capital and it could be reviewed every three or four years. The person leasing the property back would have every opportunity to make money from the property and would have the option of repurchase at any time during the period of the lease or at the end of 10 years and the two five-year options. If that person were able to farm the land and the position improved to the extent that he could farm his way out, he could buy the property back. The foreign investor would take the capital appreciation because he would sell it back at current valuation. If the lessee exercised his option, both he and the lessor would appoint a valuer, and if the twain did not meet an independent valuer would act as umpire. There would be enough capital appreciation to satisfy the investor, plus his seven per cent, and we would have kept somebody on a farm.

I know it is a simple exercise and it probably contains a lot of pitfalls, but having been in the livestock industry and a stock firm for some years I am sure it would work. I hope somebody will take a good look at that proposal and see if we cannot do something along those lines. I am getting near the end of my speech, Mr Acting Speaker, you will be pleased to know.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Burkett): It is not a matter of my being pleased to know. There is a lot of sense in what the member is saying, and I am enjoying listening to him.

Mr OLD: I would like to make a few comments about the Federal Budget. Without being my usual nasty self, as the Deputy Premier would say, I point out the Federal Budget was a great fraud. There is no doubt it was a well-framed Budget. The Treasurer, when delivering his Budget speech, made a lot of capital out of the fact that the deficit would be reduced by \$1.5 billion. I have been through all this before; the basis upon which the Labor Party's Budget deficit was established was a false premise in the first place, and the Federal Government started off way above the eight-ball. It is absolutely fraudulent to say the Federal deficit will be reduced by \$1.5 billion because when one looks at the Budget papers one sees that expenditure is up by \$5 billion and revenue is up by \$7 billion. So the Federal Government already has a surplus of \$2 billion and it talks about reducing the deficit by \$1.5 billion. If that much fat is contained in the Budget, the \$2 billion could be very well employed in reconstruction of rural industries.

I am sure the Minister for Agriculture would be happy to receive his share of the \$2 billion—I think we used to get 17 per cent of the cut for rural adjustment. That would not be a bad sort of present for Western Australia and we would be able to do something about reconstruction.

The Commonwealth is not being fair in its attitude to the State, and we as a Parliament in Western Australia should be looking towards getting more money from the Commonwealth for reconstruction. I have been to rural reconstruction meetings where one goes along cap in hand and walks away with \$2.5 million or \$3 million to keep the fires burning for one year. It is an impossibility; it is a pittance. The present Minister in his first year in that position got \$5 million. It was a good deal, but it was still a pittance. It was a great increase in the amount of money, but the Commonwealth has never been sincere in the administration of rural ad-

justment finance. I am talking about any Federal Government, not just the present Government. If it were sincere it would be talking billions rather than millions. If the Federal Government were talking in billions of dollars and it was necessary to allocate that amount, the country as a whole would have to maintain that amount of money. Maybe we have to cut down on some of the larger users of the revenue budget which I quoted tonight, and take one per cent from here and one per cent from there and put it into rural industries.

The latest development in the rural adjustment situation was contained in the Bill the Minister introduced in this House last year, or perhaps in the previous session, under which the Commonwealth has virtually abrogated its responsibility to provide reconstruction money out of the Budget. It is now prepared to subsidise interest rates by 50 per cent, and the State can borrow the money itself overseas. It sounds nice, and one would think we could go away and borrow \$20 million if we needed it and that the Commonwealth would pick up half the interest. Such is not the case.

The amount of money allocated in the Budget for the interest subsidy limits the amount of money that can be borrowed in Australia to about \$21 million. That is probably about \$5 million or \$6 million less than we were getting under the old rural readjustment scheme. Again, it is a paper tiger as it has been for years.

I have some figures here relating to rural adjustment allocations. In 1981-82 the figure was \$2.9 million; in 1982-83, \$2.9 million; in 1983-84, \$9.2 million. That was the year I talked about when the Minister trebled the amount he received. In 1984-85 the figure was \$4.6 million; in 1985-86 it is back to taws—\$2.4 million. It is a pittance. The \$9.2 million allocation probably gave us some sort of help but that occurred because some States did not use up their allocation.

This has been happening for a long time. The Rural Adjustment Authority and the Minister brought this to the notice of the Federal Minister and were able to persuade him that they should get some of the take of the money that had been used. I have no quarrel with that. I am full of admiration.

I have mentioned the amount of \$21 million. I noticed in the Budget papers last year that that Budget gave us \$25.9 million for rural adjustment, so what has happened is that we have come down another \$5 million. They might as

well wipe rural adjustment right off the face of the scene, because it will not help anybody. I think relief should be given to the meat industry immediately and I know that the Minister has been working on it. If the Government has not already done so, I know it has been forecast by the rural Press that it will introduce a single meat inspection authority. I commend the Government for doing that because it is something which has been necessary for a long time. It is a small but significant move to assist primary producers. Any move downwards is a good one, but on the down side I note that the inspection fees for pigs have risen from 75c to \$1.10.

On reading the rural Press I understand that Watson's have made a statement that this could cost it \$100 000 per annum. That is not good for the pork industry because it is still reeling from a series of very poor years, and the producers are trying to battle their way out of the mire. They are now starting to climb out again and we suddenly get an impost of an increase in fees.

I recall attending the opening of the new Watson's pig floor which was opened by the Premier; the Minister for Agriculture was there also. The General Manager of Western Food Suppliers, who was from the Eastern States, had said that they were regrettably handing back their export licence because they could not afford to have this double meat inspection.

Full marks to the Government for addressing that problem, but I do not give it full marks for increasing the inspection fee on an industry just reeling and climbing its way out of difficulties. The Government has professed concern for country people. Country people need an assurance, and again I am not only talking about the State Government; I am also talking about the Federal Government. The country people need an assurance that the Government is genuine in its desire to assist country people and somehow that has to be demonstrated.

I now refer to Mr Kerin's remarks, and I quote from the article in *The Australian Financial Review* of 26 August. The question to Mr Kerin was—

What have been the ALP's achievements for farmers?

His answer was—

As I constantly reiterate, getting the economy right is by far the best thing we can do. We think so far we have been proved to be reasonably competent.

Floating the exchange rate, and the prices and incomes accord have helped enormously, despite the fact that the farmers want to bash it down. Because we have been trying to get the economy right by definition we have taken hard decisions and that means that I have not been able to spend.

Of course the farmers are trying to bash it down because they are the people paying.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Burkett): Order! I am interested in what the member for Katanning-Roe is saying. I do not like the noise on the left flank.

Mr OLD: I thank you, Mr Acting Speaker, for your very sincere concern.

I am concerned that the Treasurer, on his own admission, has not been able to spend the money he wants to spend in the directions he wants to spend it. It may be that he did not mean that, but that is what he has said and that is what has happened.

We have only to look at the dairy industry to see the mess it is in. That mess is an accumulation of years and years of overprotection of an industry. It is not something that happened last year or the year before; it has happened over a period of years. We have now a situation where we have a State that has blatantly broken agreements, be they even oral agreements. I refer to Victoria, which has dominated the dairy industry for so long and has surreptitiously increased production when other States were controlling production. Western Australia was probably the model in the control of production; but now Western Australia is ripe to be invaded by the Victorians. I do not know how much money the Minister has stashed away in the Dairy Assistance Plan fund, but there must be a considerable amount of money left. After distributing quota, there would still be a lot of money which would be growing reasonably rapidly under investment. I suggest that the money should be kept inviolate in order to combat any moves by the Victorian dairy industry. I think that members of the industry in Western Australia will need a tremendous amount of assistance in the future. They are probably still battling along. They have not had the significant price rise that I believe they deserve, therefore inflation and rising costs impact on their production; but the dairy industry today is probably better off than some of the other primary industries in the State.

Mr Evans: Have they slid back?

Mr OLD: Yes, they have, but I think the Minister should be looking at the fund. I do not know what he has in there. I have not seen his bank book but I know he would have a few bob stashed away. If the dairy industry needs assistance I have no doubt it needs it quite urgently. This money should be forthcoming immediately.

Mr Acting Speaker, I thank you for your tolerance and protection.

In conclusion, I am concerned that we are putting more and more imposts onto rural industry, and that reflects on the people who live in the country. On looking recently through the figures of the losses of the WA Meat Commission—and this has not happened just over the last couple of years—I am concerned about the decisions made contrary to the recommendations of a committee of inquiry that Robb Jetty should continue. I am still of the opinion that Robb Jetty should not continue.

Mr Evans: Would you sell it off?

Mr OLD: I would if I had the opportunity, because there is a surplus of abattoir capacity. Albany closed down, and Tip Top and other abattoirs are struggling like the very devil. If the Meat Commission can be due for praise for any one particular item, it was when it was able to negotiate with the Meat Industry Employees Union for the right to work two shifts. Immediately that was established it doubled the capacity of the abattoirs in Western Australia. I firmly believe that Robb Jetty should have been closed down and sold because of its real estate value. As the Minister said in answer to a question, the real estate value is in the order of \$7 million and that is a lot of money. The Government has now spent \$300 000 on upgrading the mutton floor and will spend between \$800 000 and \$1 million on upgrading the freezer room.

Mr Evans: The Government will spend \$650 000.

Mr OLD: I will be pleased to see the final figures because I am a little concerned about the cost of the improvements.

I know there is pressure from the AMIEU and that I have been accused by Mr Payne as being a AMIEU basher, but I am not. I have many friends who belong to the AMIEU. The union has to take a reasonable attitude to this matter.

Only yesterday an article was published in *The Australian* about the tying of the export meat bans to the Mudginberri dispute. We will never get away from Mudginberri because the union will go from picketing the Mudginberri abattoir to stopping the export of sheep to Japan and the Middle East.

It was not very long ago that a delegation sponsored by the Government and the Minister left Western Australia to look at the situation in the Middle East. Mr Payne and Mr Flack were part of that delegation and they are both competent men in their own field. On their return the Minister told members in this House that the delegation had negotiated for one million carcasses of mutton to be sent to Egypt. That would have solved the problem confronting the sheep industry. However, there has not been one carcass, to my knowledge, that has been sent to Egypt. There is plenty of mutton in the country that could be sent.

Last Thursday week I attended a sale in Katanning of the first flush and I am sure that the value of lambs would have decreased because there were not enough people to buy them and not enough markets.

I refer again to the article which appeared in *The Australian* on 17 September and quote the following—

The Federal Government yesterday admitted bans on the export by air of chilled meat by members of the Transport Workers Union (TWU) were directly related to the on-going Mudginberri abattoir dispute.

The telling thing is that the NFF has asked the arbitration commission to put that stoppage in the same category as the Mudginberri dispute. However, the article further states—

Sir John had said he would not relist the Mudginberri case until all industrial action had ceased and would not recur.

Further on the article reads—

A leading meat supplier yesterday said saleyard lamb prices would be cut by at least \$3 a head because of the export bans.

Ironically, the AMIEU federal secretary, Mr Jack O'Toole, was a member of a recent trade delegation to the Middle East which recommended expansion of the chilled export trade to replace live sheep shipments.

How do they ever expect to replace live sheep shipments for export with chilled mutton and lamb when they refuse to load it? Is that the way we are going to overcome our problems? I think not.

MR CRANE (Moore) [8.06 p.m.]: I have pleasure in seconding the motion. If possible I do not intend to go over the ground the member for Katanning-Roe has covered.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the member for Katanning-Roe because I too was interested in the points he brought forward. A committee was formed to inquire into many areas concerning rural hardship and what he has said needs to be studied carefully because he makes a lot of sense and you, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr Burkett), would agree because you also are interested in many of the points he made. I know your interest in the rural industry because while it was a sad period when both of us were members of the Rural Hardship Select Committee we did, through our travels and our meetings with many people, ascertain that many of them were in a serious financial situation. In many instances this was not through any fault of their own. The committee was able to ascertain that the rural hardship problem is a very real one.

Before I move from the subject of the Rural Hardship Select Committee, I have been taken to task by a few people from the rural industry, some of whom hold executive positions in the PIA. They criticised the committee for not making the recommendations they wanted it to make in certain areas. I would like to place on record the fact that the terms of reference for the Select Committee were to inquire into and report on the nature, location, and extent of hardship within the Western Australian rural sector. The terms of reference did not mention anything about making recommendations in any specific area. As a matter of fact, the committee could be criticised for having gone beyond its terms of reference which were allocated to it by this Parliament.

The committee was criticised by a few people who perhaps lacked the intelligence to read and understand those few words contained in the terms of reference. I am not referring to the hierarchy of the Primary Industry Association—I am talking about the "lower-archy".

The **ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Burkett)**: You mean "lesser-archy".

Mr CRANE: Some of the people to whom I refer are "lower" and their comments were very low. I wanted to place this on the record because it was time such a comment was made.

The committee did make quite a number of recommendations and I know you, Mr Acting Speaker, agree with me—although you do not have to agree with me tonight from your position in the Chair. However, I know your attitude because I have held discussions with you and along with the other members of the committee you were keen and willing to go along with my suggestion which was mentioned in the report; that is, to report to the Federal Government on the committee's findings.

I believe that we, in Western Australia, missed the greatest opportunity we have ever had in the interests of the rural industry by not taking up the opportunity of presenting not only the committee's report, but also its findings and the reasons for those findings during the course of its investigations.

However, we cannot turn back the clock. We have missed the bus. I sometimes wonder whether, as someone once said in a similar instance, we have lost our way. As far as the rural industry is concerned, I believe we have not only lost our way as a Parliament, but unfortunately we have also lost the map because we do not seem to know just where we are going.

I said I would not go over the areas covered by the member for Katanning-Roe and I am trying to take a different tack although I know you, Mr Acting Speaker, would not mind a bit of repetition because, in this instance, it would not be tedious repetition as the subject is close to your heart due to the time you spent in the industry during your early working life.

We have lost the map and it is up to us, as members of Parliament, to do something about it. I speak tonight, not so much as a member of the Opposition but more as a member of this Parliament who should be—and I think many of us are—concerned for the great rural industry. The problems it has faced in the past and will face in the future are well known to many of us. Because of the very nature of farming, the rural community, which has to compete with mother nature, will always face problems. We understand that. You, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr Burkett), will recall that we spoke to hundreds of people and many of them told us they could stand a few bad seasons. They said it was difficult when the bad seasons came one after the other, but they were used to fight-

ing the elements. God controls the elements and thank God he does. When man controls the elements I will no longer be a farmer because I have lost my faith in human nature over the years. Because man will never control the weather we must stay with the industry as it is and accept the difficulties forced upon it from time to time.

The farmers said that they could put up with these types of difficulties provided relief was given in some other areas. Relief could be provided in regard to taxation, costs, and Government charges. That is what we as a Parliament must consider.

We all know, and we have heard many times, that the rural industry is responsible for 50 per cent of the export earnings of Western Australia. Over the last few years since 1981, the costs in the industry have increased by approximately 41 per cent. That has not been coupled with an increase in returns which would help the situation; the cost price index has increased by 27 per cent, and that indicates an irregularity. The rural industry is tremendously disadvantaged compared with the benefits enjoyed by other people. This cannot continue. We know the price of fuel has increased by 50 per cent over the last two years; those of us who use motor vehicles a great deal to travel long distances are well aware of that increase. Those who do not use motor vehicles very much because they live in the metropolitan area will not be as aware of the situation. It is incumbent on those who do not use as much fuel to understand the effect of the increase and to accept what the rest of us are telling this House—there has been a very real increase in the price paid for fuel and that increase is affecting farmers, all country people, and also the fishing industry. The fishing industry is another part of primary industry although perhaps not in the same crisis situation as the rural industry. However, I can assure members that fishermen feel these increases as much as do farmers.

Mr Blaikie: I was at Newman two weeks ago and fuel was 67c or 69c a litre. They understand what fuel prices are.

Mr CRANE: I thank the member for Vasse for that comment. I am sure those people understand what fuel prices are because they are paying them. A person does not know what it is like to be stung by a bull ant if he has never been stung by one. No-one can describe the pain of a bull ant sting. I do not need to have it described because I have been stung by a bull ant. Similarly with the rural industry, farmers

and country businesses: They understand what the sting feels like because they have been stung and are still being stung. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us as a Parliament to look at the problem and endeavour to devise ways and means whereby it can be alleviated.

I suppose these costs would be fair if there was a comparable increase in the prices received for the produce. As members are aware, we farmers sell the greater proportion of our produce, particularly grain, on the overseas market, and at the same time we have to buy the goods necessary to produce those commodities on a very much protected local market. That situation was brought to the committee's attention and I know that you, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr Burkett), feel as solidly as did the other members of the committee about how unfair it is that on the one hand the primary producer sells his product on an open market and takes world prices—the primary producer of course is a price taker and not a price setter—and, on the other hand, when he wants to buy a header—and one of the recommendations we made was about sales tax on the size of the drums in certain headers—as the member for Katanning-Roe said, the relief offered is not much use because he must pay the local protected price. Unfortunately the sliprail was down and the horse had already bolted. The vast majority of grain growers cannot afford to buy the new headers anyway; we are offering relief on something they will not buy, and that is not much relief at all.

It was also pointed out to the committee that the industry is disadvantaged with regard to fertilisers. One of the reasons was the extra \$19 a tonne which had to be paid for fertiliser because the unions demanded that it should be carted to Australia in Australia National Line ships. There is nothing wrong with being parochial and looking after our own shipping line by saying its ships must cart the fertiliser, but why is it that the additional \$19 a tonne incurred as a result of these demands has to be met only by the rural industry and the people who use the super? It has been said by some people that the additional cost was \$17 a tonne and I do not want to be too specific because there is an area of slight difference. If we want to protect the Australian National Line why should not the whole community in Australia foot the bill? It seems extremely unreasonable that one section of the community should pay the extra impost for the benefit of those who demand that the fertiliser should be carted by Australian ships.

We addressed that question also, and if we had been able to go to Canberra, we would have presented it to the Prime Minister, the Treasurer, the Minister for Primary Industry, the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, and to the other officers who no doubt would have been present to study our figures. I believe that our figures would have stood up to any examination. We came home with reams of paperwork giving the cash flow budgets of many farmers. Those figures are still available at present. They were confidential to the committee and will remain that way but figures and the conclusions we reached could have been proved to the Commonwealth Government in Canberra. It is unfortunate that we missed the bus. It is not much good harping on that point, but I believe the Government missed a golden opportunity. That is why I made the exclamation the other day and expressed my disgust at the fact that although we knew it would cost only about \$12 000, and some members had agreed to pay their own fare, the Government would not send the committee to Canberra.

I was extremely concerned, and I am still concerned, that it did spend \$93 000 on that other Select Committee merely for the sake, I understand, of passing the legislation in another place. I believe that this is an indictment of the Government. The rural industry was deserted in that particular instance. I cannot refrain from saying this because it is necessary to repeat it over and over until the message sinks in. The Government in this place let the rural industry down.

There is another area in which I feel the rural industry could be assisted. Over the years it has been the practice for the Australian Wheat Board to borrow money from the Commonwealth Bank to pay the first advance to the wheat growers. A few years ago the first advance usually was so low that farmers would wait for a number of years before they received their final payment. It actually took about four payments. We received the first advance, then the second, then the third and we received the fourth probably when the wheat stocks were exhausted and the pool of money was finalised. Thus the farmer carried that debt for a number of years. However the Wheat Board, under pressure from the producers, requested that the Federal Government pay a higher advance in the first instance. I do not know what the figures are for this year because when I handed over the running of my farm to my son, I deliberately kept away from many of those areas. I firmly believe that the only way one can

learn to do anything effectively and efficiently is to actually do the work. Thus just for the moment I cannot say what the first advance came to this year; but I do know that it has increased considerably in relation to what was received in the past.

What this means, of course, is that a great deal more money has to be borrowed from the Commonwealth Bank to pay back that low first advance. The problem here is that the Australian Wheat Board must borrow so much extra money that the farmers pay so much more in interest and this affects the final price they receive for the wheat, because this money has dwindled away accordingly.

If one cares to look at the 1937 Royal Commission into the Commonwealth Bank, one would find that there is plenty of evidence that the Commonwealth Bank was able to lend money at no interest at all, if it wished. One must remember that primary producers are growing these export commodities to bring revenue into this country. It is quite reasonable to expect that the Commonwealth Bank could have advanced the first advance to the wheat growers at no interest. That would have been a great saving for the industry. However, no pressure has been put on the Government or the Commonwealth Bank to pursue this particular line and I believe that this is an opportunity for this Parliament to look at that point. I know that you, Mr Acting Speaker, will not deny that point and you would realise that these additional costs are really killing off the wheat industry.

I should perhaps not use the word "trick", but some of the instrumentalities have deceived some farmers by pushing on to them commercial bills without letting them know the consequences of the high interest rates. There are many people in the community who do not know how the commercial bill works. They merely thought that they were getting a great deal of money at a low rate of interest; they did not realise that the interest rate had to be paid up front. When I was a member of the Select Committee into Rural Sector Hardship people would come in time after time and reveal that they were paying so much money in interest on the money borrowed that they were really in dire straits. The high rates of interest was one of the most crippling factors related to rural hardship. The committee found in its evidence that part of the problem was that while at the time the rate of interest was 13.8 per cent for a sum under \$100 000, farmers gave instances of where they went to a bank to borrow a sum of

\$20 000 to buy a tractor or a header, or whatever else they needed, and the bank officials told them, "I am sorry but we are fresh out of money." However, they were told further that if they cared to go to the side entrance—to the backroom finance company—they would find its consultants who would be able to accommodate them. This the farmers did, and from an interest rate of 13.8 per cent they found themselves paying in the vicinity of 50 per cent on the money they borrowed. In fact we had an instance where a farmer was not able to meet his repayments on machinery and his contract was very agreeably rewritten although the interest rate then was increased. In one instance a farmer was paying in the vicinity of 33 per cent interest because he could not meet his commitments. The bank rewrote his contract and put him further into the mire.

I ask the House: If one is running in a race and one cannot get over the two-foot hurdle, what happens when the officials try to put the hurdle up to 2ft 6in? That is exactly what is happening in respect of the banking fraternity. If we are honest we must admit that this is a serious problem. It is all very well for people to say what we must do but it is pointless if nothing is done. I am hoping that I will be able to do something. I may not be successful but I certainly will try and I hope that I have the cooperation of all members in this place.

We may talk, moan and groan, but we must also do something specific to provide some relief to the rural industry, and it should be something which will have a long-term, valuable result.

Earlier this year there was a great to-do about the taxation summit. Members all know that taxation is a vexing problem.

People appear to have been dodging or evading their taxation obligations for years, by one device or another. People who one would think ought to have been paying perhaps millions of dollars in tax appear to pay very little tax at all. In certain other categories tax cannot be evaded. The pay-as-you-earn taxpayer does not have a hope because he cannot do anything about evading or avoiding tax. The tax is taken out of his pay packet and he does not even see it. Members have only to look at their salary cheques every month to realise this. The problem is that there is a need for an overhaul of the tax system. However, this has not been done because there are too many people with vested interests who want to play their own tune and do not want to assist any Government which is trying to bring about this overhaul. The idea of

the tax summit was a good one and we certainly need changes in the taxation system, but I believe we should be looking at introducing a flat rate of tax.

In March this year the rural people—in fact, some 8 000 to 9 000 of them—marched to Parliament House to air their grievances about the condition of the industry. This was followed by a march in Canberra where approximately 30 000 people marched to Parliament House there and aired their grievances and expressed their concern. A number of farmers have said to me that they cannot understand why this Government seems to want to penalise people who obey the law; these people will one day turn around and start kicking heads.

The rural industry does not want to become militant in the way some people have suggested it should. I therefore believe we should hold a rural industry summit. As the member for Katanning-Roe pointed out, wheat growers in WA have a debt burden considerably higher than the Australian average. He made that point in his speech and it can easily be checked out. He is quite right. Therefore the time is right for a rural summit in WA, because we must come to grips with this problem. I hope the present Federal Government will take heed and talk to the industry and local government.

The WA Government should also talk to the Federal Government regardless of which party is in power at the time. That is one of the great problems we have had. There has been too much of a diversion between the Federal and State Governments—its members speak a different language in many instances. A member could speak to the Federal members who would not know what was going on for half the time, in my opinion, anyway, and I am sure that point subsequently has been proved correct. They do not know many things that are happening in this State. Perhaps they cannot do so because they have such vast electorates to cover and it therefore makes a lot of sense for the Federal and State bodies to get together at times. I do not mean only a few Ministers. We have had enough of them. I had the misfortune to listen to the Federal Minister for Finance (Senator Walsh) down town the other day. Speaking as a farmer and a Minister, he was so far off the beam that it was pathetic.

Mr Blaikie: It was pathetic.

Mr CRANE: That is the only way I can describe his speech. I knew him long before he became a member of Parliament. He and his brother were active with the farmers' union of

the day. His speech was absolutely pathetic because he was completely out of touch. I felt there and then that there would never be relief from the Federal Government until we could all get together and show them where the problems lie. That is why I repeat that a rural summit should be held fairly soon in WA. Perhaps because a crisis is facing Australia many of us could take part in that summit. Those people who have had farming experience have a fair idea about what is going on.

Mr Blaikie: It would be a bit of a disaster if that Senator Peter Walsh from the Federal Parliament came.

Mr CRANE: I do not think it would be a disaster if they sent him over because how else will he ever learn? He must learn as long as he holds his job. He is the person who must do it. Therefore, we must educate him to ensure he knows what he is talking about. There is a great deal of merit in having a rural summit at this time.

I conclude with these remarks: We should look at Australia as we do a farm. Many farmers currently are practically bankrupt. They have reached the stage where the mortgagee can and often does call up his mortgage and sell him up. If we look at Australia and consider its earnings and its overseas debt of \$70 billion, its income, and the amount of money it pays off to reduce that debt, we see that the figure nowhere near covers it. The interest on that debt is \$5.5 billion a year, which means in practical terms—and people should realise this—that Australia itself could and perhaps should be called up because it would go under the auctioneer's hammer if it were in the same situation as a farm, because it cannot pay its debts. The simple way by which it can pay its debts is by us all rolling up our sleeves, spitting on our hands, and getting down to work.

Australia is bankrupt and unless we, as a nation, bring this country back onto the rails, it might as well be sold up, because there is no future for us all.

MR COWAN (Merredin) [8.35 p.m.]: I shudder to think that the Government would take a great deal of heed of the request of the member for Moore for yet another inquiry or "talkfest" into agriculture. There have been plenty of those. They each have identified the problems relating to agriculture, but what we need now are solutions. The last thing we want is a

further identification parade. We need some very positive policies from both the State and Federal Governments.

Most people would accept that there are three categories in which the agricultural community and, of course, those businesses which are allied to it, are able to improve their profitability. One is to increase the price of the produce on world markets, and that is beyond the capability of the farming community. The other is to increase productivity. I think most members of this Parliament would accept that productivity in Australia and, indeed, with Western Australian farmers, is relatively high, subject of course to seasonal conditions. The third is the matter of farmers being able to retain a fair and reasonable return on the wealth they generate. That, of course, is the area wherein farmers are being squeezed because both State and Federal Governments have seen fit to impose taxation burdens whether they be direct or indirect upon the farming community. Taxation extracts from them more than a reasonable share of the wealth they generate. That really is the problem.

I come to the motion moved by the member for Katanning-Roe. I am sure members will forgive me for sounding somewhat cynical when I look at the first part of the motion, "provide immediate relief by abolishing the State fuel franchise levy." I am sure that all the people who have spoken in this debate, in fact most of the people who are present in this Parliament, would know who introduced the levy. The levy was introduced by a Liberal-Country Party Government to replace the State road maintenance tax which, at the time, was running at \$5 million per annum. That was the revenue that was generated from the road maintenance tax. As a result of some considerable pressure by road transport operators, who blockaded all major highways in Australia, the State Governments of Australia jumped at the opportunity to remove the State road maintenance tax and, in some instances, abolished the tax with no thought of replacing it.

Mr Blaikie: Which States were those?

Mr COWAN: Queensland.

Mr Blaikie: Go on.

Mr COWAN: That will do.

Mr Blaikie: Singular, not plural.

Mr COWAN: "State" then. There is no State fuel levy in Queensland. I remind the House that at the time the State fuel franchise levy was introduced it was a level which generated

\$17 million. The National Party opposed the introduction of that tax, not because we did not want to see road maintenance tax abolished, but because of two factors: Firstly, the initial rate of the fuel franchise levy was too high. It generated more than three times the value of the tax it was to replace. Secondly, no precautionary measure was taken or no provision put into the legislation which prevented Governments increasing the rate of the fuel franchise levy at will. In the six years in which that levy has been in operation, the revenue generated for this State has increased from \$17 million to \$45 million. The only thing that can be said in favour of that levy is that it is placed into a trust fund and must be expended for roads.

Mr Evans: Can you indicate the increase in the rate of the levy?

Mr COWAN: I can tell the Minister what the rate is: It is 2.17c per litre for petrol and 3.95c per litre for diesel. I cannot tell him the rate of the increase. The one point in favour of his Government is that the State fuel franchise levy has not increased this year for the first time. It has increased in past years to the extent that it now generates \$45 million. The abolition of the State fuel franchise levy would undoubtedly be welcome.

If one works on a general population breakdown as we did when we did an exercise on this levy when it was first introduced, we were advised that the rural population of Western Australia paid roughly 40 per cent of the levy. Those figures hold for today. On the basis of the \$45 million, an estimated revenue of \$18 million would be paid by rural people from Western Australia. I do not know what is the population of the farming community. However, on that basis, if we assume less than half the rural population is directly related to agriculture, that population would be contributing over \$7 million of the State fuel franchise levy. I therefore think it would be a welcome move to abolish the State fuel franchise levy. However, conditions would have to be attached to that abolition. Nobody in rural areas would accept any reduction in the payment of funds for the purpose of improving and maintaining the road system in Western Australia. So, whatever money was not taken from the trust fund, which gets its revenue from the State fuel franchise levy, that money would have to be appropriated from the Consolidated Revenue Fund. Nobody in rural Western Australia would ac-

cept a reduction in funding for roads. They are the lifeblood of the transport industry in Western Australia.

It is very interesting to note that when we opposed the introduction of the levy for the reasons that I have expressed, our party was branded as socialistic. I find it interesting that now, after some six years, the Liberal Party has seen the error of its ways and has decided that it should support the abolition of the levy. I wonder whether that makes it any more socialistic than we were in 1979.

Mr Blaikie: Do you support its abolition or are you opposed to it?

Mr COWAN: What is the difference?

Mr Blaikie: You have not said, yet.

Mr COWAN: Tell me what the difference is.

Mr Bradshaw: Are you opposing its being removed?

Mr COWAN: I am not opposing its removal. I have said the abolition of the levy would be a good thing.

Mr Blaikie: You said it in a strange way.

Mr COWAN: No, I did not.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Burkett): Order! I do not think these interjections are making any sense at all. I intend to afford the same protection to this speaker as I afforded to the two previous speakers. I would prefer that the member for Vasse did not interject.

Mr COWAN: I think, Mr Acting Speaker, that your preference is probably the House's preference because I did not understand what the member was getting at. I have said, quite clearly, that we support the removal of the State fuel franchise levy provided there is no reduction in the expenditure of moneys on road funding which would normally be generated from this source. In other words, the money would have to come from the Consolidated Revenue Fund. If that is not plain enough for the member for Vasse, he does not deserve to hold his seat.

Mr Old: That is what the Labor Party says.

Mr COWAN: I do not care what it says. I am pointing out that we opposed the State fuel franchise levy in 1979 and, in our opposition to it, we were branded as socialists. Now that the

Liberal Party has finally agreed with us, is it a socialist party too? It seems to be a very sensitive issue.

Mr Old: It is not.

Mr COWAN: The member seems to be getting pretty excited about it. He has even returned to his seat.

The next issue about which I wish to speak relates to the request to the Commonwealth Government to take action on the excise duty on fuel. We should all bear in mind that, in relation to agriculture, the responsibilities of the State Government are nowhere near as significant as the responsibilities of the Commonwealth Government in the extra cost burdens it imposes on the rural community. State costs are quite insignificant in comparison with Commonwealth costs.

The first of the five points of the motion calls on the Federal Government to substantially reduce the excise levy on all fuel. In the last Federal Budget the petroleum products excise became fully rebatable to the agricultural industry.

Mr Old: Rot! It was the excise on distillate.

Mr COWAN: The petroleum products excise for distillate used off-road was rebateable. The volume of petrol that would be used off-road in the farming industry is quite insignificant. So, when we talk about excise I think we have to look at all of the different areas where excise is applied.

Mr Blaikie: You sound as though you are apologising for the Federal Labor Government.

Mr COWAN: I am not apologising.

On 2 April a debate took place in this House which dealt with import parity pricing. For the benefit of members on this side of the House who may not know, there are two areas of excise which are applied to petroleum products. The first is the petroleum products excise which is the excise applied after the product is refined and is made available as a consumer product and the second is the crude oil excise which is applied to the product before it gets to the refinery gate. No mention has been made of the crude oil excise in this motion. That is the greatest tax imposed on petroleum products. The crude oil excise represents about 18c a litre. The petroleum products excise is 10.001c a litre of which all of that amount is rebated for off-road distillate. Of course, the other factor that nobody has taken into account is the increase per litre that is imposed because of import parity pricing.

Mr Evans: Who introduced that?

Mr COWAN: I am quite happy to tell the Minister that it was introduced by Doug Anthony in conjunction with Senator Carrick. I am also happy to tell the Minister for Agriculture that, at the time, the import parity price was not of great significance. In fact, once the import parity price was determined and the crude oil excise was applied, the Federal Government gained something like \$4 a barrel from the crude oil excise. With the import parity price as it stands, the value of the crude oil excise is quite substantial.

That represents something like \$23 a barrel. Members can see the amount by which it has jumped. Import parity pricing, as the Minister for Agriculture has said, was first applied by a Liberal-National Country Party Government. It was applied for two purposes. One was to conserve fuel and the other was to give an incentive to oil companies to explore in Australia. I suggest that the very price of fuel as it stands now is the greatest incentive to conserve. Therefore, there is no further need to apply cost imposts for the conservation of fuel. In addition, Australia is exploiting petroleum resources to the extent that in the coming year petroleum products will replace wheat as the second biggest export earner for this country. Thus we cannot really be trying to conserve fuel if we are exporting petroleum products to that extent.

The average determination of the import parity price for Bass Strait crude is roughly \$A44.40 a barrel. That represents something like \$8 to \$9 a barrel more than an Australian resource can earn on the export market. In other words, Australians pay \$8 a barrel more than they should for their own resource. If the import parity pricing policy was scrapped the price of fuel would drop immediately by between 4c and 5c a litre, which is substantially more than the value of the State fuel franchise levy; yet on 2 April the Liberal Party and the Government declared their support for the principle of import parity pricing and would not agree to a motion which called upon this House to ask the Federal Government to scrap import parity pricing.

The Liberal Party now has the temerity to come before this House and ask for the abolition of the State fuel franchise levy. Perhaps the member for Katanning-Roe should have defined what excise duty on fuel he was talking about. Was he talking about the excise on

crude, the excise on petroleum products, or the impost that is placed on fuel because of import parity?

If the member for Katanning-Roe talked about all of those he would be encompassing the total fuel picture. The terms of his motion merely mention asking the Commonwealth Government to "substantially reduce the excise duty on all fuel". Those words are not worth the paper they are written on.

Mr Bradshaw: He is talking about it all.

Mr COWAN: In that case I would have to agree with him, but why did he not mention the lot in the terms of his motion?

Paragraph 2(b) of the motion calls on the Commonwealth Government to act as follows—

take appropriate measures to influence a drop in interest on bank loans.

This is one area in which the State Government can do something very positive.

I was very pleased to hear the announcement in response to a question from the Leader of the Opposition that the State Government was prepared to invest \$72 million with building societies and at the same time forfeit something like \$11 million in interest earnings in order to assist the building societies to keep their interest rates down. I would hope that the Government makes the same sort of funding or investment available to the Rural Adjustment and Finance Corporation in order to enable that body, firstly, to make available enough money for carry-on finance and, secondly, to discount interest rates to keep the farming industry well and truly alive. That will be a very substantial task. There is no doubt that in the coming year a significant number of farmers will require large amounts of money for carry-on finance.

In addition, an even greater number of farmers by good management were able to save some money and prepare a budget which would indicate to their local trading bank that with the money they saved and their expected income they would be able to purchase land and add to the size of their property. That meant their borrowing some funds at a certain interest rate.

Mr Blaikie: Do you believe the Labor Party has the proper attitude to help farmers out of the mire?

Mr McIver: How do you think they have survived over the years? If it had not been for the Labor Party they would still be eating boiled beef and rabbit stew.

Mr COWAN: I hope that the Minister for Works will let me finish, as I have limited time. The point I make is that a large number of farmers have by good management in the past purchased land and shown to their trading banks that they were able to purchase that land and still service the debt that the borrowings would create. Because of rising interest rates their level of debt servicing has increased substantially. Those people will have to be offered by the Rural Adjustment and Finance Corporation or other suitable organisation the opportunity to discount interest rates so that the level of debt servicing would remain static—that is, at the level it was at when the farmers first did their sums which showed that they could purchase land and increase the size of their holdings. Those two matters need to be examined by the State Government.

Mr Evans: You are advocating an interest subsidy, virtually?

Mr COWAN: Yes, a discount on interest rates for those people who have borrowed heavily to lift the size of their holdings and who suddenly discover that the level of debt servicing has put them into a precarious position in terms of viability. It certainly would not amount to the same value as the money that would have to be made available to enable them to carry on. It would be approximately \$15 000 to \$20 000 as opposed to carry-on finance of perhaps \$100 000 to \$150 000 for each farm.

I do not have time to deal separately with the particular issues raised in the motion, but I wish to comment on paragraph 2(c) of the motion. I am sure that the member for Katanning-Roe—I am sorry that I missed part of his speech—would have corrected this particular section. The Industries Assistance Commission has had nothing to do with the interim dumping duty that has been applied on di-ammonium phosphate fertiliser. The dumping duty was applied by the Australian Customs Service at the request of the Victorian manufacturer called Pivot.

Mr Old: It has not been applied yet. It is still under consideration.

Mr COWAN: The dumping duty has been applied by the Australian Customs Service at the request of Pivot. It applies and will not be removed. The Industries Assistance Com-

mission is considering and conducting hearings on general assistance for fertiliser products, but it had nothing to do with the decision that was taken by the Australian Customs Service to apply a dumping duty on DAP fertiliser. It was the dumping branch of that service which decided that the imputed price for American manufactured DAP should indeed be \$80 a tonne more than the price which was charged by the manufacturers of that fertiliser in America. The dumping branch of the Australian Customs Service decided that the fertiliser was being sold at prices which did not reflect the manufacturing costs.

The price was roughly \$US170 per tonne. Converted to Australian dollars that is about \$230 to \$235 per tonne. The Customs Service determined that the f.o.b. price for this fertiliser should be \$230 per tonne; it had nothing to do with the IAC.

The fact of the matter remains, the member for Katanning-Roe is right, the interim duty should never have been applied. The Federal Minister for Industry, Technology and Commerce should direct, as it is in his power to do, the Australian Customs Service to remove that interim duty forthwith and not wait for the final report of the Australian Customs Service to be handed down. I hope this Government makes that point widely known to the Federal Minister for Industry, Technology and Commerce, Senator Button.

There is no doubt that the economic viability of the farming community is suffering greatly. I was surprised to hear the Premier say tonight that farmers had woken up. I thought farmers had woken up some time ago, because 8 000 of them presented themselves here, 30 000 presented themselves in Victoria and something like 100 000 farmers have marched in Australian capital cities in the last six months. They are definitely wide awake. They have identified very clearly the problems which are causing agriculture to suffer economically. Some of these problems are mentioned in this motion.

What is necessary is solutions. It is absolutely necessary that the Federal Government take action on issues such as dumping duties. The Federal Government must take action on issues such as tariffs, particularly those on products which are not manufactured in Australia. I refer to products like herbicides.

It is important that the Federal Government look very closely at allowing primary producers to purchase fuel commercially, whether crude

oil or petrol products, free of excise or that impost created by import parity pricing. It is important that those issues be addressed. They can be addressed, they are a matter of political decision-making. No political party has been prepared to make a decision on those issues.

It has taken something like 25 years to get to the position where the farming community is suffering to the extent it is now. We cannot wait another 25 years for the harm to be undone. We would not have to wait for long if members were prepared to make the political decisions which would allow farmers to retain a much greater proportion of the wealth they generate. Unless that happens the farming industry will always be in the position where it suffers economically at the hands of politicians.

MR McNEE (Mt Marshall) [9.05 p.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Katanning-Roe. It is true we are looking for solutions. I suppose the four or five points in the motion are not a bad starting point.

Tonight the Premier displayed his appalling ignorance of the rural industry. Nonetheless I suppose he cannot be blamed for that. I have to report that, once again, I have to stand and speak in defence of the rural industry. That is something I will always do as long as we have a steady, learning Government such as we have. It is coming along quite well with its reading and Dorothy Dix questions. We will continue to press the point of the rural industries with the Government.

We are an exporting nation. The Government should not forget that, because it is very important. It might be interesting if we take note of some of the comments which have been made recently by some of the people in charge of our exports.

According to the Australian Wheat Board, Australia this year is expected to export a record 14.25 million tonnes of wheat. The General Manager of the Melbourne branch of the Australian Wheat Board, Donald Sandow, says that while the prospect of another record year is pleasing, the fact that the expected tonnage has been reduced from earlier estimates is disappointing. He goes on to say that the wheat industry has so far this year lost the opportunity to load in excess of one million tonnes because of strikes, and more than half of that loss is due to disputes in New South Wales. Nonetheless, that is the result of militant unions again being at work.

We had the ludicrous situation recently of the transport workers tying up the export of meat, particularly in the Eastern States. It is important that we perform as a nation. I will come to Western Australia in a moment, but it is interesting to note that the transport loaders gave permission for a shipment of lamb to be loaded. One container was being sent to Japan as a promotional exercise. Unfortunately by the time the letter arrived the Qantas plane had gone. Is it not incredible that a country with such a high national debt and such a massive interest bill can allow such ridiculous situations to interfere in this way?

That selfish attitude will destroy our export industries. We have to look after Australia. The leading article in yesterday's edition of *The Australian*, referring to the action by the transport workers stopping shipments in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, had this to say—

It is another example of union militancy destroying a vital and competitive export industry. Australia has serious long-term balance of payments problems. As a nation we have lived beyond our means for too long. We spend more than we earn. A good deal of what we do earn comes from the hard-pressed rural sector, which remains one of the most efficient producers of its kind in the world.

The Government does not seem to realise that it took the rural industries to produce X million tonnes of wheat or X million kilos of wool in 1985. Rest assured that in 1986 they will be trying to produce an even greater quantity. But the militant unions may well destroy those industries. This would be detrimental not only to the best earning industry in this nation, but also to the entire country. Nonetheless, I suppose it will need to go the full distance before the Government realises the folly of its ways. The article continues as follows—

But how cruel it is for Australia's meat producers to see their efforts come to nothing because of this industrial action, to see valuable, hard won export markets sacrificed on the altar of union power. The well-being of the many should not be threatened by the avarice of the few.

I would like to make the point that Australia is an export nation and unless we pay careful attention to those export industries we will be in serious trouble.

The question of rural hardship and the difficulties that are facing farmers—and they are in a perilous position at the moment—has been raised this evening. The platitudes of the Premier tonight will do nothing to help the rural industry. However, it is interesting to note that the Premier blamed every other Government but his own for the current problems. As everyone in this place is aware—and some members tonight commented on this—it is all very well to come to this place and blame others, but that achieves nothing. That man, that "best new leader", has now been Premier for almost three years, and it is time he stopped allocating the blame elsewhere and started providing solutions to problems. He has had sufficient time, but I do not think he will succeed because I do not believe he has much time left as Premier—about five months.

The Premier may have tried to blame other people, but he did not sell the story. He failed and he failed dismally here tonight because the more he speaks, the less support he will get from country areas. His actions indicate that he has thrown away the country vote.

I refer again to productivity. It is important that this House note what has been happening to the rural industry over the last four years—that is, 1981 to 1984-85. The growers' net return for wheat has actually declined by two per cent but the interesting thing is that during the past four years the cost of fertilisers has risen by 22 per cent. It is very interesting to note that one of the matters we are discussing this evening is the proposed DAP antidumping duty. I have taken the trouble to make inquiries of the people who handle superphosphate in my district and I have found that DAP is a fertiliser which is increasing in popularity. Some contractors told me that the highest increase—that is, of 24 per cent—occurred during the deliveries for the 1985 season. There was a significant increase in the amount of DAP sold in the 1985 season as against last season. That indicates to me that the superphosphate companies are seeking protection because they are not in a position to sell their products competitively. In other words, it is an inefficient industry and so it needs to call for assistance from the Government to help it out from its hole to the detriment of the rural industry. However, if this Government, and its Federal counterpart, were to pay a little more attention to the condition of the rural industry, we would know what it was going to do. All this Government does is try to placate the militant unions.

The cost of chemicals rose by 16 per cent last year; fuel rose by 44 per cent; machinery and equipment rose by 49 per cent, and so on. The fact is that the combined input rose by an average of 40 per cent and one must keep in mind that there was a two per cent decline in prices paid for wheat during the same period. Not only do we have internal problems which are putting many people through a great deal of hardship, but also we have an external problem, the attitude of the European Economic Community, the arrangements of which have led to massive surpluses which it dumps in many of our markets. We must also contend with the reaction of the United States of America to the actions of the EEC. The USA has lowered its "loan rates" or floor price to growers, which has caused further complications. There have been big production rises in a majority of our traditional trading partners such as China, India and the USSR. These countries are now producing sufficient grain for their own needs and are, in fact, approaching self-sufficiency. Some of them are exporting products such as wheat. These are problems which are compounding the external problems the rural industry faces; and, our internal problems are being aided and abetted by the militant unions.

This Government has paid absolutely no attention to the problems facing the rural industry. All this Government has done is to re-examine the situation. The Minister for Agriculture congratulated himself tonight on the Government's performance, but I suggest that members on the Government benches take a close look at that performance because it does not amount to very much. The Government has postponed taking action by saying, "We are looking for action, for results, and for something to do" but it has done nothing more than call for inquiries and surveys. In the past year we had a parliamentary inquiry into rural hardship; a survey by the Department of Agriculture into farm indebtedness, and an update on that; we had a survey from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics; and finally we had a submission detailing farm costs from the National Farmers Federation in March this year. In April the Burke Government instigated a farm costs conference which was organised by the Rural and Allied Industries Conference. At this conference, the Premier said—

The nature and magnitude of the financial problems facing agriculture are well known to both industry and Government.

Well, if that is not an exercise in doublespeak, I would like to know what is. Of course we in this House receive plenty of this type of thing from the Premier because he thinks that we are stupid enough to believe it. The Premier has written off the rural industry, but then the rural industry has written off the Premier. We have had various submissions and representations from Australian farmers and pastoralists, culminating in marches to Parliament Houses throughout the country. At the farm costs conference held in April this year Mr Burke blamed Mr Hawke.

Do members recall Western Australians being asked by the then Leader of the Opposition, the present Premier, to vote for the best new leader in Australia, and suggesting that we should all support the Burke and Hawke team? Does Mr Burke now want to run away from Mr Hawke? It seems that the Burke-Hawke combination has failed.

We should all dwell for a moment on the absolute nonsense of the Government's antics in trying to assist the rural community. The Minister for Agriculture will be lucky if he gets back 10 per cent of the 2 000 forms he sent out. I know what the people are saying about the forms; they are saying that they are good for the rubbish bin. These people are sick to death of filling in forms to tell the Minister, the Premier and the Government—who do not want to know—what their situation is.

What the people in the farming community are looking for is an answer to their problem and some action by the Government. All the action the Minister has provided has been to create heaps of paper for bureaucrats to shuffle. That is all that is happening because the Government does not know the answer. All this paper might work for the unions and for the Labor Party Caucus, but it will not work out in the paddocks of WA. The Minister should make no mistake about that. The first time the people get the opportunity, they will show the Minister what they think of him.

Let us spend a brief moment considering what the Minister for Agriculture has said. He has said that he did not see any Opposition members at his April talkfest. Do members know why? No Opposition member was invited! This is the man who inquires about the reasons for the problem they are facing. If he does not know now how serious that problem is, God help us. He needs to get his act into gear.

He also said in a recent Press release that the farmers should go to the RAFC for assistance. I can tell members how this Government assisted the people in my electorate. People in my electorate have received letters from these people, these lenders of last resort, demanding that my constituents pay as much as \$40 000. The Government might as well have asked the man in the moon to pay. When my constituents have been unable to pay they have been subjected to a penalty for each day the money is not paid. That is how this Minister has helped. If the Minister were serious about helping these people he would not make those stupid remarks. He displays an ignorance of their plight. He needs to understand the situation is so serious that there is an absolutely urgent need for action to be taken.

Mr Bridge: Things could be worse.

Mr McNEE: Not much worse, because things have deteriorated amazingly under this Government.

We ought to spend a few minutes understanding precisely what the agricultural industry means to Western Australia. A downturn in agriculture has wide ramifications throughout the State. Agriculture earns something like 30 per cent of the State's total foreign earnings, and that ought to be pretty important even to the member for Kimberley, who tries to assure himself that everything is all right. Perhaps he has not been up to the Kimberley recently. We do not have time to talk about that now, but next week we might talk about the nonsense happening up there.

The Minister for Agriculture makes great play about the special property loans he made available last year for farmers. It was like trying to draw teeth to get those loans, and when the farmers finally did get them they had weeds on their properties which stood two feet high because of the good season, and this meant that their chance of growing a good crop was such that the money was of no use to them at all. The Minister should wake up to the fact that the farming community is in trouble; he needs to get his act into gear before it is too late. He has been told time and time again in this House what the situation is like.

Mr Evans: Every case you put up by way of a complaint has bounced on you, and you know it.

Mr McNEE: That is not so. If the Minister wants to talk about that I would be delighted to accommodate him, but it would take too much

time, a lot more than we have tonight. He knows what the situation is so he should not start that nonsense.

Members must not forget that Western Australia's agricultural industries support a work force of some 40 000 people. If we allow for the fact that one farm job means roughly two jobs elsewhere in the community, we see that agriculture provides 120 000 jobs, or 20 per cent of the work force. The Government tells us how much it has done for employment. Certainly the Commonwealth Government must have built enough footpaths to go right around Australia! These Governments have created a lot of froth-and-bubble jobs instead of directing their resources to the right areas.

I add my support to the motion moved by the member for Katanning-Roe. I sincerely hope the Government will pay more attention to the farming community. Those Government members who have been interjecting in an effort to reassure themselves that everything is all right need to understand that they should sit up and listen to what we on this side have to say.

MR TUBBY (Greenough) [9.29 p.m.]: This is a very serious debate. Because of the weather conditions experienced by large regions of our agricultural areas, the situation farmers are facing is very serious and becoming more so day by day.

I was very interested tonight to hear the Premier answering a dorothy dix question during question time in relation to drought aid. I could have sworn he was using the same document that Sir Charles Court used about 1977-78. I thought it was word for word, and I could not see anything different. The Premier was portraying the details of his announcement as an innovation of the Burke Government. I fail to see where it is different from the assistance given before by way of subsidies on interest rates and loans based on need.

I guess the announcement was brought forward in an endeavour to cover up a boo-boo made by the Premier at question time yesterday in answer to an interjection I made when he was explaining what he would do for the housing industry. He said people who were badly affected by the rise in home interest rates would be helped and he explained what the Government would do about putting money into building societies. I interjected and asked him what the Government would do for farmers. He indicated his Government was not

a sectional Government and people would be treated on an equal basis wherever they were in need.

I commend that view. If the Premier intends to implement that policy in relation to the rural industries it will greatly help farmers and they will be looking forward to it. Certainly a great need exists for assistance to rural industries. Farmers' homes are at risk. These are not homes which farmers are buying for the first time, but homes they used to own; in many cases they built them themselves. It is not only the homes which are at risk, but also their livelihood and their farming properties. If some assistance is to be given by way of interest rate subsidies it will be very welcome.

If one asks any farmer what are his greatest problems today he will indicate they are interest rates and fuel costs. They are the first two which come to mind. There are many others such as Government taxes and charges, but the two I have mentioned are the most prominent and I believe something can be done about them.

I condemn the Government's criticism of the Opposition's proposals as to what it will do on regaining Government. We will dispense with the State fuel tax. Much criticism has been levelled against that proposal, but I believe it will be a very valuable move so far as rural industries are concerned and one which will assist them greatly without much detriment to the remainder of the State.

Rural industries are not looking for big hand-outs. One thing they are sincerely looking for is encouragement. I assure the Government that rural industries are greatly discouraged by the fact that this Government is supporting the implementation of a capital gains tax. So far as rural industries are concerned a tax of this nature could not come at a worse time. Land values are probably the lowest they have been for many years; we hope that they have reached rock bottom, and that they will move upwards in the future and make a rapid gain. The thought that such gains could be subject to a capitals gains tax is very disheartening. Farmers are looking for light at the end of the tunnel but every time they see a little light it is quickly blacked out.

Farmers are terribly important to our State—they are the great producers of food and fibre. One has only to look at the daily lives of people in the city to realise the part that farmers play in their different ways by providing food and fibre. They play a large part in the

everyday lives of people in both country and city. They provide the clothes we wear and the food we eat. I am sure many city people do not realise the amount of work and risk that is involved in producing those products for community use.

I was quite concerned tonight that the Minister for Agriculture seemed to be a little critical, although not openly, of the lack of response to the survey forms which have been sent out to establish the economic situation of the rural industries. I wholeheartedly support the comments of the member for Mt Marshall that farmers are heartily sick of paperwork. I would like to extend to the Minister a sincere invitation to come to our farm. He will be well-looked after. My son is running a 10 000-acre property cropping 6 000 acres and running a flock of sheep. If the Minister worked alongside my son for a week I am sure he would realise what a great burden paperwork places on farmers. It is absolutely impossible to cope with the manual work involved in running a farm and a lot of additional paperwork.

I consider our farm to be an average farm, and I know the tremendous physical pressures farmers face in keeping their properties operating. It would be a great experience for the Minister in more ways than one, and he would realise the colossal pressure farmers are under in trying to survive. That is all they want to do—to survive, and return to being a viable operation.

Farmers also consider that the protest marches which have been held should have got the message through to the Government. They have an industry organisation with very capable leaders who are supposed to be in continual contact with the Government. They are in a position to convey the situation of rural industry to the Government.

The Minister is wrong to interpret the lack of response by farmers to the survey as indicating a lack of interest. I am sure the Minister will not feel that way when he takes into account what I have said. I assure him that it is not a question of lack of interest; the reason farmers are not replying is that they do not have the time or the energy to cope with anything more.

Mr Evans: I will answer that point when I reply.

Mr TUBBY: I ask the Minister to give me a week's notice if he intends to accept my invitation so that I can make sure suitable accom-

modation is available. I am sure it would be quite interesting for him, and an education as well.

The assistance outlined in the Federal Budget which was given so much publicity is nothing but a sick joke. That comment has been made by a considerable number of farmers. The fuel rebate for an average farm amounts to about \$270 to \$300. The tariff rebate on headers will apply to only a few farmers. Who can afford to buy a new header? I agree it is a move in the right direction, but if the Government wants to do something worthwhile to benefit farmers across the board it should look at reducing the duty on farm chemicals which are used extensively in rural industries. That would be of great assistance, more so than reducing the tariff on headers because so few will be able to take advantage of that situation.

Another matter I raise is, I know, a Federal matter and it has resulted in a great deal of discussion; that is, the antidumping duty on DAP fertiliser. Farmers in my electorate recently called meetings—which I attended—about this duty which they strongly criticised. The duty will add approximately \$80 per tonne to DAP fertiliser in Western Australia.

Many members have referred to the DAP fertiliser this evening. It is a popular fertiliser because it contains both superphosphate and nitrogen and can be spread in one application. It is different from the situation which occurred previously when a farmer had to spread superphosphate at a certain time of the year and then spread urea at a later stage. The application of these chemicals had to be carried out during the right weather conditions. The DAP fertiliser is designed to be applied when the farmer wishes, and the crops receive the boost they require when they need it.

As a result of the meetings held at at Perenjori at which the farmers were critical of CSBP, which is a subsidiary of Wesfarmers, and of its application made in a submission to the Industries Assistance Commission regarding the introduction of the antidumping duty, Wesfarmers called a special meeting last week to discuss the situation which resulted in the withdrawal of its application for the antidumping duty.

There is no doubt that we have a disastrous situation in the wheatbelt. The member for Mt Marshall indicated that a number of farmers have had their finance recalled by the Rural

Adjustment Authority and they are being put in very difficult situations. They have no hope of being in a position to repay those funds at the present time and, to add insult to injury, they are being levied a \$16.50 surcharge per day. It is compounding the problem for them, and as far as I am concerned it is an absolute insult.

The farmers who have been placed in this position have tried to sell their properties but they cannot. I know a number of farmers who have had their machinery repossessed and in three cases the most important item to go has been the tractor. In these cases the tractors which have been repossessed have been taken into second-hand machinery yards, and as far as I know they are still there today.

The poor farmer, in most cases, was unable to sell his property and he was aware that the value of the property would decrease if he did not put in a crop. Therefore, he has battled on with his old machinery and has put in a crop under very difficult circumstances.

If the hire-purchase companies had had any sympathy whatsoever, they would have stood by and let the farmer put in his crop with the machinery that had been repossessed. At least the farmer may have had some chance to meet his commitments. However, under the present circumstances it is unlikely that he will be in a position to do so.

Mr Bridge: If you attack hire-purchase companies I support you all the way.

Mr TUBBY: Members would agree that the hire-purchase companies have been ridiculous in taking such action. It certainly has been of great detriment to the farmers who have been affected.

Farmers are calling out for Government action. They are sick of filling in submissions and, as I said before, they are sick of talking. They want action. All they really want is to be given a fair go.

Mr Evans: Can you be a little more precise. What action are they specifying?

Mr TUBBY: They want some action by this Government. For example, they want lower fuel prices and some action taken regarding interest rates. The Government has decreased interest rates for new home buyers and farmers see themselves in a similar situation.

A lot of other costs are passed on to the rural community as a result of action by this Government in increasing taxes and charges. One need only transfer a motor vehicle to

realise that the fee has increased 100 per cent since he last transferred a vehicle. One need only talk to the plumber who has passed on his costs to the consumer because his registration fee has been increased by 100 per cent. The Government is in a position to take action that will relieve the pressure, and these actions can be readily identified.

MR EVANS (Warren—Minister for Agriculture) [9.48 p.m.]: The motion moved by the member for Katanning-Roe has certainly drawn attention to the financial plight of farmers and country businessmen and that is a good thing. It is something which is not fully appreciated in the community at large. As far as I am concerned the sooner that it is the better.

There is no question that the Government is fully aware of the financial difficulties being faced in the rural industry, but I am sure that any fair-minded person would be of the opinion that if there is one thing the Opposition cannot accuse the Government of, it is a lack of action in this matter. Nobody with any credibility could accuse the Government of lack of action as has been suggested.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to put the record right for some members opposite and to look squarely at what has been done by the Government, and I will refer to the items in the member for Katanning-Roe's motion *seriatim*.

Mr Tubby: Can you tell me why you could not convey this information to the protesters who visited Parliament House? They were disappointed.

Mr EVANS: Even though I was standing next to the microphone, I was not given the opportunity to speak. When one has the old harp tuned up I can assure members that it is a disappointment not to be able to speak.

I refer to the measures taken in connection with rural funds, and to what has been undertaken by the Government in this regard. Perhaps it could be put in perspective in order that we will be in a position to sort out the points about which comment has been made.

The first point is that the Government has established the Rural Adjustment and Finance Corporation to replace the Rural Adjustment Authority and the rural adjustment schemes. The new corporation was given additional responsibility and it has a broader role in consultation with and the counselling of farmers.

The recommendations of the Select Committee investigating rural hardship have all received attention except one. The member for Katanning-Roe correctly made the point that an additional amount of funding was received in 1983-84.

I agree that we shall have to look at the philosophy of rural adjustment funding, the question of where and how this should be applied, and the problems involved in expanding to the stage of having any Government become a financier or total financier of rural lands. That matter has to be considered because, as we shall see in a moment, the Rural Adjustment Authority had a specific charter and role under the agreement with the Commonwealth which was the source of the funding.

I point out that an unprecedented step was taken by the provision of special carry-on loan funds in 1984. This was continued in 1985 in an endeavour to assist those farmers who were not eligible for the lender of last resort, RAFCOR, to at least stay in business with perhaps an opportunity of trading into a viable position. That was an unprecedented move and although the member for Greenough made a critical remark about it, we should consider the situation. A number of applicants were successful in obtaining a loan and the amounts made available must have been sufficient to meet that situation because funds are still available. No doubt these can be reactivated next year.

Mr Tubby: It is too late.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Burkett): Order! I accorded the member for Greenough silence when he spoke and also when the previous Minister for Agriculture spoke he was allowed to do so in silence. I ask the member for Greenough to cease interjecting.

Mr EVANS: I will accept the point that it may have been more beneficial had those loans been made available earlier, but at least they did help some farmers and there was no delay on the Government side in sorting out problems to make them available in the manner in which they were, although some applicants were tardy.

It may not seem significant, but one of those matters raised by the report of the committee of inquiry was the question of farm counselling. Not only has there never been a facility to RAFCOR in this area, but also the Government has made arrangements to provide assistance through advice and guidance in farm management and planning through the Australian Association of Agricultural Consult-

ants. This will be made available to farmers to assess their overall position and the work management strategy they will need to adopt to overcome any problems. It is an important matter to farmers, some of whom have suddenly found themselves with a \$500 000-odd business to run without the necessary expertise. This area has been neglected in the past.

A further point relates to farm management education through TAFE and the Department of Agriculture. A series of seminars on finance and management has been conducted, and although it has met with disappointing results in some places, it has also provided an opportunity for those willing to take it up. The Department of Agriculture has given priority in the current Budget to providing guidance and advice on farm management expertise in country offices.

This evening the Premier alluded to the question of drought assistance. It is before Government at present and Cabinet will make a decision so that by the time the drought consultative committee can make its determination, probably towards the end of the month, finance will be in place and there will be a minimum of delay. The principle of drought disaster relief has been accepted and continued and I may add, on considerably more difficult terms than existed when it was first introduced and the Commonwealth-State arrangement drawn up. However, preparation has been made for that and again there will be a minimum of delay, as has been the case in the past.

I point out that efforts to assist the rural industry to quantify the finance that will be required and ensure that those sources are in place, are factors about which the member for Greenough made more critical remarks. I will reiterate a quotation I made earlier.

I refer now to surveys; in 1984 the most extensive survey ever undertaken was carried out by the Department of Agriculture. That gave a basis and hard data. In February 1985 the data was updated in the light of the costs that prevailed and the prognosis for the industry. In April the RAIC seminar on farming costs included key speakers who analysed the problems and difficulties that have been identified. I take the point that Opposition members did not have the opportunity to attend. The last I heard was that it was under discussion with the RAIC and I thought it had been resolved that general invitations would be issued. I take the point made by the member for Mt Marshall.

Currently a joint survey by the PIA and the Department of Agriculture is being undertaken and it is hoped it will be the most significant survey we have been able to conduct. I respond to the criticism made by the member for Greenough. I am not being overly critical of him, but I would like him to take on board the point made by the President of the Primary Industry Association who summed it up as follows—

...to hell with this business of our credibility being challenged, let us get them to do the work and we'll put an input into this whole thing and just keep this information up to date on an annual basis, and I think that's essential if we're going to know what we're talking about.

I am glad to see that the leaders of the industry, the heads of the PIA and the Pastoralists and Graziers Association, have taken a much more professional and serious attitude towards the problems which are so complex and which need to be researched in a manner that will stand up to the scrutiny of some of the most critical economists that the Federal Government can produce. Until that is done—and I make the point once again that it has now been recognised by industry leaders that it is necessary—and the industry makes properly researched submissions that will bear scrutiny and can hold their own with logic, reasoning, and economic justification of the contentious ideas being put forward, no progress will be made.

That is the reason that I attach such importance to this service. I can only say to the member for Greenough that I appreciate that it is a chore for farmers to fill out these forms, produce records, look back through farm documents for information, assess farm management figures, and all the other things that are required, but if that is not done, then to where do the leaders of the industry turn to get the information which is so critical to enable them to make a case that is considered logical and dispassionate in a world where these submissions come into conflict with the other entities within the Australian economy that are making demands on the resources that are available?

The State Government recognises the importance of agriculture, and the fact that agriculture represents less than one-half of our export earnings in this day and age, but it is a crucial industry producing a percentage of the State revenue in the early forties. It is of that

importance, and if it was so very easy to rectify the problems of the agricultural industry, do not members think that it would be done in the course of a weekend? Of course it would, but it is not as simple as that. We are dealing with the nuances and implications of the Australian economy when we come to grips with it.

The solution to the current problems confronting agriculture lies within commodity prices that are competitive on international markets. That point has already been made, along with reducing farm cost pressures. This can be assisted only by sound economic strategies and efficient management, not only by State and Federal Governments, but also all sectors from the farm gate through to the final consumer, with a mix of policies aimed towards reducing tariffs, taxes, interest rates, labour costs, fuel, transport costs, and storage costs. One cannot take one out of context with all the interrelated problems that are involved. It has to be that mix of policies that will improve rural industry in this State.

This State, in consultation with primary industry organisations, is continuing to address the means of alleviating farm costs and the problems that are attendant on them. Not everybody will be satisfied with each of the particular measures taken or the results achieved but nonetheless the Government is, I am happy to say, being helped by farm leaders in the instance to which the member for Greenough referred; and in consultation with the farm leaders long-term economic strategies are being sought rather than what is generally called a "bandaid" measure.

I must, before I deal with the points raised in the motion of the member for Katanning-Roe, make the point that the State Government has a record of economic management, and further evidence of this will be shown in the Budget when it is produced in the near future.

During the past year the State Government has continued its efforts to find solutions to alleviate the rural problems and the cost difficulties that are entailed. For the second successive year this Government has managed to hold charges significantly below projected inflation rates. It can be said that electricity and gas rose by only 3.8 per cent. That is the lowest in five years. Only half the predicted inflation rate is expected in 1985-86. That is not a bad effort.

Country electricity consumers will again enjoy a substantial benefit which amounts to about \$60 million from the SEC's policy of

Statewides charges. That, in itself, is significant, as is the increase in the country water, sewerage, drainage, and irrigation charges.

There has been much criticism about Westrail, and while the situation with Westrail is not idyllic it has taken a long time for it to overcome its problems. In 1985-86 country travellers on Westrail bus and rail did not have to face any increase in fares. There has been an overall reduction in Westrail freight because of grain freight concessions, deregulation of wool, and partial deregulation with regard to fuel. That is at least something along the way. Grain rail freights for most growers were not increased for the 1985-86 harvest, and some lines obtained reductions. A new grain freight rate was also negotiated.

There has been a reduction of 15 per cent in the concession rate for bulk fertilisers in consignment, and there has been a base rate increase of only six per cent for fertilisers, making a 16 per cent increase during the present Government's term. That compares with the 36 per cent increase during the previous three years. That is not bad, either.

Bulk freight rates for gypsum and talc rose by only five per cent, and bulk petrol products by three per cent—a total increase of 10 per cent in the present Government's term, compared with 50 per cent for the previous three years.

There has been a 10 per cent reduction for wool consignments of more than 25 bales, and a six per cent increase for consignments under consolidation. There, too, although those items are not great, they indicate the wide spectrum of the policy that this Government is endeavouring to foster.

Westrail reduced its cost and debt also, and I might add that these reductions were achieved at a cost. One of those costs was the loss of 1 700 jobs of Western Australians. Through redundancy payments, that has been achieved without any industrial disputation at all. Had that situation been left to another Government—had it been left to the Opposition—I am sure that there would have been immense friction and all sorts of industrial disputation, and it would have been laid at the doorstep of the unions. Here I pay tribute to my colleague, the Minister for Transport, for his efforts not only in achieving efficiency in Westrail, but also in maintaining a record of industrial harmony that must be the envy of every other State. It just goes to show, while we are on the subject of industrial relations, how this can be achieved. I might add that industrial dispu-

tation has fallen by one-half. One has to go back at least 17 years to find the same sort of figures as we have today, by whatever means members like to calculate them.

I wish to make reference to some of the other measures this Government is taking to assist rural industry in fairly large measure. The member for Katanning-Roe referred to the meat industry. That industry has been very vexatious and very complex, and has been subject to external pressures—not only State and national, but international as well. Following upon the 1984 Treloar report, a ministerial subcommittee is presently taking action to bring about the recommendations made in that report, although not in its entirety; and I will make reference to Robb Jetty as well. This is where I must disagree with the member for Katanning-Roe. I see the essential factor in the meat industry, as far as the producers are concerned, as having a service abattoir and access to the EEC market for lamb exports, without which it would have a very dismal prospect.

Mr Old: Could the Government not have sold Robb Jetty and bought the Linley Valley abattoir for about \$1 million? It would have been \$6 million in front.

Mr EVANS: Let us consider Robb Jetty, and the fact that it is alongside the port and has a lot going for it there. Again, without industrial disharmony there has been a rationalisation of the operation at Robb Jetty which will lead it to be the most essential abattoir because of its service works' potential in this State. That is something that is moving over.

I refer to the Lamb Marketing Board referendum. For the second time it has been indicated overwhelmingly that there is a need to retain that board.

Mr Old: Not overwhelmingly.

Mr EVANS: Well into the region of 60 per cent.

I feel that is representative of the industry. The member for Katanning-Roe referred to the meat industry system, a dual meat inspection which operated in this State for many years. Happily, that situation will now be resolved. It has been responsible for costing producers in WA some millions of dollars throughout the years. There is to be a review of the potato industry. I hope to see legislation come forward on that matter, so I will not go into detail at this time. It is again necessary to ensure the survival of the potato industry as we know it in WA. There are also the land release policy, the

dairy herd improvement service, the pastoral leases and the study group that was set up to examine them, the markets and the move taken to ensure that the markets are established properly so they will stand this State in good stead for the next half century.

Mr Old: That has been going on for many years, as you know.

Mr EVANS: At least some made the move.

Mr Old: Wait a minute. We had already got a site reserved.

Mr EVANS: I am sorry?

Mr Old: You can be as sorry as you like.

Mr EVANS: A site was reserved at Canning Vale, but there was no determination that that was where the market was to go and it was only after some fairly exhaustive study that the determination was made and the funding was put in place.

There might be some criticism of the restructuring of the cattle industry in the Kimberley area. The properties belonging to the Emanuel family have been purchased for \$8.5 million and a further expenditure of \$12 million on these properties is envisaged. That will afford the opportunity to revitalise the Kimberley industry. After the stripping that has taken place by absentee owners over the years, this is something that the Kimberley—

Mr MacKinnon: You mean Exim is not an absentee owner?

Mr EVANS: Members will probably realise in the fullness of time that it will afford some of those very capable and active youngish managers in that area an opportunity which they have never had, to install themselves in their own right. I am sure that is one of the keys to the Kimberley area.

Mr Old: If they have a million dollars!

Mr MacKinnon: As long as Stephen Hawke and his friends don't take them.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Burkett): Order! Have we changed the rules? The Minister for Agriculture.

Mr EVANS: Perhaps in the fullness of time, when the details of the proposal are made known generally, the Opposition will have the chance to change its mind. The computer live-stock auction selling system—CLASS, it is called—is an innovation that has a lot to commend it as one of those positive factors which could help the meat industry. There have been few enough of those factors in the past.

Kununurra has received minimal assistance in regard to our desires.

Mr Old: The Premier referred to it as a white elephant, don't forget.

Mr EVANS: Do not make me account for the Premier's comment. If he wants to make a throwaway comment, it is up to him, but do not try to leave it with me or treat it as the policy of the Government.

A pilot cashew farm is to be developed at Kununurra. Intense research is being conducted on Pangola Leucana for the fattening of stock, and the peanut growing industry has been strengthened.

I want to refer to the horticultural industry. Some very considerable developments have been made in this regard. In the first instance, a horticultural institute will be set up at Manjimup which will involve a relocation of the research station and the research capacity of five officers which will be supplemented by the extension of the research facility at Medina. Apart from research, the endeavour will take in not only the development of new species and varieties, but also nutritional and post-harvest research to ensure that the quality is that required for export markets. There is an improved transportation system which the Minister for Transport is in the course of setting up. He has given the vegetable growers association an undertaking that he will set up a committee levelled at resolving industrial dispute on the wharves so that there is not the possibility of perishable goods being delayed on the wharfside.

The Premier has shown some great initiatives in endeavouring to resolve the air cargo situation and to relax the limitations which have been so rigidly applied by the Commonwealth Government. Market identification in Asia will be intensified.

The Vasse research station is operational and, together with the establishment of a new building for the Department of Agriculture at Bunbury, it will be able to operate both Wokalup and Vasse with a shift of its personnel who will be able to look at the cattle industry overall. It has been extended so that the runs are on the board and it has been extended beyond the concept of the Vasse research station, as far as I am aware, since I first became acquainted with the problem. The additional staff at the Department of Agriculture will be directed to the salinity problem, and plant water use affecting groundwater recharge, soil conservation, land use capability, and matters

of this kind. That will be one of the priorities that the Budget will contain. The prospect of agroforestry will be highly beneficial in some areas.

I assure the Leader of the House that I will not use the full two hours that he allocated to me!

I would now like to examine the points detailed in the motion moved by the member for Katanning-Roe. I must reject offhand his expression of concern at the lack of action by the State Government. I just indicated that the performance of this State Government in meeting those problem areas would be difficult to equal for any previous Government. However, he goes on to call upon the Premier to provide immediate relief by abolishing the State fuel franchise levy. I do not know whether or not he is fully aware of what this entails.

Mr Old: I am quite aware.

Mr EVANS: I notice that the member's former colleague expressed some reservations about this matter. I suppose it would be a good idea to abolish all manner of charges and imposts, but the implications have to be examined and I hope that the Opposition has done this. The method suggested by the member for Katanning-Roe of regaining the revenue that would be lost through his proposition seems to be by utilising the levy or the revenue collected from the levy on tobacco, but whether or not that is practical is a matter which needs to be examined in terms of the total concept. However, one thing is sure; it would be most unfortunate if the \$46 million or so which the fuel levy yields now was not available. The people who would be most affected by this would be the residents of country areas.

Mr Old: Absolute baloney—the northern freeway would be affected.

Mr EVANS: As it stands now, some two-thirds, in the order of 60 per cent, of \$46 million, is raised in metropolitan areas. The expenditure is the reverse. Something in the order of 60 per cent is expended in country areas. The point was made by the member for Merredin that this is a dedicated levy; it is not a tax. It can be used only for one purpose.

Mr Old: That has nothing to do with it.

Mr EVANS: If the dedication is taken away then it is left to the Cabinet, when preparing its Budget, to make allocations from other funds for roads. Members should bear in mind that the bicentennial roads programme is winding down, and this State will be in danger of not

having any money to go into road funding. The people who will suffer will surely be country people because that is where two-thirds of the money is spent. There is also the danger of this State losing the \$80 million which will be received from the Commonwealth in the next two years. It is for those reasons that I advise great caution in making efforts to remove this levy and replace it with another. I am sure that if this money was not available, those sitting opposite would bear the wrath of country people more than anybody else.

Paragraph (2)(a) of the motion requests the Government to substantially reduce the excise on all fuel. I confess that the Government is not at all happy with the fuel excise situation and has made representations to the Commonwealth Government, at the tax summit and through its membership of the Economic Planning Advisory Council, for a reduction in the fuel excise. I would like to think that it is as a result of those representations that the 1985 Federal Budget provided a fuel rebate for off-road diesel fuel. The potential savings in diesel fuel for a sheep farmer, for instance, will be \$500 to \$700. I confess that that does not seem like much when one considers the costs being incurred in the operation of present day wheat and sheep farms; however, I point out that it is appreciated in some quarters that an endeavour has been made and if this State was not successful, then neither were five other States.

This Government is painfully aware of the cost of fuel to the rural and fishing industries.

Mr McNee: Then do something about it.

Mr EVANS: The little boy is looking at the moon again. He is great on loud rhetoric, and even though I am able to give him the facts, I am not able to give him understanding. The good Lord left it a bit late to provide the member for Mt Marshall with understanding.

Approaches have been made as requested in this motion. I am sure that, if it is possible to comply with the motion, the Premier and the responsible Minister will make the same representations for the transport industry as for the agricultural industry. Every endeavour to achieve something will be made.

Mr Old: That is a platitude—nothing more or less.

Mr EVANS: I hope the member for Katanning-Roe is not being contaminated by his new party. He has been associating with the member for Mt Marshall for too long.

Paragraph (2)(b) requests the Federal Government to take appropriate measures to influence a drop in interest on bank loans. The Premier has made representations regarding this issue. The point has been made—I hope the strategy is correct—that the economic policies of the Federal Government will result in a stabilising of the economy through sound economic management and a drop in interest rates.

Mr MacKinnon: You must have your head in the sand.

Mr EVANS: The member should look at some of the measures such as the prices and incomes accord taken by the Federal Government. It is only by those measures that inflation will be contained, bearing in mind that a one per cent drop in inflation is worth \$1 500 to the average farm. The importance of reducing inflation should be obvious to the Opposition.

Those are the objectives of the economic strategies being followed by the Federal Government. I only hope they are right. I admit that when reading the various authoritative economists I sometimes despair as to just what will happen. The action taken by the Hawke Government in allowing new banks to operate in Australia was heralded as a bold initiative. The fact that the Premier has been able to obtain one of the licences to allow a foreign bank to establish a headquarters in Perth will be a great benefit for Western Australia.

While we are on this subject I noticed that the Opposition did not mention the attitude of the banks in the absence of competition. The Opposition should care to consider some of the figures and trends in the operation of the banks that have been drawn to my attention. By easing their clients into commercial bills at a much higher cost, the tendency has been for banks to reduce their overdraft levels, and that is something that concerns me greatly. I notice that it does not concern the Opposition unduly. The present overdraft level on loans up to \$100 000 is 15.57 per cent at both banks I checked. On loans over \$100 000 the rate is 18.5 per cent and 18.25 per cent respectively. When one talks about a commercial bill of 90 days, one finishes up with an interest rate of 18.4 and 19.45 per cent respectively. The added charges effectively set the financing for this type of funding at a rate of 23 per cent. That is what we are talking about.

The motion calls upon the Premier to—

take appropriate measures to influence a drop in interest on bank loans;

That is precisely what the Premier is doing.

Mr MacKinnon: He supports the Federal Budget which is causing all of this.

Mr Old: He supports the propping up of the dollar.

Mr EVANS: I thought that the paragons of private enterprise opposite would have applauded the additional competition which has left banks in a position to do something like this. I thought those paragons would have expressed some concern about moving into commercial bills which will have a deleterious effect. I think members on that side of the House are a sham.

Paragraph (c) of the motion calls upon the Premier to—

reject the I.A.C. recommendation to apply an antidumping duty of \$80 per tonne on D.A.P. (Di Ammonium Phosphate)

That matter was taken up by this Government as soon as it was made known. I contacted the Minister for Primary Industry with a request that he take it up with Senator Button. As always, the Premier was ready and willing to lend his support. Since I replied to the member for Katanning-Roe I have obtained a more recent response from the Minister for Primary Industry which I undertake to furnish to the member. In part the Minister makes the point that antidumping measures were recently sought by Australian fertiliser manufacturers in respect of both di-ammonium phosphate and mono-ammonium phosphate. In part the Minister's response reads—

Unfair competition, such as dumping, is a matter of concern both to Australian primary producers and manufacturers. The preliminary finding by the Customs Service was based on evidence that MAP and DAP were being supplied at less than normal values and that this was causing material damage to Australian fertiliser producers. The Customs Service is conducting further investigations during the 120 day period which elapses after a preliminary finding before a final determination is made.

That is where the matter stands at the moment. I point out that this Government made sure that the argument—a questionable argument—against this sort of approach by simply taking the cost of production into account and ignoring the impact it has on the end user, bearing in mind that the price of export was the same as it was for domestic sales, was put very strongly. It is doubtful whether a dumping case

could have been made out in the first place. However, the Minister for Primary Industry has referred this matter to Senator Button. I hope that it will bear some fruit.

I add that the shipping contract between the Australian National Line and the Australian Phosphate Corporation for phosphate carried from Christmas Island and Nauru was negotiated in 1981. It was negotiated between those two parties. The Federal Government recognises that the freight rates negotiated are considerably higher than those at which the phosphatic rock could be carried on ships carrying an international flag.

Mr Old: Goodness me, that's a real breakthrough!

Mr EVANS: As I told the member, it shows that good representation always achieves a breakthrough.

The other matter which has quite justifiably caused the concern of the Opposition and, indeed, the Government is the allocation of funding for rural finance. In the motion before the House the Opposition has called upon the Premier to—

make a meaningful allocation of funds to the Rural Adjustment and Finance Corporation;

Several members opposite made reference to the implications of that proposal. I know that some of the apprehension that is abroad has been fostered by the Federal Opposition in its criticism that under the new arrangement and agreement between the Federal Government and the States the funding for rural adjustment schemes has been reduced. The member for Katanning-Roe indicated in his comments that he appreciates that new arrangements have been made for the Rural Adjustment and Finance Corporation. Under these new arrangements the State will be required to raise the funds necessary on the open market. These funds will be on-lent to farmers. The Federal Government's role will be to provide the necessary interest rate subsidy. There is no doubt that there will be administrative problems. I do not approve of several aspects of this scheme. I have made my disapproval known, but the fact is that we are in a position of having to accept a Commonwealth agreement or not having a scheme. Based on the amount of subsidy the Federal Government will be able to provide for 1985-86, the Rural Adjustment and Finance Corporation will be able to lend

approximately \$6.1 million at concessional interest rates. This compares favourably with the 1984-85 allocation of \$4.3 million.

Mr Old: What is the overall amount from the Commonwealth to the States?

Mr EVANS: The amount to be lent will be \$6 million.

Mr Old: But it won't. In the Budget papers the Treasurer said the maximum amount that would be able to be raised for Australia would be \$21 million. You won't get \$6 million out of it, because it was \$25 million last year and you got \$4.5 million.

Mr EVANS: That is our understanding. It looks as though the amount we will receive will be \$6 million, which is a 26 per cent increase on the previous year's allocation.

Mr Old: Come back and tell us when you get it.

Mr EVANS: I will be happy to do that. That is the figure that we have at the moment. The amount that is made available under the new scheme will allow borrowing to that extent.

I appreciate the call for extended borrowings to farming interests in Western Australia. It has been suggested that there should be an interest rate subsidy. That was one proposition floated tonight. While it would be highly desirable to do that, from just matchbox mathematics if we take the average indebtedness of farmers in this State to be \$170 000 and make a conservative estimate that 10 000 farmers owe this amount and reduce their interest rate by one per cent we are looking at a subsidy of \$17 million. If we consider a meaningful reduction in the interest rate of 10 per cent, we can readily appreciate that that sort of funding is getting out of the ballpark of State resources. Once again, it would have to come from the Commonwealth.

Mr Old: The Commonwealth admitted in the Budget that it has \$2 billion that it does not know what to do with.

Mr EVANS: I would like to see that.

Mr Old: You have a look at the expenditure and receipts and you will see that there is already a \$2 billion difference.

Mr EVANS: Once any Government becomes involved in lending to farmers, it has to define its role accurately. The existing scheme under the agreement requires that funds can only be lent to lenders of last resort—

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Burkett): Order! The level of background noise is very high. It is very chummy. There is a meeting there, another there, and one behind me. I only want to hear the Minister for Agriculture for the next few minutes.

Mr EVANS: I will just make the point again. People like the member for Mt Marshall quibble—I suppose they are inexperienced—and say, "There is this debt; something should be done about it." But once the Government starts becoming involved in finding funds to help farm indebtedness, one is going into billions of dollars—certainly many millions as far as the State is concerned. This is something the resources of any State would not be able to contend with.

If one went outside the role of lender of last resort, where would one draw the line of eligibility? Who would be eligible for funding and who would not? One must try to define eligibility very clearly, or it is wide open. This is a problem the Opposition does not seem to have recognised, or it does not want to recognise it. It is a practical problem, but it is basic to any suggested form of rural lending which the Opposition and the Government may desire to see.

There are limitations. I will not go through the figures of rural adjustment lending as I probably would not be thanked for it.

As far as the requirements contained in the motion are concerned, the State has pressed them as well as it is able through the correct avenues to address these problems. I am happy to be able to inform the House that there has not been one occasion when a problem has come up and appropriate information has not been produced or a submission made to the Federal Government, or to the appropriate body or arm of that Government.

Mr Old: Very good; you are voting for the motion then!

Mr EVANS: At least half a dozen urgent submissions were put to the dairy industry inquiry, and there were several submissions to the hard-ship committee. There was the grain and legume research levy; there were stud merino exports; there was drought and national disaster. There were tax summits, and a most comprehensive submission was produced by the Premier. There were the rural adjustment arrangements, plus the special conference called in regard to that. There was the DAP dumping inquiry. That was very promptly taken up, as were fuel tariffs, by the Premier at the summit

by contact with the Prime Minister and with the Minister for Primary Industry. There was also a comprehensive wine submission.

The list goes on. On not one occasion has the State been negligent in bringing forward to the Federal Government just what any measure it takes means to agriculture in the State.

It is true that the results may not have been what we have wished, on most occasions. I can only repeat my initial remark, that this Government can certainly not be construed as failing in its duty in any aspect of the rural industry in this State. As a matter of fact it has gone far further in the matter of assistance to rural industry than has any other State Government. We will continue to proceed in that vein, and to ensure that the interests of rural industries are maintained at the present exemplary level.

It is for that reason that while I recognise the matters which are raised in the motion before the House, I say by way of response that these are being attended to and the motion should be rejected.

MR COURT (Nedlands) [10.45 p.m.]: Contrary to the Minister, I would like to support the motion before the House. The motion has obviously given the Minister for Agriculture a chance to get a few things off his chest.

I would like briefly to comment on one aspect of this motion. It expresses concern for the serious plight of farmers.

Mr Taylor: What do you know about farmers?

Mr COURT: If the member for Kalgoorlie would listen—

Mr Old: Mr Mint himself! He is a mint farmer.

Mr COURT: For the sake of the member for Kalgoorlie, the motion reads—

That this Parliament expresses concern at the lack of action by the State Government in easing the serious financial plight of farmers and businessmen in rural areas and calls on the Premier to—

My comments will be related to businesses in those country towns.

Mr Hodge interjected.

Mr COURT: If the Minister for Health wants to interject, I would appreciate the opportunity to make my comments on this motion which is of some significance.

Mr Hodge: You are so negative all the time.

Mr COURT: I am not so negative. The Minister can interject as much as he likes.

The **ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Burkett):** I will be the one who rules who interjects. I would rather hear the member for Nedlands for the following few minutes.

Mr COURT: You have good taste, Mr Acting Speaker!

The **ACTING SPEAKER:** Order!

Mr COURT: Little has been done in the past to understand properly the very special problems of country businesses over the past two years. My colleagues and I have spent a considerable time organising seminars and meetings at different country centres, both in the south and in the north of the State. I have been very impressed with the enthusiasm which people have shown at those seminars.

I have been with our spokesman for agriculture at some of those functions where we have specifically related our topics of discussion to areas affecting business people in those towns. They are prepared to discuss their problems openly, and they have a willingness to find out what is happening in the business community in other parts of the State.

Because they operate usually in quite small markets, it is pretty difficult to survive with the competition, so they tend to be very efficient operators. In many country centres throughout the State one will find people have an inferiority complex, yet in actual fact they are good operators and they do well in difficult market conditions. They have to survive while operating in those small markets.

But small businesses throughout the State, whether in the Pilbara, in the south-west, or in the metropolitan area, share many common problems—problems which we have highlighted in our own small business policy papers. Some of the main areas of concern they share are problems in the industrial relations field where there is a highly centralised, rigid system which does not cater for the small business community.

They have to work under a tax system which is extremely complicated and aggressive. One of the big problems which the country businesses face is in connection with the sales tax area. I know that is a Federal matter, but the paperwork involved for a typical country business, which involves claiming for sales tax exemptions, is quite considerable. In a number of centres we have been to this has been mentioned as an area of concern.

The other problems concern regulations, such as those related to the Noise Abatement Act, which are causing problems in some country areas. The point I am making is that the major problems are the same around the State, but in these country areas they have some special problems which businesses in the metropolitan area do not have to face.

Those problems include the different borrowing power country business people have. They have difficulty borrowing for new businesses or for the expansion of present businesses, because often the banks will not take the same type of security as they will in the metropolitan area. The banks will not lend a great deal against land and buildings. If a businessman happens to go broke in a country town, the banks are not prepared to accept that type of collateral to the same extent as they would in the metropolitan area.

Country business people have to face the problems of seasonal cycles; and seasonal cash flows are very difficult to forecast. I know the Acting Speaker (Mr Burkett) has had banking experience and is aware of the special problems these people face.

They have the problem of attracting qualified staff into their country centres. Many people do not want to give up the perceived safety and comfort of the city to work in country towns. This problem has been highlighted often.

They also believe that they lack political and economic power to achieve certain benefits they want to win. However, that is changing as very quickly the small business communities across Australia, both in the metropolitan and country areas, are becoming united, getting their act together, and as a team becoming more vocal in trying to relieve some of the major problems facing them.

We now have in Australia about 730 000 small business people who are starting to become aware that if they combine they can begin to improve their lot. Country business people, along with small business people in metropolitan areas, are finding that they have a lot in common and that a lot of the problems they have within the industrial relations system, taxation and the like are common to them all. They are finding they can get together and do something about it.

The capital gains tax which is to come in is typical of this.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Burkett): From where I sit up here it would seem that the member for Nedlands might like to direct his remarks to the motion before the Chair, because unless I am wrong he is departing from the motion to a fairly wide degree.

Mr COURT: The motion before us expresses concern about the lack of action by the State Government in easing the serious financial plight of the agricultural sector. The serious financial plight of businesses operating in country centres is something the Government needs to address. The State Government has supported the introduction of a capital gains tax; that is what it has done, and this tax will make the plight of business people in country centres considerably worse. It will add to the problems they are already facing, and that is the point I am making about the capital gains tax.

I make it clear that the business people in the country and the farmers, right across Australia, are not going to allow this Labor Government to get away with it. They will not forget what this Labor Government has done to them. At a time when things are difficult for them they are now about to face not one but a number of new forms of taxation.

Country employers struggling to survive already, who happen to find it necessary to provide fringe benefits to their employees in order to get those employees, now have to pay tax on those fringe benefits. As I said earlier, one of the problems these country employers face is attracting qualified staff. They are forced to provide additional benefits to get people to work in their businesses in country towns. These people are now going to be forced to pay a tax on the benefits they give to their employees. This is an important part of the motion and it is why, at this late hour, I am speaking to defend the position of businesses operating in country centres.

I turn now to comment on the debacle we have witnessed over the last couple of weeks. We have seen the spectacle of the Federal Government and the ACTU, supported by this State Government, getting together and doing their own wages deal. They have said, "This is what the package will be, and it happens to include a superannuation component."

Remarkably, only one party was not involved in those negotiations—the employers. Mr Acting Speaker, if you happened to be a small business operator in Kellerberrin, you would have picked up the paper one morning

recently and found that the Labor Government, with the ACTU, had decided what you had to pay your staff in the next few months. What is this country coming to when the person who has to pay the money is no longer involved in these discussions? We read about it in the paper; we found that the ACTU and the Government had got together—

Mr Hughes: What rubbish! They haven't made any deal. They have only said that they will support that position in the commission.

Mr COURT: Is the member for Cockburn saying that what we have been reading over the last couple of weeks, what has been printed in the Press throughout Australia—about the Government and the ACTU having reached a final agreement—

Mr Taylor: You have a complete lack of understanding of the arbitration system.

Mr COURT: It is a cosy little operation that has to go.

It is a pleasure to hear from the member for Cockburn. I have heard that the ALP has problems with its left-wing branch in Cockburn and is thinking about disbanding it.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! If the Deputy Premier wishes to join in with his wild interjecting, it might be appropriate for him to return to his seat, from which he is entitled to interject if I let him, which I am not going to do.

Mr COURT: I am very serious about this whole question of deregulation of the labour market. Members opposite do not like the fact that deregulation of the labour market is now a subject of public debate. They do not like the fact that the new leader of the Federal Liberal Party—

Mr Taylor: Suffer, junior workers!

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order!

Mr COURT: I repeat that a businessman in Kellerberrin no longer has any say in what he will pay his employee. It seems it does not matter that he is having a tough time in Kellerberrin; it seems it does not matter that third parties are telling him he will have to pay certain wages and work under certain conditions; it seems it does not matter that he must pay a superannuation component; it seems it does not matter that if he cannot afford all this he has no choice but to put that person out of work. Members opposite are saying that it is a good system.

Mr Taylor: When should they change the wage rate? You are saying junior workers should support multinational companies like McDonald's in seeking to pay lower wage rates. You are saying McDonald's cannot afford to pay the proper wage rate for junior workers.

Mr COURT: I will explain that at another time quite willingly. I am prepared to discuss it at some length, and I will do so as I have done in the past.

The Deputy Premier has also been attending business seminars around the State at considerable expense to the taxpayer with all the elaborate mailing that goes on. I would like to know how confidential are those Government mailing lists. I would like to know where the Government got the lists from. The more the Deputy Premier travels around the State trying to defend his Party's decision on small business the better, because he supports a capital gains tax, a tax on fringe benefits, and standover and blackmail tactics in certain militant unions. He supports his Government's openly competing with the private sector through the WADC, Exim, the Tourism Commission, and the like. The more the Deputy Premier gets out there trying to defend his Government's actions the better.

I want to touch on the question of interest rates, a matter which was raised by the Minister for Agriculture. It certainly is of major concern to all people in the rural community, whether farmers, businessmen, or home owners. The Minister has told us that interest rates are high and are causing problems. We all know that; the Premier knows it only too well. That is why he has started to panic on this issue.

It has been a sad joke this year that we have had the Prime Minister, the Premier, the Federal Treasurer, and the Minister for Housing, all telling us that interest rates will start falling and that the rise in rates is a temporary, short-term thing, and there is a bit of pressure. It is a sad joke because interest rates have been skyrocketing.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Burkett): Order! I would like to hear the member for Nedlands for 13 minutes or less.

Mr COURT: I shudder to think what some farm machinery dealers must be paying for holding their stocks these days. The Minister expressed concern about high commercial bill rates and the like, but some of those dealers' floor plan facilities are extremely high.

It is interesting to see what the Government said would happen about interest rates before the last election. I refer to the *Daily News* of 1 May this year which quotes Mr Hawke, before the December 1984 Federal election, as saying—

“And the best is still ahead of us.

“Australia and Australians will, during 1985, reap the interest-rate rewards that are flowing from the successful policies of the past 20 months.

“We’ve ploughed the fields and sown the seeds. In the very near future we will harvest the crop.”

And in the House of Representatives on February 25, Mr Keating repeated that he agreed there was a further interest rate fall ahead.

“I stand by that,” he said.

That is what these people have been saying. The Federal Government said interest rates will fall because of its successful policies in the past 20 months. What rubbish that has been! Interest rates have gone in the opposite direction. They have been going up because of Federal Government policies, and the Premier is now realising the mess he is in. He is starting to say that it is because of the Federal Government’s policies and it will have to change them and do something about them. He is saying the Federal Government cannot keep interest rates high to keep the value of the dollar up. Is it not funny how quickly members opposite turn around. A couple of minutes ago they were saying they support Bob Hawke and his policies unequivocally.

Mr Gordon Hill: Do you support the policies of John Howard?

Mr COURT: Of course I did not have to be exactly the same as John Howard. In the Liberal Party one has the choice of being different; members opposite do not have that choice. A few minutes ago members opposite were saying, “We support Bob Hawke,” the man who said interest rates would come down because of what the Government has done in the past 20 months. Only a couple of days ago the Premier did a complete turnaround and said, “The Feds are mucking it up and interest rates have gone high because of their policies. They had better do something about it.” I do not know how the Government is going to live with the capital gains tax and the fringe benefits tax. No wonder farmers and business people Australia-wide are concerned about these problems.

Let us look at interest rates. The member for Kalgoorlie likes to think he is the expert on the subject.

Mr Taylor: I know more than you.

Mr Bryce: He has forgotten more than you know.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! I will ask the Deputy Premier only once more not to interject, and certainly not from a strange seat.

Mr Blaikie interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! That does not open the floodgates for the member for Vasse either.

Mr COURT: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker.

In order to finance its big deficit the Federal Government has to keep selling bonds on the market, and a lot of funds are being taken out of the money market so the Reserve Bank has money to spend. This country still has a weak currency, and as the Premier said this week, the Federal Treasurer is keeping interest rates high to keep the value of our currency high. As the Premier said in answer to questions, inflationary expectations are now being built in. We have an explanation for the high interest rates; let us do something about them. We know we have to start reducing deficits. We know we have to improve our declining trade performance. This country has problems and the rural community cannot shift lamb exports to Japan. One Government body has been trying to sell lamb to Japanese supermarkets. It has been successful but we cannot supply the lamb because we cannot get a regular shipment to Japan. The reason for that is industrial action by the TWU. What have the Japanese supermarkets done—they have gone to New Zealand to buy the lamb. That is what is happening.

Look at the problems we have in getting wheat exports out of this country. The Government talks about—and we agree with it—improving our export performance. One of the first things that must be done is to allow the goods to go out. Look at what is happening in Bunbury. We could spend a whole night debating what has happened in that port. Look at what has happened in the Mudginberri dispute where millions of dollars of export contracts have been lost because of the activities of a particular union with the support of the Federal Government. Members opposite cannot have it both ways; they cannot say we must improve our export performance and then not allow the goods to leave the country.

I come back to my original reasons for entering the debate. The fact is that when we talk about the problems in the country areas we tend to think purely of the farmers. Their problems are bad enough, but it is important that we think also about the businessmen whose livelihoods depend on the success of the farmers in the community. We believe that they too have special problems and that this

Government does not face up to those problems. Many of the problems are similar to the overall problems experienced by the general business community, and it gives me great pleasure to support the motion moved by a member from this side of the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Tonkin (Leader of the House).

House adjourned at 11.11 p.m.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

WATER RESOURCES: IRRIGATION

Camballin: Israeli Investigation

418. Mr LAURANCE, to the Minister for Transport:

What assistance, if any, has been provided by the State Government to the Israeli team presently in Western Australia to investigate a possible involvement in the future of the Camballin irrigation project?

Mr GRILL replied:

I assume the member is referring to the team of consultants employed by AIL Holdings Pty Ltd, the owners of Liveringa-Camballin.

The consultants have had discussions with officers from a number of Government departments as well as private individuals in both Perth and Kununurra as a basis for preparing a development strategy for Liveringa-Camballin.

AGRICULTURE: TRACTORS

Phillips-Merredin

434. Mr COWAN, to the Minister for Industrial Development:

(1) What was the full amount of money made available by the Government through loans or guarantees to the Merredin tractor firm Phillips Acremaster?

(2) When were they first incurred and when were they due for repayment?

(3) What amount of this money owed to the Government has been recovered by the receiver-manager appointed to take control of the company?

(4) When was the receiver-manager appointed?

(5) (a) Has the Government provided the receiver-manager with additional guarantees or funds since the date of his appointment for the purpose of maintaining the operations of the tractor manufacturer;

(b) if "Yes, what is the full amount of Government assistance provided?

(6) Has Exim gained its stake in the joint marketing company by taking over the debts of guarantees of the Government?

(7) Why has the Government been prepared to extend the terms of credit for the receiver-manager when it was not prepared to offer similar credit facilities to the original owners of Phillips Acremaster?

Mr BRYCE replied:

(1) \$166 000.

(2) 1976—\$86 000 Government guarantee—due for repayment 31 July 1977.

1979—\$40 000 drought relief loan—due for repayment 1984.

1981—\$40 000 drought relief loan—due for repayment 1986.

(3) The amount of money recovered by the receiver-manager is considered to be of a confidential nature.

(4) December 1982.

(5) (a) Yes;

(b) \$420 000 was made available to the receiver-manager by the R and I Bank of Western Australia against the security of a Government guarantee.

(6) No.

(7) The details of the credit facilities extended to the receiver-manager are considered to be of a commercial and confidential nature. However, it should be noted that the debts are expected to be repaid in full in the near future.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT: "ALBANY TOMORROW"

Telephone Hot Line

436. Mr HASSELL, to the Minister for Industrial Development:

(1) Over what period did the Government conduct a telephone hotline with regard to the Albany Tomorrow study?

(2) What was the total cost associated with the hotline service?

(3) Of the above cost, what amount was incurred in respect of advertising and promoting the hotline?

(4) How many responses were there to that hotline?

- (5) In what way were the results of the hotline analysed and by whom?
- (6) Will he undertake to provide me with a copy of that analysis?

Mr BRYCE replied:

- (1) 14 to 16 May 1985 inclusive.
- (2) \$432.
- (3) Advertising costs were \$432. Department of Industrial Development staff manned the telephone service as part of their normal duties. Local radio station 6VA kindly provided free coverage of the service.
- (4) Twenty people responded to the service.
- (5) Submissions to the hotline were all supportive of the "Albany Tomorrow" concept. The results were overviewed by the research officer of "Albany Tomorrow" and discussed by the strategy group.
- (6) The service was provided by the "Albany Tomorrow" strategy group to generate community interest in the study and to gain some idea of the extent of local support. No formal analysis was made of the result, but it provided a useful indication of community support for the "Albany Tomorrow" study, obtained at a relatively small cost.

FORESTS

Timber Industry: Review

452. Mr BLAIKIE, to the Minister with special responsibility for "Bunbury 2000":

- (1) Can he advise whether the South West Development Authority has sought views from organisations and people interested in the timber industry?
- (2) What are the terms of the review?
- (3) Who has been contacted?
- (4) What is the purpose of the inquiry?
- (5) What has been the response to date?

Mr GRILL replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) The terms of review and possible terms of reference have not been finalised.
- (3) Those contacted were—
Shire of Manjimup
Bunning Bros Ltd, Perth

Ms Niamo Segal, Forest Defence Foundation

Mr David Reid, Bridgetown West

Mr Don Keene Dept of Conservation and Land Management

Hon. H. Evans, Minister for Agriculture

Forest Products Association

Dr S. Shea, Dept of Conservation and Land Management

Ms Beth Schultz, Conservation Council of WA (Inc)

Mr Ron Gillam, Amalgamated Timber Products Pty Ltd

Secretary, Small Timber Mills Association.

- (4) Discuss need for review and possible terms of reference.
- (5) Ten responses have been received.

487, 519, and 532. *Postponed.*

GAMBLING

Casino: Sand Cartage

535. Mr RUSHTON, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Who is responsible for monitoring problems which result from sand and other cartage along Riverside Drive destined for the Burswood Island casino site?
- (2) Has any monitoring been done of the following problems which have arisen since heavy vehicles commenced using the Riverside Drive route to the casino site—
 - (a) air pollution;
 - (b) road damage;
 - (c) traffic congestion;
 - (d) traffic accidents?
- (3) If "Yes" to (2), would he table the results of this monitoring?
- (4) If "No" to (2), will he—
 - (a) initiate a monitoring programme on (2) (a), (b), (c) and (d) as a matter of urgency;
 - (b) table all recorded information available on (2) (a), (b), (c) and (d) from the date of commencement of work on the casino site until the present time?

Mr GRILL replied:

- (1) The monitoring of problems associated with the flow of heavy commercial vehicles is the responsibility of a number of different agencies. It is not the normal practice of these agencies to monitor traffic destined to an individual construction project.
- (2) Apart from the normal recording of traffic accidents through the Police Department, I am not aware of any monitoring being carried out.
- (3) Answered by (2).
- (4) I am not aware that the casino construction traffic is causing any exceptional problems that would justify special monitoring.

INVENTIONS ACT

Assistance: Applications

538. Mr THOMPSON, to the Minister for Industrial Development:

- (1) Is the Government referring applications for assistance under the Inventions Act to the Western Australian Product Innovation Centre?
- (2) Is he aware that the Western Australian Product Innovation Centre has been charging applicants \$100 for making an assessment?
- (3) How much money was allocated for use under the Inventions Act for assisting inventors for each financial year since its inception?
- (4) How much of each year's allocation was used for this purpose?
- (5) How much money has been allocated under the Act for 1985-86?
- (6) Who is responsible for administering it?

Mr BRYCE replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Yes.
- (3) and (4)

Financial Year	Allocation	Amount Disbursed	Balance
	\$	\$	\$
1975-76	10 000	—	10 000.00
1976-77	10 000	2 650.00	17 350.00
1977-78	5 000	4 672.15	17 677.85
1978-79	10 000	6 054.06	21 623.79
1979-80	10 000	11 955.90	19 667.89
1980-81	10 000	9 400.00	20 267.89
1981-82	14 000	8 500.00	25 767.89
1982-83	NIL	5 591.90	20 175.99
1983-84	NIL	5 600.00	14 575.99
1984-85	NIL	1 176.65	13 399.34
TOTAL	69 000	55 600.66	

The emphasis on financial support for innovation has changed in recent years. As well as providing funding and support for the WA Product Innovation Centre, an amount of \$3.25 million has been allocated to the Technology Development Fund to assist with the development of innovative industry.

(5) Nil.

(6) I am.

ROAD BRIDGE

Guildford Bridge: Upgrading

550. Mr RUSHTON, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Is Guildford bridge under consideration for upgrading?
- (2) Do the municipalities of Swan and Bassendean agree that Guildford bridge should be upgraded?
- (3) Does the monitoring on the bridge of the vehicle traffic indicate that the capacity should be doubled?

Mr GRILL replied:

- (1) Yes. However any action on the upgrading would be as a result of prior consultation with the two local authorities involved. No funds have been allocated and no date set for any upgrading.
- (2) The Bassendean Town Council has requested upgrading but the Swan Shire Council is believed to be divided on the matter.
- (3) Monitoring of traffic indicates the capacity of the bridge is inadequate.

TRADE

Exim Corporation: Subsidiaries

552. Mr HASSELL, to the Premier:

With reference to his answers to questions 376 and 377 of 1985, I ask if he would simply please name at this stage all the subsidiary companies of Western Australian Exim Corporation Ltd?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

I reiterate that the only operating subsidiary of Exim is WA Livestock Holdings Ltd.

Eight companies became subsidiaries of Exim as a result of the purchase of the Emanuel pastoral leases—

Margaret Downs Pty Ltd
Cherrabun Pty Ltd

Christmas Creek Pty Ltd
 Rarriwell & Meda Pty Ltd
 Elsa Transport Pty Ltd
 Emanuel Buildings Pty Limited
 Beef Air Navigation Co Pty Ltd
 Farnley Pty Ltd

The remaining subsidiaries are—

Ben West Ltd
 WA Education Marketing Organisation Ltd
 WA Investment Advisory Services Ltd
 Favonius Nominees Ltd
 Western Australian Extractives Ltd

569 and 583 to 585. *Postponed.*

AMERICA'S CUP

Union Attitudes

586. Mr PETER JONES, to the Minister representing the Minister for Industrial Relations:

- (1) Is it a fact that a further meeting between Government officers, maritime unions, and the Chamber of Shipping was held on 19 August 1985 to discuss union attitudes to several America's Cup matters?
- (2) Is it also a fact that the maritime unions are demanding Australian union crews on certain vessels visiting Fremantle?
- (3) Does this demand include launches conveying stores to moored vessels?
- (4) What is the Government's attitude to any such demands?

Mr PARKER replied:

- (1) to (4) The meeting of 19 August 1985 was to facilitate an ongoing detailed exchange of information on shipping and ferry movements during the America's Cup.

Issues raised are being pursued through direct negotiations between the relevant unions and shipping operators.

The Government is concerned to ensure that appropriate industrial relations practices are observed by all parties.

587 to 590. *Postponed.*

TRADE: EXIM CORPORATION

Mr Brian Easton: Role

591. Mr PETER JONES, to the Premier:

- (1) What is the role and responsibility of Mr Brian Easton, in the Western Australian Exim Corporation?
- (2) Was Mr Easton appointed to his position on a permanent or contractual basis?
- (3) By whom was Mr Easton appointed to his present position?
- (4) On whose recommendation was Mr Easton appointed?
- (5) Was Mr Easton's appointment ratified by State Cabinet?
- (6) If not, why not?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

- (1) Managing director.
- (2) Contractual.
- (3) The chairman and board of directors.
- (4) The chairman and board of directors.
- (5) The appointment is a Government appointment and all the members of the Cabinet are aware and approve of Mr Easton's appointment.
- (6) Not applicable.

GRAIN

Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd: Road Transport Tenders

592. Mr PETER JONES, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Does the Transport Commission award and administer road transport tenders for, and on behalf of, Co-operative Bulk Handling?
- (2) Is the Transport Commission currently administering the road haulage of grain from installations at Lake Varley and Holt Rock to Lake King?
- (3) What is the value and destination of this specific tender?

Mr GRILL replied:

- (1) Yes, at the request of CBH and under my direction.
- (2) Yes, for that grain being transported to Esperance.

- (3) Based upon the receipts of grain in the three bins from the 1984-85 grain harvest the estimated value of all the grain transported to Esperance is \$2 296 420.

The question relating to the destination of the grain from these bins should be referred to Co-operative Bulk Handling.

593 and 594. *Postponed.*

TRADE

Exim Corporation: Memorandum of Articles

595. Mr PETER JONES, to the Premier:

- (1) With regard to the Western Australian Exim Corporation, does the memorandum of articles for the corporation contain an "objects clause"?
- (2) If so, what are the stated principal articles?
- (3) If not, why is there no stated "objects" clause?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) Under 1983 amendments to the Companies Code it is no longer obligatory to have an objects clause.

596 and 597. *Postponed.*

ANIMALS

Dogs: Greyhounds

598. Mr BATEMAN, to the Minister for Local Government:

- (1) Since there appears to be an ever-increasing number of people keeping and training more than two greyhound dogs in built up housing areas in the metropolitan district, is he aware that these extra greyhound dogs are causing a great deal of annoyance to families living nearby the kennels of the offending residents?
- (2) As the residents so affected by the noise, defecation etc., of these greyhound dogs have appealed to their local authorities without success, can he advise what further action is open to them to ensure that the owners of the extra greyhound dogs abide by the law?

Mr CARR replied:

- (1) and (2) I am not aware that the keeping of greyhounds contrary to two dog limits is a widespread problem in residential sectors of the metropolitan area. It is, of course, open to local governments to allow more than two dogs on premises and, in addition, some provide special kennel areas where greater numbers of dogs may be permitted. In the absence of specific details of the problems alluded to I am unable to provide an answer as to avenues which may be available to affected residents, but I would be pleased to make enquiries with the relevant local governments should more information be made available.

MR ALESSANDRO LEONE

Letter

599. Mr CRANE, to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services:

- (1) Is he in receipt of a letter dated 15 August 1985 from Alessandro Leone of Wanneroo?
- (2) If "Yes", when will he be in a position to answer the letter and the questions contained therein?

Mr CARR replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) A reply will be forwarded as soon as possible.

MOTOR VEHICLES

Unlicensed: Temporary Permits

600. Mr McNEE, to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services:

- (1) Have any changes been made recently in the issuing of temporary permits that are required by persons to enable them to move an unlicensed vehicle?
- (2) If so, what are they?
- (3) Why were these changes necessary?

Mr CARR replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Temporary permits can no longer be issued over the phone.
- (3) The issue of temporary permits by telephone was found to be in conflict with the statutory provisions of the Treasury regulations and section 26 of the Road Traffic Act.

In view of the representations which have been made on behalf of the rural community in regard to the hardship incurred by some country people who are isolated by distance from permit issuing offices, the department is reviewing the legislative provisions in liaison with the Treasury, to establish whether a solution can be arrived at to accommodate persons living in isolated country regions.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT VALUATIONS

Use: Government Departments

601. Mr McNEE, to the Minister representing the Minister for Budget Management:

- (1) Which other departments make use of the same valuations as local government?
- (2) Do these departments make a contribution to the cost of re-valuation of a shire?
- (3) If so, how much do they contribute?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

- (1) Depending on the type of valuation used by a local authority, the same valuations may be used by the Water Authority of Western Australia, country water, sewerage and drainage boards, and the State Taxation Department.
- (2) Yes.
- (3) The total cost of the valuation is apportioned between the various bodies in accordance with formulae which take account of the use which each body makes of the valuation. A 50 per cent Government subsidy is applied to the local authority's proportion of the cost.

ROTTNEST ISLAND BOARD

Chairmanship

602. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister representing the Minister for Tourism:

- (1) For how long has Mr Dallas Dempster been acting chairman of the Rottnest Island Board?
- (2) When is it anticipated that a permanent appointment to the position of chairman will be made?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

- (1) Mr Dallas Dempster has been acting as President of the Rottnest Island Board since 22 January 1985, when the appointment of Brian Thomas Burke MLA was cancelled and revoked in Executive Council under the provisions of the Parks and Reserves Act 1895.
- (2) A permanent appointment to the position of president will be considered at the appropriate time.

EDUCATION

Health Education Syllabus: Availability

603. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister for Education:

- (1) When will the health education K-10 syllabus be made available to schools?
- (2) Has there been any parent in-put to the development of the syllabus?

Mr PEARCE replied:

- (1) The K-10 health education syllabus has been available to schools in draft form during 1985.

Implementation of the final document and the teachers guides to accompany the syllabus outline will commence in 1986.

- (2) A representative of WACSSO has served on the Health Education Syllabus Advisory Committee since its inception in 1981.

All materials have been made available at all times to WACSSO officers. The health education section of the department has worked in close liaison with WACSSO throughout the project.

604. *Postponed.*

EDUCATION

Early Childhood Education: Changes

605. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister for Education:

What changes are being planned for the early childhood section within the Education Department?

Mr PEARCE replied:

A working party is being established to examine the possibilities of regionalising the supervision of early childhood education while still maintaining a head office administrative and staffing role.

EDUCATION

Teacher-Pupil Ratios

606. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister for Education:

Would he provide me with both primary and secondary teacher/pupil ratios as at—

- (a) 30 June 1981;
- (b) 30 June 1982;
- (c) 30 June 1983;
- (d) 30 June 1984;
- (e) 30 June 1985?

Mr PEARCE replied:

Year	Primary (including special schools)	Primary	Secondary
(a) 1981	21.6	22.1	13.0
(b) 1982	21.2	21.7	13.2
(c) 1983	20.5	21.0	13.3
(d) 1984	20.1	20.7	13.3
(e) 1985	Data not yet completed.		

This data excludes teachers on long service leave, extended sick leave and leave without pay.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Head Office Reorganisation

607. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister for Education:

- (1) Bearing in mind his comments addressed to the Teachers Union conference on 3 September, how does he plan to straighten out the head office of the Education Department after the next State election?
- (2) Would he provide me with examples of "obstructionism within the Education Department" that he has encountered during his time as Minister for Education?

Mr PEARCE replied:

- (1) The member will be aware from his attendance at the conference that my remarks were made in the context of my proposals to transfer some decision-making power to schools and regional offices. I am still working on the details of my proposals.

- (2) The member will be well aware of the convention that matters relating to advice and discussions between a Minister and his department are confidential.

EDUCATION: TEACHERS

Duties Other Than Teaching Time: Cost

608. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister for Education:

Would he indicate to me how he has arrived at an estimate of \$9 million as being part of the cost of implementing one-tenth DOTT time in primary schools of Western Australia?

Mr PEARCE replied:

Primary school teachers currently have one hour non-contact time in a school week of approximately 27.1 hours. A 10 per cent non-contact time would represent 2.71 hours per week per teacher. The increase of 1.71 hours per week would apply to all teachers in non-promotional positions. There are approximately 5 300 such teachers and therefore about 9 063 hours of teaching time per week would have to be made up by additional staff. Each of these staff would also be entitled to 2.71 hours of non-contact time and therefore about 370 additional teachers would be needed.

At an average of \$25 000 per teacher, this amounts to about \$9.25 million.

609. *Postponed.*

TRANSPORT

Taxi Fares: Increased

610. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) When were taxi fares last increased in Western Australia?
- (2) Is an increase in fares being considered at the current time?
- (3) When is it likely that these increases will be announced?

Mr GRILL replied:

- (1) 3 August 1984.
- (2) Yes.
- (3) Before 1 October 1985.

EDUCATION

Teachers: Early Literacy In-service Course

611. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister for Education:

- (1) What contribution is the State Government making towards the early literacy in-service course?
- (2) How many teachers have benefited from the course to date?

Mr PEARCE replied:

- (1) The State Government provides salary and costs of one of the three tutor trainers in the programme and full system support for coordination of programmes and regional initiatives which have included provision of training centres, advisory personnel, on-going professional development for tutors and financial assistance to schools and resources for teachers who undertake the ELIC programme.
- (2) To date 33 teachers have been trained as tutors in the metropolitan area and a further 22 are currently undergoing training in country areas. Six hundred teachers in the metropolitan area commenced the ELIC workshop programme in August of this year.

TOURISM COMMISSION

Chairmanship

612. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister representing the Minister for Tourism:

- (1) Is Mr Basil Atkinson still acting Chairman of the Western Australian Tourism Commission?
- (2) When was he appointed as the acting chairman of the commission?
- (3) When is it anticipated that a full-time appointment will be made to this position?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) March 1985.
- (3) Refer to answer (3), question 419.

613 to 615. *Postponed.*

EDUCATION ACT

Updating

616. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister for Education:

- (1) Is the report in *The West Australian* of 12 September that the Education Act is to be updated factual?

- (2) If so, who will be undertaking the review of the Act prior to the updated legislation being presented to the Parliament?

Mr PEARCE replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) The Education Department in consultation with the Crown Law Department.

This information was supplied to the member on Tuesday 17 September in response to question 513.

HOUSING

Rental: Purchasers

617. Mr CASH, to the Minister for Housing:

- (1) Has Homeswest purchased established homes for rental purposes during—
 - (a) 1982-83;
 - (b) 1983-84; and
 - (c) 1984-85, in the following suburbs—
 - (i) Mt Lawley;
 - (ii) Coolbinia;
 - (iii) Yokine;
 - (iv) Menora;
 - (v) Dianella;
 - (vi) Morley?
- (2) If "Yes"—
 - (a) how many houses were purchased in each of these years;
 - (b) what was the capital outlay?

Mr WILSON replied:

- (1) and (2) As the question will take some time to collate, the member will be advised in writing.

618 and 619. *Postponed.*

COURTS

Bail Act: Amendments

620. Mr CASH, to the Minister representing the Attorney General:

- (1) Is the Attorney General aware that the New South Wales Police Force had to employ additional staff to cope with an increased work load created by amendments to their Bail Act?
- (2) (a) As the New South Wales Bail Act is similar to the proposed Western Australian Bail Act, does the Attorney General intend to re-

cruit additional police officers to cope with the increased work load created by the provisions of the proposed Western Australian Bail Act;

- (b) if not, why not?
- (3) Is the Attorney General aware that increasing numbers of both serving and retired police officers are of the view that the administrative complexity of the proposed Bail Act will dramatically increase the time taken to admit persons to bail and reduce the time available for police officers to maintain law and order?
- (4) Is the proposed administrative complexity of the proposed Bail Act designed to deter police officers from making arrests?

Mr GRILL replied:

- (1) I have been informed that additional staff were employed in NSW, but the circumstances of that increase are not known to me.
- (2) (a) and (b) The recruitment of police officers is not my responsibility.
- (3) Some officers have expressed concern about the time the new procedures might involve. For that reason, I have arranged to defer proclamation of the Act pending further consultation between the Under Secretary for Law and the Commissioner of Police.
- (4) No.

AMERICA'S CUP FESTIVAL OF SPORT

Government Support

621. Mr HASSELL, to the Minister representing the Minister for Tourism:

- (1) Adverting to the reply given to question 302, on Wednesday 28 August, in which the Minister advised that the Government had given no commitment to the America's Cup Festival of Sport, if there has been no financial commitment, has any other form of support been sought or offered?
- (2) Is the Government willing to consider any form of support or commitment if it is considered necessary?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

- (1) See answer (1) to question 302.
- (2) Not applicable.

622 and 623. *Postponed.*

MINISTERS OF THE CROWN

Cabinet Functional Review Committee: Reports

624. Mr HASSELL, to the Minister representing the Minister for Budget Management:

- (1) How many reports have been made by the Functional Review Committee?
- (2) What is the subject matter of each one of those reports?
- (3) What was the date of each of those reports?
- (4) In each case, to which Minister or Ministers were the reports made?
- (5) (a) Have any of the reports been made public;
- (b) if so, which and on what dates;
- (c) If not, why not?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

- (1) to (3) The Functional Review Committee has made a number of reports in line with its role of reviewing the functions and services provided by all Government agencies.
- The committee's work is an extension of the ordinary process of internal advice to Government and details will not necessarily be made public.
- (4) The Functional Review Committee submits its reports to the Minister for Budget Management.
- (5) Answered by (1) to (3).

625 to 627. *Postponed.*

WATER RESOURCES: UNDERGROUND

Jandakot: Pumping

628. Mr RUSHTON, to the Minister for Water Resources:

- (1) Is the Jandakot aquifer being surveyed towards increasing the pumping from it to supplement the metropolitan water supply?
- (2) Is it a fact that the water level in Lake Forrestdale has fallen by half a metre since pumping from the aquifer began?
- (3) Is he aware that Lake Forrestdale is an "A"-Class reserve and an important reserve for unique birdlife?
- (4) Is he aware there is a management plan now being prepared to protect the lake?

- (5) Will he ensure the Water Authority allows for the continuance of the lake when it is preparing its formal plans for drawing off water from the Jandakot aquifer?

Mr TONKIN replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Water levels in Lake Forrestdale fluctuate annually depending on rainfall and public and private pumping of groundwater in the area. Since Water Authority pumping commenced in 1979, water levels in Lake Forrestdale have varied from 0.57 metres below to 0.25 metres above the 1979 levels.
- (3) Yes.
- (4) No.
- (5) Yes.

ROAD

Nanga Brook Road: Realignment

629. Mr RUSHTON, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) When is it expected that a re-alignment of the Nanga Brook Road will be determined which links Dwellingup and the Nanga Brook Bridge?
- (2) Which alternatives are being considered?
- (3) When will the re-aligned road be constructed?

Mr GRILL replied:

- (1) to (3) I understand the Murray Shire Council is currently reviewing the alignment of Nanga Road.

ROAD BRIDGE

Nanga Brook Road: Construction

630. Mr RUSHTON, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) When was the Nanga Brook Road bridge built over the Murray River?
- (2) What is the maximum tonnage this bridge is capable of carrying?
- (3) What are the plans for duplicating or replacing this bridge?
- (4) When is this bridge expected to be re-built?

- (5) Does this bridge have a high priority for replacement due to the lack of reasonably close alternative crossing and the fast growing tourist traffic which uses this bridge?

Mr GRILL replied:

- (1) 1948.
- (2) The bridge is capable of carrying all normal regulation vehicles, which are permitted a maximum gross load of 38 tonnes.
- (3) to (5) There are no current plans to duplicate or replace this bridge, which has a further life of at least 15 years.

631. *Postponed.*

WATER RESOURCES

Dams: Wandering

632. Mr RUSHTON, to the Minister for Water Resources:

- (1) What water is held in the two Wandering town dams?
- (2) What water was held in these dams at this time last year?
- (3) (a) Has a decision to line the second dam been made;
(b) if "Yes", when will the work be done?
- (4) Is further consideration being given to the Shire of Wandering proposal to construct another dam outside the town?
- (5) Is it expected rationing of water will be introduced in Wandering this season given that we have an average fall of rain for the balance of the season?
- (6) Is the second dam still leaking in unacceptable amounts?

Mr TONKIN replied:

- (1) Storages in the Wandering town water supply dams as at 18/9/85 were:

	Cubic Metres
No. 1 dam	6 672
No. 2 dam	12 490
TOTAL	19 162M³

(2) Storages in the town dams as at 12/9/84 were:	
	Cubic Metres
No. 1 dam	3 890
No. 2 dam	10 510
TOTAL	14 400M³

(3) The No. 2 dam will not be lined at this stage.

(4) and (5) No.

(6) The No. 2 dam is currently holding 97 per cent of its capacity and the level has remained static for the last three weeks, but the leakage rate is still considered to be higher than desirable. However, from previous monitoring, this rate of leakage only persists when the dam is relatively full.

633 and 634. *Postponed.*

WATER RESOURCES

Country Water Supply Improvement Programme: Allocations

635. Mr OLD, to the Minister for Water Resources:

- (1) What amount of money has been made available to Western Australia under the Commonwealth Government Country Water Supply Improvement Programme for the year ending 30 June 1986?
- (2) Have allocations from this fund yet been made?
- (3) If "No" to (2), what is the closing date for applications for funds?

Mr TONKIN replied:

- (1) Nil.
- (2) No.
- (3) The programme for 1985-86 is to operate under new guidelines which have not yet been announced. The closing date for applications for funds is not known.

636 to 640. *Postponed.*

ABORIGINAL AGENCIES

Financial Statements

641. Mr PETER JONES, to the Minister with special responsibility for Aboriginal Affairs:

- (1) Is he aware that the Commonwealth Auditor General, in a report tabled in

Federal Parliament on Tuesday, 10 September 1985, noted that certain funds were not required to prepare financial statements regarding use of public moneys distributed specifically for the benefit of Aborigines, and recommended prompt action to ensure effectiveness of payments made specifically for the benefit of Aborigines?

- (2) As some funds voted by the Commonwealth Parliament are distributed by, or through, State agencies, departments and instrumentalities, what action is the State taking to ensure it complies with responsible auditing and accountability procedures?
- (3) Do satisfactory arrangements exist for ensuring public accountability of all funding used for the use and benefit of Aborigines?

Mr WILSON replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) Any funds from the Commonwealth come through the medium of the State Treasury. Departments and statutory agencies are required to account and audit such funds in the normal manner.
- (3) The member should be aware that the majority of funding for Aboriginal affairs is provided by the Commonwealth. I understand that the various Commonwealth agencies have established their own guidelines for accountability.

642. *Postponed.*

INSURANCE

State Government Insurance Office: Liability Reinsurance

643. Mr PETER JONES, to the Treasurer:

- (1) Is it fact that the State Government Insurance Office is experiencing difficulty in renewing part of its liability reinsurance?
- (2) Is it also fact that this liability reinsurance is normally required to be completed by the end of June?

- (3) For what reason is the State Government Insurance Office experiencing this difficulty?
- (4) Is it anticipated that the above difficulty will be reflected in a rise in premiums to policy holders of the State Government Insurance Office?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

- (1) The SGIO did not experience any unusual difficulties receiving liability reinsurance other than the general difficulties experienced by most Australian liability insurers.
- (2) Yes.
- (3) Australian insurers generally were affected by world market trends with respect of liability reinsurance capacity.
- (4) This question is hypothetical.

CRIMINAL INJURIES COMPENSATION

Payments

644. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister representing the Attorney General:

- (1) What was the aggregate amount of paid out demands from the Consolidated Revenue Fund to claimants under the provisions of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Act 1982 from the coming into operation of that Act (or if that is not available from 1 July 1983) to 30 June 1985?
- (2) What was the amount recouped from offenders and/or others by the Consolidated Revenue Fund during the same period?
- (3) What was the maximum, minimum and the average amount of compensation awarded in individual cases?

Mr GRILL replied:

- (1) \$712 684.38.
- (2) \$22 000.29.
- (3) Maximum—\$15 000
minimum—\$82.25
average—\$4 783.11.

645 and 646. *Postponed.*

CRIMINAL INJURIES COMPENSATION

Civil Actions

647. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister representing the Attorney General:

Is it proposed that in cases where the assessor established the right to compensation of directing of criminal injuries against the Consolidated Revenue Fund based on the provisions of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Act 1985, the Crown would instigate civil action against the person who although causing the injury was not charged with a criminal offence or has been acquitted of such charge?

Mr GRILL replied:

Under the provisions of the present Bill, the Crown's right to recover will exist only in respect of convicted offenders (clause 38).

CRIMINAL INJURIES COMPENSATION BILL

Explanatory Memorandum

648. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister representing the Attorney General:

Having stated in the Attorney General's second reading speech—when introducing the Bill for the Criminal Injuries Compensation Act—that “I have had an explanatory memorandum prepared which outlines these changes, and I propose to distribute that with the Bill”, and not having followed his proposition, could the Attorney General now state when he is going to distribute the explanatory memorandum which he had prepared?

Mr GRILL replied:

Reference to an explanatory memorandum was included in the speech in error.

ANIMALS

Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals: Government Assistance

649. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister representing the Attorney General:

Would he please say either in his capacity as being responsible for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act or as Minister for Budget Management, what financial assistance the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty

to Animals is going to have from the Government for the 1985-86 financial year?

Mr GRILL replied:

The information will be provided when the Budget is presented to Parliament.

ANIMALS

Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals: Demonstrations

650. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister representing the Attorney General:

Is it the Government's policy to allow public moneys to be used indirectly by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals for organising demonstrations, advertisements or other forms of lobbying against animal experimentation, for instance, by the Agricultural Department, or livestock producers in the State?

Mr GRILL replied:

Government grants to the RSPCA are for the society's general purposes.

651 and 652. *Postponed.*

ACTS AMENDMENT (SEXUAL ASSAULTS) BILL

Discussions

653. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister representing the Attorney General:

- (1) With which organisation, group or individuals have the provisions of the Act Amendment (Sexual Assaults) Bill 1985 been discussed for their comments?
- (2) Have these organisations, groups or individuals agreed with all the proposed provisions?
- (3) If not, or if they only partially agreed, what were their comments?

Mr GRILL replied:

- (1) Law Society
Criminal Lawyers' Asscn
Crown Law Dept
Australian Women Against Rape
Women's Advisory Council
Campaign Against Moral Persecution
Country Women's Asscn

Women's Electoral Lobby
Labor Lawyers' Society
Sexual Assault Referral Centre
Incest Survivors' Asscn
Rape Crisis Collective
Women's Service Guild
Various private practitioners.

- (2) and (3) Generally, the various comments received have been supportive of the proposed legislation. The Attorney General is not prepared to make the comments available as these were provided to the Government in confidence.

ACTS AMENDMENT (SEXUAL ASSAULTS) BILL

Consultation

654. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister representing the Attorney General:

Is the Attorney General considering to postpone the second reading debate of the Bill for Acts Amendment (Sexual Assaults) Act 1985, so that there should be ample opportunity for both the legal profession and the public to discuss in detail the proposed provisions of this legislation?

Mr GRILL replied:

No. There has been ample time for public discussion during the past two weeks. In addition, groups who expressed an interest in the legislation had the opportunity to comment during the drafting stage of the Bill.

LAW SOCIETY PUBLIC PURPOSES TRUST BILL

Aggregate Interest

655. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister representing the Attorney General:

What is the estimated amount of the aggregate of yearly interest on legal practitioners' trust accounts to the Law Society in accordance with the Law Society Public Purposes Trust Bill 1985?

Mr GRILL replied:

I am advised by the Law Society of WA that the estimated amount in a full year is \$600 000-\$700 000.

656 to 659. *Postponed.*

HEALTH

Private Hospitals: Control

660. Mr BRADSHAW, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Has the Commonwealth Government handed over control of private hospitals to the Western Australian Health Department?
- (2) If not, when does he expect this deregulation at the Commonwealth level to occur?
- (3) Does he intend to change the present system for reimbursing private hospitals in Western Australia when he receives control?
- (4) Will he approve more private hospital beds for subsidy when he takes control of such approvals?

Mr HODGE replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) Not known at this time.
- (3) The system of reimbursement will be dependent on the precise nature of deregulation conditions negotiated between the States and the Commonwealth, should such a move proceed.
- (4) As for (3), reimbursement and approval of private hospital beds will depend upon the conditions negotiated between the Commonwealth and State Governments.

661. *Postponed.*

HEALTH: TOBACCO

"Quit" Programme: Market Research

662. Mr HASSELL, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Has the Government undertaken market research in relation to its "Quit" programme?
- (2) If so, through what firm?
- (3) What question or issues were researched?
- (4) What was the total cost?
- (5) Will he table the results of that research in full?

Mr HODGE replied:

- (1) Yes.

- (2) (i) R. J. Donovan and Associates;
(ii) Murdoch University—Institute for Social Programme Evaluation.
- (3) (i) Communications strategy development;
(ii) Testing of advertising concepts;
(iii) Programme evaluation;
(iv) Background information collection.
- (4) \$15 240—1983-84
\$58 220—1984-85
\$24 050—1985-86.
- (5) It has been the policy not to reveal ongoing research, however the results of the 1985 Quit Campaign are very positive and are detailed below. The results are based on telephone surveys of 551 smokers resident in the Perth metropolitan area and major country centres. The surveys conducted at the end of Quit Week, three weeks after Quit Week, and again six weeks later showed that—
 - (i) Awareness of Quit Day was almost universal—99.4 per cent of smokers interviewed knew that May 15 was Quit Day.
 - (ii) Almost one in two smokers reported attempting to control their smoking at least some time during the six-week campaign. This compares favourably with one in three who attempted to control their smoking in some way during last year's (somewhat longer) campaign.
 - (iii) Six weeks after the end of the campaign, 80 per cent of those who attempted to control their smoking were still doing so and 69.8 per cent of quitters were still off cigarettes.
 - (iv) The television commercial featuring a laryngectomy patient (Mr Sam Maher) achieved very high levels of awareness—88 per cent of smokers recalled seeing the advertisement.
 - (v) The advertisement featuring Mr Maher had the greatest impact of any of the television commercials used in leading smokers to think about quitting—56.4 per cent of smokers nominated this advertisement as the one that made them think most about giving up smoking.

- (vi) Support for the campaign amongst smokers continued to be high—64 per cent of smokers interviewed at the end of Quit Week expressed overall approval of the campaign. This is comparable with levels of support achieved during the 1984 campaign; it is particularly encouraging in that levels of support amongst non-smokers are always higher than amongst smokers; and a recent survey for the Health Department also showed that as many as 89 per cent of smokers support the Government's education programmes on smoking directed towards school children.

HEALTH

Student Nurses: Training

663. Mr BRADSHAW, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Where are student nurses currently being trained and taught?
- (2) How many student nurses are enrolled at each institution in each year?
- (3) What has been the percentage drop out at each institution this year?
- (4) How does the total percentage drop out of student nurses compare this year with the previous three years?

Mr HODGE replied:

- (1) to (4) The information the member has requested will take some time to research and compile. The member will be advised in writing when the information is to hand.

FISHERIES: SWAN-CANNING

Licences: Transfers

664. Mr TRETOWAN, to the Minister for Fisheries:

- (1) What was the policy for—
 - (a) transfer of current licences; and
 - (b) appointments of assistants (employee fishermen) for the Swan Canning Estuarine Fishery in the years 1978-82 inclusive?
- (2) What criteria had to be satisfied for the approval of the transfer of licences for the Swan Canning Estuarine Fishery in the years 1978-82 inclusive?
- (3) What criteria had to be satisfied for the approval of assistants (employee

fishermen) for appointments in the Swan Canning Estuarine Fishery in the years 1978-82 inclusive?

(4) What is the present policy for—

- (a) transfers of current licences; and
- (b) appointments of assistants (employee fishermen) for the Swan Canning Estuarine Fishery?

Mr EVANS replied:

- (1) (a) Transfer of current licences was not permitted;
- (b) assistants could be licensed in cases where the Director of Fisheries considered it equitable that an established fishing unit may have an additional fisherman to assist with the operations of the fishing unit.
- (2) See (1)(a).
- (3) See (1)(b). The Director of Fisheries did not approve the licensing of any assistant fishermen in the years 1978-1982 inclusive.
- (4) (a) Transfers of current licences are not permitted;
- (b) assistants will not be licensed.

SWAN BREWERY

Old Site: Purchase

665. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Planning:

- (1) Why did he not inspect the old Swan Brewery site before paying \$5 million for its purchase?
- (2) Would he regard it as a normal common sense managerial procedure to inspect a purchase of this magnitude before committing taxpayers' funds?

Mr PEARCE replied:

- (1) and (2) The site is known to me and examination of the property was made by appropriately skilled officers before the decision to purchase.

SWAN BREWERY

Old Site: Redevelopment

666. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Planning:

Will he give an assurance that any redevelopment of the Swan Brewery site

improves the traffic safety of this section of Mounts Bay Road and a priority is given to upgrading the facilities for cyclists?

Mr PEARCE replied:

Yes.

DTX AUSTRALIA LTD

Relocation: Government Assistance

667. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Regional Development and the North West:

- (1) Has the Government offered any financial assistance to the company, DTX Australia Ltd, for it to relocate outside of Perth?
- (2) If "Yes", in what form was this financial assistance offered?

Mr GRILL replied:

- (1) No. Provision of assistance is under consideration.
- (2) Not applicable.

668. *Postponed.*

SWAN BREWERY

Old Site: Redevelopment

669. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Planning:

When will the Government announce plans for the future of the Swan Brewery site?

Mr PEARCE replied:

It is proposed in the near future to seek community views on the future use of the site. Once these views have been assessed and considered by Cabinet an announcement will be made.

670 to 672. *Postponed.*

WAGES AND SALARIES

Discounting: Deal

673. Mr COURT, to the Premier:

Does he support the new deal worked out between the Federal Government and the Australian Council of Trade Unions where unions accept wage discounting in return for tax cuts and a compulsory superannuation scheme funded by employees?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

This Government supports the continuation of the accord noting the improved industrial relations and economic environment that it has produced.

The specific details of the arrangements are still to be finalised.

MINISTERS OF THE CROWN

Visits

674. Mr COURT, to the Premier:

How many Government Ministers were in Melbourne on official business on 29 September 1984?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

If the member has any reason to believe that travel or other expenditures of an unauthorised or unnecessary nature have been undertaken, he should let me have specific grounds for his beliefs and I shall have them investigated. However, I am sure he realises that I do not keep records of the whereabouts of Ministers on a daily basis and considerable resources may need to be devoted to extracting the information he requires.

675 and 676. *Postponed.*

DTX AUSTRALIA LTD

Report: PA Consulting Services

677. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Regional Development:

- (1) Has the Government received a report from PA Technology on the company, DTX Australia Ltd?
- (2) If "Yes", will the report be made public?
- (3) Does the report support the Government offering incentives including financial assistance for DTX Australia Ltd to relocate at Bunbury?

Mr GRILL replied:

- (1) A business plan was received by DTX from PA Consultants. That business plan has been made available to the Government for perusal and a copy of the summary to the plan has been retained by Government.
- (2) The plan is not the Government's to release and this request should be made of the company.

- (3) The report did not specifically address the question of incentives but made an assessment of DTX's videotex system.

678. *Postponed.*

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: WA DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Short-term Money Market: Agreement

679. Mr COURT, to the Treasurer:

- (1) What agreement does the Western Australian Development Corporation have with the Treasury covering the investment of this State's surplus funds?
- (2) Will this agreement be made public?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

- (1) The Western Australian Development Corporation has entered into an agreement to accept and invest surplus funds from the Treasury.
- (2) The arrangement is a commercial undertaking between the State and the Western Australian Development Corporation and it is not appropriate to disclose a business arrangement of this nature publicly.

680. *Postponed.*

INVESTMENT

Japanese Investors

681. Mr COURT, to the Premier:

What has been the level of Japanese investment in Western Australia in the financial years ending—

- (a) 30 June 1980;
- (b) 30 June 1981;
- (c) 30 June 1982;
- (d) 30 June 1983;
- (e) 30 June 1984;
- (f) 30 June 1985?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

The State does not maintain any statistics on the total level of Japanese investment in Western Australia. However, I understand that statistics

on the level of foreign investment in Australia are maintained by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

SHOPPING

Trading Hours Inquiry

682. Mr COURT, to the Minister representing the Minister for Industrial Relations:

- (1) Has Commissioner Kelly returned from his overseas trip to examine the issue of trading hours?
- (2) When will his final report be released?

Mr PARKER replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) The date for the release of the final report has yet to be determined.

683 and 684. *Postponed.*

HEALTH: PATHOLOGY

State Health Laboratories: Private Gain

685. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Has the Government stopped its pathology medical technicians from using the State Health Laboratories for private gain?
- (2) If "Yes", have any moves been made to recover past expenses associated with this practice?

Mr HODGE replied:

- (1) and (2) No evidence has been produced to suggest this allegation is true. If the member has any such evidence, I would be pleased to receive it for investigation.

686 to 688. *Postponed.*

FORESTS

Logging Policy

689. Mr RUSHTON, to the Minister for Conservation and Land Management:

Are there exceptions to the Government's policy not to log—

- (a) conservation reserves;
- (b) national parks;
- (c) areas to be managed as national parks?

Mr DAVIES replied:

- (a) to (c) Currently, no exceptions are envisaged.

LAND: RESERVE

Lane-Poole: Boundaries

690. Mr RUSHTON, to the Minister for Conservation and Land Management:

- (1) Will he explain the basis on which the Lane-Poole boundaries have been set?
- (2) Why has the area of Yarragil Brook and the Murray River been excluded from both the recreation and conservation zone of the reserve?
- (3) Was the area excluded because of the requirements of—
 - (a) Alcoa;
 - (b) the timber industry;
 - (c) both (a) and (b)?
- (4) Does the research of the Department of Conservation and Land Management or its predecessors show that jarrah dieback is likely to spread down-hill from affected areas within this reserve?
- (5) Referring to question 473 of 1985 and his reply—
 - (a) does "area" equal "zone";
 - (b) what data does the Government have to provide a basis on which to determine "such conservation values";
 - (c) what are the "conservation values";
 - (d) what steps will the Government take to ensure that the conservation values specified are retained?
- (6) Further to question 473 of 1985—
 - (a) what agreements have been reached with Alcoa regarding the prevention of the spread of jarrah dieback by bauxite mining operations and the minimisation of disruption of recreation activities in the recreation zone of the jarrah reserve;
 - (b) if final agreement does not exist on implementation of the above, is it possible that a no-conflict situation exists in the appointment of Dr Nichols as a coordinator of the Lane-Poole Reserve Management Committee?
- (7) Is he aware that the recreation values that attract many people including those in school and youth groups to

the Lane-Poole Reserve are the natural, relatively unspoilt, diverse and rugged environment that make up the valley and uplands of the Murray River?

- (8) Is it not a fact that—
 - (a) mining; and
 - (b) logging,
 will destroy the natural and diverse environment of the reserve?
- (9) What is the Government's policy with regard to the conservation value or loss thereof of areas within conservation zones of the northern jarrah reserves that are or may in the future be affected by—
 - (a) jarrah dieback;
 - (b) fire?
- (10) Further to question 429 (1) of 1985, does any agreement exist between any of the following—
 - (a) member of the Government;
 - (b) Government;
 - (c) Government department existing or defunct; or
 - (d) Government authority,
 and any company or individual that will allow that company or individual to obtain timber resources within the Lane-Poole recreation zone?

Mr DAVIES replied:

- (1) The boundaries of the Lane-Poole Reserve are based on the conservation and recreation management priority areas established under the Forests Department's general working plan No. 87 of 1982, adjusted after negotiation within a reserves review committee established by the Department of Resources Development.
- (2) The area referred to is a scientific management priority area in which important dieback, hydrological and salinity research is being undertaken.
- (3) (a) No;
- (b) no;
- (c) not applicable.
- (4) Research indicates that dieback is unlikely to spread into most forest types in the Murray valley.

- (5) (a) Neither the word "area" nor "zone" are mentioned in my reply to question 473;
- (b) to (d) this information will be presented in the management plan for the reserve.
- (6) (a) Joint working arrangements exist between Alcoa and the Department of Conservation and Land Management. These include agreed hygiene requirements for all phases of mining. Plans to minimise disruption of recreation activities in the reserve will be developed when there is more information about the timing and location of mining in the area.
- (b) There is no such body as the Lane-Poole Reserve management committee.
- (7) Yes.
- (8) (a) Mining will increase the diversity of the environment in parts of the proposed recreation zone of the reserve;
- (b) almost the entire proposed recreation zone has been logged in the past and this did not destroy the natural and diverse environment.
- (9) (a) and (b) The Government aims to prevent or minimise loss of conservation values due to dieback or fire.
- (10) (a) No;
- (b) no;
- (c) no;
- (d) no.

LAND: RESERVES

Lane-Poole: Recreation

691. Mr RUSHTON, to the Minister for Conservation and Land Management:

Is the Lane-Pool Reserve the only reserve within the 96 000 hectare reserve system within the northern jarrah forest that contains areas that are to be set aside for recreation?

Mr DAVIES replied:

Under general working plan No. 87 of 1982, a number of areas in the northern jarrah forest were prescribed as

management priority areas for the purpose of recreation. These areas are in addition to the Lane-Poole Reserve.

LAND: RESERVES

Lane-Poole: Environmental Education

692. Mr RUSHTON, to the Minister for Education:

- (1) Is he aware that the Lane-Poole Reserve is a unique environment that offers the opportunity for programmes which teach an ever-increasing number of young people a sense of community responsibility, skills and individual development in a natural environment on a year-round basis?
- (2) Is he also aware that there is concern within—
- (a) the Department of Education;
- (b) the private school system;
- (c) tertiary institutions,
- that proposals to allow mining and logging within the reserve will have a detrimental effect upon these programmes?

Mr PEARCE replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) The Education Department of Western Australia is in consultation with the Lane-Poole Reserve planning group to determine what effects the management proposals will have upon present and future educational programmes in the reserve.

FORESTS: LOGGING

Lane-Poole Reserve

693. Mr RUSHTON, to the Minister for Conservation and Land Management:

Further to questions 111 (3) and 429 (3) of 1985, will he please explain why the Government is unable to assure the House that no agreement with any company to obtain timber resources within the Lane-Poole Reserve will be made before the management plan for the reserve is adopted?

Mr DAVIES replied:

The Government does not wish to make any commitment with any company to obtain timber resources within the Lane-Poole Reserve before the management plan is adopted, be-

cause any commitment may pre-empt the recommendations of the plan and the public participation processes required under the Conservation and Land Management Act.

694 to 696. *Postponed.*

ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS BOARD

Shop: Goods Sold

697. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Lands and Surveys:

Has the South Perth Zoological Gardens Board given any direction to the zoo shop lessee as to what brands of frozen goods it must purchase and sell?

Mr McIVER replied:

There is no lessee of the South Perth Zoological Gardens Board Cafeteria. It is managed on behalf of the board. The managers have not been directed as to what brands of frozen goods they must purchase and sell.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS: BUILDING SOCIETIES

Interest Rates: Government Assistance

142. Mr HASSELL, to the Treasurer:

From what funds will the Government provide the \$72 million that it proposes to make available to building societies to forestall an increase in rates?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question that he asked and I take the opportunity to provide some details to the Parliament in response.

The Government has today agreed with the building societies to provide assistance that will flow to 40 000 home owners in Western Australia, thus effectively eliminating a one per cent increase by the societies in the mortgage rate. The Government is aware that it will be criticised, particularly by the Opposition, for taking this

option; but the Government believes that home ownership is something that deserves to be protected. The recent increases of one half and one half of one per cent in two bites by the societies have taken many families to the stage where they are finding mortgage repayments very hard to bear.

The Government has therefore decided to deposit funds with the societies at a preferred rate. It is difficult to give an exact accounting of the amount of money that will be necessary to derive the benefits to the borrower that are required to reflect the amount of money that the societies would have preferred if the rate had been increased by three-quarters of one per cent. However, the revenue foregone in terms of interest will be about \$11.2 million. The \$72 million to which the Leader of the Opposition referred is the predicted amount and, as of today, that will be required to be invested with the societies at the preferred rate. The Leader of the Opposition would know that the Government has on hand, from time to time, cash balances which are invested in a variety of ways—ranging from the short-term money market investments carried out by the Treasury through to other Government and local government securities, banks, and other institutions' accounts. Thus to answer the question asked by the Leader of the Opposition, those cash balances are to be invested with the building societies—

Mr Hassell: At what rate of interest?

Mr BRIAN BURKE: That is difficult to predict because the societies told the Government that they thought an increase of one per cent was required. In the negotiations held with the building societies the Government has agreed to invest an amount of money with the societies that will reflect this revenue in terms of the income to the societies that they would have received had they increased mortgages by three-quarters of one per cent; that is, the building societies have adjusted their planned increases by one quarter of one per cent—

Mr Hassell: They are absorbing a quarter of a per cent.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: They are not really absorbing a quarter because there are a number of other factors which should be taken into account. Every increase costs something to impose. Some people may choose not to pay the additional costs, become delinquent mortgagees, and default on occasion. This is an additional expenditure that the building societies must consider. Additionally, the Government has put in place arrangements—to which I have referred—for a period of 12 months. It might reasonably be expected that in that period interest rates will decline and the building societies will have an opportunity to retrieve additional revenue to make up for that part of the quarter of one per cent that is forgone by them during this period.

Mr Laurance: How does your plan work?

Mr BRIAN BURKE: The Government has received an assurance from the building societies in respect of two things. Firstly, the societies will do their best to keep rates down, which implies that they will become as efficient as they can, looking at their reserves and their profitability. Secondly, the societies have indicated to the Government that they will give very early warning should they believe pressures are building up.

We have not attempted to bind the societies; neither would we. We have not told them that we want to control interest rates.

I told the meeting today that the only circumstances in which we would move to control interest rates were circumstances in which one society was acting wilfully or irresponsibly, in which case we thought some measure of control might be warranted. So we have not attempted to bind the societies at all, but we have attempted to work out as accurately as we can the likely pressures. The societies have assisted us and we have tried to tailor the assistance to ensure that there are no increases in interest rates for the next 12 months at least, but longer than that hopefully, because we think rates will come back. The decrease in Government revenue will be reflected

in the decreased earnings to the Government from the investment of its public moneys and cash balances.

Mr Hassell: The current projection of \$72 million which you have to put in will come out of the Treasury's cash balances through the WADC's operations?

Mr BRIAN BURKE: That is the current plan. The Treasury is still working out the details. But sufficient liquid assets, sufficient cash balances of the Government will be invested with the societies to ensure that they are able to reduce their cost of money by three-quarters of one per cent and, as a result of that reduction, avoid having to increase their rates.

DEFENCE: SUBMARINES

Base

143. Mr HUGHES, to the Minister for Defence Liaison:

Can the Minister inform the House of the latest developments linked with the Government's strategy to have RAN submarines based at HMAS *Stirling* or Garden Island?

Mr BRYCE replied:

In answer to a question from the Federal member for Brent, the Minister for Defence, Kim Beazley, advised the House of Representatives that there would be no US naval ships home ported in Cockburn Sound, but that a study was in progress within the Department of Defence which might result in the relocation of the Australian submarine force to be home ported at HMAS *Stirling*.

Currently the Navy has two submarine bases in Australia. The present home port for the submarine force is at the Sydney base in Neutral Bay. The other submarine base is at HMAS *Stirling*. For a variety of reasons the submarine base in Sydney should be vacated and the Department of Defence is considering whether the new home port is to be a brand new facility at Jervis Bay on the south coast of New South Wales or at HMAS *Stirling*.

I am confident that economic and strategic factors together with commonsense will prevail to bring about the relocation of the submarine force to establish its home port at HMAS *Stirling*. I understand that Minister Beazley will be able to make his announcement on this matter in six to eight weeks.

PORTS AND HARBOURS: BUNBURY

Dispute: US Naval Vessels

144. Mr HASSELL, to the Minister with special responsibility for "Bunbury 2000":

- (1) How many visiting US naval ships were prevented from entering the Port of Bunbury as a result of the current dispute which has closed the port?
- (2) How many other ships have had to bypass the Port of Bunbury as a result of this dispute?
- (3) Has he been able to estimate the loss of earnings to the Bunbury community as a result of the visiting US naval and other ships bypassing the port?

Mr GRILL replied:

- (1) No visiting US ships were prevented from entering the Port of Bunbury. Both unions involved in the present dispute indicated that they they were prepared to allow the navy ships to enter, and in fact they invited them to do so. The member for Bunbury also entreated the US Navy to have its ships enter the port. I understand that the US Navy made a decision not to enter the port, not because its ships would not be moored or unmoored, but because it did not want to become involved in any way, directly or indirectly, with any possible union dispute.
- (2) I am not aware that any other ships bypassed the Port of Bunbury; and I would have to check to be certain.
- (3) I did hear some figures mentioned on the radio about the proposed visit by the US naval ships, but I simply do not have those details and I do not think anyone in government has worked them out. All I can say is that it is lamentable that the US naval ships were not prepared to enter the port, despite the fact that both unions

involved in the dispute were prepared to moor and unmoor the ships. I suppose the potential loss would be around \$100 000 or more.

AGRICULTURE: FARMERS

Drought Assistance

145. Mr TROY, to the Premier:

Is the Government planning to give assistance to farmers who experience financial difficulties due to drought?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

This Government has a consistent and proud record of providing assistance to the rural sector, and I think the record built up by the Government is part of the explanation why farmers these days, and certainly their representative organisations, are questioning their traditional political adherences.

Certainly I was amazed and amused to see on television the other evening a group of farmers confronting Mr Sinclair, the Leader of the National Party, and showing quite conclusively that as a group they were sick and tired of the way in which they had been taken for granted in the past by political parties which kept them standing in the sun for hours without assisting them in any substantial way.

Mr Cowan: Tell us about the capital gains tax.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: I am not sure that I can at the moment.

Mr Cowan: Just before you start getting excited about the contribution the Labor Party is making to the rural sector—

Mr BRIAN BURKE: No-one is getting excited about it. But the member's former leader, Mr Anthony, that great protectionist, who sought this coalition between the agrarian and manufacturing sectors, has a lot to answer for. Whether the member knows it or not, his traditional supporters and the traditional supporters of these half-baked farmers opposite are leaving in droves.

The Labor Party is now being seen as the farmer's friend. Who deregulated wool? The member for Esperance-Dundas. Who kept grain

freights down? The member for Esperance-Dundas. Which Government has consulted with and been accessible to farmer organisations? This Government, not the Government of members opposite.

Members opposite would send wine and spellbind for hours and keep people standing in the sun. The only thing members opposite did not do was to refuse to allow them to go to high school to understand how they were being treated.

We are giving consideration to a comprehensive package of measures and we expect to make a final decision shortly. The key proposals include a lift in available loans, a more flexible interest rate, and subsidies for stock and fodder transport.

It is expected that concessional interest rates will be offered on loans and that they will be adjusted in line with the recipient's ability to pay. There is also a real need to lift the maximum loan rate in the light of escalating farm costs.

We are considering a detailed programme of freight subsidies to be paid on the transport of stock to and from agistment, and in some cases for stock sent for slaughter because of drought.

New natural disaster relief arrangements offered by the Commonwealth will put an additional burden on this Government, but we are committed to ensuring that our rural producers are not put at a disadvantage because of drought.

When final details of the aid package are determined, the information will be available through country shires, the Department of Agriculture, and the Government's new Rural Adjustment and Finance Corporation.

I conclude on one further note. I have been absolutely amazed at the way in which the Country Party, the National Party, the National Country Party, and those splinter parts of the Liberal Party have rushed to this standard that says, "No subsidy for country producers; we don't want subsidies."

As far as this Government is concerned we believe the maintenance of the Australian character demands that

essential services such as electricity be provided to country consumers under a uniform tariff. Whether one likes it or not, that involves a subsidy. One cross-subsidises between metropolitan and country consumers. We do not apologise for that; we support it.

It is about time those people who pretend most thoroughly to represent country interests faced up to their true responsibilities. People who are prepared to go on the land, to pioneer, and open up new country, deserve to be treated in the same way as city folk. They do not deserve to be disadvantaged unless the community does not have the resources to eliminate the differences in the costs involved in country versus city living.

We will continue the subsidies provided by the SEC to country people because we believe they are deserved; we will continue the disproportionate sharing of road funds into country areas because we think country roads are the lifeblood of farming industries; and we will continue the assistance we provide to country people in respect of their water. It is about time members opposite stood up and said their privatisation-no subsidy policy means country people will not be badly affected because they will not be able to afford to live in the country.

UNION: BUILDERS LABOURERS FEDERATION

Deregistration: Legislation

146. Mr HASSELL, to the Premier:

Is he aware that the Prime Minister, when speaking to the ACTU Congress, is reported to have said that intimidation and violence within the union movement was the most serious threat to the credibility of unions, and further that—

The thing which is most calculated to discredit the whole union movement and weaken public support for unionism is the intrusion of the tactics of intimidation and even violence. They are the tactics which of their very nature are anti-union and

anti-worker. They have no place in the Australian union movement.

In view of the well established evidence of intimidation and standover tactics by the Builders Labourers Federation in Western Australia, including that in recent months—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition cannot ask a question based on supposition. He must ask a question that is factual.

Mr HASSELL: Mr Speaker, it is a question which is factual.

The SPEAKER: Order! Are there any further questions?

Mr HASSELL: Mr Speaker!

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr HASSELL: I will finish asking the question in a way which you do not find offensive.

Mr Brian Burke: Or that complies with Standing Orders. Try that! You need not be offensive in your withdrawal.

The SPEAKER: The first two parts of the member's question were in order in setting out some statements, but he went on to raise a question based on supposition.

Mr HASSELL: I will put in this way: In view of the evidence that has been presented to this House on a number of occasions in debate relating to the intimidation and standover tactics of the BLF, is the Premier now prepared to indicate his support for legislation to deregister the BLF in Western Australia?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

I am not aware of the direct quote which the Leader of the Opposition referred to from a speech allegedly made by the Prime Minister to the ACTU Congress, but on hearing it for the first time there is not much in it to which I would take exception. The only caveat I would put on that is that I have not seen the words he read and I have only heard them as he read them. Past performance would demand I obtain a copy in order to comment conclusively.

The situation in respect of the BLF in this State is that prior to the announcement of the plans by the Federal Government to deregister that union in some States—I believe in New South Wales and Victoria—the State Government concluded with major employer groups and unions involved in the building and construction industry an agreement designed to eliminate industrial disruption which, following its signature, appears to have worked remarkably well.

As I understand the situation—and I have not checked the matter because I have not had notice of the question—the Master Builders Association does not want the State Government to proceed with deregistration of the BLF. Obviously the unions do not want to proceed with that action and the Leader of the Opposition now implies to us a course that is not wanted by anyone except him. I suggest it is wanted by him simply because he believes there is some political advantage in trying to pursue that course. The Deputy Premier has made the obvious point: In nine years when industrial disruption made what is happening now pale into insignificance, what did the Liberal Government do to deregister anyone?

Mr Hassell: Proceedings were under way, and you stopped them.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: The second coming is under way as well.

Mr Hassell: The eight boxes of evidence are still in the Crown Law Department.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: The proceedings to which the Leader of the Opposition now refers are Federal proceedings.

Mr Hassell: No, State proceedings as well.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: The Leader of the Opposition had nine years in which to achieve something he now says was in train when the Government to which he belonged lost office. Who is to be believed? Where is the credibility?

We are very pleased and proud to see the dramatic reduction in days lost as a result of industrial disputes in this State. The record is on the board. What does the Leader of the Opposition want us to do? I know what he

wants us to do; he wants us to set everyone at each other's throat and see industrial turmoil and disruption from which the Leader of the Opposition thinks he can vault into power. His stock in trade has been reflected in the past two days by the statements from the member for Karrinyup (Mr Clarko) when he referred to homosexuals, compounded and amplified by the member for Floreat (Mr Mensaros) today with his discourse on the lack of virtue of some female members of our community.

That is the stock in trade of the Opposition. As far as we are concerned, we are happy to see people working productively.

We are happy to be able to say about the casino, for example, that there is hardly another city in the world I know of in which one could construct a building like that as quickly as it is being built here. At that site workmen have been able to use their skills in a way that is productive and which demonstrates their capacity and willingness to work.

Under the Opposition and its policies the society becomes coloured with the visage of "Asians go home" on bus stops, attacks on homosexuals that do not make much sense, aspersions being cast about the virtuousness of our womenfolk, and unionists trying to throttle each other on building sites.

AGRICULTURE: FARMS

Financial Survey

147. Mr TAYLOR, to the Minister for Agriculture:

I understand the current farm financial survey being run by the Department of Agriculture and the Primary Industry Association has resulted in a slow response rate so far. Is it the Minister's intention to extend the deadline for replies to this survey?

Mr EVANS replied:

Yes, it is my intention to do that, and the deadline for the survey has now been extended to Friday, 4 October. I would like to point out that nearly 2 000 questionnaires have been sent to farmers in the State's grain belt, and

the results from the questionnaires will form the basis of submissions to the Federal Government for further assistance measures as and when they become necessary.

It is important that as many farmers as possible who have received survey forms fill them in and return them, otherwise the results will be open to challenge. I point out that the survey was initiated after requests from the Primary Industry Association which said there was a need to gauge the demand for credit at the beginning of the 1986 farm year and the likely debt servicing difficulties that will arise.

It is not just a mere fact-finding exercise; it will be an important basis for any Government action which may be needed to help stem the rural financial downturn. I emphasise and reiterate that respondents' information will remain anonymous, and recipients have been asked to include their name purely for checking purposes.

I noted there was some catcalling or baaing from members opposite. To reinforce the point from somebody who has a better grasp of the situation than the Opposition, I would like to quote from a radio talkback show in which Des Guilfoyle was interviewing the President of the Primary Industry Association, Mr Winston Crane. The interview went as follows—

GUILFOYLE

One thing that I'd like to ask you while you're here, and that is we've seen the announcement of a joint study by you people and the government into the financial plight of farmers in grain growing areas. Now I wonder what do you hope this will achieve. I would have thought that from your words this morning you believe that it's time for action, not for more talk, more study, more surveys.

CRANE

... one of the things that's been lacking in the past in the industry is hard data. Now the Primary Industry Association some years ago, about six years ago I think it was, we started surveying our

members on an annual basis to find out what the trends were in their economic situation, and out of that survey we found in that particular period of five years that the average debt for West Australian farmers went from \$70 000 per farm to \$170 000. Now last year we had a particularly good grain growing year in the sense that it was a record by some 25% or 26% in the State. Now what we want to find out now to update that information, is the exact impact that harvest had in the industry with regard to the ever increasing costs.

He concluded by saying—

... so what we've now said to the government, well to hell with this business of our credibility being challenged, let us get them to do the work and we'll put an input into this whole thing and just keep this information up to date on an annual basis, and I think that's essential if we're going to know what we're talking about.

Those words used by Mr Crane should be very useful to some members of the Opposition.

MINISTERS OF THE CROWN

Jet Aircraft

148. Mr HASSELL, to the Premier:

- (1) On approximately what date did the Premier take to Cabinet his proposal for the acquisition, by purchase or lease, by the Western Australian Government of a jet plane for the use of the Premier and Ministers or as otherwise authorised?
- (2) Is it correct that the total purchase price of the plane to be purchased or leased was of the order of \$11 million to \$12 million?
- (3) Is it correct also that the proposal was considered by Cabinet and deferred, presumably until after the election?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

- (1) to (3) This matter has never been taken to Cabinet unless, in my absence, by somebody else.

Mr Bryce: It was not, never.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: So Cabinet has not decided to defer anything. Apart from informal discussions with individual members from time to time, I do not know of any consideration being given to this matter.

Mr Hassell: Then you were considering getting one of the jets?

Mr BRIAN BURKE: No, I do not think we were considering it at all. Someone offered to give us a test flight. This will cause a lot of trouble. Jerry Maher from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation travelled from England to Scandinavia with my wife and I when we went to inspect submarines at Malmo and Kiel. However, there was never any consideration given by the Government, apart from that sort of thing. We do not intend to buy a plane. We have not deferred a decision and that is that. I am sorry to have disappointed the Leader of the Opposition.

WATER RESOURCES

Charges: Increases

149. Mrs BUCHANAN, to the Minister for Water Resources:

Could the Minister indicate the extent to which water charges have increased during this Government's term and how this compares with increases under the previous Government's last three years of office?

Mr TONKIN replied:

Since the present Government took office, the standard residential charge for water in the metropolitan area has risen by 10.5 per cent and by 22.6 per cent for consumption charges at average residential consumption levels. During the previous Government's last three years in office, the standard charge rose by 90 per cent and consumption charges rose by 63 per cent.

In the last three years, average non-residential water rates have decreased by between seven per cent and 10 per cent in money terms, depending on property valuation. In the previous three years, there was an increase under the conservative Government of approximately 80 per cent.

Opposition members squeal about small business. The respective inflation rates for those periods were an estimated 21 per cent and 30.6 per cent. Members can see, therefore, that under the conservative Government, the increase was far in excess of the inflation rate.

Furthermore, in country areas, the average total increase in domestic water charges over the present Government's three years in office is 24 per cent compared with 101 per cent during the previous three years of the conservative Government.

Members sitting opposite who represent country people must be ashamed to see that the average rates in domestic water charges rose by 101 per cent in three years. The member for Darling Range can produce individual bills to try to prove otherwise, but he knows that the increases he has received are the result of individual valuations. We are talking about average increases, and the figures do not lie. There was a 101 per cent increase in country domestic water charges under the previous Government compared with a 24 per cent increase under this Government.

MINISTERS OF THE CROWN

Jet Aircraft

150. Mr BRIAN BURKE (Premier) replied:

Mr Speaker, with your leave and the leave of the House, I wish to add something to my previous answer.

The answer remains unchanged. However the Minister for Transport has informed me that his department completed a report on, amongst other things, the purchase of a plane, which report never went to Cabinet and never was considered by the Government.

Mr Hassell: Well, then, it was a little more than just a ride across to Scandinavia.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: Not at all. The Minister for Transport has told me that the report was completed. To make sure that the record is absolutely straight, that report was part of a report into the cost of travel.

The answer to the question remains the same. This matter never went to Cabinet and it was never considered by the Government. No decision has been deferred because no decision was contemplated.

TRANSPORT

Railway Station: Tambellup

151. Mr OLD, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Does Westrail plan to remove the buildings on Tambellup Station?
- (2) If not, are there any plans to undertake maintenance on the buildings?

Mr GRILL replied:

- (1) and (2) I cannot give the member any accurate information on that matter.

Mr Old: I sent the question to your office.

Mr GRILL: It did not reach me. What time did the member send it?

Mr Old: It went down yesterday.

Mr GRILL: I have not seen it. Allegations have been made before that certain communications have been sent to my office. When I checked them out, I found that the communications were not sent or were sent incorrectly. I will check this matter out and give a reply. If the member wants a reply to the substantive question, the fact is that I do not know. However, I am sympathetic to the retention of historic buildings throughout the State. Where they belong to the railways I have made every attempt in the past to have them retained. If the member has an argument for retaining—

Mr Old: I sent you down a question. You have accused me of not sending questions down. You investigate this matter and come back with an answer.

Mr GRILL: We will check that out.

Mr Brian Burke: How did it get to his office? Did it walk?

Mr Old: It went to his office by courier.

Mr GRILL: I do not know how to respond to the comments made by the member for Katanning-Roe, but if he is serious I am prepared to give him an answer to the best of my knowledge of this particular case. If the member has a case for the retention of certain buildings on the railway reserve at

Tambellup for community purposes or whatever, it will receive sympathetic attention.

WATER RESOURCES: DAM

Harris River: Commonwealth Funding

152. Mr TOM JONES, to the Minister for Water Resources:

In view of the importance of the Harris River Dam to Collie and to other country towns in the south-west, would the Minister advise what steps the Government has taken to obtain financial assistance from the Commonwealth for this project, and when it is proposed that the dam be completed?

Mr TONKIN replied:

The Harris River Dam was included in the list of projects submitted to the Commonwealth for financial assistance under the Federal water resources assistance programme. The importance of the project to Collie and other country towns has been discussed personally with Senator Evans, and a further written representation for financial assistance has been made. This work is subject to an environmental clearance and the availability of funds. It is planned, subject to these considerations, to complete construction of the dam before the winter of 1989.

Unfortunately members of the previous Government, and probably the member for Floreat who is interjecting, are telling many untruths about the Harris River dam. The fact of the matter is that never once did the previous Government apply to the Commonwealth for funds. Never once did it make it a No. 1 priority as we have done. Never once did it go to the Fraser Government formally and say that it wanted the dam built and that it wanted funds for it.

Mr Mensaros: I personally talked to the Minister.

Mr TONKIN: I know that the member talks a lot. However, he never decided to build the dam. He never decided to ask the Commonwealth for funds. The fact is that conservative members of Parliament in that area, like Mr Lewis

MLC, are going around saying all kinds of things about the Harris River dam, yet the Government in which he sat never decided to build that dam and never went to the Commonwealth for funds. The Fraser Government never decided to build that dam.

Mr Bradshaw: They did so.

Mr TONKIN: They did not; that is untrue. The Fraser Government had a history of possible projects under the bicentennial water resources programme, but it did not provide one cent for that dam.

WATER AUTHORITY

Corporate Planning

153. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister for Water Resources:

My question to the Minister relates to the reply he gave to a question without notice asked by the member for Welshpool. I ask—

- (1) Is it not a fact that corporate planning in its most advanced form was exercised by the Metropolitan Water Authority before he was placed in charge as a Minister—indeed, at a time when his party, when in opposition, used nothing but derogatory expressions in connection with the Metropolitan Water Authority?
- (2) Is it not a fact, further, that five-year plans have been worked out and published yearly by the Metropolitan Water Authority for many years now?
- (3) Is it not a fact that the Metropolitan Water Authority under the Liberal Government had a corporate planning section which—amongst other things—briefed members of Parliament who were interested?
- (4) What then is the reason for suddenly praising the system of corporate planning as something novel when only the name and entity of the authority is really new, and it has the same dedicated, capable officers whom the Minister's party abused only 3 years ago but praises now?

Mr TONKIN replied:

- (1) to (4) In answer to the member for Floreat, I have to say that during the Ministry of the member for Floreat, which was clearly a time of inept handling of the whole portfolio, the Metropolitan Water Authority was continually in the firing line. The member for Floreat, when he was the Minister, showed a complete lack of sensitivity. I remember him standing on this side of the House and when the now Premier, then Leader of the Opposition, asked him to send a second and final notice to people to make sure that their water was not cut off unjustly, he said that that would be too expensive and would not be done. When this Government took office a second and final notice was sent. That is one of the reasons the Water Authority is far more highly regarded now. It no longer has that Minister who showed such insensitivity. It is true that corporate planning in the—

Mr Mensaros: You are telling an untruth.

The SPEAKER: Order! I cannot hear the Minister replying with all the interjections.

Mr TONKIN: The fact of the matter is that corporate planning has been part of the—

Mr Mensaros: Which officer told you that they despised me as a Minister? That is what you implied.

Mr TONKIN: I did not say that.

Mr Mensaros: What did you say?

Mr TONKIN: If the member had not been shouting his head off he would have heard what I said. I said that the member, when he was the Minister, was so inept that the Water Authority was continually in the firing line because of his policies. The Water Authority, now that there is a Government which has policies that are sensitive to the needs of the people, is performing far better.

With respect to corporate planning it is true that it was instituted by the Metropolitan Water Authority before I became the Minister, but it is also true that the member for Floreat, when the Minister, had nothing whatsoever to do with the introduction of corporate planning.

PASTORAL INDUSTRY

Report: Carrying Capacity

154. Mr BLAIKIE, to the Minister for Lands and Surveys:

In view of the fact that the report into the pastoral industry which was released in April indicated that some 10 000 head of cattle is the minimum number necessary to comprise a viable pastoral lease, does the Minister responsible for the administration of pastoral lands support that recommendation? If not, why not?

Mr McIVER replied:

It is natural that 10 000 to 12 000 cattle comprise a viable herd for pastoral leases. I support the recommendation.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Dandaragan Shire Council: Shacks

155. Mr CRANE, to the Minister for Lands and Surveys:

(1) Has the Minister written to the Dandaragan Shire about shack owners in the shire?

(2) If "Yes", when?

(3) What is the Government's attitude on shack owners at—

(a) Sandy Cape and Dandaragan Shire generally;

(b) Windy Harbour;

(c) Other areas of the WA coastline?

Mr McIVER replied:

I thank the member for Moore for ample notice of the questions, the replies to which are—

(1) No, although the Under Secretary for Lands has so written.

(2) 8 August 1985.

(3) (a) to (c) Present Government policy is one of firm opposition to squatters in any location. The resolution of a policy on action to remove them awaits the outcome of studies currently being undertaken by two separate committees, one under the auspices of the Town Planning Department and the other under the Department of Conservation and Land Management.