

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 6 August 1980

The SPEAKER (Mr Thompson) took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS ACT

Increased Penalties: Petition

DR DADOUR (Subiaco) [4.32 p.m.]: I have a petition which reads as follows—

THE HONOURABLE THE SPEAKER
AND MEMBERS OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE
PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN
AUSTRALIA IN PARLIAMENT
ASSEMBLED:

We, the undersigned residents in the State of Western Australia do herewith pray that Her Majesty's Government of Western Australia will legislate for increased maximum penalties under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act for persons convicted for cruelty and neglect to animals.

We are convinced that the current penalties are totally inadequate and therefore do not serve as a deterrent.

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

This petition bears 21 signatures. I certify it complies with the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly, and have signed such.

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

(See petition No. 5.)

FISHERIES

Harbour at Hopetoun: Petition

MR GREWAR (Roe) [4.33 p.m.]: I have a petition which reads as follows—

TO: The honorable speaker and members of the legislative assembly of the parliament of Western Australia and the parliament assembled.

We the undersigned professional fishermen and citizens of Western Australia, respectfully petition the government of Western Australia, to provide at Hopetoun and East of Cape Arid, on the South coast of Western Australia, anchorage and unloading facilities for fishing-craft engaged in fishing on this isolated South coast.

Together with lead and navigational lighting aids for access in darkness when anchoring at Hopetoun. We the undersigned citizens suggest priority to be given with these considerations in mind, over the proposed Bandy Creek harbour at Esperance.

Your petitioners humbly pray that you will give this matter earnest consideration.

This petition bears 228 signatures. It conforms with the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly, and I have so signed.

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

(See petition No. 6.)

TOWN PLANNING

Institutions for Intellectually Handicapped: Petition

MR WATT (Albany) [4.34 p.m.]: I have a petition which reads as follows—

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

We, the undersigned residents in the State of Western Australia do herewith pray that Her Majesty's Government of Western Australia will amend the Town Planning Regulations, 1967, of the Town Planning and Development Act 1928-1975 so as to allow the intellectually handicapped of this State to live in the community on the same conditions as their more fortunate fellow citizens.

We believe that it is fundamentally and morally wrong that a house in which the intellectually handicapped live should be automatically classed as an institution, and that re-zoning is subsequently required to allow the intellectually handicapped to live in a residential area.

We also believe that the Minister for Urban Development and Town Planning should as soon as possible take action to amend the definition of "Institutional Building" as contained in the above mentioned Regulations, and to add other such definitions of houses as may be required to allow small groups of intellectually handicapped people to live as family units within the community without having to obtain special permission to do so.

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

The petition bears 16 signatures, and I certify that it conforms with the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly.

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

(See petition No. 7.)

"DIGEST OF THE PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA"

Tabling

THE SPEAKER (Mr Thompson): I have for tabling the "Digest of the Parliament of Western Australia". It is Digest No. 7.

The paper was tabled (see paper No. 143.)

QUESTIONS

Questions were taken at this stage.

BILLS (6): INTRODUCTION AND FIRST READING

1. Public Service Amendment Bill.
2. Government Employees (Promotions Appeal Board) Amendment Bill.
3. Essential Foodstuffs and Commodities Amendment Bill.

Bills introduced, on motions by Mr O'Connor (Minister for Labour and Industry), and read a first time.

4. Agriculture and Related Resources Protection Amendment Bill.

Bill introduced, on motion by Mr Old (Minister for Agriculture), and read a first time.

5. Broken Hill Proprietary Company Limited Agreements (Variation) Bill.

Bill introduced, on motion by Mr P. V. Jones (Minister for Resources Development), and read a first time.

6. Taxi-cars (Co-ordination and Control) Amendment Bill.

Bill introduced, on motion by Mr Rushton (Minister for Transport), and read a first time.

STOCK (BRANDS AND MOVEMENT) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

MR OLD (Katanning—Minister for Agriculture) [5.32 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

As a result of increased demand for hand-crafted and natural-look wool products there has been an

increased interest in the use of naturally pigmented wool. This wool may be used by home spinners or by specialty manufacturers to produce patterns without the necessity for dyeing the wool.

This demand has caused an increase not only in the number of coloured sheep retained in white-wooled sheep flocks but also in the number of sheep bred specifically to produce coloured wool.

Australian merino wool has a world reputation for lack of contamination by coloured wool fibres and it is important to ensure that contamination does not occur as a consequence of the increased production of coloured sheep.

Colour in the wool is derived from the presence of the pigment melanin in the fibre; and a variety of colours can appear ranging from black, grey, bluish to brown.

In the merino breed most sheep are entirely white but individuals may carry a gene producing coloured offspring. In the simplest of terms, an animal will always carry two genes—one from each parent.

In the case of colour, the gene for lack of pigment—that is, white wool—is dominant. As a consequence it is not possible, just by looking at a white-fleeced animal, to tell whether or not it is carrying a gene for dark colour which could be transferred to its offspring.

The various associations of breeders of coloured sheep are well aware of this problem and have adopted a responsible approach—that is, to adopt an Australia-wide standard identification for the white wool progeny of coloured sheep.

It appears that an earmark, consisting of three holes in the ear, will be adopted nationally.

The Act provides for the registration and use of brands and earmarks for stock and every proprietor of sheep is required to apply for and use a registered earmark which is unique to that proprietor.

While section 16 allows a proprietor to use earmarks for private reference purposes, there is no provision in the Act for the registration of special earmarks for purposes such as are envisaged.

The proposed amendment is framed to permit any future requests of a similar nature which may be made by industry to be handled by regulation.

A further amendment proposes to increase the maximum general penalty to \$500. There has been an increasing value of livestock in recent years and such a maximum penalty is in keeping with this trend.

I commend the Bill to members.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr H. D. Evans (Deputy Leader of the Opposition).

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY: SECOND DAY

Motion

Debate resumed from 31 July.

MR DAVIES (Victoria Park—Leader of the Opposition) [5.35 p.m.]: I did not take the opportunity during my remarks on opening day to extend the usual courtesies proffered when a new Parliament gathers together, when members have just been sworn in and officers elected.

I was happy to have the opportunity to draw attention to the unequal malapportionment of distribution in the electoral districts. In fact, I would have thought there might be some response from the Premier. After all, on his side there is a member for Whitford representing some 27 000 constituents and a member for Murchison-Eyre representing only about 2 000 constituents. Most country members represent an average of about 8 000 electors, whereas the member for Pilbara has about 16 000 to look after.

A great number of inequalities are evident in our electoral system. I did not think it was unreasonable that I should ask for the Chief Justice to report to the Premier on how the Electoral Act measured up to the adherence to the principles of fair play and democracy. It certainly needs attention.

We realise, of course, that under the law as it stands, it is unlikely for some time that the required number of seats will be sufficiently out of balance before a redistribution of boundaries is necessary. However, those electorates which already are badly out of balance will become grossly out of balance during that period. Yet the Government seems quite happy to sit there and do nothing about rectifying all the inequalities of the electoral apportionment.

Still, we hope the Government will have something to say about the matter and might even get around to discussing it in Cabinet in an effort to relieve some of the pressures on its own members. After all, I find that most of the inequalities are related to the newer districts, which seem to be represented by Liberal Party members. Of course, the seat of Gosnells, which is represented by one of our own members, also is very badly out of kilter.

Mr Pearce: It has fine representation, though.

Mr DAVIES: It has splendid representation; the constituents of Gosnells are capably looked after. However, the present member has an unfair load to bear. He is an active young man with a

family to look after and he is devoting all of his time to his electorate, when in point of fact he should not have so many constituents to represent.

A fact which makes life even more difficult for the member for Gosnells is that, due to the policies of the Government, many problems are being experienced in the electorate of Gosnells. His constituents live in a strata of society which is very badly hit by increased water rates, electricity charges, local government rates, and the like. So, there is need for something to be done.

Mr Speaker, I would like again to offer my congratulations on your election for a second term to the office of Speaker. I am quite certain that, whilst at times there might be some hard words said and some hard thoughts thought between the Opposition and yourself, we are always able to discuss matters with you. I believe that if we can organise communication, that is the main thing. I am sure that is the reason you received such an overwhelming vote from this side of the House.

I also congratulate the Chairman of Committees and his deputies; they perform a very important and onerous job in this place. Indeed, when a large Bill is before the Committee and we are sitting for hour after hour, the Chairman of Committees and his deputies are hard pressed to maintain control of what is going on, and to remain alert and to make certain that the Government—not so much the Opposition—does not try to put anything over them.

I also congratulate the new members who have recently joined us in this House. I refer of course to the member for East Melville on the Government side and the three new members of the Opposition, the member for Kalgoorlie, the member for Fremantle and the member who comes here by way of defeating one of the sitting Government members, the member for Kimberley. I congratulate them all; I am quite certain that each of them will make a valuable contribution to this place.

In particular, the contribution the new member for Kimberley will be able to make is very pertinent to the present conditions. For the first time in a very long while we have a member for Kimberley who is continually moving through his electorate. Already, there are few, if any, parts of his electorate of any consequence which he has not visited. When one considers the size of the electorate of Kimberley and the difficulties of getting from place to place, one must congratulate the new member for Kimberley on what he has already done.

This work has not been carried out in the first flush of being a new member; I am quite certain it

will be maintained during his time here. Already, he has brought back to me some very strange reports of what has gone on in the past in his electorate. He has not brought me reports of plane-loads of alcohol, or of thousands of dollars in the middle of a two-up ring, or the like. But heavens above, if the Minister for Cultural Affairs—I am sure he must spell that with a “K”—has such information in his possession, I am certain it must be correct. However, the evidence I would require would need to be much more convincing than the Minister presented here today.

In his speech, the Lieutenant-Governor mentioned four members who had passed away since His Excellency last opened Parliament. Three of them we have already acknowledged by way of condolence motion in the Parliament. The fourth—the Hon. George Bennetts—passed away since Parliament was last in session.

I wish to place on record my appreciation of the service George Bennetts gave to the Australian Labor Party as a long-time member of the Legislative Council, representing the goldfields region. He was a character in his lifetime. By the same token, he was a very shrewd man who knew what was going on; he knew the right time to go in, the right time to make approaches, and the right time to make representations on behalf of his constituents.

He was a man with a great deal of courage. Although he was rather loose at times with his use of the Queen’s English, nevertheless he was a man of great sincerity. Indeed, he was one of the most sincere members it has yet been my pleasure to be acquainted with in this Parliament. He was still a member of Parliament when I was elected here in 1961; in fact, he remained here for a number of years after that. He was active not only in the Parliament itself and in his electorate but also in the party room. He was a fighter and had qualities we could well do with in many of the members these days.

Finally, it would be churlish of me not to congratulate the Government on its re-election. I will not say I was not disappointed with the result. I am delighted there was a considerable increase in the Labor Party vote, although that increase is not represented in our representation in this place. Overall, there was a swing of about 4 per cent, to the Australian Labor Party, which was most gratifying. Unfortunately, however, it was not a uniform swing; had it been uniform, we probably would have finished up with four additional seats instead of only one.

I congratulate my colleagues for the tremendous effort they put in during the last election. It was most encouraging to see the enthusiasm with which they worked and to receive such splendid support from them. I was very gratified for that support, and for the way in which they came together.

It would also be quite wrong if I did not acknowledge the work done by my personal staff. I do not know how the Premier gets on with his personal staff but I could not complain in any way about my staff. They kept working literally day and night and at weekends as well to do whatever was required to be done—and there was plenty to be done.

I would not say the election came unexpectedly. Indeed, I think we had even nominated the actual date on which it would be held, because the Premier usually is a conformist and this date fitted in closely with the pattern of previous years. So, the election was not unexpected. However, it does not seem to matter how much one expects or is waiting for an election; tremendous pressure is placed on all of us as members of Parliament during the last few weeks leading up to an election. All kinds of things crop up which perhaps were not anticipated and other issues suddenly become very important.

One has to have the resources. My staff did a splendid job and I am very grateful for their support. I was very sorry the Premier thought that they should not be paid any overtime, but, I overcame this by keeping a careful record of the hours they worked, and after the election, when things became quieter, they were able to take time off in lieu. However, that is a highly unsatisfactory situation. My staff do not look for reward, but I believe they should be properly rewarded for the work they do. It is not always entirely satisfactory for them to take time off in lieu.

It is worth noting that there is no single Labor member of Parliament who has been returned to the Legislative Assembly whose vote was not considerably and, indeed, substantially increased at the last election. In six cases, members had their vote increased by more than 10 per cent. In another 11 cases, the vote was increased by 5 per cent or more. With those figures, it is safe to say that there are now no unsafe Labor seats. Indeed, every seat can be considered a safe one, whereas there are many shaky Liberal Party and National Country Party seats.

I give the Government fair warning that we will be attacking it at every opportunity. But we will be a responsible Opposition. We will be strong

and vigorous and we will carry out the role an Opposition is supposed to play in Parliament in a conscientious manner.

We will scrutinise the Government's actions very carefully. We will question the Government closely when the public have not been told all they ought to be told. I have indicated already that Government members are past masters at this.

We will be critical when we believe mistakes have been made and we will propose alternatives when we consider there are better alternatives. At all times we will be acting in the best interests of the State. When we believe the Government is acting in the best interests of the State it can expect our wholehearted support. We have demonstrated this in the past and will do so again. When criticism is deserved we will hand it out forcefully.

But we will be a responsible alternative Government. We will not nit-pick. We will deal with the facts of the situation and we will keep to the facts. We will not oppose simply for the sake of opposition. It makes me laugh at times when I hear people say that we oppose everything, because they have so little knowledge of the workings of Parliament. They do not realise that so much legislation goes through with our complete and total agreement. It is only matters on which we disagree that make the news, generally, and these matters are those about which such people read. I repeat: we will not oppose for the sake of opposing.

I still believe the issues we raised during the election were very pertinent issues—economic development and job creation; regional development; preservation of family living standards; better Government services; and more sensitive government. These are the important issues facing this State. The State needs a Government with policies which will provide jobs for everyone. We have to be able to put confidence back into the community. We have to look at all the factors affecting the economy and not continually harp about the people so quaintly called the "working class", as the Premier does. There are very few of us these days who are not in the working class. People in this category are the ones who get the blame for the Government's financial mismanagement. Government members say that if these people did not ask for rises to keep up with the cost of living because of Government charges increasing, the Government would not have any trouble at all.

We will take every available opportunity to raise the issues I have mentioned. They were the

pertinent and important issues at the time of the election and they remain so now.

I shall now comment on issues which arose during the election campaign. It has been very difficult to cull those items that should receive attention; there are so many issues about which the Government is deserving of censure; so many which require explanation. My greatest difficulty has been to limit myself to the important points.

The recent State election revealed, above all else, serious flaws in the electoral system. These flaws relate primarily to the timing of elections, the electoral rolls, and the procedures for enrolment. Since the 1920s, State elections invariably have been held in February or March. I believe they should be held in late March, April, or May because of the severe weather problems experienced in the north in the month of February—indeed this applies to the rest of the State also. Because, traditionally, we have gone to the polls in February does not mean we cannot have a serious reassessment of this practice. I made this point immediately after the last election so that I could not be accused of trying to alter the date of the election at the end of the three-year period.

February is the time of tropical cyclones in the north of the State. When cyclones roar through the north they disrupt everything; not just for days but for weeks. They cause a lot of flooding and general damage. This is well known to many members. The Honorary Minister for Housing looks slightly stunned, but that is not unusual for him. In the Carnarvon area he has recently experienced serious flooding, even though most members would agree that this has been somewhat unseasonal and not something we would expect every year. However, in February it is certain that the north will receive a good deal of tropical rain. This year, a cyclone coincided with the closing of the rolls.

I made the suggestion—which was regarded as highly improper and impertinent by some—that an extra period should be allowed so that those people in the north who had been unable to get on the rolls might have their cards recorded. The Premier said, "What an excuse", or words to that effect. He said they had had all the time they had been in the area to register and it was their fault that they had not done so earlier. He said this while once again insulting the electorate by giving only 24 hours' notice of the closure of the rolls. Even though there had been a cyclone in the north, the Premier did not believe the people there should receive some allowance for the inconvenience caused. One could be excused for

believing the Premier thought that it was their own fault they were hit by a cyclone.

When the time came for nominations to close, another cyclone hit the area. The Premier hit on the idea that he would extend the closing date for nominations. I do not know whether he had been unable to get through to some of his members to ascertain whether they had submitted their nominations. But if it was not unreasonable for the Premier to have extended the closing date for nominations, was it not unreasonable that he did not extend the time for people to get their names on the rolls?

Mr Nanovich: There was no problem there; all our members nominated. You had a lapse on your side, though.

Mr DAVIES: That was not caused by the cyclone. Incidentally, that raises an important point. Was it the retiring member or the new member for East Melville who got paid from the date of the declaration of the poll? If the new member was elected unopposed he became a member as from the closing of nominations and was therefore entitled to be paid as the member for that electorate. The former Deputy Premier thought he would be paid until the new Parliament began. It would be interesting to see who did get paid. I will pursue this matter further at another time. Perhaps the present member for East Melville will tell us whether or not he was the lucky man.

It was an interesting point, because for a short time we had two members for the one electorate. I know we can have a member of Cabinet who is not necessarily a member of Parliament. Perhaps the former Deputy Premier was paid his ministerial allowance; but I doubt that he was entitled to payment as a member of Parliament, because I recall that the one and only time I was elected unopposed, I was declared the elected member by the returning officer as from the close of nominations.

One of the other problems created by cyclones in the north is the difficulty in getting mobile polling booths transported from one point to another. We experienced this trouble, as well as receiving contradictory instructions as to how to handle this "breakthrough" in polling procedures. Apart from the confusion which existed there, we found that the persons who physically were to take around the mobile polling box were unable to plan with any degree of certainty where they would be in an hour or two. This was due entirely to the weather conditions. They would indicate that they would be at a particular station at a certain time only to find that the landing strip

was out of action, so forcing them to go elsewhere. That created confusion not only for them, but also for the supporters of the candidates who had a right to be at that spot and, indeed, had to be there to see what was going on.

All these factors point to the desirability of holding elections at times other than when there are likely to be disruptions caused by the wet season in the north. We could better hold the elections at a cooler time in the south; but my main concern is with the north.

There were a number of complaints from people who had enrolled correctly and who had received acknowledgments from the Electoral Department, but whose names did not appear on the printed roll. It is bad enough that the electoral rolls should be in such a state that names should be left off, but it is even worse that, in many cases, people in that situation should not be informed of their right to vote under section 122(a) of the Electoral Act. That section gives people the right to claim a vote, which is then checked against the department's records before it can be admitted.

In many cases, people were not told they had this right, despite the fact they had a card. They were not given the option and so went away somewhat disenchanted because their names had been left off the roll. Of course, the haste with which the rolls were printed could have accounted for some of the mistakes made.

The only solution appears to be for the Electoral Department to be given the resources to put its rolls in order. It should not have to be rushing around before an election to make sure its rolls are up to date. It should continually be going through the rolls to see that they are up to date. It should be doing what the Federal department does.

Probably the most insulting thing to happen to any elector was when one went along to register only to find he had to have his signature witnessed in the first place by an electoral officer, a police officer, or a justice of the peace. This is causing unreasonable and unnecessary confusion. It would be something of a laughing matter if it were not a matter of real inconvenience. There is no justification for it whatsoever. When the Government introduced the amendments to the Electoral Act, it could not give us any sound reason for this requirement and the Government has yet to justify the stand it has taken in this regard, unless it thought it would help the Government to cook the rolls or to keep people who were entitled to a vote off the rolls. I can think of no other reason that might have

prompted the Government to bring in such a stupid amendment.

We have the spectacle of a man, a notary public, who can witness a signature worldwide but who cannot witness a signature when it is put on an electoral claim for the first time.

Then, we go to the other extreme, the ridiculous spectacle of somebody who is working in a polling booth for one day every three years and who is considered an electoral officer and able to witness cards. These people, apart from the time they fill in their own cards, would never fill in another card. Yet, they are entitled, as an electoral officer—albeit for one day—to witness a signature on a card when a person is registering for the first time or re-registering after having been taken off the roll; through no fault of his own. That is ridiculous!

Let us revert to the old situation where it was convenient to fill in a claim and where it was also in line with the Commonwealth. Indeed, we may well look for a joint State-Commonwealth electoral roll. It would help many of us, especially members of Parliament and there would be a cost saving for the State. There would also be a cost saving for the Commonwealth. The member for Welshpool has advocated this for long enough and has not had a satisfactory answer as to why this is not done. The Government can save up to half a million dollars a year in this instance yet it consistently refuses to take the opportunity.

There is more than passing disquiet about the way in which certain investigations into some electoral matters were launched following the election.

The behaviour of a number of people and one very senior public official has been appalling. However, I am not able to say very much about these matters at this time because they are *sub judice*. I expect to say much more about these affairs when they cease to be before the courts. The Government was right behind them and only too happy to offer its support. These were matters of great disgrace but I will have to leave them for the time being because I am not certain that the Speaker would allow discussion on them if he were here. I do not know about the Deputy Speaker. I will not challenge him.

Another matter which has caused me some concern relates to the Environmental Protection Authority and the Worsley project. One of the issues we stressed repeatedly during the last session of Parliament and up to the time of the election was that there should be honesty, frankness, and integrity in government. Surely that is not asking too much, but during January

some startling revelations were made about some blatant dishonesty on the part of the Court Government.

For months the Premier and the Minister concerned gave the public the impression that the Worsley alumina project had the full backing of the EPA. The Premier said the project had the all-clear from both the Federal and State EPAs. However, it was revealed that the EPA wrote to the Government expressing reservations about certain aspects of the project. The project did not have the full support of the EPA, despite the fact the Premier had led us quite clearly to believe that it had.

In other words, the Government's statements were misleading and dishonest and it is the honesty and integrity of the Government which are the key issues to surface from these revelations. The Premier attempted to evade the issue by talking about the need for development and the need for jobs as well as the right of the Government to reject advice it received from departmental or statutory authorities.

All of these matters are uncontestable. Of course we need development and jobs, and any Government has the right to reject the advice of its departments or authorities, whether it be expert advice or not. None of these points are at issue or were at issue. The Premier's comments were irrelevant. The issue was: Why did the Government deliberately mislead people about the attitude of the EPA and why did the Government misrepresent the EPA? Why did the Government cover up the truth?

The Government should have told the truth about the recommendation and explained why it was ignoring that recommendation as well as argue its case. Instead, it covered up. Many people—rightly or wrongly—had reservations about the project but when the Government said quite forcibly and clearly that the EPA had given its approval these people were satisfied. They looked for assurance from the Government because they were worried about the matter, and they received assurance from the Government.

These people put their faith in the honesty and integrity of the Government. Of course their faith was misplaced. What was the Government attempting to gain by misrepresenting the EPA right up till the disclosure of all the documents which passed between the EPA and the Government? The Government has refused to make these documents public. The most important document of all is the final letter from the EPA to the then Minister for Mines.

The equivalent letter regarding the Wagerup project was made public but the Government says that the final letter from the Worsley project will not be made public. It will not be disclosed.

The only sensible conclusion to be drawn from this inconsistency is that the full scale of the Government's dishonesty has not yet been revealed, and that the cover-up is continuing. The Government has continued to hide the facts. Why does not the Government table the documents; what has it to hide? I suppose the Government is hoping that the issue will fade away, but it cannot and it must not because there is no more serious issue involved in government than the Government's honesty. If the community cannot rely on its Government to report matters truthfully, the fabric of community opinion-making and decision-making is torn to shreds.

I appeal to Government members, for the good of government and for the honesty of government, to try to ensure, in their party room, that this matter is brought up for discussion. Government members should endeavour to have the Government table the final letter; indeed, they should force the Government to table all the documents. If we now know all there is to know, why is the Government refusing to table the documents? We can only be left with the conclusion that there are other matters not yet made public which the Government does not want us to know about despite the assurance given last November—which has since proved to be false—that the ALP at both the Federal and State level supported the Worsley project. There is no argument on those matters; there is argument on the honesty of the Government and certainly we have not heard much from the Government on this matter.

Something else has continued to amuse and surprise me both before and since the last election. I refer to the defence of Western Australia. Since the turn of the century—since federalism, not the new federalism, but since the beginning of our original federalism—we have had the spectacle of conservative Governments crying out for extra defence expenditure along the Western Australian coast. We have heard a great many promises and I am able to say without fear of contradiction that those promises never have been honoured. The promises were made again in 1977 and the spectacle was repeated in 1980. On both occasions the Liberal Party tried to bring up defence as a major issue prior to the elections.

During a visit to Perth on 17 February 1977, two days before the State election, the Federal Minister for Defence (Mr Killen) said that HMAS *Stirling* would be the port base for two

RAN destroyers and two Oberon-class submarines. That was the promise made on 17 February 1977. Mr Killen said the warships would operate from the Western Australian base early in 1979. Certainly, that was a long way off at that time, but it was a firm promise.

The situation is that no RAN destroyers are operating from HMAS *Stirling*, and no submarines are operating from that base. Now, three years later, those ships still are not operating from HMAS *Stirling*. Nothing larger than a patrol boat has used the facility as a base.

On his 1977 pre-election visit Mr Killen also said the Government was considering four sites for a Navy patrol boat base in the north-west. He hoped a decision on the site would be made by the end of 1977. He said a north-west base was essential because of the vast distance between Darwin and Fremantle. There still is no such base in the north-west, despite the 1977 promise made with a degree of urgency.

The promises made were a shameless election stunt, and the Liberal Party had the gall to make those promises again in 1980. On 19 February this year, four days before the 1980 State election, the Fraser Government announced the upgrading of the Cockburn Sound base, the upgrading of air bases at Pearce and Learmonth, and a new base at Derby together with the stationing of one frigate at HMAS *Stirling*.

It was election time again, but in terms of ships at HMAS *Stirling* the promises were somewhat less grand than they were in 1977. In 1977 we were promised two destroyers and two submarines, but on the latter occasion the promise was for one frigate.

Mr Stephens: It may have been additional, of course!

Mr DAVIES: The promises were brand new. If all those ships were stationed here I think it is probable we would have the whole of the Australian Navy! The fact is we have had nothing other than patrol boats stationed at HMAS *Stirling* during the last three years.

By June of this year, with a Federal election in the wind, the promises had changed again. On 12 June it was announced that HMAS *Stirling* would be the base port for one destroyer and one destroyer escort till December. I suppose they would remain there only until the threat from Afghanistan had passed! The announcement on 12 June fell far short of fulfilling the defence undertaking which the Fraser Government gave to Western Australia in 1977. The ships promised in June do not go even halfway to redeeming Mr

Killen's long overdue and probably forgotten 1977 promise.

No more than two ships will be based at HMAS *Stirling* at any one time during the rest of this year, and one will be a destroyer and one a destroyer escort. That announcement was made in June. It is now August and we have seen no sign of the ships. HMAS *Stirling* will cease to be their base after December. The promise was for two destroyers and two submarines.

The Liberal Party must explain why it has not made good the promise it made in 1977, long after it was due to be made good. Furthermore, there was no indication in the June announcement with regard to what will happen after December of this year when the tour of duty of the destroyer and its escort will end. I suppose the two ships will be withdrawn—if they ever arrive—and then the Government will start to make more promises about the future.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr DAVIES: In 1977 the Federal Minister for Defence said we would have base-porting at HMAS *Stirling* of two RAN destroyers and two submarines, and that they would arrive by early 1979. He said the Federal Government was considering four sites in the north for a naval patrol. That was two days before a State election.

In 1980, four days before another State election, the same Minister promised us one frigate, the upgrading of Cockburn base and the air bases at Pearce and Learmonth, and the establishment of a new base at Derby. Subsequent to the election, on 12 June 1980 he promised us one destroyer and one destroyer escort would be stationed at *Stirling* until December. We do not know what will happen next.

Despite this long series of promises, no defence measures have been taken in Western Australia. The best we have had is a patrol boat based at *Stirling* for a period. At one time we had a civilian patrol of our north coast. I think it was owned by a company based in Hong Kong. It was looking for drugs and also providing surveillance of the coast, but somehow or other a couple of Vietnamese refugee boats slipped in, and when we asked why they were not sighted by the patrol planes we learnt that they operated on only one or two days a week. So it is similar to the situation in Darwin in days gone by: if one wanted to make an air raid on Darwin one made it after 5.00 p.m. on Friday and before 9.00 a.m. on Monday, because that was when radar was not operating.

None of the promises in relation to the west coast—made two days before one election and four days before another election—has been kept.

The entire commitment of the Federal Liberal Government to Western Australia is based on electoral promises which are never honoured. We would be much better served if it honoured some of the promises instead of making "pie in the sky" promises about the United States boats to be based at *Stirling*. We know that for obvious reasons that will not happen. We know all the reasons which would prevent that coming about.

The Fraser Government seems to be quite content to say, "We will promise them something. We have been doing it for 10 or 20 years now. We will not do anything and they will forget about it before the next election." That is precisely what has been happening. We have no base in the north-west. Nothing more has happened about ships coming here, although on 12 June the Minister said two frigates would remain here until the end of the year. It is several months later and still they have not appeared. The promises were only gimmicks and stunts. The best we can expect now is that the US ships will be based at Cockburn, despite the fact that it will then become a nuclear target; but nuclear matters, especially nuclear power, continue to confuse the Government.

One of the most fascinating aspects of the last election campaign was the Liberal Party's contortions in relation to nuclear power. The Government's attempts to confuse the public about where it stands on this life-and-death issue have continued since the election. The attempts to muddy the waters have been dishonest, but the twistings, turnings, and convolutions of members of the Government have been so blatant that they have repeatedly tripped themselves up and contradicted themselves, and the worst offender has been the Premier. Prior to the Liberal Party's policy speech, no-one could have been in any doubt whatsoever about where the Liberal Party stood in regard to the development of a nuclear power station.

Mr Nanovich: Which one of the Labor candidates made it known that he did not care two hoots whether a nuclear plant was established in Western Australia? He said he knew it was a winner and that it was a pity he had not caught onto the gimmick earlier because he would have used it in his election campaign.

Mr DAVIES: I do not know. The member for Whitford might like to give me his name. I can demonstrate that his thinking is entirely wrong. I can show the honourable member that it is certainly not a winner. It came through as a strong negative factor in the Government's opinion polls before the election.

As I was saying, prior to its policy speech no-one could have been in any doubt that the Liberal Party wanted a nuclear power station here, but it was a very unpopular policy which Western Australians did not want. They made it very clear in the opinion polls we took, and I am sure the same result came through in the opinion polls taken by the Liberal Party. It is no wonder that the Liberal Party itself was quite appalled at the hard line the Premier had been taking in this matter.

We found when the policy was announced that there had been a dramatic watering down of what the Premier had previously said, and of his unqualified commitment to a nuclear power station near Perth. The Premier said in his policy speech that, in fact, his position and that of the Government was simply to keep the option open. There was an election around the corner. It was a very unpopular item. He wanted to keep the option open, and I have no doubt all members of the Liberal Party hierarchy breathed a sigh of relief when he said that.

However, the Premier's commitment to this deathly foolishness is so great that he could not restrain himself. Having said the Government was merely keeping its options open, he went on to say that nuclear power was the only certainty for energy. Since the election, the confusion and contradictions have continued.

I remind members that on election night the Premier said his Government would have a look at the position and keep the options open; and in the next breath he said, "We will be building a nuclear power station by 1985." That is on record; I believe it has been filmed and recorded.

Despite the Premier's policy speech statement, the Assistant Commissioner of the State Energy Commission (Dr Booth) has said there is no certainty at all about nuclear power. Later, the Premier undermined his own commitment. In June, when addressing a seminar in Perth, he said Australia had centuries of assured fuel from oil, coal, and shale. If that is true, why does Western Australia have to keep its options open?

Why does it have to keep open the option of taking the undoubted risks associated with the establishment of a nuclear power station? The Court Government has never made any serious attempt to justify the nuclear power station proposal except to make the unsubstantiated assertion that the State might run out of other fuels suitable for electricity generation, and therefore, we might have to rely on nuclear energy. The argument is specious. It has never been backed up with facts and figures. The

Premier's June comments have exploded it quite finally and irrevocably. Western Australia does not need nuclear power; it cannot afford it and we most certainly must not take the risk. We will be able to generate our power needs for many years to come from Collie coal. The most conservative estimates of proven extractable coal reserves at Collie are 415 million tonnes. Currently Western Australia is using Collie coal at the rate of only 2.4 million tonnes a year.

There is expected to be a big increase in the demand for Collie coal in the next few years, but the Government itself says that, even allowing for this, currently known extractable reserves are sufficient for at least 40 years.

However, the coalmining companies estimate there are 900 million tonnes of extractable coal, and the Government's geophysical survey says the Collie basin contains 5 000 million tonnes of coal.

Much of this could be extracted by shaft mining methods; a technique used in other parts of the world, but apparently not used in Western Australia.

There are also about 100 million tonnes of coal in deep mine pillars and roofs which, in the past, it has not been feasible or economic to extract. However, with new mining technology and new methods, the mining companies will be able to recover much of this coal and that will be a far more economic proposition.

There is little doubt that for a comparatively small expenditure on boring programmes and mine technology, Collie's reserves will be upgraded substantially. Of course, most members know, as I do, that there are promising coal reserves at Eneabba, Hill River, and Jurien which have not been properly explored.

Mr T. H. Jones: And Boyup Brook.

Mr DAVIES: The member for Collie reminds me of another prospective area. The potential these areas hold for providing Western Australia with a new energy source is exciting indeed.

A nuclear power station will cost at least \$1 000 million. That is the best estimate I have been able to obtain, and probably it will cost substantially more. The cost of investigating new coal deposits, undertaking boring programmes at Collie, and investigating new mine technology would be only a tiny fraction of the enormous cost to establish a nuclear power station.

The Government has refused consistently to answer fully such basic questions as the cost of a new power plant, how Western Australian taxpayers will pay for it, and whether such a plant can be justified in terms of real need and risk.

The Government has never properly refuted the arguments of the member for Collie that Collie coal reserves, combined with new energy technologies, are adequate for our needs.

Government Ministers have never bothered to explain how they intend to dispose of radioactive waste, or how Western Australia would cope with a nuclear accident, especially since no permanent solutions have been found for these things anywhere in the world.

The Court Government is rushing this State headlong towards a nuclear future when the rest of the world is backing away, and I will give the House some figures to support what I am saying.

In 1973 OECD countries placed orders for 56 nuclear power stations. By 1976 the number of new orders was down to 13. By 1978 there were only 10, and that total was barely keeping ahead of the number backing away from nuclear power commitments. The costs of nuclear power are almost as frightening as the risks associated with it.

A nuclear power station will cost at least three times as much to build as does a coal-fired station, and the financial charges of running a nuclear station are nearly 40 per cent higher than those of a conventional power station. The cost of using coal is 2.35c per kilowatt hour compared with 3.2c for nuclear power. Even if Western Australia could afford to build a nuclear power station, there is every possibility that electricity bills would soar, although I know it is hard to believe that they could be any higher than they are. I am sure members all read this morning's issue of *The West Australian* and it does not fill us with too much pride to see that Western Australians pay more for their power than do any other people in Australia. This was not a surprise to the Opposition, because we have known it for quite some time.

I have referred to a few of the matters I wanted to raise arising from the election. These matters will receive further attention from this side of the House from time to time. Of course, I would have liked to refer to them much earlier but we did not have an opportunity to do so.

The opening of the Thirtieth Parliament is long overdue. The Legislature has been in recess for almost eight months, and that is too long in a community that regards itself as democratic. It means, of course, that the Government has had virtually a blank cheque to do what it likes without being questioned or called to account. It is just not good enough. The practise of the Parliament not sitting for the autumn sitting in an election year is not one that needs to continue. It

is quite wrong that we should be expected to accept it so readily.

I have referred to some of the actions taken by the Government since the election. There are so many of them that it was hard to pick out the ones that needed attention.

I now turn to the Lieutenant-Governor and Administrator's Speech. It is very difficult for me to make any meaningful comment at all about his Speech—certainly he read it beautifully. It was very hard to find anything in it to warrant any meaningful comment. The Speech told us almost nothing of what we are to expect during the current session of Parliament.

It has become traditional for this Government to use the Speech to praise itself for achievements which have come about mostly through the efforts of other people. It simply lists the names of the Acts it intends to amend or the names of completely new pieces of legislation it intends to bring forward. There is no way of telling what will happen during the session or what we will be dealing with. Indeed, of the pieces of legislation of which notice has been given already, not one was mentioned in the Speech of the Lieutenant-Governor. There was very little in it to excite us, but with this Government's record we should not expect much else. It is not what is in the Speech that is interesting, but rather what is left out.

The Government has displayed persistently an irritation with the parliamentary process, and at times this irritation borders on contempt. It seems it is too much trouble to come here to proceed with the legislative programme. About all it is possible to say about the legislative programme as outlined in the Speech is that it appears there will be a significant amount of legislation, but that little of it will be of significance. Of course time alone will tell.

I would like to deal with a few matters that have been brought to the attention of the public. The Opposition welcomes the decision of the Government to have the National Health and Medical Research Council conduct another evaluation of the Tronado cancer treatment. For some time we have been calling for the treatment to be made available to those patients in Western Australian public hospitals who wish to undergo it. Before anyone jumps up and down to say that we want to push the treatment down people's throats, let me say that we do not. We like it there as an optional form of treatment. Certainly it is a palliative treatment which should be available to people in Government hospitals, but at the present time anyone who wishes to undergo it must leave a public hospital and go to a private clinic. It is

only from these clinics that the treatment is available. I hope that the committee of inquiry will not only assess any records available but also that it will talk to the people who have undergone the treatment.

Very important developments have occurred overseas recently in microwave therapy, and I am sure some of these must be filtering through, even to the most conservative of doctors. We do hope that the committee of inquiry which has been announced will get on with the job quickly. I am sorry we have not yet been able to hear that the Government has appointed an oncologist at the Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre to carry out some of the work associated with the survey. This was promised by the Minister during the last session of Parliament and I have not yet seen any notice of an appointment. Indeed, I understand the Government is having difficulty in finding a suitable appointee.

Mr Young: They are not easy to find.

Mr DAVIES: I hope the Government is pursuing the matter as ardently as possible, and I await the outcome with a great deal of interest.

I do not think I could allow this occasion to pass without saying something about the very latest propaganda supremo appointed by the Government. To use the colloquial, if anything takes the cake, this most certainly does. It represents one of the most astounding decisions made not only by this Government but also by any Government to waste the taxpayers' money on a further expansion of the already bloated Government propaganda machine. This appointment just cannot be accepted by me or by my party members.

The Government has decided to create a new branch in the Premier's Department to deal with so-called public relations, headed by a director—a new position carrying a salary of \$34 000 a year. I bet that makes some members lick their lips. I note that the salary includes an unspecified allowance in lieu of overtime. I point out to the House that my staff and my Press officer do not receive an allowance in lieu of overtime; as I have already pointed out, they are not paid overtime, either.

Yet here we have this new propaganda supremo who is to be paid \$34 000 a year to head a new branch in the Premier's Department, and he apparently will be entitled to special considerations.

Let me point out the officers the Government already has at its disposal in this field. It has 15 ministerial Press secretaries and an army of other public relations officers, information officers, and

similar officers to spread its message to the public. Four of the Press secretaries are assigned to the Premier. Even before this latest appointment, a strong growth had occurred in the Government's propaganda machine in recent years. In 1977 there were only 10 ministerial Press secretaries, and now there are 15.

It is a poor reflection on the Government's sense of priorities that it should be handing out a \$34 000-a-year propaganda job to a Liberal Party activist at a time when the Premier is predicting he will have to reduce expenditure on health and education.

It is hard to imagine any reasonable excuse for the appointment of an extravagantly paid propaganda supremo. The principal reason is probably that the Liberal Party vote fell by 5 or 6 per cent in the recent State election, and the Government and Liberal Party headquarters have decided that the taxpayers will have to meet the cost of polishing up the party's image. Blame for the party's falling support apparently has been assigned to the propagandists rather than to deficient policies and personalities.

There is a legitimate and proper place in government for the employment of professional journalists and public relations staff to provide information to the media and the public. I have no argument with that. However, the Court Government already has ample staff for this function, and there is no justification whatsoever for this new appointment.

If there was any lingering doubt that the purpose of the appointment was to enhance the popularity of the Liberal Party at public expense, it was dispelled by the appointment to the position of a person who had held two senior positions in the Liberal Party. Plainly, it is a matter of jobs for the boys, and one of the most blatant examples of it.

The Government appointed Mr John Leggoe as its propaganda supremo to join Mr W. W. Mitchell, its propaganda extremo. For those members who are not familiar with Mr Leggoe's background, let me point out that two of his previous posts were national public relations manager for the Liberal Party and State director of the Liberal Party in Queensland. Mr Leggoe's appointment was a clear indication that the purpose of the position is to polish up the Government's image at public expense. He has not been appointed to meet any deficiency in the Government's information services.

The Government has abandoned any pretense that the prime purpose of the post is to assist the flow of information to the public. This is a

shameful situation, and one of the most blatant appointments ever made by any Government, especially during a time of supposed financial stringency, when the Premier is talking about cutting expenditure on health and education, and when he already has five additional ministerial secretaries in the past three years, and four to look after his own office. The new propaganda supremo is to be paid a salary far greater than that of a member of Parliament, and there is not the slightest doubt whatsoever that the sole purpose of the appointment is to polish up the Liberal Party's image at public expense.

Mr Harman: The Government should be condemned for it.

Mr DAVIES: It will brazen it out; the Government does not mind doing these things. If we did it, probably the Press would tear us apart; but apparently the Press has accepted this appointment. I understand the Press has had what is quaintly called a stomachfull of the outpourings of the Premier's office.

Mr Harman: You should be congratulated for drawing this to the notice of the people of Western Australia.

Sir Charles Court: You'll get on.

Mr DAVIES: The Government has a new propaganda supremo to join its propaganda extremo; what a team they will make!

No doubt one of Mr Leggoe's first jobs will be to try to repair the damage done to the Government's standing by massive increases in charges—I will not call them taxes because the Premier will immediately take exception. However, I do not think the public care whether they are called taxes or charges; they know they are getting hit to leg by this Government, and apparently the Government is acting without any real thought of what it is doing.

I doubt that there is a single Western Australian who was not shocked and disturbed by the number of Government charges increased this year, and by the magnitude of the increases. We have almost reached the stage where a 50 per cent increase is the norm. No-one denies that the cost of the services provided by the Government must rise in line with the cost of providing them. We realise that the cost of providing services rises as the rate of inflation increases. However, the increases have been so great this year that they raise serious doubts about the efficiency and competence of the Government.

Many of the increases have been far greater than the inflation rate, and we have received no explanation about that. All the increases are in

themselves inflationary, and in every case the Government has failed to justify them.

The increases that have occurred this year reveal three disturbing things about the Court Government; they are three things which transcend the normal grumbling about any increases in charges; they are three things which make the Court Government deserving of the strongest possible censure; and they are three things which expose the Court Government as dishonest and incompetent.

I make the following charges against the Court Government: That it was wilfully dishonest about the State's financial position before the State election; that it failed to subject the requests from Government departments and authorities for increases in charges to rigorous scrutiny and that this neglect was a gross dereliction of duty; and, that it manipulated the State's finances for its own electoral advantage before the recent State election, with the consequence that the ordinary citizens of this State who have to pay the bills have been disadvantaged after the election.

I will deal with each of those serious charges in turn. The Government no longer can disguise the fact that it duped Western Australians before the recent State election. When the last State Budget was brought down, the Premier assured the Parliament and the people that although the State's financial position was tight, it was sound.

He made a point of saying that adequate allowance had been made for projected cost increases. However, now those same cost increases are advanced to justify the rises in charges which subsequently have occurred.

During the Premier's televised policy speech just before the election, he exuded confidence about the Government's financial position, fulsomely praising his own budgetary efforts in an orgy of self congratulation. How different his cheery pre-election tune was from the post-election dirge.

The Liberal Party gave the clear impression before the election that no major increases in the State's revenue-raising measures would be necessary. It is obvious from the many calls and letters I have received that people feel they have been misled and lied to; that they have been the victims of a confidence trick perpetrated by the Liberal Party.

If the Government were going to the polls again this Saturday, it would be decimated on the basis of its duplicity alone.

Mr Harman: The Minister for Cultural Affairs would not get a portfolio in the next Government.

Mr DAVIES: The second charge I make is that the Government failed to subject the requests from Government departments and authorities for increases in charges to rigorous scrutiny. I use the word "rigorous" because it is a word so often used by the Premier. The \$3 million Metropolitan Water Board bungle of itself is conclusive evidence of this lack of scrutiny.

When the Government was engulfed by the tidal wave of public complaints about the size of the increases in Metropolitan Water Board bills, the Minister for Labour and Industry, in his capacity as Acting Premier, revealed that the board's charges were going to raise \$3 million more than intended—at least, more than Cabinet intended.

Subsequent comments by the Acting Premier, in which he denied there was any mistake, revealed that in fact, the board had intended all along to rip the public off for an extra \$3 million. First of all it was a mistake, then it was not a mistake, and then it was intentional.

That is proof enough for me that Cabinet did not carry out its job properly; that it did not give the charges the rigorous scrutiny it claimed had been given.

When the increases were announced, the Premier made much of how heartbroken and sorry he and his colleagues were. He assured us everything possible had been done to minimise them and that Cabinet had been absolutely ruthless in dealing with the demands of departments and authorities. Yet despite this alleged absolute ruthlessness, a \$3 million error got through.

The Metropolitan Water Board apparently intended all along to raise the extra money. So close, rigorous and thorough was the Cabinet's investigation of the board's requests for another raid on the taxpayers' pockets that Cabinet did not realise it.

I wonder who was advising Cabinet, and where all this information came from. I suppose it came from the board, through the department, through the Treasury officers, through the Minister and, finally, up to the Premier and to Cabinet. It got through without anyone realising that the Metropolitan Water Board was ripping off the public for an extra \$3 million. When the board was found out, the Government said it was a mistake and then said it was not a mistake.

Mr Harman: Who was the Minister in charge?

Mr DAVIES: I do not know. I think the Premier was away at the time the mistake was discovered, so perhaps we should not blame him too much.

If such an enormous and shocking mistake could be made in Metropolitan Water Board charges, it is clear that Cabinet did not subject the board's submissions to the rigorous scrutiny the community has a right to expect, nor to the "detailed evaluation"—to use the Treasurer's own words—that the Treasurer claimed.

It appears that Cabinet did nothing more than rubber-stamp the board's proposals without even knowing or trying to find out what the full effect would be.

There have been so many problems in the operations of the Metropolitan Water Board in recent years and such big increases in the board's charges that it is reasonable to suppose Cabinet would be particularly alert and that, more than any other department, the Metropolitan Water Board would have its submissions thoroughly checked by Treasury and Cabinet. However, despite this, Cabinet's scrutiny of the Metropolitan Water Board's proposal fell far short of what the community had a right to expect.

If Cabinet's scrutiny of the board's proposal was so deficient, it becomes frightening to think of the kind of scrutiny Cabinet gave to the applications by other departments and statutory authorities for the increases in charges which have been foisted on the public so readily since the election. If Cabinet has been deficient in one area, when it should have been particularly alert, we can expect only that it has been doubly deficient in other areas. Similar mistakes could be found in charges in other areas.

When the uproar over the Metropolitan Water Board's bills broke, leading to the uncovering of the blunder—which, apparently, was not a blunder—the Acting Premier made apologetic and soothing noises and tried to pass the blame onto the Metropolitan Water Board. Of course, the board must share the blame. However, the final responsibility must lie with Cabinet, because it is Cabinet's duty to take every possible step to satisfy itself that increases in charges are justified before they are imposed on the public. The Court Cabinet, despite its self-proclaimed financial wizardry, failed to take every step possible, and the cost of correcting the consequences of this negligence will be another financial impost upon the taxpayer.

This is the second multi-million dollar mistake the Government has made in setting charges in only 14 months. Members will recall that when the State fuel tax legislation was before Parliament last year it contained a small error of \$3.3 million.

Mr Harman: The Minister for Transport knows all about that.

Mr DAVIES: Fortunately, that error was discovered before it was foisted on the public. Let us not talk about the Minister for Transport and his additions and subtractions. We could go back to the issue of the electrification of the railways and recall how he gave us a series of figures, none of which matched; they just happen to be the ones on the top of his pad at the time; certainly, they were the worst batch of figures we ever saw.

These two multi-million dollar mistakes indicate the incompetence and the cavalier attitude of Cabinet when it is dealing with proposed increases.

What emerges from this mess is the need for Cabinet to exercise greater financial vigilance.

Following the Metropolitan Water Board bungle and last year's \$3.3 million bungle with the imposition of a State fuel tax, the public can have little confidence in the Government's ability to handle financial matters carefully and efficiently. By the Government's own ineptitude, it is destroying any confidence the public has in it.

The Cabinet has proved twice that it is incapable of dealing with requests for increased charges in a manner which protects the interests of the public. At all times, the cabinet should be trying to protect the interests of the public, yet on two occasions it has not dealt with such requests in a proper manner. A review of all the increases that have been made since the election is essential so that we can see there is justification for the increases and for the size of the increases. We want to be certain that the public is not being ripped off, as it could have been so easily in relation to the Metropolitan Water Board charges.

Thirdly, I said the Government manipulated the State's finances to its own electoral advantage before the State election. Of course, the consequence of this is that the average citizen has been disadvantaged since the election. It is reasonable to assume that any Government would be ultra-careful about its actions in the months leading up to an election. However, we would expect the Government to be doubly careful, because irresponsibility would mean that the ordinary citizen would be disadvantaged at a later date because of actions taken by the Government.

There are many examples I could deal with, but I will deal with just three: the Motor Vehicle Insurance Trust, the State Energy Commission, and the Metropolitan Water Board. I will deal firstly with the Motor Vehicle Insurance Trust.

On 23 April 1979 the Motor Vehicle Premiums Committee submitted a report to the Minister for Local Government. In part, this report said—

The committee resolved to recommend that approval be sought for an overall increase of 15.26 per cent in premiums effective from the 1st July, 1979 on the basis that it is the minimum increase that can be recommended.

Two of the factors in the committee's recommendation were, in its opinion, that if trends then current continued, there would have been a need for a further increase from 1 July 1980; and that there was an estimated deficit on 30 June 1979 of \$2.88 million. In August 1979, Cabinet refused the recommended increase.

I will mention those dates again. On 23 April 1979 the application went in. The increase was to apply from 1 July 1979; and Cabinet refused the request for a 15.26 per cent increase in August. Obviously, Cabinet had no intention of granting that request. As I said, a factor of the committee's recommendation was that it thought there would be a further need for an increase as from 1 July 1980, and that there would be an estimated deficit of \$2.88 million as at 30 June 1979.

When the Minister for Local Government refused the increase, she said—

The Government had considered that after the big rise last year another rise was not warranted at this stage regular reviews would enable the Government to see what effect there had been on the funds since the trust's original request for an increase . . .

A rather odd statement! I suppose it was a good enough excuse for knocking back the request for an increase.

On 11 September 1979—a month after the request had been knocked back—the Minister tabled in this House the annual report of the Motor Vehicle Insurance Trust for the financial year ended 30 June 1979. The report showed that at that date the Motor Vehicle Insurance Trust had an accumulated deficit of \$8.65 million. The actual operating deficit for 1978-79 was \$10.5 million.

On 2 May 1980, about eight weeks after the State election, the manager of the Motor Vehicle Insurance Trust (Mr Marshall) announced that motor vehicle third party insurance premiums would be increased by an average of 50 per cent from 1 July 1980. The premium on private motor vehicles would increase from \$60 to \$90 per annum. Mr Marshall was reported in *The West Australian* as saying that the trust deficit at 31 December 1979 was \$16.8 million, despite a

premium increase of 33 per cent which had been granted in the financial year 1977-78. After the announcement of increases this year, the Minister for Local Government was reported as stating that allegations about political considerations having influenced the timing and magnitude of the increases were unfair. The band played "Believe it if you like"! She said she had not received a report from the trust until March—after the election.

When the Minister was asked whether the Government had made a mistake by rejecting a trust request for increases last year, she said the Government had had to make a judgment. All I can say is that she attempted a very clumsy cover-up. The Minister cannot refute the fact that the Government rejected an application for an increase of 15.26 per cent in April 1979 with the full knowledge that the trust estimated a deficit for 1978-79 of \$2.88 million. Only a few months later the Minister received a second report—the financial statement of the trust for 1978-79—which showed that the trust had a deficit on 30 June of \$8.65 million.

The Minister had been warned about the \$2.88 million deficit. The report showed that the accumulated deficit was \$8.65 million. Despite the Minister's statement in 1979 that the trust's financial position would be kept under review, the trust's deficit had reached \$16.8 million by 31 December 1979.

The Minister's claim that she had not received a report from the trust until March, after the election, conceals the full story. She was aware of the severely deteriorating financial position of the trust in April 1979, and later that same year. I have given my sources for that.

On 30 June 1978 the trust had a surplus of \$2.6 million. Eighteen months later it had a deficit of \$16.8 million. From a surplus of \$2.6 million to a deficit of \$16.8 million in 18 months—a remarkable record!

This all provides strong evidence that the Government allowed the trust's financial position to deteriorate seriously because it did not want to increase premiums in a pre-election year. Of course, the consequence is that, post-election, we are now paying much more than would otherwise have been the case. As I said, from 1 July there is an increase of 50 per cent.

The Government acted without proper regard to the effects of its decisions on the public. It failed to recognise how badly the financial position of the Motor Vehicle Insurance Trust was deteriorating. However, the evidence was

there. It had been produced in this House; so the Minister cannot say she did not know.

All we can say is that the Government knew of these facts, but it was not going to increase the charges before the election. Since then, the increases have been much greater, and the public has had to bear this impost.

Let us have a look at the State Energy Commission and let us learn what kind of conflicting stories and statements have been made in regard to SEC charges. I will remind members again that we pay the highest charges for electricity in Australia.

On 31 May 1979 the Premier announced a 3.5 per cent tariff increase for electricity and gas. He said the increase had been kept to a minimum, and that the SEC had estimated it would make a trading surplus of \$2 million in 1979-80 on a revenue of \$250 million.

In his letter to the Minister for Fuel and Energy in the SEC's annual report for 1978-79, the Commissioner (Mr Kirkwood) said that oil price rises, together with the general increase in the rate of inflation, would affect adversely the commission's financial result during the next financial year, notwithstanding the 3.5 per cent increase in tariffs from 1 July 1979; that is, within a period of four weeks.

Further on the report states, "The commission is expecting an operating deficit in the coming financial year due to recent oil price rises." The commissioner said there would be a deficit and the Premier said there would be a surplus. Who knows what was going on? In my opinion the Premier was not telling the truth.

The Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for 1979-80 for the State's business undertakings presented to Parliament showed that the SEC's estimated revenue was \$248.52 million, and its estimated expenditure was \$246.98 million. This indicated a surplus of \$1.54 million in 1979-80. Once again we have this difference in the story told by Commissioner Kirkwood and the one told by the Premier.

Of course, this raises the shocking possibility that deliberately falsified figures were presented to Parliament. As I said, the figures are here for anyone to see. Any member who studied the figures would come to the same conclusion I have reached.

On 23 April 1980, only eight weeks after the State election, the Premier announced increases in electricity and gas tariffs of 18 per cent and 24 per cent respectively, plus a series of other charges such as the iniquitous fixed charge, allegedly for meter reading. If a consumer has

electricity and gas, he pays this fee twice—once for having the gas meter read and once for having the electricity meter read.

It was reported in *The West Australian* that the Premier had said the increases were absolutely unavoidable and that, regretfully, Cabinet had been forced to accept the SEC's recommendations. It was claimed also that without increases, the commission's loss in 1979-80 would be almost \$13 million, and about \$47.5 million in 1980-81. Whatever happened to that \$2 million surplus the Premier was talking about before the election?

Mr B. T. Burke: Straight into the slush fund.

Mr DAVIES: Let me summarise the chain of events. On 31 May 1979, the Premier announced that there would be increases of 3.5 per cent in electricity and gas tariffs and that the SEC would have a trading surplus of \$2 million in 1979-80.

Only four weeks after the Premier's announcement the SEC reported that oil prices would result in an operating deficit in 1979-80.

Despite the SEC's predictions, the Premier presented to Parliament financial estimates for the SEC that showed an operating surplus of \$1.54 million in 1979-80. These were presented after the SEC's warning about the impact of oil prices.

Only six months after the estimates were presented to Parliament and just eight weeks after the State election, the Government announced a second tariff increase for 1979-80 of 18 per cent for electricity and 24 per cent for gas. The Government said that without these increases the SEC would have an operating deficit of \$13 million in 1979-80.

In less than 12 months the SEC's financial position had deteriorated from an estimated surplus of \$2 million to a deficit of \$13 million. The Estimates presented to Parliament by the Premier in September were in error by about \$15 million. More financial wizardry!

When the first tariff increases for 1979-80 were proposed, either the Government's assessment of the SEC's financial position was hopelessly inadequate, or the tariff increases were deliberately kept artificially low to enhance the Government's electoral standing.

All these facts suggest that information that was wrong was presented knowingly and deliberately to Parliament; that Parliament was misled wilfully; and that financial estimates were falsified. These are very grave matters indeed.

I shall now have a few words to say about the Metropolitan Water Board. I think it was about

May, 1979, that the board submitted proposals to the Government for increases in water, sewerage, and drainage charges for 1979-80. The proposals for water charges provided for an increase in the fixed charge from \$36 to \$44—an increase of 22.2 per cent—and an increase in the price of water consumed in excess of the annual allowance from 17c per kilolitre to 21c per kilolitre—an increase of 23.5 per cent.

On 15 May 1979, it was reported in *The West Australian* that Cabinet had rejected the proposed increases because it was not satisfied with the board's predictions of future revenue and that it thought the proposed increases were too high. The Premier was reported to have said that Cabinet wanted more information about the board's past operations and proposed operations over the next two or three years. Consequently, the Government ordered an investigation by the Treasury of the Metropolitan Water Board's proposals.

On 29 May 1979, it was announced that the Government had severely pruned the board's initial proposals. The Premier is reported as saying—

... the Government thought the board's original proposals did not reflect reasonably predictable revenue results in a normal year free of water restrictions.

And further—

The Treasury examination of the finances made it practicable to adopt a different approach, without endangering the board's financial liquidity.

I wonder what happened to all the plans which were brought into this place in 1962 which suggested the board would have complete autonomy and would not have to subject itself to any political wrangling.

In any case, two days later the Government announced the increases in water, sewerage, and drainage rates for 1979-80. The fixed charge for water was increased from \$36 to \$40—an increase of 11.1 per cent—and the price for water in excess of the allowance was increased from 17c per kilolitre to 19c per kilolitre—an increase of 11.7 per cent.

It was reported that the Government had slashed the board's figures in half because it was clear that they would have resulted in a substantial surplus. This was in late May-early June, 1979.

It was reported also that the Government's review of water charges by the Treasury with the board had produced what was thought to be a break-even operation for the board. Further, it

was reported that, because of the cuts, it would be necessary for the Treasury to arrange any overdraft finances if the board ran into liquidity problems during the year.

At the end of June 1979, only four weeks after the announced increases, the Water Board completed the financial year 1978-79 with an operating deficit for the year of \$5.5 million and an accumulated deficit of \$8.3 million. All this happened in June/July 1979 before the election and just after water charges had been increased by over 11 per cent.

Clearly the board's financial position was already in a critical state.

On 5 June 1980, the Premier announced—this, of course, is after the election—increases in water, sewerage, and drainage charges, among a range of other increased charges, to apply from 1 July 1980.

The fixed charge for water was increased from \$40 to \$60—an increase of 50 per cent—and the price for water in excess of the allowance was increased from 19c per kilolitre to 24c, an increase of 26 per cent. Sewerage rates were increased by an average of 15 per cent and drainage rates by 9 per cent.

It is evident from the magnitude of the recent increases that the increases in water charges in 1979 were kept artificially low in a deliberate attempt by the Government to boost its election prospects.

The claim by the Cabinet that the increases of 22 per cent proposed by the board in May 1979 were "too high" sits uneasily alongside the increases of 50 per cent and 26 per cent operative from July 1980.

Clearly the Government merely deferred total increases necessary in 1979-80 until after the State election in February 1980 by cutting the board's initial proposals from 22.5 per cent to 11.1 per cent, and then increasing the charges by 50 per cent for the fixed charge, and 26 per cent for the unit price of water.

This electorally-inspired manipulation by the Government has caused a further deterioration in the board's financial position. The board completed the financial year ended 30 June 1979 with an accumulated deficit of \$8.3 million.

In 1979-80 the board was forced into an operating deficit of \$2.4 million, taking its accumulated deficit to \$10.7 million.

It is important to recognise that, according to the Premier's financial management principle that the user must pay, the customers of the Metropolitan Water Board will be forced to pay

for the Government's irresponsible financial management as well. Not only will the customers have to pay for what they receive, but they will also have to pay for the Government's irresponsible financial management.

The upshot of this chicanery is that by delaying necessary increases in charges, the size of the ultimate price rise has been increased because of the need to fund deficits in the interim period.

On 15 July 1980, the Government ordered an urgent review of steep increases in MWB charges, because it was found that the new charges would raise up to \$3 million more than the Cabinet thought when it approved them.

Mr Mensaros: That is not so.

Mr DAVIES: The Acting Premier said that "when Cabinet first considered the issue it did not have information on land revaluations". This statement was not true.

The Valuer General (Mr Whitfield) whose department was responsible for forwarding the new valuations to the MWB is reported to have said that "The Water Board had sufficient information to accurately assess its rate income." That was Mr Whitfield's own statement.

In addition, during Opposition investigations with the MWB and the Valuer General's department immediately after the increases were announced by the Premier in June, an MWB officer advised us that, although the board had not received revaluation figures for all districts, sufficient statistics had been available on which to base increases for 1980-81.

Mr O'Connor: What is meant by "sufficient statistics"?

Mr DAVIES: He said that land valuations had been increased by an average of 140 per cent. I was advised of that before the election. Indeed, I believe I am on record as making a statement that "some could go as high as 150 per cent, but the average seemed to be 140 per cent". So before the last State election I was able to tell the Government what the valuations were likely to be, because apparently some people in the Metropolitan Water Board were quite shocked at the huge increases they believed would be necessary in the future.

In any case, if the board's proposed increases had been examined as closely as the Premier stated they had been, this information would have been readily available.

On 18 July the Acting Premier announced that the Government had decided to put a 50 per cent limit on MWB bill increases based on valuations carried out in 1980-81.

In the final analysis, all the Government has done in the latest chapter of the saga of the mismanagement of the MWB's financial operations is to reduce the board's revenue by \$3.5 million in 1980.

The accumulated deficit of \$10.7 million might be reduced to \$9.7 million in 1980-81 according to the latest figures available. However, in the long run MWB customers will have to pay off the deficit—part of which has been accrued from the Government's irresponsible financial management—in instalments incorporated in future increases in water charges and sewerage and drainage rates.

In conclusion, it is relevant to mention that one of the members of the Metropolitan Water Board is a representative from State Treasury. These charges are supposed to have been subjected to the most rigorous examination before Cabinet approved them. I do not know whether the examination was carried out by the Treasury, Cabinet, or the MWB.

Mr Harman: I think you have to blame the Minister. He is the one responsible for it.

Mr DAVIES: In the end the Minister has to take the blame. He has to provide accurate information to Cabinet. What Cabinet does with the information is its own business; but there is a responsibility on every Minister to take only the truth to Cabinet.

Mr Mensaros: Are you alleging that I did not?

Mr DAVIES: Somebody blundered along the way.

Mr O'Connor: You blundered.

Mr DAVIES: I have just recited the Minister's own figures to him. What I have said tonight is taken from information provided by the Premier, Acting Premier, and the Minister. From May 1979 when the first increases of roughly of 22.2 per cent were sought and rejected, I have proceeded step by step.

Mr O'Connor: Where did you get the information?

Mr DAVIES: The information came from records in my office and originated, in the main, from Press statements by the Premier, Acting Premier, or the Minister.

Mr O'Connor: I am glad you made that point.

Mr DAVIES: The two financial blunders in the last two years—that is, 1979-80 and 1980-81—raise questions as to the effectiveness of the Treasury's scrutiny of these financial matters before they go to Cabinet.

What I have revealed tonight in regard to the Motor Vehicle Insurance Trust, the SEC—in particular, the contradictory statements, with confidence on the one hand and gloom on the other, and the figures presented to Parliament which appear to be erroneous—and the Metropolitan Water Board paints a shocking and frightening picture of an unscrupulous and irresponsible Government, determined to protect its electoral prospects, irrespective of the subsequent cost to the elector. Every matter surrounding the increases in taxes and charges announced this year discredits the Court Government. Its honesty and frankness are discredited and its political integrity is discredited.

The State's finances have been manipulated for political purposes with the ultimate cost to the average Western Australian family. There is not the slightest doubt about that. Whilst I accept and acknowledge that Governments are always careful—particularly for election purposes—this Government has been not only irresponsible and not only careful, but indeed also quite dishonest in its dealings with the public.

Opposition members: Hear, hear!

Mr DAVIES: I am sure the Government wishes to say something on the matter and I am quite certain that some of my colleagues wish to comment also. I have not gone through the whole gamut of increases; I have not introduced the increased charges which were gazetted last week and the many others which were foisted on us by the Government, with the same upheaval as the three matters I raised earlier.

Amendment to Motion

Mr DAVIES: Because of the manner in which this has been done I move an amendment—

That the following words be added to the motion—

But we regret to inform Your Excellency that your government—

- (a) was wilfully dishonest about the State's financial position before the recent election,
- (b) failed to subject requests from government departments and authorities for increases in charges to the rigorous scrutiny expected of a responsible government,

- (c) manipulated the State's finances for its own electoral advantage before the recent State election with the consequence that subsequently the citizens of the State have had to meet unnecessarily high bills for government services, and,
- (d) has, thereby, lowered the standard of living of the average West Australian family which was already under attack from the policies and decisions of the Fraser Government.

Mr Grayden: A disgraceful motion! Absolutely disgraceful!

Several members interjected.

Mr Grayden: Absolutely unworthy of the Opposition.

Government members: Hear, hear!

Mr O'Connor: I think it is worthy of them.

MR H. D. EVANS (Warren—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [8.42 p.m.]: In seconding the motion I would like to comment on several specific points and would also like to elaborate on and support the comments of the Leader of the Opposition on the matters raised in his amendment.

Last night the member for Merredin spoke briefly on one matter which I feel needs to be expanded; that is, the question of rail freights and the manner in which they are likely to be applied and the manner in which this Government has endeavoured to implement them.

The member for Merredin suggested that people, although they expect to pay increased charges for services, do take exception when the charges exceed the CPI. This applies, as we have been saying.

Mr Rushton: Which they do not do!

Mr H. D. EVANS: These apply to the whole range of imposts and charges whether it be for gun licences, fishing licences, or anything else when the charges are of the order not expected.

It is understandable that the sections of the community which are affected become very embittered and cynical about the whole matter. The carefully worded Press statement of the Premier dated 4 June 1980 is certainly worth examination. It is a masterpiece in understatement and the generalities it portrays still leave the transport system—as it is proposed by this Government—a deep mystery. In the Press statement the Premier said—

Graingrowers will be given an opportunity to demonstrate their desire to have a truly

competitive transport system during the coming grain season.

He said, "a truly competitive transport system". As the member for Merredin suggested, "competitive with what?"

The Premier's statement went on to mention that the growers would be given an opportunity to demonstrate their feelings. There should be no doubt about that at the moment in view of some of the happenings of the past few months. The Premier continued—

After close consideration, Cabinet agreed to a postponing of the temporary regulations so that we could see farmers' response to the more competitive transport situation brought about by the increased system Westrail has been given to offer more competitive freight rates.

We will just take this seriatim. The new Westrail charges were to apply from 1 July as was announced on 4 June. It would be on a sliding scale providing for increases up to 20 per cent for long haulages, but reductions of up to 33 per cent for short hauls. How classic!

It was disputed strongly by the organisation which represented grain growers. The classic is that Westrail is hopeful that new rates will bring more grain to rail. That was the salient feature of the Press release of the Premier which I felt we should examine before turning to a document which was brought in recently to indicate the reaction the Premier was seeking. Its heading was, "The great grain train robbery".

With that rather impressive title it makes an introductory remark as follows—

A few weeks ago, hundreds of Perth residents were shattered when they found that their water bills were up by as much as \$300. The result was uproar. Special sessions of Cabinet were called, politicians ducked for cover, and there were calls for inquiries.

The article continued by saying that a Marvel Loch resident, Mr Romalo Patroni, smiled cynically because he had just finished calculating the new price increase for his crop in this coming season. The Patroni family will have to pay Westrail an additional \$10 000 freight charges.

So we can understand that producers in this situation feel there is some form of inequity.

Mr P. V. Jones: Over what area is that? How many acres of wheat?

Mr H. D. EVANS: The article did not give a figure in that specific case but it did for other areas.

Mr Rushton: What is it as a total of freight? What is the total acres income?

Mr H. D. EVANS: It does not give a figure.

Mr Rushton: I understand it is something like half a million.

Mr H. D. EVANS: I comment on the percentage increase on expense accounts, but not on this one. I have others which are documented. I will go back to the full cost which the Minister for Transport asked for for his consideration and the implications which are contained in the agricultural economics of this matter.

In this case the Patroni family is stuck with an increase of \$10 000. That would be less than 10 000 acres.

Mr Rushton: Can you give me a suggestion of what you have for the percentage of the gross income of the freight?

Mr H. D. EVANS: Be patient. I will come to this shortly and the Minister will be able to see for himself the percentage and amount involved.

Mr Rushton: What do you think should be fair?

Mr H. D. EVANS: We will see that as the case unfolds and we realise the increases that have been levied on some of the other commodities, which increases the Minister has steadfastly refused to reveal.

The Minister expects the producers to come up with a reasonable case to be considered in the same way as is done for minerals and other commodities. This is nothing like a mineral submission but the Minister suggests the producers should be able to do it on the same basis.

Mr Stephens: They don't have the figures.

Mr H. D. EVANS: Perhaps we will receive the answer to that question later on.

On 4 June 1980 the Premier said that Westrail was hopeful that the new rates would win more grain to rail.

From all appearances the contrary will occur. The proposition which has been put forward is ill-considered, and from my understanding of the grain industry increased haulage is the last thing that is liable to happen, for a number of reasons which need to be detailed and recorded in this House.

The reaction which the Premier was seeking from the producers perhaps can be summed up in the comment appearing in the document under the heading, "Freight rate rip-off". The comment sets out that after three bad years in the Southern Cross area a farmer with a reasonable crop this

year will pay \$16.30 a tonne to have Westrail freight his wheat to Perth. Last season the rate would have been \$13.70 a tonne. With around 9 000 acres of wheat to freight, the Government will take an extra \$10 000 out of the family income of that farmer. Those are statistics.

Many miles further up the track BHP will load iron ore onto trains which will travel the same line to the city, but by way of comparison BHP will pay \$7.54 a tonne. That is the crux of the objection of the farmers; the two commodities travel over the same line and there is not much difference in the continuity of production as far as Westrail is concerned. The farmers will pay \$16.30 a tonne whereas the BHP company will pay \$7.54 a tonne; less than 50 per cent of the rate the farmers will pay. The farmers do have fair cause for grievance, and it is something which should be examined fairly closely and dispassionately.

Peripheral matters must necessarily be considered. The comment on the sixth sheet is, "Decentralisation destroyed". In the town of Merredin, local storekeepers and businessmen have listened with interest to the Government's comments about the additional wonders of decentralisation. This season, \$2 million of the revenue which farmers normally would have spent in the area will be freighted into the Government's coffers. Towns such as Merredin cannot survive this sort of attack. A sum of \$2 million which would normally be spent in the area will be lost to the shopkeepers and businessmen.

Westrail makes a profit on the transport of wheat; there is no doubt about that. Its profit is considerable. If Westrail did not transport the stable commodities such as wheat and superphosphate it would be even further in the red.

Alcoa and BHP pay lower freight rates than the farmers and it is understandable that farmers and shopkeepers in towns such as Merredin are facing ruin. Alcoa is looking to a profit of \$100 million this year. Perhaps the Minister might tell us the rate per tonne Alcoa is paying for the transportation of its material. The Minister seems to be rather mute at the moment. This is occurring when it is predicted that farm income will be down.

The last season was a record one, but such seasons do not last. Farming in some of the outer areas is a seasonal matter, and cyclical to boot.

The document contains a comment about Mr Mensaros with regard to the central eastern regional committee, dated 15 September 1978. Although the Minister is not present, my remarks

will be on record. The Minister is reported to have said that regionalism is fundamental to the policy of the Government in the development of this State. So much for development in country areas. When the facts are held up against the rather hollow statement of the Minister responsible for that aspect of government, I do not think there is much need for further comment.

Probably with some element of fair warning the subtitle on the next page reads, "We won't just go away". That particular comment was made at a meeting of farmers at Merredin several weeks ago in the presence of the Minister for Transport. The Minister stated his case to the farmers. There is a comment in brackets to the effect that the farmers are not generally considered to be social activists or anti-Liberal.

At the end of the meeting a motion of no confidence was moved in the Minister. The motion was not moved by socialists or red activists, but from the range of normal wheat producers in the Merredin area. It was estimated that 500 to 600 people attended the meeting but only 330 could be accommodated in the hall at that time. A vote was taken on the motion of no confidence and the chairman refused to count the "Ayes". However, he did count the "Noes" who numbered seven. That was a fairly decisive opinion expressed by the farmers.

The Premier stated in his Press release that the meeting would provide an opportunity for the growers to express their views, and I am sure he is not in doubt as to their views.

The same Press release to which I have already referred, dated 4 June, stated that the Transport Commission would carefully monitor the response of the grain growers to the new charges. I reiterate: the Premier should have a good idea now.

I have presented the view of the grain producers of this State. In another publication they elaborate a little further on decentralisation problems. Under the heading, "How to kill a region", the cost of cropping a number of areas is taken into account. The Shire of Yilgarn has taken out its own costing, and in towns like Southern Cross it can be seen that where there is a poor crop the operation will be very marginal indeed. The total return per acre in that area will be \$31.66. So, with an average season this year the farmers in the Yilgarn Shire will lose 84c an acre in rail freight. This is where the viability of the whole operation comes in, and this is the reason farmers are upset.

The farmers have established, through the Farmers' Union, a fighting fund into which they

have paid something like \$2 000. Another committee has been set up also. The two, in a joint action, not only will present collated information in a detailed documented case to the Government, but also will endeavour to obtain additional support for their cause. It is understandable that they have taken this view, particularly because of the attitude of this Government which has never been known to be other than high handed.

Mr Stephens: How effective do you think the National Country Party was in Cabinet? Do you think the increase was only 20 per cent because of the effectiveness of the NCP in Cabinet?

Mr H. D. EVANS: How effective has it ever been, even when it had more strength?

I turn now to the stand of the Farmers' Union and the Interzone Transport Commission. Before doing so it is apposite to mention that prior to the last election the Liberal Party's policy was that there would be no increase in freight rates until at least June 1981. I make that point because the Leader of the Opposition made an unqualified statement to that effect prior to the last election. It is a pity some primary producers did not listen a little more closely.

The Farmers' Union and the Interzone Transport Commission have taken a very responsible attitude. They applaud the decreases in rail freights in the inner areas but believe they were inevitable in the light of the proposed increases. Had the freight rates been increased they would have looked ludicrous against the alternative transportation costs. Both organisations are firm in their belief that wheat should be carried by rail—they do not cavil about that at all—but it is the lack of a definitive policy which worries them. Both organisations feel that the policy of Westrail will drive grain trade to road and there will be an overall loss in grain traffic as far as Westrail is concerned.

Three reasons can be readily projected to indicate why that is so. A survey has been conducted in the lakes area. It cannot be claimed to be a comprehensive survey but it shows that 18.2 per cent of grain from the lakes area will go to Albany by road because of Westrail's additional freight increases. It is understandable; the sheer economics of it make it so. Three farmers in the area, who have secured a suspension of the regulatory provisions, have their own grain trains and Westrail will not be able to compete with them.

The position on the three northern lines—the coast line, the inside line, and the Miling line—is rather interesting. They are somewhat parallel

but the loading facilities and bins are spread in such a manner that farmers will be bypassing their nearest siding because the wheat will have to travel quite a distance further to get to Geraldton. Therefore, those who normally serve the inside line will be conveying their wheat to the coast line, and in those districts they will be harvesting about a week ahead of the coast districts. The coast line bins will become clogged up and there will be no use at all for the inside line bins. The wheat will be going to Geraldton by road. Places like Miling, Three Springs, Mingenew, and Bolgart will be involved, and Bullfinch wheat will go to Bodalling.

It means that on the inside line, the economics of which are fairly shaky now, a considerable capitalisation by CBH and Westrail will not be used, which will contribute to the overall deterioration of rail economics. This will be a most undesirable and unfavourable consequence; and, as a further spin-off, the increased use of road transport will put an additional impost on the shire councils. They will be up for greater road maintenance, which they will be ill able to afford with the probable decrease in their income.

Farmers in some areas have declared they would probably become unviable as far as wheat growing is concerned. The Minister challenged farmers to submit a case showing how freights would affect viability in any circumstance. The farmers have done that. A submission has been prepared by Agribusiness Councillors and is in its final draft. It has been prepared professionally and checked by professionals. It will be an indisputable case for the Minister to examine in response to the challenge he threw out.

I do not want to go through the submission in detail but I think it is necessary to point out the concept of the conclusion. The concept is that with wheat expecting to return about \$90 net from the first advance and \$100 overall, it typically requires a yield factor of about .82 tonnes per hectare to break even. The break-even point is .82 tonnes per hectare, and that must be reached before any profit can accrue.

We find that in the wheatbelt of Western Australia there are 18 shires with a 10-year average close to or below the break-even figure of .82 tonnes per hectare. These figures are worth recording because there are some surprising ones among them—

Albany	.8
Lake Grace	.96
Merredin	.86
Mt. Marshall	.85
Mukinbudin	.83

Narembeen	.99
Nungarin	.85
Westonia	.79
Dalwallinu	.99
Dandaragan	.92
Morawa	.95
Mullewa	.91
Perenjori	.94
Chapman Valley	.96
Dundas	.66
Esperance	.91
Ravensthorpe	.78
Yilgarn	.8

As 18 shires are so close to the break-even point, the Minister will find the viability case fairly well proven.

It should also be pointed out that it has been predicted fairly authoritatively by most of the boffins with crystal balls on the agricultural scene that the trend will be towards larger farms with greater investment in machinery and land and the utilisation of the most up-to-date techniques, managerially and technologically. These will enable farmers to survive in what is called in common parlance the cost-price squeeze situation, with costs escalating at a faster rate than returns are coming in. If the costs cannot be absorbed with greater acreages and higher investment in most areas, the export producers of this State will not be able to continue in operation. That is broadly the situation.

It must be added that there are still some questions about the continued utilisation of additional capital, but at some stage we must reach the point where any sort of loss will be of a magnitude that cannot be sustained. However, the Minister will receive a submission in response to his challenge, and it will be a fairly valid submission. The freight rates themselves in conjunction with other things will tell the story.

The crux of the case put forward by the producers is that they are unable to obtain the information they are seeking in order that they might submit a balanced argument. Only yesterday the Leader of the Opposition asked the Minister for Transport the following question—

- (1) How much does it cost Westrail per tonne/kilometre on average to transport—
 - (a) woodchips;
 - (b) iron ore;
 - (c) bauxite;
 - (d) grain.

He then asked—

(2) How much does Westrail charge per tonne/kilometre on average to transport—

- (a) woodchips;
- (b) iron ore;
- (c) bauxite;
- (d) grain.

The Minister replied as follows—

(1) (a) to (c) These commodities are carried under commercial freight agreements which are kept confidential in accordance with normal business practice.

In regard to the freight rates for hauling grain, we were told only what the new grain rates will be.

I have been quoted some figures by the producers, but as the Minister will not verify them, I do not know whether or not they are absolutely correct. The producers claim that over the five-year period the freight for grain has been \$8.64 per tonne, compared with \$5.77 per tonne for iron ore, and 75c per tonne for bauxite. The Minister is not prepared to state whether or not these figures are correct, so we will just have to wait to find out in due course.

The whole intention of this Government in regard to its land transport policy remains clouded in secrecy. How will its policy operate? How will rail and road transport be integrated? The whole situation is baffling to the producing community of this State.

I quoted some figures in the House last night, and these have a bearing on paragraph (d) of the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition. It reads as follows—

(d) has, thereby, lowered the standard of living of the average Western Australian family which was already under attack from the policies and decisions of the Fraser Government.

I would like to bring these particular figures up to date. Last evening I referred to the average weekly earnings of a single man. These were \$166.90 in December 1975, rising to \$243.70 in March 1980. A single man's disposable income was \$129.58 in 1975, and \$184.95 in March 1980.

The CPI for Perth increased by 68.6 per cent between December 1975 and June 1980, so we can see that a single man on the average weekly earnings has lost \$21 a week in real terms over that five-year period. His standard of living has been eroded by \$21 a week.

A married man with two dependent children under 16 years of age had a disposable income of \$146.01 in December 1975. This rose to \$212.88

by March 1980, but we must bear in mind that he now must pay for health insurance for himself and his family—if he can afford to do so.

Certainly many people in the community now have no health insurance cover, but I feel I am justified in allowing an average of \$10 a week for this item. So we can see that while the average married man has fallen behind in his disposable income, he is not quite as badly off as is the single man. So the average wage and salary earner has been affected by the policies of the Western Australian and Federal Governments to the extent that he is now \$17 to \$21 a week worse off than he was in 1975.

I now come to the reply given by the Premier tonight to a question without notice. He was quoted in today's edition of the *Daily News* as saying that the latest matter is the proverbial peanuts compared with some of the very sophisticated avoidance schemes that are practised on a large scale in other areas of commercial and financial activities. That is quite so—corporate and white-collar crime, particularly in the field of tax avoidance, is manifest to a marked degree. The Premier made that point quite clearly.

I will conclude my comments tonight on the note of the erosion of the standard of living and the quality of life of the average wage and salary earner. That fact carries with it the corollary that the same average wage and salary earner is paying a disproportionate amount of the tax required to operate the telephone lines and to build the footpaths and roads throughout the nation. The inequity and injustice of this situation is manifest in the comment the Premier made in his reply to the question without notice—a reply which I thought was quite inadequate. So for these reasons I support and second the amendment moved very ably after the Leader of the Opposition's discourse which should leave the Government of this State with at least a feeling of a degree of shame.

MR T. H. JONES (Collie) [9.19 p.m.]: I have much pleasure in supporting the amendment ably moved by the Leader of the Opposition and seconded by his deputy.

Members will recall that prior to the State election when they turned on their radios or television all they could hear was "Let us leap into the 80s with a man named Court".

Mr Grewar: And wasn't it good?

Mr T. H. JONES: When we turned on the television of an evening, all we could hear was what this man Court would do if returned to Government. Certainly I am not arguing about

the leaping, but the only things that have leapt are the prices, and this has been demonstrated ably by the Opposition tonight.

At the same time living standards have been eroded as a result of unprecedented increases. Unfortunately, people in the low income bracket, and pensioners in particular, are most affected by these severe increases. It would be true to say that the public of Western Australia have been fooled by the Premier, who has made all sorts of excuses and given all sorts of reasons for the increases in prices.

In my speech this evening it is not my intention to deal with all the areas of increase. Suffice it to say that in the time available to me I will deal primarily with the steep increase in the price of electricity and gas in Western Australia.

The first announcement came in a statement which appeared in *The West Australian* of 24 April which said—

State Energy Commission customers will pay an average of 18 per cent more for electricity and 24 per cent more for gas from next Thursday.

However, pensioners will get a bigger rebate to help cushion the impact of the new charges— among the steepest ever announced.

The last increase in electricity and gas charges was in July last year, when they rose 3.5 per cent.

With your permission, Sir, I will continue to quote briefly from the article, as follows—

The Government appreciated that such big increases would come as a blow to many people.

They certainly have. I will refer later to the action groups which have been formed in Western Australia to protest against the steep increases, which many people are unable to meet. The article goes on to say—

The cost of diesel distillate used in country power stations had increased by 110 per cent in the past 12 months—far above the increase that could reasonably have been predicted when SEC charges were increased last year.

“The position has deteriorated because of the 25 per cent rise in the cost of coal in the past year, at a time when the SEC has been rapidly increasing its use of locally-produced coal as fuel,” Sir Charles said.

What did the Premier expect? Did he think the coalmining industry could contain the cost spiral? Of course it could not. Members are aware of how

much petroleum is used in the production of coal; so it is no wonder the coal companies had no alternative but to increase the cost of coal to the State Energy Commission of Western Australia. The companies could not contain the cost spiral. So it is silly for the Premier to say he was surprised at the increase in the price of coal because he must have expected it. He should have known as a result of his experience not only as Premier, but also as a former Minister for Industrial Development, that the coalmining industry could not contain its price structure, just as many other industries could not contain it. The article went on to say—

Sir Charles said: “The cost of WA coal has trebled in the past five years—only fractionally less than the rate of increase in the cost of imported heavy fuel oil in the same period, though coal is still the most economic fuel.”

I would like to know what is the cost of fuel oil to the State Energy Commission today. Would the Minister for Fuel and Energy indicate that to the House? We would like to be able to draw a comparison between the cost structures for oil and coal.

The *Sunday Independent*, along with other newspapers, tried to draw out the Government in respect of the cost of oil; but, as usual, their queries were unanswered. For many years we could not ascertain the price of oil being used at the Kwinana power station. It was a closely guarded secret. We knew that unfair competition was occurring because the oil combines knew the price paid by the State Energy Commission for coal, but the coal companies did not know what price the commission was paying for oil. If that is not unfair competition, what is?

That is precisely the situation today. It is all very fine for the Premier to say that the increase in the cost of coal is the main reason for the increase in the price of electricity; but what would be the position had we relied heavily on oil for the production of power in Western Australia? What would be the cost of electricity then? Had we continued with the extension of the Kwinana power station, which the Premier so proudly boasted about on behalf of his Government, what would we be paying per kilowatt hour of electricity now?

These questions remain unanswered; and it is questions such as these which prompted my leader to move this amendment to the Address-in-Reply. The Premier was quoted in *The West Australian* on 24 April as saying the cost of Western Australian coal had trebled in price in the past

five years. He was challenged by the Secretary of the Collie Coal Miners' Union (Mr Jack Watkins). Mr Watkins' challenge was unanswered by the Premier; therefore I would assume the Premier realised he made a mistake and accepted the figures presented by Mr Watkins. This is what Mr Watkins had to say in the *Collie Mail* of 1 May 1980, under the headline, "Coal price at 1960 level"—

The cost of coal being purchased by the State government from Collie coal mining companies is still below that paid by the Government to Amalgamated Collieries in 1960.

This was said this week by the secretary of the Collie Coal Miners' Union of Workers, Mr Jack Watkins, when denying claims made by Sir Charles Court that the cost of coal had contributed to the need to increase electricity charges.

Sir Charles claimed that coal had trebled in cost during the past five years.

"This is not so," said Mr Watkins.

"The fact is that since 1975 the price has only just fractionally more than doubled," he said.

Mr Watkins said that the price of coal paid by the Government to Amalgamated Collieries in 1960 was £9 or \$18, and that the price being paid today by the government is, on average, below this amount.

The government policy of using oil in preference to coal led to the price going down in the early sixties.

It is only in the past ten years that coal has started to climb back towards the prices paid by the Government in 1960, added Mr Watkins.

That statement passed unchallenged, so I presume it is reliable: the price of coal was dearer in 1960 than it is today. Certainly the Premier did not take up Mr Watkins' challenge, and one assumes that he erred in his statements in *The West Australian*.

That being the case, it is no good blaming the coalmining industry or the price of coal for the increase in electricity costs. Other factors, to which I will refer in a moment, are to blame. One is the irresponsible attitude to electricity policies of successive Liberal Governments.

Mr Young: Before you go any further, can you tell me how the kitchen and dining area at the Collie Hospital is going? The reason I ask is that you promised me that if I got them going you

would never make this speech again. I understand it is halfway through.

Mr Davies: He is only halfway through his speech.

Mr T. H. JONES: I have not started yet. In answer to the Minister, the kitchen is not yet completed and I do not know when it will be.

Mr Young: Nor is your speech.

Mr T. H. JONES: Therefore, I am unable to answer the Minister's question. When I find the answer I will take the trouble to let him know, even if his departmental officials cannot do so.

Mr Young: But you won't stop your speech now, will you?

Mr T. H. JONES: It would be wrong to do that. It is all right for the Minister for Health to interject, but this is not a joke; it is a serious matter.

Mr Young: So is the hospital.

Mr T. H. JONES: This is a serious matter, because the Government continually has condemned the coalmining industry.

Mr Young: Smile, Tom!

Mr T. H. JONES: The Minister knows that it is not right to make a statement on the price structure of electricity which cannot be supported. If we said the cost of running Royal Perth Hospital was too high, the Minister for Health would be on his feet defending it. I am on my feet correcting a false impression given by the Premier in an article in *The West Australian*.

The cost structure applying to Collie coal is no different from that of any other commodity; naturally, it has escalated over the years. However, we know that the price of coal today is reasonable; even the Minister for Fuel and Energy would agree with that. It may interest members to know that the cost of imported coal in France is \$60 per tonne. According to the latest figures made available to me, the average cost of production at Western Collieries by open-cut and deep-mine method is about \$17.49 per tonne, while at the Griffin mine, the average cost is \$20.42 per tonne. It is possible those costs may have increased slightly.

The *Sunday Independent* did not take too kindly to the announcement of increases in electricity charges. In its leading article of 27 April this year, the following statement appears—

GOVERNMENT Ministers and State Energy Commission executives have produced a battery of excuses for the massive increases in gas and electricity charges they're about to impose on the community.

The oil cost spiral (which started seven years ago), interest on borrowings, future expansion needs and the perennial labour costs are blamed by those whose own performances demand closer scrutiny.

Before we begin paying an additional 18 per cent (average) on our power bills we're entitled to ask:

- Why the SEC still depends on oil;
- Why the Court government did not convert all its power stations to coal when oil price hikes started;
- Why new oil-only fired power stations were built during the 70s;
- Why there hasn't been an independent study of the management efficiency of the SEC; and
- Why this week's announcement was delayed till after the State election?

In his 1979 annual report, SEC Commissioner Kirkwood boasted to his minister that only \$32 million has been spent on coal conversion at Kwinana, \$4 million less than the budget estimate.

How much more of the public's money might have been saved had the original station been given the capacity to burn coal as well as oil?

That is something I have been saying in this place for a number of years. It was one of the biggest blunders made by the Liberal Government of the day. The leading article continues—

Delays in expansion of the Muja complex have been highlighted by the Opposition. It behoves the government to explain whether they were contributing factors to the Commission's current dilemma.

As late as July last year our SEC planners were budgeting for 25 per cent annual increases oblivious of the 100 per cent rise which was announced just two months later.

Those are the important questions which have yet to be answered by the Government. The chickens have come home to roost and the high cost of power faced by Western Australians is a direct result of the mismanagement by the Brand Government.

It is all very well for the Premier to talk about the escalation in the price of coal. But what would the situation be if the Premier had had his way as a Minister of the Brand Government, when he wanted to make Kwinana the greatest power station in Western Australia, burning only oil? Even as late as 1965, when the Government of the day decided to double the capacity of the

Kwinana power station, the Hawke Opposition, by motion in this place, tried to stop the Government from proceeding, as indeed did the trade union movement and the Collie Miners' Union. However, the Government said, "We are going ahead, irrespective of the fact that America and the rest of the world are turning back to coal. We are going to double the capacity of the Kwinana power station and use only oil." According to the Brand Government, America and the rest of the world were wrong; only Western Australia was in step. Of course, subsequent events demonstrated clearly the inexcusable mismanagement by the Brand Government.

The Premier talks about the increasing price of coal; but what would be the situation if Western Australia were dependent upon imported oil for power generation? The figures clearly demonstrate the situation. In 1978 it cost 1.5c per kilowatt hour to generate power at the coal-fired Muja station, while it cost 3.39c per kilowatt hour to generate power at the oil-burning Kwinana station. How much worse off would we be without coal, and had the ill-conceived policies of successive Liberal Governments been fully implemented? The Liberal Government would not listen; it knew it all, and now Western Australia is paying the penalty for those badly-timed and ill-conceived policies.

It is a matter of record that when the first unit at Kwinana was converted to dual firing, the cost per kilowatt hour came down from 3.39c to 1.6c by the use of coal. It is clear that what the Opposition of the day predicted in fact occurred, and Western Australians are now paying the penalty.

I do not intend to read all the reports in my possession; I will refer to only a few. In *The West Australian* of 30 April this year appears an article headed "Group to fight new SEC bills". It states as follows—

A newly formed action group will urge the State Government to ease the impact of the new State Energy Commission charges on low-income earners.

These are the people about whom the Opposition is principally concerned. Another article under the heading "Group critical of power-bill change" describes the severe hardship caused to low-income families by a change in electricity billing. The claim was made by Shelter WA, whose spokeswoman (Mrs O'Rourke) strongly opposed the increased charges on pensioners and low-income earners.

Western Australia has the highest electricity charges of any State. Can any member tell me when any other State electricity corporation has made a blunder of the dimensions of the one made in Western Australia? He cannot. I regularly study the annual reports of the power corporations in other States and I have found no evidence of a similar blunder.

It is still beyond me why the Government of the day insisted on going against current world trends and installing only oil-fired units at the Kwinana power station. Can anyone tell the Chamber why the Government embarked on this policy? It had never been done before. The units at East Perth, South Fremantle, and Bunbury all could be converted to burn either coal or fuel oil. Why did the Government insist on installing only oil-fired burners at Kwinana? Who made the decision? Did the Brand Government instruct the then State Electricity Commission to install only oil-fired burners as a matter of policy? No-one will own up to the mistake. Does any member opposite say it was not wrong to install only oil-fired units at Kwinana? Of course not! Even the Premier cannot justify the mistakes made by the Government of the day.

The important thing we are discussing tonight is: What has this blunder cost the taxpayers of this State? On Tuesday of this week I asked the following question of the Minister for Fuel and Energy—

What was the final cost of conversion of the first two units at the Kwinana power station from oil to coal?

I was informed that the cost was \$32 million. That would be a handy sum for the Government to have in today's price spiralling situation. Yet only the first two units have been converted; another two units are yet to be changed over. That cost a minimum of \$32 million. I would say the price would be closer to \$40 million by the time the units are converted. Those sums amount to \$72 million—only peanuts! That was only a minor mistake!

That is one of the reasons the State Energy Commission is in its present bad financial situation. No-one can deny it was one of the biggest blunders ever made in Western Australia so far as the power generating system was concerned.

Then I asked what was the cost of converting the South Fremantle and East Perth power stations from oil to coal, and the Minister said he could not give me the figures, but the cost involved was not very significant. I have a copy of a question which I asked on Thursday, 12

September 1974 when I asked how much it cost to convert East Perth and South Fremantle power houses from coal to oil. Members will recall the Government made an unwise decision so far as East Perth and South Fremantle were concerned. The estimated cost was \$288 000. Not a very significant cost—only \$288 000!

We now know that those stations had to be reconverted from oil to coal, and double \$288 000 is over \$500 000. Half a million dollars is not very significant? It certainly would have helped the pensioners in Western Australia to a considerable extent.

We do not stop at that. We know that the Court Government deferred the Tonkin Government's programme to add the two 200 megawatt units to the Muja station at Collie. The Government deferred that decision for over 12 months. I understand that that increased the cost by some 38 per cent. The original cost was \$87 million for the two 200 megawatt units. By way of an answer to a question, I find those costs are now rising to some \$155 million. I admit the question was cleverly concealed amongst other items. A former Minister for energy is here on the front bench. I understand that increase of \$87 million was somewhere in the vicinity of 38 per cent.

Taking all those figures in the round, we are looking at a sum of \$90 million. That is due to the mismanagement and blunders made by the Government or someone associated with the decisions made at top level in the State Energy Commission in this State.

Of course, the Opposition opposes the 3 per cent levy. We say that the money made available for power generation should be kept within the operations of the SEC. Since the 3 per cent levy was introduced in 1974, the State Energy Commission has paid \$25 789 867 into the Treasury. That is a sizeable figure. I think any fair-minded person would agree that that money could be put to good use within the operations of the SEC.

Recently the member for Perth made a submission to the present Minister for Fuel and Energy regarding a better deal for pensioners. The Minister wrote a letter in reply. In the second last paragraph, the Minister said—

This Scheme currently in operation in Western Australia was adopted by Cabinet as one of several alternatives considered, and was judged to be a reasonable balance between the immediate needs of pensioners and the financial ability of the Energy Commission to provide relief to a particular section of the community.

Finally, he said—

The Government's view on this matter has always been that the Commonwealth Government should be the main source of social welfare transfer payments . . .

That is this new federalism!

If the Minister is right—and I do not agree with what he said in the letter to the member for Perth—and if he is justified in holding that viewpoint about this new federalism that the Liberal supporters said was one of the best things to be introduced, he does not know what this new concept is doing to people in Western Australia, particularly those in the pensioner sector.

It will be appreciated that since 1974 power costs in Western Australia have increased by 135 per cent. The reasons are clear to me. The \$90 million I referred to includes the cost of deferment of the Muja station. That has played a big part in making the State Energy Commission in Western Australia increase its charges.

This is a very sorry and pitiful story, to say the least. However, here we are. Those are the blunders for which nobody has owned up. The Premier would not tell me whether he directed the commission, or whether the commission directed the Premier. The fact is that a sum of \$90 million has been wasted. That money could have been used in a better way, and certainly it would not have brought about the need to increase power costs to the high level at which they are.

I support the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition.

MR COWAN (Merredin) [9.47 p.m.]: I have no doubt that there is some proof in some of the words the Opposition wants to have added to the Address-in-Reply. Certainly if one examines paragraph (b), the proof there is quite easy to find. One has only to go back to the time when the Government decided to introduce the State fuel levy to discover that the Government was not prepared to submit to very close scrutiny some of the facts and figures presented to the Government by officers within the department of the Minister for Transport.

In relation to paragraph (c), all Governments are guilty of manipulating the finances of the State just before an election. In fact, if we were to have a censure motion which would be justified on that basis, every Government would be censured before the Parliament became very old.

As far as paragraph (d) is concerned, I have no doubt that taxes and charges have increased. Certainly they have increased to a level much higher than that of the Consumer Price Index. As

I stated last night, and as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has stated tonight, the rail freight for long haul grain has definitely increased at a rate higher than the CPI, even if one refers back to 1978 and takes the figures from then on.

There is no question at all that these matters are discriminatory, and that the Government is deserving of some form of condemnation for introducing policies of that nature.

I have one comment to make, and that relates to some statements being made in the electorate of Merredin at least, and I am sure they are being made in the electorates of Mt. Marshall and Stirling. Those statements were made by some of my political opponents who stated that, to be effective, one has to have representation in Government. I wonder how much effectiveness has been shown by Government back-benchers in their alleged representation in the Government in relation to these grain freight charges.

We saw a classic example of politics in this situation: there are two Western Australian members of the Australian Wheat Board. One of them has been charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the interests of Western Australian wheat producers are catered for. That gentleman, (Mr Bill Hewitt), directed officers of the Australian Wheat Board not to pay the increased charges, as the Government had announced they should be paid. In fact, he directed that no payments should be made on grain held in storage bins until 1 November.

Consequently, the Government agreed to that direction given by Mr Hewitt. He was given a great deal of support by producers at three meetings conducted for the purpose of holding discussions with the Minister. I was surprised to read a statement in the Press to the effect that the Minister had agreed not to bring the charges to bear on grain held in bins because of pressure put on him by Liberal and NCP back-benchers. I have never heard so much rubbish in my life. Where were the NCP and Liberal back-benchers when these charges were being considered? If the Government had any respect for the ability of its back-benchers, these charges would have been discussed with those members. To my knowledge, they were not consulted. I reject completely the Minister's statement about the Liberal and NCP back-benchers having influence on the Government. I reject the idea that they have any effectiveness at all.

Mr H. D. Evans: Quite right.

Mr Nanovich: We were consulted.

Mr COWAN: In that case, why did not the member do something about the charges? None

of the credit for the charges having been withdrawn belongs to people such as the member for Whitford.

Mr Rushton: You know you are wrong.

Mr COWAN: As far as we are concerned, there may be some justification for the Opposition's moving an amendment to the Address-in-Reply. In some instances the Government's performance has been poor and an amendment to the Address-in-Reply is a traditional censure motion.

Mr B. T. Burke: And well justified, too.

Mr COWAN: However, the public of Western Australia, for better or for worse, have decided that the Court Government should have a further term of office. We have to abide by their decision and allow the Government to serve out its term.

Mr H. D. Evans: What aspects of the amendment are wrong?

Mr COWAN: There is justification for the amendment being moved, but I am now about to state again that we have always made very clear the fact that we are not prepared to support a censure motion against the Government.

Mr H. D. Evans: Men of straw!

Mr COWAN: If Opposition members are prepared not to introduce amendment after amendment to the Address-in-Reply—

Mr B. T. Burke: This is the first one.

Mr COWAN: Yes, and there are probably more to come.

Mr B. T. Burke: How do you know?

Mr COWAN: I am making an assumption. If further amendments are not introduced, the Address-in-Reply can be completed quickly, and some individual motions which relate specifically to these issues are moved—that is, if the Opposition can beat us to the punch—we can perhaps support them. Whilst we support certain aspects of the amendment, we cannot support a censure motion against the Government.

The National Party will be raising these issues and we might be asking the Opposition for its support. If the Opposition gets there first we will certainly give further consideration to the specific issues listed in this amendment.

SIR CHARLES COURT (Nedlands—Premier) [9.55 p.m.]: One is tempted to deal with this amendment by treating it with the contempt it deserves.

Mr B. T. Burke: Ho, hum!

Sir CHARLES COURT: I listened to the member's leader in silence, despite what he had to say.

Mr H. D. Evans: You said this all last night.

Sir CHARLES COURT: There is another way in which we could treat this amendment and that is the way adopted on one occasion during the Brand Government—we could amend the amendment moved by the Opposition. The only trouble with that, of course, is that we finish up amending our own Address-in-Reply. I well remember an occasion when this was done. We always regretted what we did because of our having to take a qualified Address-in-Reply, even though it lauded the Government and condemned the Opposition, down to His Excellency the Governor. I do not propose to deal with this amendment in that way. We should be condemning the Opposition for abusing its position in Parliament and for having the temerity, the audacity, and the lack of integrity to move such an amendment.

Mr B. T. Burke: The good sense.

Sir CHARLES COURT: I will deal with the several points very briefly, because everything contained in it has been said again and again. One can assume only that one is getting an overdose of sour grapes. Opposition members seem to overlook the fact that, although there may have been a swing against the Government in the election held earlier in the year, this Government was re-elected with the second best result ever in the history of the Liberal Party.

Mr Davies: There was a 6 per cent swing against you.

Sir CHARLES COURT: If that is not a decent result, I do not know what is. The Opposition has to do better than it has been doing during the last two days if it wants to make any impact and do anything which might have any effect so far as the Government is concerned.

We listened to a very long and wearisome speech by the Leader of the Opposition. It was a hotchpotch of political bric-a-brac. It contained a little about the pre-election, the election, and the post election periods, defence, energy, and a bit of this and that.

Mr H. D. Evans: You have fouled up a lot.

Sir CHARLES COURT: The Leader of the Opposition's speech made a dog's dinner look like an orderly repast. After he has read and corrected the draft copy of his speech, he will realise what we had to put up with.

Paragraph (a) of the amendment commences with the words "was wilfully dishonest".

Mr B. T. Burke: I agree with that.

Sir CHARLES COURT: We could take exception to this. It ill-behoves the Opposition to

use such language. It does Opposition members no credit. It does the institution of Parliament no credit.

Mr B. T. Burke: How would you put it?

Sir CHARLES COURT: We can dismiss paragraph (a) completely because at all times there has been complete frankness on the part of this Government so far as the financial position of the State is concerned. Once again I remind the Opposition—because its members do not seem to understand—that we have such things as the Budget, the Budget debate, the Budget papers, the Budget statement, and the State accounts.

Mr B. T. Burke: And the slush fund.

Sir CHARLES COURT: Hours and hours, days and days, and weeks and weeks are allowed for debate on these matters. If the Opposition misses things or does not understand them, the Government cannot be held responsible. There is no intention on the part of the Government, either in the speech introducing the Budget, in the Budget detail, or in the supporting information, to hide anything from anyone.

We do have as an officer of this Parliament and this State a person known as the Auditor General. He is not an officer of the Government; he is not an employee of the Government, but an officer of this Parliament. When the Opposition talks about the Government being wilfully dishonest in respect of the State's financial position it is reflecting on the integrity of the office of the Auditor General.

Mr B. T. Burke: Rubbish!

Sir CHARLES COURT: It ill-behoves the Leader of the Opposition and members of his party to move this sort of amendment, knowing in their hearts that the accusation is just not true and could not be right under the system under which we work.

Paragraph (b) states that the Government has failed to subject requests from Government departments and authorities for increases in charges to the rigorous scrutiny expected of a responsible Government.

Mr B. T. Burke: I agree with that and so does the Deputy Premier. I heard him on television. You were away getting your second knighthood.

Sir CHARLES COURT: I am speaking about the Government's performance. No Government has submitted the submissions of departments to the same rigorous control as has this Government.

Mr H. D. Evans: Why are the errors so big?

Sir CHARLES COURT: I should like to give members opposite one example which is that in the last five years SEC sales have increased by 60

per cent whilst staff numbers during that period have increased by only 4 per cent. If this does not show good management, what does?

Mr B. T. Burke: That is not exactly true. That is one of your self-evident untruths.

Sir CHARLES COURT: Members are aware that the unions are concerned about the fact that we have been very tight in our control of some of the submissions presented. We have not allowed the growth which some unions have favoured.

I should like to remind members opposite of the increased tonnages carried by Westrail.

Mr Davies: What does that have to do with the amendment?

Sir CHARLES COURT: I am talking about the rigorousness with which the Estimates and submissions are studied.

I am not talking about the recent increases in tonnages in particular, but rather I am referring to the ratio between the increased tonnages carried and the employee numbers. It is obvious that, once again, there has been progressive efficiency and increasing productivity within that instrumentality.

Mr B. T. Burke: What are you doing with all the money?

Sir CHARLES COURT: That is only one of the many examples and it is typical of the rigorous approach which has been adopted by the Government.

It is the Opposition which has complained constantly that we do not have enough teachers or nurses. When the Budget is presented members opposite come here and say that we do not have enough teachers. They tell the Government that it should reduce the class numbers.

Mr Pearce: But that does not mean putting up the price of electricity!

Sir CHARLES COURT: If members opposite advocate such a course, I should like to know where they expect to find the money.

Mr B. T. Burke: W. W. Mitchell was on television tonight saying that he wrote your speeches. Did he write that one?

Sir CHARLES COURT: I do not know to which speech the member is referring. I am making this one.

Mr B. T. Burke: I would disown him too.

Mr Pearce: W. W. Mitchell will be putting his name to it.

Mr B. T. Burke: If he wrote that one it would be in red crayon.

Sir CHARLES COURT: Members opposite wanted to be listened to tonight, and they were, but they will not let anyone else respond.

Paragraph (c) of the amendment reads as follows—

manipulated the State's finances for its own electoral advantage before the recent State election with the consequence that subsequently the citizens of the State have had to meet unnecessarily high bills for government services.

Mr B. T. Burke: I agree with that!

Sir CHARLES COURT: What a lot of twaddle! It is not possible to manipulate the State's finances. Parliament is a very public place and it is necessary to table the accounts of the State and instrumentalities. Are members opposite unable to read? That must be the case if they say they have been deceived or that they cannot understand the accounts which are tabled here, and other documents such as the Auditor General's report or the economic statement prepared by the Treasury.

I should like to remind members also that if in fact, as members opposite allege, manipulation occurred—which is not the case—and the inference is that charges were kept down before the election and put up afterwards, the people who have benefited out of that situation are the ratepayers and taxpayers, because they have not had to shoulder the burden of the increased charges for up to two years, as occurred with the recent increase in charges levied by Westrail. Instead of having to pay at least part of the increased charges earlier, the ratepayers have had a respite.

Mr B. T. Burke: What about the SHC tenants?

Sir CHARLES COURT: Paragraph (d) of the amendment reads as follows—

has, thereby, lowered the standard of living of the average West Australian family which was already under attack from the policies and decisions of the Fraser Government.

Let us examine that part of the amendment. This Government is supposed to be so inept and has manipulated its accounts so that the people of Western Australia have had lower standards. But in fact it has the best CPI performance in the whole of Australia.

Mr B. T. Burke: It has the highest rate of inflation.

Mr Carr: That is only on percentage terms, because you started from the highest position.

Sir CHARLES COURT: Why does the member say that?

Mr B. T. Burke: This Government has the highest rate of unemployment. It is the worst Government.

Sir CHARLES COURT: It has the lowest CPI in Australia.

Mr Carr: That is only in percentage increases.

Mr Davies: He does not understand that.

Sir CHARLES COURT: It has the lowest CPI in Australia. If we look at the situation throughout Australia, we can see that in 1979-80 the inflation rate increased to 10.7 per cent and this State had the lowest rate of inflation, which was 9.7 per cent.

Mr B. T. Burke: You started off with the lowest.

Mr O'Connor: Don't manipulate figures.

Mr Carr: He is the one manipulating the figures.

Sir CHARLES COURT: I ask you, Sir, does that show irresponsible management?

I should like to turn to the matter of employment. If we are so badly off in this State compared with the other States, how is it that we have by far the highest employment factor; that is, 28 000 additional employees in a year?

Mr B. T. Burke: What does that mean? Don't be ridiculous!

Sir CHARLES COURT: We have by far the highest employment factor out of all the States. This means that the State is prosperous and people come here because they believe it is the best place in Australia to live. Looking at the employment situation in the last four years—and this hurts the Opposition—

Mr B. T. Burke: It does not hurt us.

Sir CHARLES COURT: Why do not members opposite listen?

Mr B. T. Burke: Don't talk about the employment you have created, when in fact you have created unemployment of such a magnitude that we have never previously seen the like.

Sir CHARLES COURT: Employment is the key and that is why we are in a better situation than any of the other States.

Mr B. T. Burke: It is the key especially for those who are out of work.

Sir CHARLES COURT: Over the last four years employment in this State has increased by 6.7 per cent; but at the same time the employment situation in Victoria was minus 2.8 per cent, New South Wales minus by 3.9 per cent, and South Australia minus 2.2 per cent.

Mr O'Connor: Very good figures.

Mr B. T. Burke: Unemployment has increased at the same time.

Sir CHARLES COURT: Those figures give the lie to paragraph (d) of the amendment.

I should like to remind members of another important matter. If I were the Leader of the Opposition I would not have the hide—

Mr B. T. Burke: You would not be the Leader of the Opposition, because we would not have you.

Sir CHARLES COURT: —to talk about finance, because in his election promises he promised the electors there would be no increases in certain charges until 1981. He made that promise with full knowledge of the figures contained in the Budget accounts, because the House sat until the end of November and the Budget papers were available to him. Therefore, it is obvious that the Leader of the Opposition had access to the information contained in the Budget and yet he promised the electors there would be no increases in certain charges until 1981.

Mr Davies: You are wrong.

Sir CHARLES COURT: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has given us confirmation of that tonight.

Mr Davies: He might have misquoted. Have another look at that. If you are going to quote me, quote me correctly.

Sir CHARLES COURT: If the Leader of the Opposition is accusing his deputy of misquoting him, that is his affair. He said an undertaking was given not to increase railway freight rates before 30 June 1981.

Mr Davies: If you are going to quote me, quote me correctly.

Sir CHARLES COURT: I am quoting the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Davies: If you want to quote my deputy, do so; but if you quote me, quote me correctly.

Sir CHARLES COURT: The Leader of the Opposition can settle that argument when Parliament has adjourned.

Mr Davies: I will argue with you at any time.

Sir CHARLES COURT: The Leader of the Opposition said there would be no increases in certain charges and he stipulated a time until which those charges would remain unchanged.

It is completely irresponsible for any leader to make such a promise when he is aware of the situation in regard to rising inflation, salaries, and wage and fuel increases. The Leader of the Opposition should not have the hide to talk in this House about Government finances.

If members opposite really want to find out whether conditions in this State are good compared with those in the rest of the world and the rest of this country, they should ask visitors who come here and spend time amongst us. They compare the conditions here with those in the other States or their country of origin. These are the people who have a real feeling for what it is all about. These are the people who would give members opposite the complete lie to paragraph (d) of the amendment.

People who travel overseas or visit other States give the lie to paragraph (d) of the amendment when they return, because they are aware from personal experience that this is one of the best places, if not the best place, in the world in which to live. I believe the Leader of the Opposition has been completely irresponsible, especially when one has regard to the record of the promises he made to the electors. One has only to imagine what would have occurred had the Leader of the Opposition been successful at the last election in which case he would have had to take over the Treasury and honour the promises he had made.

Mr Davies: We were so close to being successful that you nearly went white instead of grey.

Sir CHARLES COURT: The Leader of the Opposition had promised the electors there would be no increases in certain charges. One shudders to think of the situation which would have arisen in this State in that situation. We would have been totally bankrupt or, alternatively, the Leader of the Opposition would need to go down on bended knee and say, "I am sorry. I was a fool to do that. You now have to pay and pay."

Mr Davies: They would not have been paying more under me than they are now.

Sir CHARLES COURT: Had the Opposition become the Government, it could not have run the State as efficiently as this Government has, because it would not have been allowed to do so. In that situation, members opposite would be told how many teachers and nurses to employ, how many people should be put onto the day labour force, and how many people had to be employed by the MWB, Westrail, and the SEC.

Mr Davies: If you want to bring the debate down to this level, you are only degrading the Parliament.

Sir CHARLES COURT: In spite of all the problems of escalating wage costs, and increasing salaries and fuel costs in all of these areas, this Government has still been able to keep the State solvent and at the same time—and this is really the test—keep the CPI at the lowest level in

Australia and the employment factor at the highest level. What more can we do? That is the real test and we reject this amendment for the nonsense that it is.

MR STEPHENS (Stirling) [10.10 p.m.]: I support the remarks made in this debate by my leader, the member for Merredin. He quite correctly pointed out the stand the National Party has taken on amendments to the Address-in-Reply.

We should tell the Opposition that the correct way of attempting to assist this Government is to get rid of the motions on the Address-in-Reply and put forward some substantive motions for improvements that could help the Government. There is no question that the Government is in difficulty. I do not know whether it is its members' ages—

Mr B. T. Burke: Creeping senility.

Mr STEPHENS:—or their complete indifference, or the ineffectiveness of the Opposition. Whatever the reason, we in the National Party want to get on with the job and assist the Government to govern in the best interests of the people of Western Australia. The Minister for Transport introduced legislation with regard to State fuel levies. The Government has the National Party to thank for correcting a serious error in the Bill which would have cost the public 3.5 million dollars. Because of the effectiveness of the National Party the Minister was put on the right track.

Mr Rushton: You are wrong again.

Mr STEPHENS: We have seen the problem with the Metropolitan Water Board charges and the Treasurer has told the public of Western Australia that there is stringent control and that costs were kept down to an absolute minimum. We then find that there is a \$3 million rip-off by virtue of a mistake by the Cabinet.

Mr O'Connor: What mistake?

Mr STEPHENS: Then we look at the SEC charges, with another mistake made to rip off the public. We may have the lowest CPI increase, but we do not have a performance by the Government to keep the costs down.

Mr B. T. Burke: The Government has been completely inept in the job. The Minister concerned should have been made Minister for Cultural Affairs.

Mr Bateman: That would be far too big for him!

Mr B. T. Burke: We should make him a minister of religion.

Mr STEPHENS: I am quite capable of expressing my own views and the views of the National Party without the assistance of the Opposition.

Mr Young: You are about the same.

Mr STEPHENS: The motion before the House has some merit, but an amendment to the Address-in-Reply is the wrong way is to assist the Government to improve the position for the people of Western Australia.

I have some information which was obtained from reports of the Metropolitan Water Board, the SEC, and the Australian Bureau of Statistics. It shows the charges applying from 1 July 1979. For water there was a fixed rate of \$40 for 150 kilolitres an increase of 11.1 per cent over the 1978 rate, and 19 cents per kilolitre, for excess water, an increase of 11.7 per cent over the 1978 figure. The cost for electricity was 4.6c per unit which was an increase of 3.4 per cent over the 1978 figure. These are the electricity and water increases for Perth in 1978-79. The CPI figure increased by 8.1 per cent so that the increases were comparable with the CPI increases. So that sounds quite good. That was for 1979.

Then on 1 July 1980, the water fixed rate was \$60 for 150 kilolitres, which is an increase of 50 per cent over the 1979 figures. Excess water was 24c per kilolitre; that increased by 26.3 per cent over the 1979 figure. Electricity on 1 May 1980 was 5.42c per unit cost; indicating an increase of 17.8 per cent over the 1979 figure. But, the Perth CPI in 1979-80 increased by 9.4 per cent so, in 1980, it is quite evident that the Government charges increased considerably more than the CPI. This was mentioned earlier in the debate.

I feel that this amendment to the Address-in-Reply will achieve nothing and we should make an effort to do something substantive to help the Government improve the lot of Western Australians. Then we in this Parliament will be achieving something worth while.

The Government has spent \$700 000 to \$800 000 on the SWATS report but the Government still does not know where it is headed. It has brought forward policies which it has then altered.

The Premier says with regard to the pollution in Cockburn Sound—and this has now been clearly established—there is a requirement to spend at least \$45 million to overcome and correct the problem. The Premier has stated that we cannot expect industry to meet this cost and, of course, if industry does not meet the cost, the taxpayers of Western Australia will have to do so.

A reorganisation of the transport system in Western Australia is long overdue—we will all agree on that—but the Government has in effect said that the users of the transport in Western Australia will provide the capital for any reorganisation which takes place.

The only inference I can draw from the comment of the Government is that the users in Western Australia will be forced to provide the capital for the reorganisation of transport in Western Australia. If the Government is prepared to use the taxpayers' money to clean up the pollution problem in Cockburn Sound, it is being inconsistent by not using the taxpayers' money to reorganise transport in Western Australia.

Before the Leader of the National Country Party leaves the House I will say how concerned I am at that party's silence in this matter. The leader has been very vocal in the Press, and during the election campaign, about the benefits of being in Government—

Mr Old: You have not done very much.

Mr Sibson: He does not understand.

Mr STEPHENS: I do understand. That is why we in the National Party have woken up to the fact that the Liberal Party uses the National Country Party for numbers and nothing else.

Mr T. H. Jones: The RTA today indicated that.

Mr STEPHENS: It is no wonder the National Country Party has been quiet during this debate, particularly when grain rates were mentioned.

Let us examine the National Country Party policy objectives for the State Election in 1980. It says, "with regard to the grain industry, the National Country Party will work to support this industry and seek ways to keep down costs which threaten producers' margins".

Now, surely the increased freight rates are an extra cost and reduce producers' margins. What did the National Country Party do about it? Nothing! The back-bench members claimed they were not even consulted.

The National Party, as have farmers, has pointed out that the viability of certain farming areas is being threatened by the massive freight increases.

Mr Sibson: Administer them.

Mr STEPHENS: The farmers seek ways to keep down costs.

Mr Sibson: Their voices are silent. You helped make that policy.

Mr STEPHENS: We did not. When the member for Bunbury interjects, he should at least take an intelligent interest in the debate.

Mr B. T. Burke: That means he will never be able to interject.

Mr STEPHENS: The member for Bunbury may wake up some time. The people of Bunbury almost woke up at the last election.

I wish to stress the importance of a strong railway system and our party recognises the reliance many country people place on that system. The system should be made more competitive without a further cost burden being imposed. If the 20 per cent increase on the freight rate is not a cost burden, what is it?

Mr Rushton: The CPI is the same.

Mr STEPHENS: Sir Thomas Drake-Brockman's statement in the Press recently was perhaps half-correct when he said the National Country Party had a problem of identity.

I say he was half right; they have not only a problem of identity, but also a serious problem of performance. Obviously they are impotent in Cabinet, and not only impotent in Cabinet but also ineffective in this House. It is a serious matter and something which affects the farming community. What have we heard from the National Country Party?

Mr Old: It seems we are hearing a little from "Walter Mitty" at the moment.

Mr STEPHENS: The member for Katanning has woken up and taken his face out of his crossword. That shows the interest taken by the Leader of the National Country Party in a debate such as this. When we are discussing an increase in freight rates he spends his time working out a crossword.

Certainly, the National Country Party has a problem of performance and the public of Western Australia are starting to realise—and they will continue to realise it—that when they want performance and representation for the non-urban areas they have the National Party which is able to do the job.

MR PEARCE (Gosnells) [10.21 p.m.]: It was no surprise to us when the Premier stated this motion should be treated with the contempt it deserves. He trotted out the same old phrases. I was rather surprised because I thought his second knighthood might have propped him up and brought him out of his senility.

Withdrawal of Remark

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member for Gosnells to withdraw that remark because I believe it is offensive.

Mr PEARCE: Could you, Mr Speaker, advise me of the words you want withdrawn?

The SPEAKER: Your reference to senility.

Mr PEARCE: I withdraw the word.

*Debate (on amendment to motion)
Resumed*

Mr PEARCE: With the increasing old age of the Premier I thought his second knighthood might have allowed him to hang on until after the next election so that he would be able to work out the leadership problems of the Liberal Party. We are aware of the problems it has. There was one aspect of the Premier's remarks which I thought was deserving of some attention.

Mr Sibson: Those remarks are unfair. The Hon. John Tonkin was much older than the Premier and we never made those sorts of remarks.

Mr B. T. Burke: The member for Bunbury is on steroids.

Mr PEARCE: I am astounded that the member for Bunbury is so vocal. He has said more during my speech than he said during the whole of the last Parliament. The member for Bunbury, the member for Darling Range, and a couple of others have made only a 10-minute contribution between them during the last three years. Perhaps the electoral fright which the member for Bunbury received at the last election has made him vocal.

Mr Spriggs: In the only contribution you have made throughout the last three years you are now wasting the time of the House.

Mr B. T. Burke: Here is George "Sproggs" who voted in his sleep.

Mr PEARCE: Be fair to him; he actually got out a whole sentence.

Mr B. T. Burke: He crossed the floor in his sleep, and that is the truth. He is a sleepwalker.

Mr PEARCE: The significant point about the Premier's speech which deserves the attention of the House is that he did not attempt to refute one of the serious allegations made by the Leader of the Opposition—not one.

Mr Sibson: They were treated with the contempt they deserve.

Mr PEARCE: We have before us a proposition to the Parliament that the Government deliberately withheld necessary increases in charges by State utilities in a pre-election year, and then bunged on double charges straight after the election. The Premier said that is not true but he has not demonstrated the non-truth by actual reference to figures.

We know the Premier counts himself as an accounting whiz; he likes to present himself in this House and reel off figures. We have all seen enough to demonstrate what an accounting whiz he is. Not one figure was quoted tonight.

A fair assumption is that the figures do not tell a very good story in favour of the Premier. In fact, when he attempted to launch into the percentage figures of the CPI, which were totally irrelevant, he could not help but mislead the Parliament. He said we have the lowest percentage increase in the CPI, and he quoted figures for the last quarter. However, he did not tell us that we started with the highest CPI in Australia. Although our percentage increase is lower than some of the Eastern States, we were high amongst the worst States in Australia. By quoting that increase the Premier, in essence, misled the House by trying to make out that we had a good performance. The good performance he claims over the last year is relevant only to his bad performance in the five years previously. Why did not the Premier canvass the details of the increases which the Leader of the Opposition dealt with in such detail?

Let me remind members that the Opposition has put the proposition to this House that the charges made by the Motor Vehicle Insurance Trust should have been increased last year. There ought to have been an increase in fees last year because there was an estimated deficit in excess of \$2 million. Cabinet was approached but said it was not appropriate to increase charges in view of the large increase granted the previous year. That meant it was bad news to increase Motor Vehicle Insurance Trust charges with an election coming up.

Within weeks of the result of the election the Government—after scraping back with what the Premier claims was the second-best Liberal performance ever, but which is a result of a rigged electorate—increased dramatically Motor Vehicle Insurance Trust charges. The slunkey back-benchers opposite who represent pint-sized electorates of 9 000 and 10 000 voters as opposed to the 20 000 voters represented by members on this side, supported the Government in that move.

The Premier asked who had been the beneficiaries of the failure to increase charges during 1979. He said it was the taxpayers. That is nonsense. The taxpayers did not have to face the increase for a year because the Government did not want any increases with an election coming up. Because of the large deficit there was a huge increase in charges. The cost increase was much greater than it should have been. The Premier claims to be a businessman, but what business

would not put up its charges for a period of two years, and then impose a massive increase in one year to cover the deficit of the previous years?

The Motor Vehicle Insurance Trust recovers large sums of money, and a percentage of its income is interest on the money it holds in trust until it pays out on claims. But, because there was no increase in charges in 1979 its money reserve was allowed to run down and now the customers of the trust have to pay a greater proportion of the money raised. Overall, the end result is a greater charge on the consumers.

What motivation is there for the Government to take this action? The answer is quite simple the only way the Government can present a good housekeeping image is not to increase charges prior to an election. That is dishonest.

Mr Rushton: Remember that the Labor Party decreased charges during its time.

Mr PEARCE: What has that to do with the argument?

Mr Rushton: It demonstrates what they were doing.

Mr PEARCE: That is unbelievable! The Minister for Transport is saying that the performance of the Government in putting up charges is to be loaded against the Labor Party practice of putting down charges.

Mr Rushton: Because of the position you left behind; that was the trouble.

Mr PEARCE: That is not the problem. By putting the charges down in the cost circumstances at those times, the Labor Government was able to operate the MVIT rather more efficiently than the present Government is able to do. The State cannot afford this stop-start approach to charges, where they are not put up in the year before an election but are bumped up massively in the year after an election in the hope that the increase will last for three years.

That undermines the living standards of the people. If all Government charges went up at a rate comparable to the Consumer Price Index increases—about 10 per cent a year—people would be able to cope with them because their incomes rise at roughly that level. But increases of \$30 or \$40 for a motor vehicle licence, and increases in water and electricity charges in excess of 100 per cent for some individual consumers, place people in difficulty. They might be expecting a bill for \$60 and they get a bill for \$135. That is something which people on low incomes are not able to cope with.

The thrust of the Opposition's amendment to the Address-in-Reply is in paragraph (d), where we talk about the lowered standard of living of the people of Western Australia. The Leader of the Opposition has demonstrated clearly that in the areas of motor vehicle insurance, power, energy, and water charges the Government, in its efforts to buy votes before the last election, has imposed this year increases which are much greater than necessary.

When we tie that in with the Premier's support of the Fraser Government, we appreciate that the attack on the living standards of the people is twofold. In the short time that this Parliament has been sitting, we have already heard the Premier supporting parity pricing for petrol, which must be the greatest single increase in charges for any individual in Australia. There is no spin-off for Western Australia in parity pricing. We do not have vast deposits of new oil to be discovered or any indications that oil exists. The only claim for oil is a 5 per cent possibility at Noonkanbah. Unfortunately, when the Noonkanbah community is rolled over and the drill goes down with all the cultural and social devastation it is causing, and no oil is discovered, we will find that parity pricing has no attraction for Western Australia in commercial terms. It has a severe distraction for the State's citizens because we are probably paying 2½ times the price we should be paying for our petrol. Yet the Premier is one of the State's foremost advocates of parity pricing.

Mr B. T. Burke: So is the Deputy Premier.

Mr PEARCE: I have never seen a man duck so quickly. The Deputy Premier was probably not in favour of it. The point is, when we take the parity pricing policies of the Fraser Government and the economic devastation they are causing, along with the economic policies of the State Government and the devastation they are causing, it is no wonder we find the waiting lists for State Housing Commission homes are growing longer, the list of people applying for benefits from the Social Security Department is growing longer, and the number of people in small businesses who are going bankrupt is growing; and more and more people in lower and middle income groups are finding they cannot cope with increasing charges.

It seems to me there is need for legislation to provide statutory curbs on the amount by which Government instrumentalities can increase their charges. If a private business were running the operations of the State Energy Commission it could not put up its prices without going to the Prices Justification Tribunal; but Government instrumentalities are exempt from that

requirement and there is no pressure on them at all to restrain their charges.

Worse still, these instrumentalities are very much at the command of the Government as to when they can and cannot increase their charges, for political reasons. The most crucial part of the Opposition's amendment is that the Government has in fact manipulated the charging system for State authorities and instrumentalities to bolster its electoral appeal in a pre-election year and impose much larger increases than are necessary and justified in a post-election year, based solely on the cynical hope that the people will forget in 2½ years what happened back in 1980 and it will not affect their vote in 1983, although had the necessary level of charging been imposed in 1979 it might have affected their vote. It is very cynical and politically smart to do that but it is not honest or justified. That is the basis of the Opposition's amendment to the Address-in-Reply.

It is a point to which the Premier has not addressed himself. We have had the same old glib clichés which I have heard for 3½ years and some other members have heard for 20 years. One would think the man would do a little better but obviously the Government is getting old and tired. It does not intend to address itself in this Chamber to the serious problems of the State. It intends to run everything by Executive action with as little discussion as possible in the Chamber.

I thought the Premier was not even going to participate in the debate. He showed no interest in much of it and probably did not listen to 75 per cent of what went on. When he spoke he had no figures, facts, or documents to support what he said. He picked up the amendment, read out the four paragraphs, and uttered a few clichés—the same ones about each of the four paragraphs. I hope he will do the right thing by the State and quit in December, as the rumour is. I think it will be a justified move and I wish the Deputy Premier every success if he can hang on to the numbers for that long—which will be problematical if what I am hearing is accurate. Next year we might have good debate in this Chamber and the Opposition might be able to review seriously the information given to the Parliament—information which only the Government can give.

In this sense, I think the Premier was being hypocritical when he accused the Opposition of not basing its statements on facts and claimed the Government was very open about financial matters. We do not have to turn our minds back very far to remember the long series of questions the Opposition asked last year about the use of

funds for investment in the short-term money market. Week after week the Premier got up and answered 20 or 30 questions by saying, "I am not going to tell you any more about this." As the Opposition's questions got closer and closer to the bone, and closer to uncovering the illegalities and improprieties, the Premier became even more close-lipped. One does not keep one's information close to the chest if one has nothing to hide. It is only when the information would be damaging to oneself that it is not given.

The Opposition has asked questions in this place about the amount of money spent by Ministers in touring the world, with their trips, fares, perks, and lurks. Every time we asked a question about this the Premier said, "The information is not readily available; however, if the Opposition has any knowledge of abuses and informs me, I will investigate them." We do not know for certain whether or not there are abuses unless the facts are made available, and the only person who can make the facts available is the Premier and Treasurer. He will not make them available because he is aware of the abuses. We know that the previous Minister for Tourism used to tour the world incessantly. The Minister for Education was on educational tours around the world for four weeks at a time.

Mr Young: You had better be careful. The Tonkin Government was in office for three years. Check up on the amount of time the member for Cockburn was out of the country.

Mr PEARCE: It has never been the case that a Labor Government has failed to make available in answers to questions information on the cost of ministerial trips. That has never been the case.

Mr B. T. Burke: That has shut you up, hasn't it?

Mr PEARCE: If anyone asked a question on any of those matters, the information was freely available.

Mr O'Connor: I will give you the cost of my overseas trips in the last three years.

Mr B. T. Burke: What about the other Ministers?

Mr PEARCE: The other Ministers will not.

We saw cost-cutting measures like the little pre-election stunt of the Premier's Commodore. The Premier had a second car bought for him to demonstrate the Government's commitment to saving money on petrol. The reason money had to be spent was that our Government supported parity pricing. If it had not supported the Commonwealth parity pricing, petrol would not be so expensive. In order to save on the number of

litres used, the Premier was responsible for the spending of about \$13 000 on a second car. He drives this Holden Commodore occasionally, and uses the official car to attend official functions.

I would be fascinated to know how much petrol could be purchased for the amount of money necessary to buy that Commodore. I wonder how far ahead this State is by laying out the \$13 000 for that car.

Mr Sibson: You know those figures are not relevant. You know that is not the story.

Mr B. T. Burke: He is the D'Artagnan of debate!

Mr Sibson: Now talk about the facts.

Mr PEARCE: It may well be that the member for Bunbury got the Premier a good deal.

Mr B. T. Burke: Bananas in the diff!

The SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order!

Mr B. T. Burke: He is the original blunt instrument.

Mr PEARCE: All I am saying is, what sort of a sound economic policy is it to buy one man two cars? Obviously he can drive only one car at a time, but we are told the purchase was to save petrol.

Mr Young: Just a minute—be reasonable.

Mr PEARCE: He seems to have two of many things.

Mr Young: The Premier has one car he drives, and he uses an official vehicle for official functions. There is a pool of official vehicles. Do not be so ridiculous.

Mr PEARCE: It is astounding to contemplate the sort of cost-cutting measures we will see before the next election. Possibly all 13 or 15 Ministers will have two cars each to save on petrol. That will be a tremendous saving!

Mr Young: You are being ridiculous.

Mr PEARCE: I am asking serious questions about the Premier's ability to count. We are referring to a man who made statements about having 15 Ministers without undertaking a count of heads around the place. He could have taken a count on his fingers, or he could have asked people how they would vote. His counting inability emphasises his lack of capability to know where the State is going.

Mr B. T. Burke: We could buy him a bus.

Mr PEARCE: This is an example of the sort of questions we will be raising in the next week or so. We will be discussing the Premier's second car and the number of Ministers in the Cabinet. I am

sure this discussion will prove interesting to all concerned.

I will finish off my contribution to the debate on the amendment to the Address-in-Reply simply by saying that tonight we heard one of the Premier's most disappointing speeches—disappointing for his supporters, but heartening for us.

Sir Charles Court: You have said that three times before in previous years.

Mr PEARCE: The Premier has trotted out the old platitudes. He is no longer capable of coming to grips with the questions we raise about the State's finances. The Premier should look behind himself before he mumbles into the papers on his desk. If he did so he would realise that the people behind him are realising his insufficiencies. Tonight he has demonstrated his inability to come to grips with the very well documented charges laid by the Leader of the Opposition. The people of the State will have the chance to judge for themselves.

Mr Shalders: How many of your members sat glued to their chairs listening to your leader? You were almost an orphan over there.

Mr PEARCE: That is absolute rubbish.

Mr Shalders: It was an insult to your leader.

Mr Young: The only one sitting there was asleep.

Mr PEARCE: It is absolute nonsense for Government members to say that. Most of them did not listen when their own leader spoke.

Mr Shalders: You do not have a whole lot of listeners either.

Mr PEARCE: The Premier has demonstrated his lack of ability to come to grips with the question. There must be some answers. Why were not the Metropolitan Water Board charges put up last year? If there is a simple reason that the Metropolitan Water Board figures were found to be right, then were \$3.5 million over the estimate, and then were right again, we should be given it. If there is a simple answer to these questions, why does not the Premier tell us? It may be that he is incapable of doing so. Maybe he has forgotten, or maybe he can no longer speak without notes. However, it is most likely that there is no answer. The Premier simply seeks to gloss over the matter with the same old tired cliches he has used for years.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result—

Ayes 19	
Mr Barnett	Mr Harman
Mr Bertram	Mr Hodge
Mr Bridge	Mr T. H. Jones
Mr B. T. Burke	Mr Parker
Mr T. J. Burke	Mr Pearce
Mr Carr	Mr Skidmore
Mr Davies	Mr Taylor
Mr E. T. Evans	Mr Wilson
Mr H. D. Evans	Mr Bateman
Mr Grill	

Mr Blaikie
Mr Clarko
Sir Charles Court
Mr Cowan
Mr Coyne
Mrs Craig
Mr Grayden
Mr Grewar
Mr Hassell
Mr Herzfeld
Mr P. V. Jones
Mr Laurance
Mr MacKinnon
Mr McPharlin

Noes 27
Mr Mensaros
Mr Nanovich
Mr O'Connor
Mr Old
Mr Rushton
Mr Sibson
Mr Sodeman
Mr Spriggs
Mr Stephens
Mr Trethowan
Mr Watt
Mr Young
Mr Shalders

(Teller)

Ayes
Mr Jamieson
Mr Tonkin
Mr Bryce
Mr McIver

Pairs

Noes

Mr Crane
Mr Tubby
Mr Williams
Dr Dadour

Amendment thus negatived.

Debate (on motion) Resumed

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Trethowan.

SUPPLY BILL

Returned

Bill returned from the Council without amendment.

(Teller)

House adjourned at 10.50 p.m.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

PORT

Bunbury

1. Mr McIVER, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) When was the land-backed wharf at Bunbury completed?
- (2) (a) What was the total cost of constructing the wharf; and
(b) how many ships have utilised it since construction?
- (3) What rate of interest is charged per annum re the wharf?
- (4) How much has the Government paid in interest to 30 June 1980?
- (5) Is it a fact that freight and produce from the Bunbury region previously forwarded from the port of Bunbury is now being carted by road to the port of Fremantle?
- (6) If "Yes" to (5), what action, if any, has he taken to have the freight retained through the port of Bunbury?

Mr RUSHTON replied:

- (1) February 1980.
- (2) (a) \$3,609,000.
(b) One.
- (3) 6.5 per cent to 11 per cent.
- (4) Bunbury Port Authority has paid \$620,000 interest to 30 June 1980.
- (5) Most of the general cargo formerly shipped through Bunbury is now being centralised on Fremantle by both rail and road. Rail movements would predominate.
- (6) Owners of cargo or shippers of cargo working with shipowners make decisions as to the port any commodity is shipped through. Governments and port authorities can do no more than encourage and facilitate this process and this is being done.

It is known that at least one substantial south-west shipper is having discussions with a number of shipowners about shipping directly from Bunbury.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Uniform Building By-laws: Licence Fees

17. Mr HERZFELD, to the Minister for Local Government:

- (1) When were licence fees currently applicable under the uniform building by-laws gazetted?
- (2) What principles were used to establish the level of fees to be charged at time of gazettal?
- (3) Are these principles still applicable at this point of time?
- (4) Has she received representations to have the scale of fees reviewed, and if so, by whom?
- (5) Is a review taking place and when are the results anticipated?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

- (1) 2 April 1976.
- (2) Comparisons were made with the Australian Bureau of Statistics "Wholesale Price Index" relating to buildings and "Weighted Average Minimum Weekly Wage Rate", to ascertain the extent of movement in prices in the period since the previous review.
- (3) Any review of building licence fees would of necessity take notice of changing price structure in the industry and other factors considered relevant at the time.
- (4) Yes; the City of South Perth and Country Shire Councils' Association.
- (5) Yes. I hope to be in a position to make a decision within two months.

REAL ESTATE AGENTS BOARD

Membership

18. Mr JAMIESON, to the Chief Secretary:

Who are the present members of the Real Estate Agents Board?

Mr HASSELL replied:

- (a) Mr R. A. Lindsey (Chairman)—a person who is not a licensed agent to be chairman.
- (b) Mr L. G. Fletcher—a person who is experienced in commercial practice and is not a licensed agent.
- (c) Mr P. H. Atkins—a person who is a legal practitioner and not a licensed agent.

- (d) Mr D. M. Hutchison—a person who is a licensed agent nominated by REIWA.
- (e) Mr J. K. Quinlan—a person who is a licensed agent and is elected by licensed agents (elective member).

COURTS

Bail Hostels

19. Mr JAMIESON, to the Premier:

What action has been taken on providing bail hostels for suitable people on bail from courts?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

The Government has approved the setting up of a bail hostel in 1980-81, subject to funds being available.

HOUSING: PENSIONERS

Belmont

20. Mr BRYCE, to the Honorary Minister Assisting the Minister for Housing:

- (1) Does the State Housing Commission intend to build additional pensioner accommodation in Belmont?
- (2) If so, where are the units to be located?

Mr LAURANCE replied:

- (1) and (2) No additional pensioner units are proposed for the 1980-81 financial year.

HOUSING: RIVERVALE

82 Kooyong Road

21. Mr BRYCE, to the Honorary Minister Assisting the Minister for Housing:

With regard to the State Housing Commission premises at 82 Kooyong Road, Rivervale—

- (a) when was the house built;
- (b) is the house still the property of the State Housing Commission;
- (c) which Governmental authority controls the tenancy?

Mr LAURANCE replied:

- (a) 1950.
- (b) Yes. The property is held for Aboriginal housing under the grant funded scheme.
- (c) State Housing Commission.

EDUCATION: SCHOOLS AND HIGH SCHOOLS

Priority Schools Programme

22. Mr BRYCE, to the Minister for Education:
- (1) How much money was allocated to the priority schools funding programme in Western Australia during each year since the inception of the programme?
 - (2) How many different—
 - (a) primary schools;
 - (b) secondary schools,
 have received funding under the priority schools programme?
 - (3) Which primary schools and secondary schools in Western Australia received funding under the priority schools funding programme—
 - (a) in 1979;
 - (b) in 1980?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

	\$
(1) 1974-75	1 164 000
1976	790 000
1977	985 000
1978	1 040 000
1979	1 070 000
1980	1 142 000
(2) Primary Schools	79
District High Schools	8
Secondary Schools	7
(3) 1979—see below.	
1980—see below.	

Western Australian Education Department

Disadvantaged Schools Programme

Schools to be treated as Disadvantaged Schools in 1979

Balga Senior High School
 Beachlands Primary School
 Beaconsfield Primary School
 Bellevue Primary School
 Boulder Primary School
 Boulder Junior Primary School
 Broome District High School
 Camballin Primary School
 Carey Park Primary School
 Carnarvon Primary School
 Carnarvon Senior High School

Coolbellup Primary School
 Cue Primary School
 Deanmill Primary School
 Derby District High School
 Donnelly River Primary School
 East Carnarvon Primary School
 East Fremantle Primary School
 Hamilton Hill Primary School
 Hamilton Senior High School
 Highgate Primary School
 Hilton Primary School
 Koongamia Primary School
 Koorilla Primary School
 Kununurra District High School
 Kyilla Primary School
 Leederville Primary School
 Lockridge Primary School
 Lockridge Junior Primary School
 Marble Bar Primary School
 Maylands Primary School
 Maylands Junior Primary School
 Medina Primary School
 Meekatharra District High School
 Middle Swan Primary School
 Midland Primary School
 Midvale Primary School
 Mt Hawthorn Primary School
 Mt Hawthorn Junior Primary School
 Mt Magnet Primary School
 Mullewa District High School
 Northcliffe District High School
 North Fremantle Primary School
 North Perth Primary School
 North Perth Junior Primary School
 Nullagine Primary School
 Nyamup Primary School
 Onslow Primary School
 Osborne Primary School
 Perth Modern Senior High School
 Queens Park Primary School
 Quin nip Primary School
 Rangeway Primary School
 Rivervale Primary School
 Roebourne Primary School
 Shark Bay Primary School
 South Coogee Primary School
 South Fremantle Senior High School
 South Terrace Primary School
 Southwell Primary School
 Useless Loop Primary School
 Warriapendi Primary School
 White Gum Valley Primary School
 Willagee Primary School
 Wilson Park Primary School
 Winterfold Primary School
 Wittenoom Primary School
 Wyndham District High School
 Yalgoo Primary School.

Western Australian Education
Department

Priority Schools Programme

Schools to be treated as
 Disadvantaged Schools—1980
 States Grants (Schools Assistance)
 Act 1979

Ashfield Primary
 Balga Primary
 Balga Junior Primary
 Balga Senior High
 Beachlands Primary
 Beaconsfield Primary
 Bellevue Primary
 Blackmore Primary
 Carnarvon Primary
 Coolbellup Primary
 Cue Primary
 Deanmill Primary
 Derby District High
 Donnelly River Primary
 East Carnarvon Primary
 East Fremantle Primary
 Girrawheen Primary
 Girrawheen Senior High
 Hainsworth Primary
 Hamilton Hill Primary
 Hamilton Senior High
 Highgate Primary
 Koondoola Primary
 Koongamia Primary
 Kyilla Primary
 Leederville Primary
 Lockridge Primary
 Lockridge Junior Primary
 Lockridge Senior High
 Marble Bar Primary
 Maylands Primary
 Medina Primary
 Meekatharra District High
 Middle Swan Primary
 Midland Primary
 Midvale Primary
 Montrose Primary
 Mt Hawthorn Primary
 Mt Hawthorn Junior Primary
 Mt Magnet Primary
 Mullewa District High
 North Balga Primary
 North Balga Junior Primary
 Northcliffe District High
 North Fremantle Primary
 North Parmelia Primary
 North Perth Primary
 North Perth Junior Primary
 Nullagine Primary
 Nyamup Primary
 Onslow Primary

Orelia Primary
 Osborne Primary
 Perth Modern Senior High
 Port Hedland Primary
 Queens Park Primary
 Quininnup Primary
 Rivervale Primary
 Roebourne Primary
 South Coogee Primary
 Sth Fremantle Senior High
 South Terrace Primary
 Southwell Primary
 Warriapendi Primary
 White Gum Valley Primary
 Willagee Primary
 Wittenoom Primary
 Yalgoo Primary

EDUCATION: PRE-SCHOOL

Staff: Salaries

23. Mr BRYCE, to the Minister for Education:

In respect of community based pre-school centres, if five year old pupils attend nearby pre-primary facilities attached to primary schools, will the Education Department continue to provide the salaries for pre-school centres to cater for four year olds?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

Availability of places for four-year-olds in centres is associated with a decline in the number of five-year-olds in an area. Up to the present four-year-olds have been permitted to fill vacant places provided no additional salary costs are involved.

Conditions under which children younger than one year below school age attend pre-schools are under review. There can be no undertaking that salaries of staff in pre-schools, predominantly enrolling four-year-olds, will be paid by the Government.

24. *This question was postponed.*

EDUCATION: SCHOOL

Cloverdale

25. Mr BRYCE, to the Minister for Education:

- (1) When will the wood burning heating units be replaced at Cloverdale primary school?

- (2) When will the next internal repairs and renovations be done at the Cloverdale school?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

- (1) The replacement of the wood burning heating units at the Cloverdale Primary School has been listed for consideration in the 1980-81 heating programme. It is not possible to indicate when the work will be carried out as this will depend on the amount of funds approved and the needs of other schools.
- (2) This school will be listed for internal repairs and renovations in the draft submission for the 1981-82 financial year.

DRAINAGE: RATES

Forrestfield

26. Mr BATEMAN to the Minister for Water Resources:

- (1) (a) Are people in Forrestfield being charged a drainage rate when they are miles from a drain of any description;
 (b) if "Yes", why?
- (2) Is it a fact that residents in the main have paid in some instances up to \$600 to provide their own stormwater drainage?
- (3) If "Yes" to (2), will he further advise why this rate is being charged when the developer, in this case Realty Development Corporation, provided the drainage which was ultimately paid for by the purchaser?
- (4) If the answers to questions (1) and (2) are fact, will he refund immediately the drainage rate already charged?
- (5) If not, why not?

Mr MENSAROS replied:

- (1) (a) and (b) The Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Board provides metropolitan main drainage. Properties within a metropolitan main drainage district are required to pay metropolitan main drainage rates. Subsidiary drainage as distinct from metropolitan main drainage is the responsibility of the local authority.

- (2) Not to the Metropolitan Water Board.
- (3) Realty Development Corporation paid a headworks contribution of \$250 per hectare towards upgrading and improving the Woodlupine main drainage scheme plus road crossings and structures associated with the drain within the urban zoning.
Metropolitan main drainage rates are to meet the cost of operating and maintaining the metropolitan main drainage system.
- (4) No.
- (5) Answered by (3).

CYCLES

Cycleways: Legislation

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

- (1) Is it proposed to bring in legislation regarding cycleways?
- (2) If "Yes"—
 - (a) what form is proposed; and
 - (b) what effect will it have on local authorities generally?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) The form of the legislation has not been finalised and therefore I am unable to provide any detail at this stage.

EDUCATION: SCHOOL

Royal Street, Kenwick

28. Mr BATEMAN to the Minister for Education:

In view of the inquiries from sporting bodies and other interested parties desiring the use of the unused school premises in Royal Street, Kenwick, for sporting purposes, what plans are envisaged for the grounds and future use of this vacant school?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

The Kenwick primary school is to be converted for use as a special school and documentation of the work is being finalised at present. As this work is expected to commence later in the year

the building and grounds cannot be made available to sporting bodies.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Home Occupation Permits

29. Mr SHALDERS, to the Minister for Local Government:

- (1) Which legislation enables a local government authority to authorise the conduct of a business in areas zoned other than commercial or industrial?
- (2) What is a "home occupation permit"?
- (3) (a) Is there any prescribed fee for such "permit";
(b) if not, was it intended that such permit be issued free of charge; or
(c) local government authorities should determine individually the fee to be charged for such permit?
- (4) Where a person is advised by a local government authority that a home occupation permit is required, do they have the right of appeal to the Minister?
- (5) Where a home occupation permit is refused by a local government authority does the person so refused have the right of appeal to the Minister?
- (6) Is there a right of appeal to the Minister against the level of the fee charged for a home occupation permit by a local government authority?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

- (1) A town planning scheme made under the Town Planning and Development Act or a zoning by-law under the Local Government Act may allow a business in areas zoned other than commercial or industrial.
- (2) A "home occupation" means a business which meets certain criteria specified in the Town Planning Regulations 1967 and is carried on with the permission of the responsible authority, (i.e., the local authority). Therefore, a "home occupation permit" would be a permit issued by the local authority granting such permission.
- (3) (a) No.
(b) and (c) There is no specific provision in the legislation but under the Act a council is able to recover its expenses in giving effect to its town planning scheme.

- (4) No.
- (5) Yes, providing that in refusing permission the council is exercising a right of discretion under its town planning scheme.
- (6) No; however, see the answer to 3(b) and (c).

GREYHOUND RACING INDUSTRY

Inquiry

30. Mr BATEMAN, to the Chief Secretary:

- (1) Has his department or any other Government department known to him, brought about an official inquiry into the greyhound racing industry in Western Australia?
- (2) If "Yes", who are the personnel appointed to make the inquiry?
- (3) If "No", will he institute an inquiry, as there appears to exist growing concern on the part of trainers, breeders and owners about the industry in general?
- (4) If not, why not?

Mr HASSELL replied:

- (1) Yes; Cabinet, on 16 June 1980, gave its approval for the Chief Secretary's Department to hold an inquiry into the greyhound industry.
- (2) Mr J. R. Ewing—chairman of the TAB, and representing the under treasurer.
Mr D. Molyneux—chairman of the Greyhound Racing Control Board.
Mr K. G. Shimmer—secretary of the Chief Secretary's Department.
- (3) and (4) Answered by (1) above.

WATER RESOURCES

Rates: Thornlie

31. Mr BATEMAN, to the Minister for Water Resources:

- (1) Will he give full and complete reasons why many residents living in the Thornlie area received on 3 July 1980 water rate notices showing a rateable value on their properties of \$889, and three days later received another notice showing an increased rateable value of \$1 976?
- (2) As this is an increase of 125 per cent for rateable purposes, can his department justify such an enormous increase?
- (3) As possibly many pensioners are affected by this impost, will he further advise if their valuation can be reduced by 50 per cent, as is the case with all other rates, in order to assist them and other fixed income earners?

Mr MENSAROS replied:

- (1) This probably refers to rate notices sent for the unexpired part of the year ending 30 June 1980 in respect of a new sewer area which was completed and rated from 1 June 1980. This account would contain the 1979-80 valuation. The rates accounts for the 1980-81 year forwarded in July contained the valuation which is operative from 1 July 1980.
- (2) Valuations are provided by the valuer general and are subject to appeal.
- (3) Eligible pensioners can apply for 50 per cent rebate or deferment of the full amount of their 1980-81 assessment.

TRANSPORT: BUSES

Linc

32. Mr McIVER, to the Minister for Transport:

Are all the State Government's linc buses currently in use on fixed bus routes with the exception of those undergoing regular routine maintenance and repairs?

Mr RUSHTON replied:

Yes.

HOSPITAL: SIR CHARLES GAIRDNER*Medical Records: Microfiche System*

33. Mr HODGE, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Who made the decision to install a microfiche medical record system at the Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital?
- (2) When was the microfiche system installed?
- (3) (a) From whom was the microfiche system purchased;
(b) how much did it cost to purchase and install; and
(c) who installed it?
- (4) Who made the decision to abandon the microfiche system?
- (5) (a) Were any of the staff in the medical records department of the hospital consulted before the decision was made to abandon the microfiche system;
(b) if "Yes", who?
- (6) Is it a fact that the medical records department of the hospital has now undergone four changes of system within the past 12 months?
- (7) Is it a fact that staff in the medical records department of the hospital were not informed of changes to the system of keeping medical records until the time of implementation occurred and that they were not trained to operate the new systems?
- (8) Is it a fact that the hospital commissioned a study of the microfiche medical record system early this year by Handley-Walker Industrial Consultants Pty. Ltd.?
- (9) How much did it cost to employ Handley-Walker Industrial Consultants Pty. Ltd.?
- (10) Is it a fact that Handley-Walker recommended two programmes designed to achieve an efficient and controlled microfiche system?
- (11) Is it a fact that Handley-Walker recommended that the hospital should complete the programmes recommended for improving the microfiche system before making a decision on its future?

- (12) Is it a fact that Handley-Walker concluded in their report that abandonment of the microfiche system and reversion to a paper record system would only serve to perpetuate an inefficient and inadequate record system?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (1) Board of Management, Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital.
- (2) Commenced operation on 13 August, 1979.
- (3) (a) Cameras—A.B. Dick (Aust.) Pty. Ltd. Readers—Bell and Howell
(b) Approximately \$150 000
(c) A.B. Dick (Aust.) Pty. Ltd.
- (4) The Board of Management, Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, on the recommendation of the hospital's administration.
- (5) No.
- (6) No, there was a conversion from paper to microfiche and now back to paper.
- (7) No, there was an interval from the time the equipment was required to the time it was put into effect and this would have been known to staff.
- (8) Yes.
- (9) First report free—paid for by A.B. Dick (Aust.) Pty. Ltd.
Second report—total cost \$14 000—A.B. Dick (Aust.) Pty. Ltd. paid \$5 000 and the Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital \$9 000.
- (10) Programmes were submitted, but were not acceptable to the board.
- (11) and (12) Yes, but it was not accepted by the board.

EDUCATION*School Canteens: Food Quality*

34. Mr HODGE, to the Minister for Education:

On 14 May 1980, he announced that he had launched a top level probe into the quality of food served in school canteens. Will he please advise if the probe has concluded yet and, if so, what are the results?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

A committee is in the process of being formed.

HEALTH

X-rays: Hospital Patients

35. Mr HODGE, to the Minister for Health:

In view of the Government's decision to charge privately insured hospital patients for X-rays, will he advise whether it is proposed to issue accounts direct to health insurance funds or will they be sent to the patient, as is the case for other hospital services?

Mr YOUNG replied:

The bills will be sent to the patient.

ABATTOIRS

Number, Health Surveyors, and Meat Inspectors

36. Mr H. D. EVANS, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) (a) What is the total number of abattoirs in Western Australia;
(b) of these, how many are licensed export abattoirs?
- (2) (a) How many abattoirs are there located in the metropolitan area;
(b) of these, how many are licensed export abattoirs?
- (3) How many health surveyors employed by the country local government authorities are required to carry out meat inspection as part of their normal duties?
- (4) How many Commonwealth Department of Primary Industry meat inspectors are there employed in Western Australia?
- (5) (a) How many health surveyors are employed by the Department of Health in Western Australia;
(b) of these, how many operate—
 (i) in the metropolitan area;
 (ii) in the country areas?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (1) (a) 65.
 (b) 14.
- (2) (a) 4.
 (b) 4.
- (3) 62.
- (4) Not known.
- (5) (a) 40 (meat inspection).
 (b) (i) 40;
 (ii) nil.

WATER RESOURCES

Salinity: Perth Supply

37. Mr H. D. EVANS, to the Minister for Water Resources:

- (1) What was the total salt content of Perth water supply from January to May this year?
- (2) What is the salt content in each of the other capital cities?
- (3) What is the ppm of salt as maximum recommended by the World Health Authority?

Mr MENSAROS replied:

- (1) The total dissolved salt content of the metropolitan water supply ranges from 250-500 mg/litre.
- (2) Present data is not available. I can refer the member, however, to the Federal Minister's reply No. 2415 to a question asked on 10 October, 1978, in the Commonwealth Parliament.
- (3) World Health Organisation International Standards for Drinking Water 1971 sets two levels for total dissolved salts in drinking water:
 - (i) Highest desirable level—500 mg/litre
 - (ii) Maximum permissible level—1 500 mg/litre.

MEAT: EXPORT

False Labelling

38. Mr H. D. EVANS, to the Minister for Agriculture:

- (1) Was a Western Australian meat exporting firm convicted by a court for falsely labelling diced boneless beef as mutton earlier this year?
- (2) If "Yes"—
 (a) what was the name of the firm;
 (b) to what market was the meat involved consigned;
 (c) has the Western Australian Government taken any action to ensure that Western Australian meat markets are not jeopardised through trading of this kind and, if so, what actions?

Mr OLD replied:

- (1) and (2) I refer the member to press reports in *The Western Farmer* of 10 and 31 January, 1980, which provide the information sought.

The supervision and certification for all meat intended for export is a Commonwealth responsibility. The false labelling was detected before consignment. I am confident that Department of Primary Industry officers in Western Australia are carrying out their inspection responsibilities effectively.

FERTILISER

Phosphate Rock

39. Mr H. D. EVANS, to the Minister for Agriculture:

- (1) From what sources does Western Australia obtain its supplies of phosphate rock, and what amount annually is currently obtained from each source?
- (2) What is the price per tonne of phosphate rock obtained from each of the sources listed in (1)?
- (3) From what other countries is phosphate rock available to Western Australia and what is the current price per tonne from each of these sources?
- (4) For how long is it expected that present supplies of phosphate rock can meet Western Australia's supply requirements?

Mr OLD replied:

- (1) to (4) This information is not known to my department.

PLANT VARIETY RIGHTS

Legislation

40. Mr H. D. EVANS, to the Minister for Agriculture:

Is it proposed to introduce legislation in connection with plant variety rights in the present session of State Parliament?

Mr OLD replied:

No.

CONSERVATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Darling Range: Land Use Committees

41. Mr H. D. EVANS, to the Minister representing the Minister for Conservation and the Environment:

- (1) What committees are involved in the study of land use, bauxite mining, water supplies and rehabilitation in the Darling scarp?
- (2) What is the function of each committee?
- (3) Who are the members of each committee and what department or organisation do they represent?

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

- (1) to (3) The major groups dealing with various research programmes in the Darling Scarp area are listed below, however the member should recognise that in the area of land use many local authorities, the Town Planning Board and the Metropolitan Region Planning Authority have a significant influence.

DARLING RANGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE: A subcommittee of the "Planning and Co-ordinating Authority", acting to advise the Premier and Treasurer on the work of the Darling Range Study Group and the Research Co-ordinating Committee and advising those committees in matters of policy.

The members of the Advisory Committee are:

E. Gorham (Chairman)
R. Hillman
C. Porter
N. Fitzpatrick
B. Rogers

and co-opted (i.e. additional to members of the "Authority")

B. Beggs
H. Hunt
W. Benson.

DARLING RANGE STUDY GROUP:

Set up to carry out a comprehensive study of land use in the Darling Range and to advise the Government on land use policy and the co-ordination of land use planning by departments.

The members of the Study Group are:

Chairman—W. Benson
Chief Research Scientist—F. Batini

Other Members—P. Eckersley, G. Maugher.

RESEARCH CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE: I refer the member to the answer to question 1055 of 15 August 1979.

MINING AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME LIAISON GROUP: I refer the member to the answer to question 1055 of 15 August 1979.

STEERING COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH INTO THE EFFECTS OF BAUXITE MINING: Reports to the Bauxite Policy Committee on studies, investigation and trials which should be undertaken to evaluate the soil salinity characteristics of the various catchment areas and quantify the effect of mining and re-forestation on water resources of the respective catchments, and the success of re-forestation in catchment areas with particular reference to stabilising soil moisture profiles and water run-off quality.

Membership:

Metropolitan Water Board—Mr H. Hunt (Chairman)

Metropolitan Water Board—Mr I. O'Hara

Forests—Mr J. Havel

Geological Surveys—Dr A. Trendall

Public Works—Mr D. Collett

Agriculture—Mr T. Stoneman

Conservation & Environment—Dr M. Mulcahy

University of W.A.—Mr R. Herbert

C.S.I.R.O.—Mr R. Perry

Industrial Development—Mr P. Patterson

Metropolitan Water Board—Mr G. Lowe (Secretary)

Alcoa/Alwest Representative—At the discretion of the Chairman.

THE SYSTEM SIX COMMITTEE: Reports to the Environmental Protection Authority on areas within System 6 desirable for national parks, nature reserves and major associated recreational resources; and related matters in and near the area delineated as System 6.

Membership:

Chairman: Mr C. F. Porter—
Department of Conservation and Environment

Mr E. N. Fitzpatrick—Department of Agriculture

Dr M. J. Mulcahy—Chairman,
Conservation and Land Use Committee

Mr C. Cheyne—General Manager,
Swan Portland Cement Ltd
(member of MRPA)

Mr N. J. Semmens—Chairman,
Tourism & Recreation Committee

Mr D. J. Collins—Chairman, Local
Government and Urban Planning Committee.

WATER RESOURCES: CATCHMENT AREAS

Denmark River: Land Clearing

42. Mr STEPHENS, to the Minister for Water Resources:

- (1) With respect to zone A of the Denmark River catchment area, excluding fence lines and fire breaks, how many licences have been issued for total clearing of virgin land and how many hectares involved?
- (2) (a) How many licences have been issued for clearing regrowth; and
(b) how many hectares involved?
- (3) (a) Have there been licences issued for other purposes involving general farm maintenance;
(b) if "Yes", how many and for how many hectares?

Mr MENSAROS replied:

- (1) One licence has been issued on appeal for 100 hectares.
- (2) In zone A of the Denmark River catchment area:
(a) 11 licences have been issued.
(b) 796 hectares.
- (3) (a) Yes. Licences for other purposes have been issued in zone A.
(b) Five licences covering 31 hectares have been issued in zone A.

RECREATION

Government Employees: Programme

43. Mr JAMIESON, to the Minister for Cultural Affairs and Recreation:

- (1) What progress has been achieved in the development of a programme to encourage the participation of Government employees in sporting and recreation fitness activities?
- (2) Where have facilities been installed?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

- (1) The Department for Youth, Sport and Recreation has adapted its staffing structure to promote this objective and has been able to give advice on request to a number of Government bodies.
- (2) To date, the advice given has been limited to the better use of existing facilities and the development of programmes.

RECREATION

Fishing Jetties

44. Mr JAMIESON, to the Minister for Cultural Affairs and Recreation:

What plans has the Government for building fishing jetties, and where are these to be located?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

Several jetties are being planned for commercial fishing purposes and will invariably cater for the needs of recreational fishermen. It is planned to construct a jetty at Green Head and to re-construct the Keane's Point Jetty as soon as funds permit.

In the longer term, fishing jetties are planned for Leeman, Jurien Bay and Lancelin.

EDUCATION: SCHOOL

Cowaramup

45. Mr BLAICKIE, to the Minister for Education:

- (1) Has his department given consideration to building new classrooms at the Cowaramup primary school?

- (2) (a) What is the estimated cost; and
(b) when would the works be listed for consideration?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

- (1) and (2) Cowaramup Primary School has four permanent classrooms and a pre-primary centre for 92 primary pupils and 11 pre-primary students. The school is not being considered for further classroom additions.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Responsibility: Transfer to Commonwealth

17. Mr DAVIES, to the Minister for Labour and Industry:

Does the State Government endorse recent suggestions that the State should transfer responsibility for industrial relations to the Commonwealth?

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

No.

TRAFFIC: ROAD TRAFFIC AUTHORITY

Retention

18. Mr T. H. JONES, to the Minister for Police and Traffic:

- (1) Is it correct that Cabinet decided today to retain the Road Traffic Authority as an independent and separate authority?
- (2) If the answer is "Yes", will he advise whether the pre-election promise of the National Country Party was considered by the coalition Government, and also whether the decision was based on the recommendations of local authorities in Western Australia?

Mr HASSELL replied:

- (1) and (2) Cabinet did conclude today that there should be no change in the structure of the Police Department and the Road Traffic Authority.

In reaching that conclusion Cabinet had before it the results of a survey of all local authorities in Western Australia requesting their views on the matter. That survey was carried out in response to an undertaking given by the Premier prior to the State election, that the Government would consult with local authorities on the future structure of the Police Department and the Road Traffic Authority.

The result of the survey was an indication, by a clear majority, that local government did not favour any change to the present structure and, accordingly, the conclusion was reached that no change should be made.

ABORIGINES: LAND RIGHTS

Minister for Cultural Affairs: Statement

19. Mr WILLIAMS, to the Minister for Cultural Affairs:

- (1) Is he aware that the Aboriginal Legal Service in Western Australia has claimed that he had breached the Racial Discrimination Act and has referred comments attributed to him to the Commissioner for Community Relations?
- (2) Is there any justification for action of that kind by the Aboriginal Legal Service?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) There is no justification for the action taken by the Aboriginal Legal Service. Claims by the Aboriginal Legal Service that I have breached the Racial Discrimination Act are ludicrous and so irresponsible and false that they raise serious doubts about the professional competency of the Aboriginal Legal Service.

The Aboriginal Legal Service now appears to be an unashamedly politically-oriented organisation, professionally engaged in manipulating Aborigines rather than providing them with legal help.

Sir Charles Court: Hear, Hear!

Mr GRAYDEN: Statements by Aboriginal Legal Service spokesmen in recent months have been reprehensible and have amounted to straightout attacks on

State Government policies and members. Views sometimes expressed by spokesmen for this organisation are synonymous with those expressed by left-wing elements and organisations.

The Aboriginal Legal Service statements are so politically oriented that the Aboriginal Legal Service now does a serious disservice to Aborigines rather than assist them.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! Will the Minister resume his seat? I think I should, at this early stage of the Thirtieth Parliament, point out to members that it is my intention to enforce a ruling I gave during the life of the Twenty-ninth Parliament with respect to the conduct of the House during question time.

For the benefit of new members—and this was spelt out clearly at a recent seminar—I expect members when asking questions to be able to do so in relative silence. I also expect that Ministers, when answering questions, be accorded the same privilege. I am prepared to allow a single interjection seeking some qualification of a reply, but I will not accept a barrage of interjections from members opposite. The Minister for Cultural Affairs.

Mr GRAYDEN: To continue: In addition, the Aboriginal Legal Service does not have any qualms about squandering taxpayers' money in taking costly legal action at the slightest pretext. The irresponsibility of officers of the Aboriginal Legal Service, and their undisguised political bias, has destroyed the credibility of the service as an acceptable legal service for Aborigines.

The Aboriginal Legal Service should, therefore, be disbanded and an alternative politically impartial organisation set up in its place. The new organisation could make use of commercial legal practitioners on a retainer basis.

Finally, may I say in response to the question that I understand the Premier is so concerned about the general conduct of the Aboriginal Legal Service that he is to take up the matter with the Prime Minister of Australia.

MEAT: INSPECTION

Government Policy

20. Mr H. D. EVANS, to the Minister for Agriculture:

I have not given the Minister any notice of my question, but it concerns a matter of policy and he should have no difficulty in answering it.

Is the State Government policy of meat inspection at export works such that the inspection should be handed over to the Commonwealth? If the answer is "No", will the Minister outline the policy of the Government on this matter?

Mr OLD replied:

The policy of this State with regard to meat inspection is that it should be a State meat inspection.

The actual inspectorial duties should be handled by the Public Health Department under supervision from the Department of Agriculture on the veterinary side.

This belief has been transmitted to the Commonwealth Government.

MEAT: EXPORT

False Labelling

21. Mr H. D. EVANS, to the Minister for Agriculture:

My question follows the reply to question 38 asked today.

Does the Minister intend to make a practice of referring members to journals of the media for information regarding matters that are of paramount importance to the major exporting industries of this State?

Mr OLD replied:

This matter was publicised very widely and I realise the honourable member was trying to get me to name somebody in the House, which I am loathe to do. I am quite sure all Opposition members who have any interest in the meat trade are very well aware of the person and organisation named in that particular allegation. I have no intention of naming someone in this House when the matter has been publicised.

ABORIGINES

Death of Child Living at Rubbish Tip

22. Mr SHALDERS, to the Minister for Health:

Can the Minister advise this House whether he has investigated allegations made here last night by the member for Balcatta about the death of a child during the time its parents were living at a rubbish tip?

Mr YOUNG replied:

I can answer the query of the member for Murray about the matter raised by the member for Balcatta during the debate on the Supply Bill last night. I understand the member for Balcatta would want this House to receive the information.

The baby to whom he referred was born at King Edward Memorial Hospital on 9 July 1976. The mother and baby were discharged subsequently in the normal course of events but the baby was admitted to the Princess Margaret Hospital on 3 August 1976 with gastroenteritis. She was discharged from the Princess Margaret Hospital and admitted to the Lady Lawley Cottage on 20 August 1976 where she died on 22 August 1976. However, the post-mortem indicated the baby died of cot death. The family of which the baby was a member was a highly mobile family but at that particular time—at least officially—it was housed in State Housing Commission accommodation at Calligiri. I am prepared to believe that although the family was still technically in residence at that address until 26 August, probably it was not living there. The evidence, in fact, is that the family was living somewhere in Perth—it had lived at the Lockridge camp, Widgee Road, Midland Brickworks, Wexcombe, and Moora, and the mother of the child had sought refuge at Nordine Emmaus, and the East Perth Night Shelter.

My experience as Minister for Health and Minister for Community Welfare, and my interest in fringe dwelling Aborigines in and around the area of Swan and the like, indicates to me that this family had probably become used to the life of fringe dwelling.

Notwithstanding the number of occasions on which the State provides State Housing Commission homes for people like that, unfortunately so often they do not fit in with that style of accommodation and they tend to end up in circumstances described by the member for Balcatta. I take the opportunity to point out that the death of the child apparently was in no way caused by the family's lifestyle—in fact, that lifestyle was not necessarily thrust upon that family. The death of the child was due to the strange and inexplicable cot death syndrome.

I want also to point out for the edification of members, and particularly for the edification of a female reporter from the "Nationwide" programme whom I heard the other night wrongly describe the Aboriginal mortality rate at about 70 deaths per 1 000 live births that the Aboriginal infant death rate is decreasing. A decade ago it was 76 deaths per 1 000 live births, but today it has fallen to 27.5 deaths per 1 000 live births—a death rate close to that of Caucasians.

ABORIGINES

Remote Areas: Drinking and Gambling

23. Mr HARMAN, to the Minister for Cultural Affairs:

Does the situation in remote areas concerning alcohol and gambling to which he referred last evening in this Chamber—a situation which he claims existed four years ago—still exist, and if so, why has neither he nor the Government done anything about it?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

Certainly the situation exists, and without question something should be done about it as soon as possible. All sorts of statements were made here last evening, and it was stated that I could not produce any evidence to substantiate my claims. This matter has been given wide publicity, notwithstanding the fact that the Opposition should have been in a position to know that this sort of thing was happening. Some Opposition members represent isolated areas of Western Australia.

Mr Harman: Who?

Mr GRAYDEN: For instance, there is the member for Kimberley.

Mr Harman: You are talking about the Warburton Range.

Mr GRAYDEN: The Opposition has members representing the goldfields. Surely they ought to know what is happening at Warburton Range.

Mr Harman: Warburton Range is 600 miles away.

Mr GRAYDEN: Good gracious me! It is well known that truckloads of alcohol are coming in to the Warburton Range, and alcohol comes in by other means also.

Mr Harman: Truckloads of alcohol? It was planeloads last night.

Mr Pearce: Truckloads of alcohol go to South Perth.

Mr GRAYDEN: The police at Laverton are aware of this situation. I have here a cutting from a newspaper report referring to the situation in the Northern Territory. The alcohol is coming in from the Northern Territory, and this fact can be confirmed by contacting the police at Laverton. The article to which I refer is headed "Drink Flown to Aborigines", and it reads—

Aborigines in the Northern Territory are using charter aircraft and taxis to import alcohol, according to a report tabled in Parliament yesterday.

Mr Davies: Tell us how it gets to the Warburton Range.

Mr GRAYDEN: Members will see how it gets there. The article continues—

The interim report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aborigines said that big quantities of alcohol were taken to reserves and communities in this way.

Mr Davies: And 44-gallon drums.

Mr GRAYDEN: The article then says various things, and it states—

Aborigines could destroy themselves through excessive drinking.

Mr Davies: Anybody can.

Mr GRAYDEN: It continues—

The Committee said that the proportion of income spent on alcohol by Aborigines was very high, sometimes up to 50 per cent.

There was much evidence that drunkenness caused fighting and brawling often leading to severe injury and sometimes death.

Property was destroyed, women beaten, and families neglected.

That is what is happening in the Northern Territory. I have the evidence from this impeccable source.

Mr Bateman: What is the impeccable source?

Several members interjected.

Mr Pearce: What is the date of that report?

Mr GRAYDEN: Coming a little closer to home, we find this situation at Laverton two weeks ago: 26 flagons of wine were taken out to the Warburton Mission. They had been purchased for \$6 each at Laverton and sold for \$60 each at the Warburton Mission.

Mr Harman: Who told you that?

Mr GRAYDEN: On that particular occasion the police officers at Laverton asked the publican to have wine delivered in plastic flagons because after drinking the wine the Aborigines use the empty bottles as weapons. The police officers said that almost every time liquor was delivered to the Warburton Mission, they were called on to settle disturbances.

A few weeks ago, under these same circumstances, 50 flagons of wine went out to Warburton.

Mr Harman: Who told you that?

Mr Davies: Tell us your authority?

Mr GRAYDEN: I am told by another impeccable source that—

Mr Harman: Give us the source.

Mr GRAYDEN: —a vehicle took alcohol out to the Warburton Mission and broke down—

Mr Coyne: Bloody nonsense!

Mr Bryce: The way you are carrying on, you are prostituting the Parliament.

Mr GRAYDEN:—and Aborigines came out with a rifle and stole the alcohol.

Mr Bateman: Another impeccable source.

Mr GRAYDEN: For years a charter service operated from Wyndham to the Oombulgurri settlement in the Northern Territory, taking out plane-loads of alcohol.

Point of Order

Mr HARMAN: I rise on a point of order, Mr Speaker. I am aware that you told members they could interject to clarify a question, but the Minister for Cultural Affairs did not respond to my interjection. I am now asking him to table the papers from which he is quoting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his seat. I see no requirement for the Minister to table the notes from which he is reading. However, I ask the Minister to bring his reply to a fairly rapid conclusion.

Questions (without notice) Resumed

Mr GRAYDEN: I am quoting from a newspaper which I will be glad to table. These notes in my hand are scribbled telephone messages.

Mr Bateman: The impeccable source!

Mr GRAYDEN: This sort of thing has happened in the Kimberley for years, and I am sure it is well known to the member for Kimberley. Very commendably the Oombulgurri settlement put an end to it—the elders would not tolerate these plane-loads of alcohol coming in.

Except for the occasional weakening of this resolve, the problem has been rectified there.

I quote these instances to give the lie to the statements made by Opposition members which unfortunately have been publicised widely in Western Australia.

ABORIGINES

Remote Areas: Drinking and Gambling

24. Mr BRYCE, to the Minister for Cultural Affairs:

I would like to direct a further question to the Minister for Cultural Affairs. Did he hear his own colleague in the back bench refer to his ravings about the

Warburton Range as "bloody nonsense", and in the light of that statement made by the member for Murchison-Eyre, who represents the area concerned, will he stop prostituting this institution, come clean, and declare the source of his information?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

The latest information I received this morning came from very reputable individuals in Laverton, and the police officers could well go further than that.

I did not hear the comment of the member for Murchison-Eyre. If he made the comment, he is obviously not aware of these particular facts. Let me reiterate: every single statement I have made can be substantiated completely. I am prepared to make the same statements on the steps of Parliament House or in any media that the Opposition wants to nominate. I deny that any member of the Opposition can contradict a single statement I have made.

Mr Bryce: I just want you to substantiate it.

Mr GRAYDEN: The member for Ascot is no longer the Deputy Leader of the Opposition—obviously the Opposition members realised the sort of person he is. I express the strongest resentment at statements of the kind made by the member for Ascot and by other members of the Opposition. If they would get off their—to put it politely—bottoms to find out what is happening in the remote areas of Western Australia they would be aware of the substance of the statements I made.

Mr Davies: You have to prove it—we don't have to disprove your ridiculous statements.

AUSTRALIAN TAXATION OFFICE

Tax Avoidance Schemes

25. Mr BERTRAM to the Premier:

I wish to ask the Premier, without notice, whether he was reported correctly in today's edition of the *Daily News* as being angered by an Australian Taxation Office decision?

If so, is the basis of his anger that the Australian Taxation Office is acting unlawfully? Will he supply details of the very sophisticated tax avoidance schemes of which he has personal knowledge, and instead of attacking taxation officers, would it not be fairer and more responsible for him to attack the Fraser Government and, in particular, the Federal Treasurer (Mr Howard)?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

I will endeavour to deal with the question as I remember it in chronological order. I gather that the member for Mt. Hawthorn asked me whether the Australian Taxation Office had been acting unlawfully.

Mr Bertram: Correct.

Sir CHARLES COURT: I have never said it has been, and it is no good the member for Mt. Hawthorn, with his usual adroitness, trying to put words into my mouth or into anybody else's mouth. I did refer to some of the nit-picking that goes on, and the tremendous effort that has been made over the years to try to make taxable some of the notional rents in respect of properties and houses used by workers in remote areas. My party and my Government when in office have resisted this very strongly; and I hope members opposite join with us because we believe that the law should be administered with a certain amount of common sense in remote areas.

I know purists in the law, like the member for Mt. Hawthorn, would say that taxation officers should be sent out there to make notional assessments and to extract the last cent from the workers. We do not believe that should happen. We believe these matters have been administered with good sense over the years, and it is most unfortunate that the subject was ever raised. It came to a head when the Commonwealth Government introduced some amendments which we thought would overcome the anomaly; but in fact the amendments seemed to create an even bigger anomaly.

I say without any reservation and without any apology to the Australian Taxation Office or the Commonwealth Treasury that they would have been

better off had they allowed the old practice to continue, because it was thoroughly understood by all concerned. If a managing director has a penthouse in St. George's Terrace for which he pays a nominal rent to a company, I have no qualms about saying he should be taxed on a notional rent. But when we are talking about farmers, fishermen, and other workers in remote areas who may have their accommodation supplied by a company, good sense should prevail; because this is one way to help overcome the factors of cost, loneliness, and isolation. This is one way in which to compensate them for an unrealistic zone allowance, in respect of which I hope to see some redress in the Federal Budget.

I take strong exception to the member's implication that I have some personal knowledge of major tax avoidance schemes. I have not. Nor do I criticise the Commonwealth Government in this respect because the present Federal Treasurer has done more than any other Treasurer I know of to try to disclose some of the devices being used. If members look at what Mr Howard has achieved in his term of office and compare it with what happened during the time of the Treasurers of the Whitlam Government, they will see that at last we have a Treasurer who is prepared to expose these schemes and to do something about them.

ABORIGINES

Remote Areas: Drinking and Gambling

26. Mr HODGE, to the Minister for Community Welfare:

- (1) Has the Minister had an opportunity to investigate the allegations made last evening in the Parliament by the Minister for Cultural Affairs concerning plane-loads of alcohol being taken to Aborigines, and the matter of the two-up games?
- (2) Does he regard the Minister's comments as statements of fact, or merely as allegations?

- (3) If he regards them as statements of fact, what evidence is there to support the view that they are factual statements and not merely allegations?

Mr HASSELL replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) Yes.
- (3) The evidence produced by the Minister.

The SPEAKER: I will take two more questions without notice.

LOWE, MRS LYNN

Daughter: Removal to England

27. Mr PEARCE, to the Minister for Community Welfare:

- (1) Has the Minister received an approach from Mrs Lynn Lowe with regard to the removal of her daughter, Suzi, to England?
- (2) If so, does he intend to take any action in respect of the request?

Mr HASSELL replied:

- (1) and (2) The matter of Mrs Lowe has been reported extensively in the *Daily News* tonight. I have barely glanced at the report, but it contains a reference to the telegram that was sent to me. I have replied to Mrs Lowe's telegram today and advised her of two things: Firstly, that the matter of the future of her child is one for the Family Court of Western Australia, which has legal authority in the matter. As I understand the position it is not a matter within my jurisdiction. Accordingly, I regard it as *sub judice* and, therefore, I question the wisdom of the *Daily News* for having joined Mrs Lowe in the campaign she appears to be waging. I question also the responsibility of that newspaper in respect of dealing with a young child in this manner. I regard what appears in the *Daily News* as a disgraceful example of irresponsible journalism.

We are dealing with the welfare of a child who is in the care of an institution and is in the most difficult of circumstances. Emotions and passions are involved; in addition, the future of the child and the future of her mother are involved. It is incredible to me that the *Daily News* should have written up this matter in the way it has. We will not allow that to happen in the Department of Corrections. We must protect people and particularly young children from this kind of thing occurring again, and we will be looking at the powers we have to do that.

The second point I made to Mrs Lowe in response to her telegram was that if the court decides that the child must stay here, the department will give her all the support it can provide in respect of any problems she has. If the court decides the child should be returned to the United Kingdom, the department will carry out its legal obligations and its general obligations in this matter in the best way possible for the parties concerned.

SMALL BUSINESSES

Effect of Alcoa Dispute

28. Mr BRYCE, to the Honorary Minister assisting the Minister for Industrial Development and Commerce:

- (1) Was the Minister correctly reported as advising small businessmen in Mandurah who may have been adversely affected by the Alcoa dispute to contact the Small Business Advisory Service?
- (2) What forms of assistance does he believe that service can offer those small businesses?
- (3) Is he aware that he has embarrassed his department, because the Small Business Advisory Service is not able to give any tangible form of assistance?

Mr MacKINNON replied:

- (1) to (3) Yes, I was correctly reported in the Press as advising businessmen and women in the Pinjarra area—not the Mandurah area—to talk to the Small Business Advisory Service if they were facing a decrease in business due to the strike.

Secondly, I believe the assistance which the service can provide to small businessmen and women is advice on how to approach their creditors. From experience I know creditors would be putting pressure on them, because their cash flow would have dropped as a result of the strike.

I have no reports that I have embarrassed my department. We have received many inquiries and the officers are carrying on with their job in an efficient manner.

The SPEAKER: When I indicated a few moments ago that I would take only two further questions, I overlooked the member for Dianella who had been attempting to ask a question for some time. He may direct his question now.

STATE FINANCE

Commonwealth-State Tax-sharing Arrangements

29. Mr WILSON, to the Premier:

- (1) What line will the Premier take on the new arrangements for Federal-State tax-sharing at the Premiers' Conference on tax next Friday?
- (2) Will he support the introduction of a State income tax at that conference?
- (3) On what terms is he prepared to introduce a State income tax in Western Australia?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

- (1) to (3) Firstly, the main thing to be done on Friday is to try to reach a basis of understanding between the Premiers as to the form of the approach to the Prime Minister for the tax-sharing arrangements. It was decided at the Premiers' Conference in June that the time had come when the Premiers should get together, free of the Commonwealth officers and Ministers, and compare notes about their individual problems, State by State. At the same time they should determine where they had common ground in the representations. Long experience teaches me, and no doubt the others, that the Commonwealth loves to have us at a disadvantage; if there is a division or lack of certainty amongst the Premiers, the Commonwealth loves to "divide and conquer".

Our first task is to ensure that we have common ground in respect of our tax-sharing arrangements. Then we will try to arrive at some better understanding with the Commonwealth as to what will happen when the Commonwealth changes its policy in respect of its tax raising. This is something which was provided for in the original arrangement, but it has never been adhered to by the Commonwealth. I refer particularly to the part of the arrangement whereby if the Commonwealth decided to change its policy or in any major way to alter the incidence of any tax, such as personal income tax, it would consult with the States. That has not occurred, although the Commonwealth has undertaken some major reforms in taxation. Bear in mind that when the Commonwealth reduces the incidence of personal income tax, under the present arrangements the States bear 40 per cent of the reduction. We are not satisfied about that. The formula had three elements in it. One related to movements in population, another related to movements in the

wage structure, and the third related to a betterment factor which is varied from time to time.

Mr Davies: Wasn't that under the 1973 agreement?

Sir CHARLES COURT: It goes back to McMahon, who increased it; and then the Whitlam Government increased it even further. Unfortunately that increase was rather unrealistic and the Premiers themselves could not justify it in the light of history. Some of us offered the Prime Minister a compromise designed to get back to a more realistic betterment factor, but still enabling the Commonwealth and the States to live with it.

However, it is on those broad principles that discussions will be held between Premiers and, hopefully, we will arrive at a common basis. Other matters incidental to the ones to which I have referred will be discussed.

However, State income tax is not a matter for discussion at the conference on Friday.
